

# **The Implications of Internal Migration on Socio-Political Stability in Kyrgyzstan**

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by

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Dedicated to my loving family for their endless support and encouragement throughout my life.

## **Abstract**

The study focuses on the positive and negative implications of internal migration on socio-political stability in Kyrgyzstan. This is because of the poorly developed registration mechanisms, lack of cooperation among state institutions which are unaware of the current patterns of internal migration, negative perception of the process and negligence from the government negatively impacts the rural-urban movement. The thesis will also reveal the positive effects of internal migration. The research will look at migration of rural dwellers to Bishkek and Osh cities from neighboring villages and other parts of Kyrgyzstan. The interest in studying internal migration derives from its impact on socio-political instability in Kyrgyzstan, mismanagement from the government's side and ineffective policies that regulate the process. Moreover, the study aims at contributing to the limited research on internal migration in Kyrgyzstan.

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## Introduction

Although internal migration significantly influences economic, social, and environmental security of the population on one hand, it is considered as one of the contributors to socio-political instability.<sup>1</sup> This is because of the poorly developed registration mechanisms, lack of cooperation among state institutions which are unaware of the current patterns of internal migration, negative perception of the process and negligence from the government negatively impact the rural-urban movement. The research will also describe the positive effects of internal migration which are ignored. The interest in studying internal migration derives from its implications on socio-political instability in Kyrgyzstan, mismanagement from the government's side and ineffective policies that regulate the process.<sup>2</sup> The National Security Strategy of Kyrgyz Republic considers the unregulated internal migration as one of the security threats in social sector.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, despite the actual negative consequences from unmonitored internal migration there is a lack of research on its influence on political instability within the country. Therefore, one of the aims of the research is to contribute to the general study of the issue.

The hypothesis has been that although there are some negative implications of internal migration on socio-political stability they are exaggerated due to prejudiced attitude of the urbanites, the government and media towards internal migration. The paper will prove this by looking at contribution of internal migration to the cities' development and to the status and welfare of rural migrants. The introduction describes the historical background and Soviet policy's legacy on shaping internal migration's patterns in independent Kyrgyzstan. The first chapter provides theoretical framework to explain the factors of migration, consequences of

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<sup>1</sup> *Internal Migration and Development: A Global Perspective*, IOM Migration Research Series, No.19, 2005, [http://www.prb.org/source/mrs\\_19\\_2005.pdf](http://www.prb.org/source/mrs_19_2005.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Irina Bairamukova, *Socialnye problemy vnutrennih migrantov i puti ih resheniy*, Ulan Bekmuratov, Public Council on migration policy in Kyrgyzstan, June 21, 2013, (accessed on March 23, 2015) [http://www.region.kg/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=915:2013-12-19-06-13-40&catid=5:ob](http://www.region.kg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=915:2013-12-19-06-13-40&catid=5:ob)

<sup>3</sup> *Koncepciya nacionalnoi bezopasnosti Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki*, June 1, 2011

urbanization and major literature which enriched the research content. The second chapter focuses on contemporary patterns of rural to urban migration and challenges they are exposed to in given domestic legislation on internal migration. It also describes the initiatives of migrants, non-governmental organizations, and the government aimed at providing basic services to migrants.

## **Methodology**

The research for the most part uses the qualitative data analysis to provide arguments to support the hypothesis. Quantitative data served as a backup for the arguments. In order to answer the research question historical analysis was used to identify the reasons which formulated the contemporary features of rural migration. The content analysis of secondary sources was also implied to analyze the primary challenges faced by migrants. Descriptive statistics of historical and present rate and speed of migration was also used to support the arguments. Secondary sources encompass analytical research papers, field reports, newspapers, online news editions, and scientific works. Moreover, expert interviews in Osh and Bishkek were conducted to provide up-to-date information regarding the developments in internal migration policy and accomplishments of rural migrants. Unfortunately, the paper lacks interviews with migrants themselves. Moreover, it was difficult to collect information about Osh migrants due to lack of thorough research. The new settlements in Bishkek are the main subject of research whereas Osh does not have a certain community of newcomers.

## **Historical migration patterns in Kyrgyzstan**

During the Soviet rule the migration from rural to urban areas was strictly controlled by the government. In 1932 the authorities introduced the residence registration (*propiska*, transliterated from Russian) policy in order to oversee the population mobility to monitor the

labor supply.<sup>4</sup> The registration granted citizens right to employment, state services, and other social benefits. The policy was aimed at preventing the massive chaotic movement of people especially to cities like Moscow and Leningrad.<sup>5</sup> Although the rural residents were trying to escape the countryside the government wanted to stay them in their areas not only as a labor force for agricultural development but also future industries like hydroelectric power sector, mining and metallurgical plants which began to develop in 1970s.<sup>6</sup> As a result the rural territories became a more favorable place with higher wages and lower cost of living; however, it did not stop people from leaving to economically profitable cities. In addition, since cattle breeding was the most common activity of Kyrgyz people during Soviet Union, majority of population stayed high up in the mountains. Moreover, a cattle breeding was sort of a specialty of Kyrgyz nation, therefore, it was economically beneficial for the Soviet authorities to keep Kyrgyz in certain rural areas, thus, restraining the free movement.<sup>7</sup>

Historically, a massive migration of rural residents to urban Bishkek started in 1990 when Russian residents and other ethnic minorities moved to Russia and Bishkek was in need of labor force and high qualified professionals. According to Martin Schuler's research *Migration Patterns of the Population in Kyrgyzstan* the rate of internal migration was high during 1960s when Kyrgyzstan was building new industrial and housing structures which required skilled workers and qualified engineers. During this period flow of rural migrants to urban cities up North was very high. Later in 1970-1980s the population growth continued

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<sup>4</sup> Elena Prager, *The Propiska System as a Constraint on Capital-City Size in Soviet Russia*, Schulich School of Business, York University; and Guanghai School of Management, Peking University, [https://editorialexpress.com/cgi-bin/conference/download.cgi?db\\_name=CEA2010&paper\\_id=767](https://editorialexpress.com/cgi-bin/conference/download.cgi?db_name=CEA2010&paper_id=767) (accessed on March 23, 2015)

<sup>5</sup> *The Propiska System as a Constraint on Capital-City Size in Soviet Russia*, [https://editorialexpress.com/cgi-bin/conference/download.cgi?db\\_name=CEA2010&paper\\_id=767](https://editorialexpress.com/cgi-bin/conference/download.cgi?db_name=CEA2010&paper_id=767) (accessed on March 23, 2015)

<sup>6</sup> Matthias Schmidt and Lira Sagynbekova, *Migration past and present: changing patterns in Kyrgyzstan*, Centre for Development Studies, Department of Geography, Freie Universitaet, Berlin, Germany, Faculty of Geography and Ecology, Kyrgyz National Balassagyn University, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Published online: 2008, 113

<sup>7</sup> Zh. Zhorobekov, *Etnodemograficheskie protsessy v Kyrgyzstane (vchera, segodnia, zavtra)*, (Bishkek, 1997), 184-206

but remained stable. The Southern Osh city was facing a dynamic growth of agricultural sector which attracted a lot of workers there. Since 1989 Bishkek lost 89 000 people to international migration but gained 151 000 through internal migration. This period's tendency can be explained by the losses in international migration and in natural increase which were compensated by positive internal migration from rural to urban areas. Other regions which faced internal migration losses were Naryn, Issyk-Kul, Alai, Talas, and Jalal-Abad. In 1989 people from periphery and mountainous areas moved to the cities for permanent residency. Even though they could not afford the property in central districts of cities they bought houses in their outskirts where the leaving non-Kyrgyz residents sold them for cheaper prices.<sup>8</sup>

In 1989-1990s the citizens were actively involved in land seizures (*samozakhvaty* transliterated from Russian). In general the process of land seizure can be divided into three waves.<sup>9</sup> First happened in 1989 when middle-class citizens took the situation into their hands when the state failed to fulfill its promise to grant them apartments. Beginning from 1960s the inflow of population to Bishkek rapidly increased, yet, the city could not provide sufficient housing to people. Moreover, they could not register in queue for apartments because they did not have residence registration, again because they did not have anywhere to live. Hence, youth organized a socio-political movement "Ashar" (*assistance* in Kyrgyz) to protect their rights and promote their interests.<sup>10</sup> They have also obtained support from Kyrgyz intelligentsia in their struggle. As a result the government issued the participants 500 square meters of land each. The second wave took place in the late 1990s with the

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<sup>8</sup> Aida Aaly Alymbaeva, *Internal Migration in Kyrgyzstan: A Geographical and Sociological study of Rural Migration*, EBSCO Publishing : eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) Laruelle, Marlene.; Migration and Social Upheaval in the Face of Globalization in Central Asia, 137

<sup>9</sup> Balihar Sanghera, Elmira Satybaldieva, Adil Rodionov, Sabira Serikzhanova, Nurlan Choibekov & Kunduz Sultanmuratova, *Illegal settlement and city registration in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, Implications for legal empowerment, politics and ethnic tensions*, Central Eurasia Project, Open Society Foundations, 2012, 25

<sup>10</sup> *Na puti k suverenitetu, Otkrytyi Kyrgyzstan*, 2014, <http://www.open.kg/about-kyrgyzstan/history/kyrgyzstan-a-sovereign-state/540-na-puti-k-suverenitetu-i-nezavisimosti.html> (accessed on March 23, 2015)



degradation of agricultural sector in rural areas and land privatization forced the rural residents to rush into Bishkek. The biggest settlements appeared during the third wave before and after the “Tulip Revolution” in 2005. Severe economic indigence pushed the rural migrants and other vulnerable groups to seize or buy the cheap plots. Change of ruling elites and political turmoil also provided them an opportunity to housing. However, they were given false or no documents at all which was a ground to disputes over the ownership. According to “Arysh”<sup>11</sup> an NGO which assists internal migrants residing in new settlements around Bishkek there were three main inflows of internal migrants into Bishkek which are linked to land relations.<sup>12</sup> The first one is called a “social wave” (1989-1991) when many former students occupied the land in Kok-Zhar arguing that the land must belong to them not to Russians. The “economic wave” (1992-2005) when a lot of land plots were taken by migrants, and the “commercial/political wave” (post 2005) occurred when Bakiev’s administration together with the “land-mafia”<sup>13</sup> established a business selling land plots through agents. However, each settlement has a different origin, and it is wrong to generalize all cases. Still, most settlements were established in early 1990s, and were legalized upon the demands of residents. Since most citizens wish to acquire their own plot, and it is extremely difficult even though constitution provides such rights to Kyrgyzstanis, this idea is highly politicized. It was widely exploited during Bakiev’s presidential campaign in 2005 - “Vote for Bakiev and get a plot of land!”<sup>14</sup> - in order to attract more Southerners as a support.

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<sup>11</sup> “Arysh”, public association, <http://aryshkg.kloop.kg/o-nas-3/>

<sup>12</sup> Paul Fryer, Emil Nasritdinov, Elmira Satybaldieva, *Moving Toward the Brink? Migration in the Kyrgyz Republic*, Central Asian Affairs, 2014, 183

<sup>13</sup> It is a nexus of corrupted politicians, local leaders (*topbasy* transliterated from Kyrgyz) who serve as agents to sell land to the ordinary people. Interview, Emil Nasritdinov, March 2015, Bishkek

<sup>14</sup> *Moving Toward the Brink? Migration in the Kyrgyz Republic*, Central Asian Affairs, 2014, 184

According to some experts internal migrants are puppets of political elites,<sup>15</sup> but others argue that rural dwellers are the ones manipulating the elites to improve their well-being.<sup>16</sup>

Osh also experienced numerous waves of land-grabbing in early 1990s, 2010. Land grabbers are interested in agricultural lands which are mostly around Bishkek and Osh. Since most of them were occupied by the Uzbeks in Osh, and Russians in Bishkek, the process has led to ethnic conflicts. Kyrgyz people do not have a long history of land cultivation, mostly minority groups were engaged in the agricultural activities. The ethnic tensions have also increased as a result of land grabbing. “Osh-Aimagy” (*Osh district, tribe* in Kyrgyz) was one of the movements which collected 7000 claimants for land comprised mostly from rural dwellers.<sup>17</sup> In May 1990 during political rally the claimants have demanded to issue them plots of Leninskiy suburban *kolkhoz* (collective farm) with predominantly Uzbek employees. Government has assigned them 32 hectares of *kolkhoz*. Being morally insulted by such action the Uzbek population demanded to grant Osh oblast an autonomous status, and the official status to Uzbek language. To ease the tensions the authorities allocated 662 hectares in Kalininskiy, Papanskiy, and Keneshkiy farms. Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations were satisfied, still, there were several instigators on both sides whose actions led to bloodbath which spread to the whole Osh oblast.<sup>18</sup> Land grabbing is the outcome of poor socio-economic status of rural residents and political instability and corrupted mechanisms are the means through which the citizens realize their rights.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Scott Radnitz, *Weapons of the Wealthy: Predatory Regimes and Elite-Led Protests in Central Asia*, 2010, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67801/scott-radnitz/weapons-of-the-wealthy-predatory-regimes-and-elite-led-protests> (accessed on March 26, 2015)

<sup>16</sup> Interview, Elmira Satybaldieva, April 2015, Skype interview

<sup>17</sup> *Kirgiziya: goryuchiy material bol'shogo konflikta*, Strategic Culture Fund, online edition, 2014, <http://www.fondsk.ru/pview/2010/11/13/kirgiziya-gorjuchij-material-bolshogo-konflikta-958.html> (accessed on March 26, 2015)

<sup>18</sup> *Oshskaya reznya 1990 goda: Hronologiya tragedii*, Ferghana.ru, 2010, <http://www.ferghananews.com/articles/6601> (accessed on March 26, 2015)

<sup>19</sup> Interview, Elmira Satybaldieva, April 2015, Skype interview

With the breakdown of the Soviet Union the tight control over the population movement was decreased; the government had to deal with other major obstacles. It had to improve the rural social and economic conditions who suffered due to destruction of *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* (collective farms). The liberalization of economy had a significant effect on rural residents who were occupied with cattle breeding and farming. Although the situation improved in 1996, the crisis of 2005 increased the influx of rural dwellers to cities.<sup>20</sup> Overall, the rate of internal migration was determined by the hardships faced by independent Kyrgyzstan. The introduction of som in 1993 and its devaluation led to extreme unemployment (50% in urban, 80% in rural areas<sup>21</sup>).

After the industries and collective farms shut down with the collapse of the Soviet Union a lot of people moved to urban areas looking for jobs. The situation for rural residents deteriorated with the introduction of new economic policies. Since gaining independence Kyrgyzstan became economically vulnerable yet IMF and World Bank were willing to help newly emerging countries financially and morally. Baliyar Sanghera in his article *Understanding Land Seizures in Bishkek: Urban Involution and the Moral Economy of Land Invaders* explains that Kyrgyzstan introduced many neo-liberal economic policies which were about liberalizing market, relaxation of foreign ownership policies, cuts in government expenditure, reduction in subsidies and import tariffs. His main argument is that shock therapy approach to the transition to market economy had negative consequences on land invasions and urban slums. The rural citizens were no longer able to feed their families due to small proportion of land and no financial capacity to buy fertilizers and equipment. Some people were forced to quit farming and give their land for leasing or to local authorities. As a result of not favorable agricultural policies many households in rural areas became economically impoverished and excluded from other social benefits. Many migrants have

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<sup>20</sup> *Internal Migration in Kyrgyzstan: A Geographical and Sociological study of Rural Migration*, 132

<sup>21</sup> N. Omarov, *Migratsionnye protsessy v Kyrgyzskoi Respublike v gody nezavisimosti. Itogi desiatiletia*, (Bishkek: 2001), 69

migrated to Bishkek or its surroundings others chose Russia and Kazakhstan which is more profitable but also dangerous and costly. In order to make ends meet migrants enter occupations which are labor-intensive and low-paid. Since there is a huge employment competition patronage, family and clan kinship, and bribery has a significant influence on rural migrants' well-being. Therefore, neo-liberal economic policies imposed by IMF and World Bank which were mostly focused on "urban community development" were inadequate. Urbanization is not just about population and physical growth of cities, neither it is about rural-urban migration to wealthier parts of a country. Besides bringing opportunities for employment, improved goods and services, unregulated urbanization leads to challenges such as crime, violence, poverty, and inequality.

In addition, with the economic stagnation and with the introduction of "indigenization policy"<sup>22</sup> in early years of independence there was a massive outflow of non-Kyrgyz population from the Kyrgyz Republic. Peak immigration fell to the period between 1990 and 1995 when 326,600 Russians left the country for Russia, representing about 70 percent of all migrants. The political and economic instability encouraged people to leave Kyrgyzstan; after the intrusion of Islamic Movement in Uzbekistan to Batken the immigration rose in 1999-2000. The outmigration also increased in 2005 and 2010 years of political tension and uncertainty for their future.<sup>23</sup> During 2000-2009 the migration was more or less stable characterized mainly by seasonal migration, when rural residents return their homes. During this period the labor factor was the most common driver of internal migration with almost 50% of population having admitted it. Another 34% migrated for studies, and 5.5% moved to their relatives, whereas only 5.2% came to serve the army.<sup>24</sup> Besides Bishkek, Osh also received a significant number of internal migrants from other oblasts. It is explained with the

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<sup>22</sup> *Internal Migration in Kyrgyzstan: A Geographical and Sociological study of Rural Migration*, 135

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> M. Ablezova and G. Botoeva, et al., *Pokolenie v opasnosti?! Detskaia bednost' v Kyrgyzstane*, CHIP Report no. 15 (Bishkek: Research Center of Childhood Poverty and Policy Development, 2004), 27.

economic development as with acknowledgement of Osh as a Southern capital of Kyrgyzstan.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, Soviet authorities were actively restricting the rural population's movement to urban cities. They Soviet legislation also prohibited to sell the state lands for individual constructions. The policy was justified by saying that the historical nomadic lifestyle of Kyrgyz population does not allow them to work in spheres which require high intellectual and experienced professionals.<sup>26</sup> Hence, the Kyrgyz people remained in regions to contribute to rural economy, and were not exposed to urban culture to enjoy the benefits of intellectual and technological development. Moreover, the unfair economic distribution and "unequal makeup"<sup>27</sup> of rural and urban populations have shaped the internal migration patterns and factors later in Kyrgyzstan. While today the labor migration of Kyrgyzstanis to Russia and Kazakhstan is widely researched and analyzed by academic world and more or less regulated by the government, internal migration is poorly studied and neglected by the government due to its irregular character, ineffective national policies, and its negative image in Kyrgyzstan's society. However, the process significantly influences the social and political life of the country with both positive and negative implications. Yet, it is important to remember the historical moments which set a direction for its development after independence.

## **First Chapter: Theoretical framework and review of literature**

### **Concepts of internal migration**

Internal migration is described as a movement of people within one country; still, its directions may vary. Rural-urban migration is most common in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>28</sup> According to

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<sup>25</sup> *Internal Migration in Kyrgyzstan: A Geographical and Sociological study of Rural Migration*, 141

<sup>26</sup> *Etiodemograficheskie protsessy v Kyrgyzstane (vchera, segodnia, zavtra)*, 184-218

<sup>27</sup> Aida Aaly Alymbaeva, *Internal Migration in Kyrgyzstan: A Geographical and Sociological study of Rural Migration*, EBSCO Publishing : eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) Laruelle, Marlene.; Migration and Social Upheaval in the Face of Globalization in Central Asia, 128

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

the law on *Internal migration* of the Kyrgyz Republic internal migration is “a movement of citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic for various reasons within the Kyrgyz Republic with a view to a permanent or temporary change of residence.” Thus, internal migrant is “an individual who has moved from one area of the Kyrgyz Republic to another due to different reasons for the purpose of permanent or temporary change of residence.”<sup>29</sup> The term itself has a discriminatory tone to it because these are also the citizens of Kyrgyzstan. Yet, it academia the term is necessary to identify this particular group of population like any other.<sup>30</sup> However, it is not clear till what time the migrant remains a migrant, what are the periods of temporary migration. Such vagueness causes discrimination of rural migrants by the city residents, the government, and the law enforcement representatives. Rural-urban migration can have a voluntary or an involuntary character.<sup>31</sup> Examples of voluntary movement may be better economic opportunities in bigger cities, access to education and medical assistance, better ecological conditions and abundance of entertainment and leisure activities. Involuntary factors such as political instability, wars, ecological accident or natural disasters may force people to leave their homes in countryside. Rural residents in Kyrgyzstan leave to Bishkek or Osh mostly in search for better jobs. According to research report *Discrimination of Internal Migrants in Bishkek* conducted by Dr. Emil Nasritdinov, a thematic leader on migration at Social Research Center and Associate Professor at Anthropology Department of AUCA together with a student research team 88% of migrants came to Bishkek to look for a job. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that internal migration in Kyrgyzstan can be identified as a labor migration (Research report, p.8).

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<sup>29</sup> Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on “Internal migration”, Закон Кыргызской Республики “О внутренней миграции” (В редакции Закона КР от 16 октября 2002 года № 144)

<sup>30</sup> Interview, Elmira Satybaldieva, April 2015, Skype interview

<sup>31</sup> Machel McCatty, *The Process of Rural-Urban Migration in Developing Countries*, Department of Economics Carleton University Ottawa, Ontario 2004, <http://www.carleton.ca/economics/wp-content/uploads/he-mccatty-machel.pdf> (accessed on March 30, 2015)

In Bishkek internal migrants settle in new residential communities. New settlements, *novostroiki* in Russian, or *jany konushu* in Kyrgyz is a term referring to newly emerged residential communities in urban locality.<sup>32</sup> However, in case of internal migration the concept of “squatter settlements” is also commonly used because most of them were acquired through illegal means. However, What is more, it is wrong to call them “slums” because the settlements have different economic welfare, however, the most poor settlements are the ones who have not been granted a legal status yet.<sup>33</sup> Among them are Ak-Zhar and Altyn-Kazyk, TEC-2. According to the United Nations Expert Group there are several characteristics of slums: inadequate access to water, poor access to sanitation and infrastructure, poor housing, overcrowding, insecure residential status.<sup>34</sup> Some settlements face such problems; however, they develop over time like Archa-Beshik, Kok-Zhar, Ak-Orgo, Altyn Ordo, and Ak-Ordo settlements. These southern settlements are the oldest ones they are mostly occupied by the Northern migrants who had better financial capacity to buy the land plots there. City residents also obtain plots and houses in new settlements. The land has always been an expensive asset and the plum land is in Southern part of Bishkek.<sup>35</sup>

Officials have recognized 48 new settlements with the population of 200-300 thousands of people; according to unofficial sources, the number is twice as many.<sup>36</sup> By contrast, researcher on migration and associate professor at AUCA, Emil Nasritdinov concluded that there are 26 settlements around Bishkek with approximately 168 000 people.<sup>37</sup> He argued that there are smaller parts of new settlements which cannot be considered as independent local territorial administrations (*mestnye territorialnye upravleniya* in Russian).

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<sup>32</sup> Free Dictionary, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/settlement> (accessed on March 30, 2015)

<sup>33</sup> Bermet Zhumakadyr kyzy, *Development in urbanized settings*, 2012

<sup>34</sup> United Nations Human Settlements Programme, *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003* (London and Sterling, VA: Earthscan Publications Ltd., 2003), 9., Development in urbanized settings, by Bermet Zhumakadyr kyzy.

<sup>35</sup> Interview, Emil Nasritdinov, March 2015, Bishkek

<sup>36</sup> Arysh, *Vstrecha s “nevidimkami”*, 2014, <http://aryshkg.kloop.kg/2014/09/23/677/> (accessed on March 30, 2015)

<sup>37</sup> Interview, Emil Nasritdinov, April 2015, Bishkek

There are other definitions of settlements which vary from negative to neutral, and positive approaches.<sup>38</sup> Some of them are:

- Informal settlements
- Low-income settlements
- Semi-permanent settlements
- Shanty towns
- Spontaneous settlements
- Unauthorized settlements
- Unplanned settlements
- Uncontrolled settlements

They all represent salient features of settlements in Kyrgyzstan. It is obvious that the *novostroikas* portray the poor capability of the authorities to regulate the process of migration and land relations. Yet, the significance of contribution of settlements to the housing issue is indubitable. The issue is rather with the upgrade of the settlements which is proportional to their legality and official recognition.<sup>39</sup> The authorities and international donors are willing to work with legal settlements and those who are willing to help themselves. Still, the question of legality is highly debatable because the criminal and administrative codes of the Kyrgyz Republic outlawed them in 2005 during Kurmanbek Bakiev's regime. In 2012 Almazbek Atambaev issued severe punishment for squatters. Article 172-1<sup>40</sup> sentences the participants in massive squatting to 3-5 years of imprisonment, in individual cases to 1-3 years, with the use of weapons and violence to 5-7 years, and the initiators of the massive land grabbing the code imprisons to 7-10 years. Those who voluntarily give up the land and compensated the

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<sup>38</sup>Hari Srinivas, *Defining Squatter Settlements*, Urban Squatters and Slums, <http://www.gdrc.org/uem/squatters/define-squatter.html>

<sup>39</sup> *Developments in urbanized settings*, 2012

<sup>40</sup> *Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic*, Paragraph, [http://online.adviser.kg/Document/?doc\\_id=30222833&page=7](http://online.adviser.kg/Document/?doc_id=30222833&page=7) (accessed on March 30, 2015)



harm are exempt from criminal responsibility. The authorities are pressured from both sides, one demanding to penalize the squatters, and the squatters pushing for their legitimate right to own a land. The government is faced with the dilemma of satisfying the needs of two conflicting groups of society. The dilemma becomes urgent in the face of upcoming parliamentary elections in 2015, and probably in the run up to the presidential elections in 2017.

### **Internal migration theory**

Understanding the population movement across the country will explain the political and economic context which they come from and how they will influence their new residence. There are several approaches explaining the migration process. One of the prominent British economists, Alfred Marshal, viewed the migration as a process of attracting the best people across the country to cities, meaning the most intelligent and talented, people with highest moral standards would travel to urban cities.<sup>41</sup> However, it is only partially true today because it does not explain the reason why poorly educated people from farming background arrive to cities. According to Ernest George Ravenstein, one of the first English scientists who conceptualized the migration process, economic factors are the main drivers of rural-to-urban migration.<sup>42</sup> In his *Laws of Migration* (1889) he concluded that the migration is regulated by *push and pull factors*. Unfavorable conditions at home such as economic and social insecurity, natural disasters and threats of violence push people out of their places, and more attractive conditions in other places pull people them out.<sup>43</sup> Later in 1938 Ravenstein's conclusions were developed into gravity model of migration by such economists as Marschak, Makower, and Robinson who found a close relationship between migration and

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<sup>41</sup> Michael J. Greenwood, *The Early History of Migration Research*, Department of Economics University of Colorado, Gary L. Hunt Department of Economics University of Maine, <http://www.colorado.edu/econ/courses/spring12-4292-001/Greenwood%20and%20Hunt%20Migration%20Research%20History.pdf> (accessed on April 3, 2015)

<sup>42</sup> John Corbett, *Ernest George Ravenstein: The Laws of Migration, 1885*, Center for Spatially Integrated Social Science, <http://www.csiss.org/classics/content/90> (accessed on April 3, 2015)

<sup>43</sup> *Ravenstein's Laws of Migration*, <https://sterlingaphug.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/ravenstein-reading.pdf>

distance, and migration and population size of origin and destination places.<sup>44</sup> Having applied it to Kyrgyzstan, it means that Bishkek is more attractive to rural citizens, yet, people from Chui province and other northern provinces will be pulled more to Bishkek compared to southern citizens. Therefore, people from Jalal-Abad, Batken may be willing to move to Osh city rather than to Bishkek. However, with the development of transport the choice rather lies between traveling to Bishkek or abroad. Today there are around 500 000 internal migrants in Osh<sup>45</sup>, with only 250 000 registered and 937 000 registered migrants<sup>46</sup> approximately 300 000 of whom live in 26 settlements four of which have not gained legal status yet.<sup>47</sup>

### **Rural-to-urban migration and instability theory**

To explain why internal migration has threatened the stability in the country the concepts of “urban dilemma” and “structural violence” were used in the paper. Urban dilemma describes 21<sup>st</sup> century urban tendency as a progress towards development of poor on one hand, and increases insecurity of urban poor on the other.<sup>48</sup> In Kyrgyzstan, in a region of high population growth and competition for very limited natural resources and land reserves, urbanization has rather contentious character with social exclusion of rural migrants. The theory of social disorganization which says that “economic disadvantages, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential instability contribute to the level of violence in cities” can be used to explain the characteristics of social tensions in Bishkek and Osh and their surroundings. In urban contexts where inequalities is not just about income but also lack of access to basic social services, lack of state protection, exposure to systematic corruption, can

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<sup>44</sup> Michael J. Greenwood, *Modeling migration*, University of Colorado, USA, <http://www.colorado.edu/econ/courses/spring12-4292-001/Modeling%20Migration.pdf> (accessed on April 3, 2015)

<sup>45</sup> Ernis Nurmatov, *Osh: Rastet kolichestvo vnutrennih migrantov*, 2012, Azattyk Radio, [http://rus.kg/news\\_rus/obshetvo\\_rus/7597-osh-rastet-chislo-vnutrennih-migrantov.html](http://rus.kg/news_rus/obshetvo_rus/7597-osh-rastet-chislo-vnutrennih-migrantov.html) (accessed on April 3, 2015)

<sup>46</sup> Anara Mamytova, *GRS: Na nachalo 2015 goda v Bishkeke zaregistrirvano 937 tysyach vnutrennih migrantov*, March 4, 2015, News agency «24.kg», [http://www.24kg.org/obschestvo/8220\\_grs\\_na\\_nachalo\\_2015\\_goda\\_v\\_bishkeke\\_zaregistrirvano\\_937\\_tyisyach\\_vnutrennih\\_migrantov/](http://www.24kg.org/obschestvo/8220_grs_na_nachalo_2015_goda_v_bishkeke_zaregistrirvano_937_tyisyach_vnutrennih_migrantov/) (accessed on April 3, 2015)

<sup>47</sup> Emil Nasritdinov, *Discrimination against internal migrants in Bishkek*, Social Research Center, OSI, 2009

<sup>48</sup> Natalie Brender, *Researching the Urban Dilemma: Urbanization, Poverty and Violence*, based on the study by Robert Muggah, International Development Research Centre 2012

be described as a structural violence.<sup>49</sup> The policies are structural because they are introduced by political, legal, and economic institutions; they are violent because they harm and disable individual's potential and liberties.<sup>50</sup> Johan Galtung's, the principal founder of conflict and peace studies discipline, Violence Triangle (1969) consists of cultural, structural, and direct violence. He argued that although the direct violence (physical) strengthens the other types, its roots lies in cultural and structural violence.<sup>51</sup> According to Kyrgyzstani law *On Internal migration* (16.10.2002, # 144) (article 16) citizens must register within 10 days (at a place of residence) if they arrived for more than 45 days and provide rental contract with landlord. It is not beneficial for the landlords to assist the migrants in registration because of the advance in the utility prices. 67% of migrants do not have *propiska* in Bishkek because of complexity rules, too much paperwork, and time constraints. Since most migrants come to Bishkek temporarily they do not want to lose their registration in their home towns. In addition, 66% of migrants rent an apartment, and in order to be registered there they need to get an official letter from a landlord which has to pay additional taxes for utilities per every registered migrant.<sup>52</sup> Ulan Bekmuratov, the lawyer of Osh NGO Advocacy Centre, stated that the law did not determine the residence period of citizens after which the temporary residence transforms into permanent which is from 6 – 12 months in Western countries.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, due to lots of complicated rules and time consuming and expensive process the migrants are not registered. It can be an example of structural violence since such a discriminatory legislation constrains the rights of citizens to movement and to choose place of residence. In

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<sup>49</sup> Structural violence is a term commonly ascribed to Johan Galtung, which he introduced in the article "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research" in 1969. It refers to a form of violence where some social structure or social institution may harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs.

<sup>50</sup> Dr. Paul E. Farmer's quote, professor at Harvard Medical School, <http://www.structuralviolence.org/structural-violence/> (accessed on April 7, 2015)

<sup>51</sup> Rajkumar Bobichand, *Understanding Galtung's Violence Triangle and Structural Violence*, Imphal Free Press, 2012, <http://kanglaonline.com/2012/07/understanding-violence-triangle-and-structural-violence-by-raj-kumar-bobichand/> (accessed on April 7, 2015)

<sup>52</sup> *Discrimination against internal migrants in Bishkek*, 2009

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, International practice determines the period from three months up to one year

the judgment of Aigul Ryskylova, the head of working group on migration policies, the legislation deprives political and social rights of migrants.<sup>54</sup>

In Kyrgyzstan the risk of open conflicts and violence may escalate as a reaction to deteriorating living conditions of urban villagers. As a support to the mentioned social disorganization theory, the conflict theory explains that “the diverse backgrounds and interests of city residents often lead to conflict because some residents’ beliefs and practices clash with those of other residents.”<sup>55</sup> This is also true in case of Bishkek migrants’ belief that the city is a ground for political and economic elites to enrich their resources and to gain more power by taking limited resources from poor. Here differences in social backgrounds instead of contributing to tolerance and promoting cultural values frequently lead to conflicts. Among different conflicts that migrants have to face are: resident – migrant, police officer – migrant, medical worker – migrant, employer – migrant. They all determined by different social, economic, educational, background distinctions of migrants from other four groups. According to research report by Dr. Emil Nasritdinov, there are four different factors that contribute to the level of discrimination against internal migrants: origin by regions, residential registry, knowledge of Russian language, and financial situation. Southern migrants confessed to have more conflicts with the police and medical workers because of their background, absence of residential registry, low level of Russian language, and poor financial situation compared to the Northern migrants. Besides above mentioned discriminatory factors, local residents and police believe that migrants are lazy, aggressive, and illiterate, thus, to gain easy money they join criminalized gangs to steal, murder, and do

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<sup>54</sup>Irina Bairamukova, *Socialnye problemy vnutrennih migrantov i puti ih resheniy*, Public Council on migration policy in Kyrgyzstan, June 21, 2013, [http://www.region.kg/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=915:2013-12-19-06-13-40&catid=5:ob](http://www.region.kg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=915:2013-12-19-06-13-40&catid=5:ob) (accessed on April 7, 2015)

<sup>55</sup> *Sociological Perspectives on Urbanization*, <http://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/a-primer-on-social-problems/s17-02-sociological-perspectives-on-u.html> (accessed on April 7, 2015)

other illegal activities. Such negative perception makes the internal migrants foes among their own and negatively impacts their human dignity and status.

Those people do not possess identification or registration documents so they become “invisible” because they cannot enjoy social services in health, security, education, employment spheres and cannot participate in elections, since they are allowed to vote in the place of their registration only (*propiska*). Even though article 10 of law of Kyrgyz Republic *On internal migration* states that *citizens should not be deprived of their rights and freedom on the basis of absence of residential registration*, de facto the provision is not practiced. Migrants do not have passports and most of them do not have registration in Bishkek. This is a common reason why they do not have access to medical treatment, why police officers arrest them and demand money, why local residents treat them badly complaining bad on the migrants’ manners, poor knowledge of Russian, lack of education, and poor clothing. The state fails to protect them; so do the legislation and law enforcement agencies. Being deprived of their basic rights and struggling to survive migrants represent a threat to stability of the country because they actively apply political measures in their benefit. According to frustration-aggression theory and relative deprivation theory suggest that the risk of rebels increases when people experience obstacles to their wellbeing and their essential needs are not satisfied.<sup>56</sup> This is especially true in states with poor governance and low capacity to equal resource distribution.

The above-mentioned theories explain the reasons why migrants might represent threat to political stability in Bishkek and Osh cities. However, the urbanization instability theory explains how movement to big cities influences the behavior and motives of internal migrants. The research was conducted in Mexico *Urbanization as an Agent in Latin*

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<sup>56</sup>Dr. Brian-Vincent Ikejiaku, *Poverty-Conflict Nexus: The Contentious Issue Revisited*, European Journal of Sustainable Development (2012), <http://www.ecsdev.org/images/V1N2/ikejiaku%20127-150.pdf> (accessed on April 10, 2015)

*American Political Instability: The Case of Mexico* (1969) by Wayne A. Cornelius, Jr.<sup>57</sup> The theory suggests that the rapid urbanization caused by massive rural-urban migration has “socially disintegrative and politically disruptive consequences”.<sup>58</sup> The research is based on three factors which impact the instability in a city with rapid population growth. Firstly, before moving to the cities rural citizens acquire high economic and social expectations; however, either due to poor pre-migration preparation, low competence, and local authority’s low capacity to accommodate the newcomers, the migrants are unable to fulfill them. In Kyrgyzstan, due to ineffective residence registration regulations migrants do not have access to state services and land acquisition. As one of the marginal groups they are prone to engaging in radical movements and political activities. The rural migrants constituted majority of *Aprelevcy* (people who participated in 2010 April events overthrowing Bakiev’s rule).<sup>59</sup> During Bakiev’s regime the internal migrants who were surviving everyday used the opportunity to improve their lives. Some severely injured participants were granted financial compensations (rewards) equal to 50.000 soms (around 1000 USD, 2010 currency rate) and apartments in Dzhal and Tunguch micro districts.<sup>60</sup> During and after “Tulip Revolution” in 2005 the land in settlements like Ak-Bosogo, Ak-Zhar, Zhenish, Tynchtyk, Altyn-Kazyk and others was illegally sold. It is interesting that in these cases political instability contributed to illegal land seizures. Still, during 2010 April events, and March events in 2005 there were mostly internal migrants who participated in lootings and land seizures.

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<sup>57</sup> Wayne Armstrong Cornelius, Jr. is a CCIS Director Emeritus and Theodore Gildred Distinguished Professor of Political Science and U.S.-Mexican Relations, Emeritus Co-Director, Center of Expertise on Migration and Health, <http://ccis.ucsd.edu/people/wayne-cornelius/> (accessed on April 10, 2015)

<sup>58</sup> Wayne A. Cornelius Jr., *Urbanization as an Agent in Latin American Political Instability: The Case of Mexico*, Source: The American Political Science Review, Vol. 63, No. 3 (Sep., 1969), 833-857, published by American Political Science Association, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1954431>. (accessed on April 10, 2015)

<sup>59</sup> Madeleine Reeves, *Breaking point: why the Kyrgyz lost their patience*, OpenDemocracy, 19 April 2010, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/madeleine-reeves/breaking-point-why-kyrgyz-lost-their-patience> (accessed on April 10, 2015)

<sup>60</sup> Kubanychbek Zholdoshev, *Preimuschestva “geroev” 7 aprelya*, Azattyk radio, 2014, <http://rus.azattyk.org/content/article/26538403.html> (accessed on April 10, 2015)

Secondly, migrants experience social and psychological obstacles to integrate to urban environment. They are no longer a part of rural community and are not able to communicate the way they did in their regions of origin. As a result, they become vulnerable to recruitment to radical movements be it religious or political because they want to regain security and sense of belonging to some social group. Radical movements undermine the state security and political opposition may threaten the current authority. Thirdly, being exposed to a new social communication, high competition for social and economic interests, and witnessing political activities internal migrants become a source of mobilization in different organizations, mostly political. Their frustration and concerns are promised to be resolved so they take parts in riots, initiate unrest to promote their interests.

Internal migration is a very complex and chaotic process in Kyrgyzstan. Human agency and politics are the most important determinants of the process. Urban instability identifies three factors which in given harmful structural policies and legislation may erupt in open conflicts and upheavals. Absence of residential registration, official identification documents, improper land ownership status are the main factors which hinder migrants from enjoying their rights and improving their welfare. In addition, officials' and society's prejudice and negative attitude towards them which are determined by the abovementioned issues the migrants are facing. Yet, migrants are also responsible for the negative image they create. Illegal acquisition of land property, participation in lootings and popular unrests contribute to the stigma of being uneducated, violent, and bad-mannered citizens. Since the root grievances of internal migrants are financially costly for the government to deal with, together with international donors, local non-governmental organizations, authorities are working on the aftermaths of their movement. However, prejudice against internal migrants' prevents government to fully address the interests of migrants. On one hand, authorities have to cope with city problems, provision of services to city residents, and with infrastructure

development. On the other hand, they have to deal with hyper urbanization and needs of newcomers. The conflict for the same resources arises due to rejection of *novostroikas* and their non-acceptance as part of Bishkek by locals, and exclusion of migrants in Osh. The government's role is essential in integrating internal migrants into the city development. The latent conflict is there, yet, its outbreak directly depends on the government's ability to properly cooperate with both sides, and on its capacity to promote their interests.

## **Second Chapter: Problem setting and analysis of findings**

### **Internal migration patterns and factors**

Today up to 1 million people are living as internal migrants in Kyrgyzstan most of whom are living in the outskirts of Bishkek and Osh cities with no electric power, gas, or proper sanitation.<sup>61</sup> In Bishkek 350 000 people do not have city registration which deprives their civil and political rights and hence, they become a subject of social discrimination.<sup>62</sup> After arriving to the cities they face discrimination and misunderstanding from local residents (who have been born or raised in the city), police officers, medical workers. According to a survey conducted by Public Association "ARYSH" in 2013 there are at least 406 adults and 436 children invisible citizens in 11 new settlements around Bishkek within a population estimated for 42,000 people, which means that they do not have any identification documents.<sup>63</sup> Only in 3 settlements around Osh and Dordoi markets there were 1.589 citizens without registration, 224 without passports, and 173 children without birth certificates.<sup>64</sup> It becomes a vicious circle because if there is no passport a person cannot register in a new

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<sup>61</sup> Sarah Gandrup, *DCA's successful fight for migrant rights*, 2014, <https://www.danchurchaid.org/news/news/dca-s-successful-fight-for-migrant-rights> (accessed on April 12, 2015)

<sup>62</sup> *Illegal settlement and city registration in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, Implications for legal empowerment, politics and ethnic tensions*, 25

<sup>63</sup> *Simplifying civil registration, Securing Human Rights*, 2014, <https://www.danchurchaid.org/news/news/simplifying-civil-registration-securing-human-rights> (accessed on April 12, 2015)

<sup>64</sup> Yuriy Kopytin, *Nesuchestvuyuwie grajdane Kyrgyzstana*, K-news, 2013, <http://www.knews.kg/ru/society/29202/> (accessed on April 12, 2015)



residence. Moreover, if a child does not have a birth certificate educational and medical institutions do not accept him/her, grown up he/she is unable to find a well-paid job, retired he/she does not receive pension. Children start to work as *tachkisty* (Russian word to describe people who carry goods in markets in wheelbarrows), collect waste, or sell goods in local bazars. His/her children continue in the same way which contributes to growth of child labor and neglected children in Kyrgyzstan. In Osh there are around 500 000 internal migrants half of whom have not acquired registration and face the same problems as those residing in Bishkek. Although there are no illegal settlements in Osh migrants struggle to find proper housing. Rural migrants live in poorly facilitated dormitories in Cheremushki, Oshskiy and HBK (Textile enterprise) districts.<sup>65</sup> During Soviet period lots of working families used to live there, after the collapse the rooms were sold and whole buildings were privatized. Today migrants rent a room with no heating and common bathroom unit for 1500-2000 soms per month.

In Kyrgyzstan inter-regional (about 60%) prevails over intra-regional (40%) movement of people. Inter-regional migration predominates in Naryn and Batken provinces (76% and 72%) but much slower in the southern Osh and Jalal-Abad provinces (39% each).<sup>66</sup> Therefore, the assumption about *ponaehavshie* (new comers in Russian) from Southern regions is wrong because Osh and Jalal-Abad attract migrants from their own regions. Still, Bishkek remains the most economically attractive destination for various regions, the process is called “Northern Drift” by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).<sup>67</sup> According to the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) the majority of internal migrants are from Naryn and Issyk-Kul oblasts (19,5% each), Osh and Jalal-Abad oblasts (18,2%), and followed by

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<sup>65</sup>Ekaterina Ivachenko, *Na krayu jizni. Vnutrennie migrant v Kyrgyzstane*, 2013, Ferghana news, <http://www.ferghananews.com/articles/7700> (accessed on April 13, 2015)

<sup>66</sup>U. Ergeshbaev, *Migratsionnye protsessy v Kyrgyzstane i ikh sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie posledstviia*, (Osh, 2009)

<sup>67</sup> IOM in Kyrgyzstan, *iom.kg, Moving towards the brink? Internal migration in Kyrgyzstan*, 174

Chui oblast (11,7%), and lastly from Talas (2,8%).<sup>68</sup> Around 69% of internal migrants are men in their 20s-30s (67%). Most of them brought their families with them (71%). Emil Nasritdinov in his research suggested that families with children are more likely to travel shorter distances, while unmarried and childless prefer to migrate abroad.<sup>69</sup> More migrants with families had their own houses compared to single ones, and they were happier about their income rather than unmarried migrants. However, families need more money to send their children to schools, to use medical service, and on other major expenses. If they do not possess any documents or residence registration the expenses double. Ethnically, the majority of internal migrants are Kyrgyz (82%), followed by Uzbeks (11%) and others (7%).<sup>70</sup> The majority had secondary or secondary special education (66%) and only 23% had higher education. Some experts suggest highly educated and skilled citizens leave to overseas and acquire foreign citizenship. Therefore, only Bishkek and Chui oblast have positive population growth, while Southern and rural areas struggle with population loss, especially Batken region. Bishkek and Chui regions are experiencing 89% of population growth which makes them the most densely populated areas in the country.

During the last few years more women have migrated, today they are as active as men. In Bishkek and Osh female migrants are engaged in informal economy, mainly in small-scale trading, low-paid jobs in service sector, and sewing business. Men usually work in small factories, in construction sector, or as craftsmen.<sup>71</sup> Internal migrants are the most hard-working citizens in Kyrgyzstan. In Bishkek Osh and Dordoi markets provides jobs for 80% of internal migrants.<sup>72</sup> In Osh there are such markets like Kelechek and Kara-Suu. Yet, among migrants there are very vulnerable groups and those who spend hours around “labor

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<sup>68</sup> UNFPA, *Natsional'nyi otchet po chelovecheskomy razvitiyu* (Bishkek: United Nations Population Fund, 2001).

<sup>69</sup> *Discrimination against internal migrants in Bishkek*, 7

<sup>70</sup> *Migratsionnye protsessy v Kyrgyzstane i ikh sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie posledstviia*, (Osh, 2009)

<sup>71</sup> *Discrimination against internal migrants in Bishkek*, 9

<sup>72</sup> Interview, Emil Nasritdinov, March 2015, Bishkek

exchange” on Lev Tolstoi Street. Since they do not have *propiska*, or even documents they tend to become victims of employers. Absence of labor contract often leads to employer’s cheating or employee’s careless work. Even though each of four districts in Bishkek have official labor exchange offices, migrants prefer to come to the “bridge” on Lev Tolstoi Street. They can earn 200 – 2000 soms<sup>73</sup> per day, whereas in jobs provided by local administration they are paid once a month which does not meet their needs. Moreover, in order to leave a job application in state offices one has to provide passport, graduation certificate or diploma, and service record.<sup>74</sup> In summer there are around 100-200 people per day, in winter season the number increases till 800-1000. 90% of them have migrated to Bishkek.<sup>75</sup> In 2007 authorities tried to open an official labor exchange but soon closed it because neither employers nor employees were willing to come.<sup>76</sup> Osh elemental labor exchange spot around railroad station is famous for criminal activities. Therefore, in 2009 the local administration has established an official one near it.<sup>77</sup> The new regional office serves rural migrants from far provinces of Osh, Jalal-Abad and even from Uzbekistan. They also provide professional trainings to jobless migrants especially in advocacy and civil rights.

However, according to Bermet Moldobaeva, the director of IOM in Kyrgyzstan, there are job opportunities in Kyrgyzstan but mostly in bigger cities. Still, there is a lack of highly qualified professionals especially in construction capable of working with new technologies.<sup>78</sup> She argued that the vocational training institutions fail to train such professionals, they have transformed in law and economic colleges. The government has cut

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<sup>73</sup> Ulan Egizbaev, *Diplomirovannyh polno, specialistov net*, Azattyk Radio, 2014  
<http://rus.azattyk.org/content/article/26736654.html> (accessed on April 13, 2015)

<sup>74</sup> *Nashe vremya* #2, Fifth Central Asian School of Contemporary Journalism of OSCE Academy in Bishkek and Deutsche Welle Akademie, 2014, 27 [http://www.osce-academy.net/upload/file/OSCE\\_NASHE\\_VREMYA\\_all.pdf](http://www.osce-academy.net/upload/file/OSCE_NASHE_VREMYA_all.pdf) (accessed on April 13, 2015)

<sup>75</sup> *Diplomirovannyh polno, specialistov net*, 2014

<sup>76</sup> *Nashe vremya* #2, 27

<sup>77</sup> *V Osh otkrylas` mejoblastnaya birzha truda*, Ferghana News, 2009  
<http://www.ferghananews.com/news.php?id=11684> (accessed on April 13, 2015)

<sup>78</sup> Bermet Moldobaeva, *Vneshnie i vnutrennie migracionnye process v Kyrgyzstane*, Round of public speeches, Centre for Social Research, American University of Central Asia Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Feb. 8, 2007

the government spending in education. Moreover, these are low paid and not prestigious occupations. Around 90% of labor demand is for workers with vocational training. In addition, a skilled person would rather migrate to foreign countries which would satisfy his/her economic and social needs. According to analysis of work of Ministry of labor, migration and youth in 2014, the highest unemployment rates are in Batken, Chui, Issyk-Kul, and in Bishkek. The lowest rate is in Osh and Talas cities.<sup>79</sup>

Local administration assists internal migrants in finding job opportunities. Mobile placement service under Bishkek municipal administration of Ministry of labor, migration and youth also assists migrants in Bishkek *novostroikas* with temporary or without any residence registration.<sup>80</sup> They cooperate with non-governmental organizations who conduct educational trainings. Together with “Zelenstroj” and “Tazalyk”, and other construction companies, and state ministries the municipal administration allocates jobless most of whom are migrants in short-term paid community works. According to the report in of Ministry of labor, migration and youth 10.702 citizens approached the Youth labor exchange including regional offices in 2014. Yet, only 5882 were placed in jobs.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, in 2014 there were only 384 citizens who received unemployment benefit, 142 of them are in Bishkek, and only Batken did not receive any benefits. It is so because according to the law on *Employment promotion*, the benefits are assigned to those who paid deductions to employment promotion fund.<sup>82</sup> It is paradoxical, how a person should pay deductions if he/she does not have a job. As expected the report did not provide any sufficient information on internal migrants.

Apart from economic reasons, migrants leave to Osh and Bishkek either due to social, political or environmental insecurity in the regions. Youth migrate to the cities to get a higher

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<sup>79</sup> *Analiticheskiy otchet o deyatelnosti Ministerstva truda, migracii i molodeji Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki za 2014 god*, 3

<sup>80</sup> *Itogi raboty PZS po Birzhe truda za 9 mesyacev*, Bishkek municipal administration of MoLMY, <http://old.btm.kg/> (accessed on April 13, 2015)

<sup>81</sup> *Analiticheskiy otchet o deyatelnosti Ministerstva truda, migracii i molodeji Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki za 2014 god*, 17

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 4

education, broaden their network, and have access to leisure and other cultural events. Most of them stay in cities after graduation. Sometimes youth is pressured by their family to support their relatives.<sup>83</sup> Access to water is a constant issue in Southern provinces which pushes rural dwellers to migrate to more favorable areas. In Batken particularly there are seasonal problems with heating and gas in winter. The prices are high, and it is difficult to buy it for low wages. Ethnic clashes in South, Batken terroristic intrusion, and popular uprisings also forced people to leave their homes. Frequent earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters also impact the decision of rural citizens to change the residence. In general, the deep rooted social and economic grievances are the main reasons of internal migrants' aspirations. Contemporary internal migration is characterized by the following tendencies: migration of rural to urban areas, migration from regional cities to bigger cities (Bishkek, Osh, Jalal-Abad), and migration from underdeveloped, unsuccessful regions to more developed regions.<sup>84</sup> This process in Kyrgyzstan being historical feature of Kyrgyz people is not new; however, today the government is trying control and decrease the rate of internal migration.<sup>85</sup> Spontaneous migration is a great burden for bigger cities; it undermines the social and economic infrastructure and leads to "ruralization" of urban regions. Moreover, it is difficult to count the real numbers of rural-urban migration. It can be estimated by the growth of container markets around Bishkek and Osh, also by the number of newcomers around elemental labor exchange spots, and by the constant construction works in new settlements around Bishkek.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *Moving towards the brink? Migration in Kyrgyzstan*, 175

<sup>84</sup> Zh. K. Belevov, *Osobennosti vnutrennei migratsii v Kyrgyzskoi Respublike*, 2011, <http://articlekz.com/article/8541> (accessed on April 14, 2015)

<sup>85</sup> *Dzh. Otorbaev otmetil o neobhodimosti sozdaniya rabochih mest dlyz molodezhi, reform v migratsii I izmeneniy v trudovom kodekse*, Kabar.kg, 2015, <http://kabar.kg/index.php/economics/full/89051> (accessed on April 14, 2015)

<sup>86</sup> Ulan Nazarov, *Nikto ne znaet istinnyh masshtabov vnutrennei migratsii v Kyrgyzstane*, OASIS, Time.kg, 2011, <http://www.time.kg/neprostoe-vremya/2433-nikto-ne-znaet-istinnyh-masshtabov-vnutrenney-migratsii-v-kyrgyzstane.html> (accessed on April 14, 2015)

## **Analysis of national migration policy**

Population registration ensures a set of public services in all areas such as health, labor, welfare, education, property ownership. The State Registration Service (SRS) was set up in 2009 to provide residence registration service by one of its respective departments.<sup>87</sup> Every citizen is obliged to inform SRS on change of his/her residence by registering in the Department for Registration of Population within 5 (at a place for temporary stay) or 10 (at a place of residence) days after arrival. The residence document includes the proof of residence which is also required for passport issuance (point 9 of Regulations on the passport of the citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic).<sup>88</sup> If such registration is missing, the Kyrgyzstani citizens unable to participate in elections (art.24.2 of Elections Code), to get married (art.26 of law on Civil status), to obtain social assistance (art.17 of law on State benefits in the Kyrgyz Republic). It becomes impossible to apply to courts (art.28 of Code of Civil Procedure), to send children to public schools although the KR law “On Education” ensures the children’s right regardless of their place of residence.<sup>89</sup>

All of the above is inconsistent with the provisions of numerous international Human Rights treaties to which the Kyrgyz Republic is signatory. Those are International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which outlaws any kind of discrimination, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which guarantees legal and social protection, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which ensures right for free and quality education.<sup>90</sup> However, there is an inconsistency between the laws on registration, the actual procedures, and regulations adopted by the local administration.<sup>91</sup> Besides the law on internal

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<sup>87</sup> *Gosudarstvennaya registratsionnaya sluzhba pri Pravitelstve Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki*, <http://grs.gov.kg/ru/about/> (accessed on April 14, 2015)

<sup>88</sup> *Assessment on the Prospects for the Establishment of a Population Register*, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2012, 12

<sup>89</sup> *The impact of the registration system on access to basic services in Kyrgyzstan*, DanChurchAid, AUCA, 2010

<sup>90</sup> *Discrimination against internal migrants in the Kyrgyz Republic*, 26

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 13

migration there are also statute “On the rules of registration and de-registration of citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic” and regulations “On temporary registration of citizens actually residing in Bishkek.” Unlike of the law and the statute, the regulations of temporary registration allow the authorities to ask for other documents “providing grounds for issuing temporary *propiska*” (art.2,6.) Lack of transparency in registration procedures and its impracticality impedes the migrants to acquire registration. Moreover, the regulations prohibit the non-registered citizens to engage in trade or other services (art.3.13) which violates the freedom for labor and occupational choice and social protection.<sup>92</sup> It is easy to predict that the number of religious marriages will grow which by-turn increases the number of unregistered children (some even do not have birth certificates) who will face major problems with social and medical state benefits. Most times corruption or “facilitation payment”<sup>93</sup> is a solution to access the state services and other rights. Still, corruption creates obstacles for internal migrants due to contradictory legislation and its willful interpretation of the authorities and law enforcement agencies. It is also the result of lack of proper information about the legal procedures and absence of knowledge of migrants’ basic rights. Migrants can obtain *propiska* for certain payment which is too high. Therefore, most migrants left with no choice but to live without registration.

### **Image of internal migration: pros and cons**

Internal migration is viewed as being a symbol of disorder due to government’s ineffectiveness to provide services to its citizens. Therefore, migrants are believed to have no value for property rights and represent a threat to rule of law in urban areas. Urbanites blame newcomers for a range of difficulties faced after independence and today.<sup>94</sup> It is interesting how the perception of state and migration has changed after independence. In early 1990s

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<sup>92</sup>Malene Sonderskov and Cristina Mansfield, *Access to Accountable Services in Kyrgyzstan*, ICCO and DanChurchAid, Context Analysis, July 2011, 9

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 10

<sup>94</sup> Moya Flynn & Natalya Kosmarskaya, *Exploring “North” and “South” in post-Soviet Bishkek: discourses and perceptions of rural-urban migration*, *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 465

urbanites were associated with the state, where the authorities being exposed to large influx of migration try to preserve the “status quo”<sup>95</sup> of the cities to maintain the order. However, today the urbanites perceive the situation differently; with the new group of residents in cities, a “new order” has emerged which threatens the status of older residents. Such perception is more relevant to Bishkek realities compared to Osh. Yet, the negative perception of migrants is based rather on the person’s origin than on his status in Bishkek.<sup>96</sup> Southern migrants are more likely to be discriminated than their Northern compatriots. Such attitude is associated with the South being integrated with Uzbeks, and therefore, Southern Kyrgyz have acquired linguistic, traditional, and behavioral traits of Uzbeks. Moreover, old residents attribute Bishkek to progress and high culture which is left from Soviet period.<sup>97</sup> According to them, rural migrants spoil the general image of Bishkek, and *novostroikas* are the visual evidence of “ruralization” of the city. Rural migrants especially newly arrived build their houses from adobe bricks which do not look neat and attractive. Urbanites and authorities refer to settlements as “adobe belt” which surrounds Bishkek and so the city “suffocates”.<sup>98</sup>

Locals envisage that Bishkek residents must have certain behavior, morals, order, and infrastructure which the rural migrants lack. Most often the *novostroikas* are portrayed as the seat of aggression and criminal world. Law enforcement agencies also concluded that due to massive arrival of migrants the city has experienced more criminal activity. One of the social workers stated that they do not know how people earn money because they do not have necessary documents to find an official job and pay taxes. Thus, they engage in informal

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<sup>95</sup> Exploring “North” and “South” in post-Soviet Bishkek: discourses and perceptions of rural-urban migration, *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 466

<sup>96</sup> Moya Flynn & Natalya Kosmarskaya, *Constructing the ‘rural other’ in postsoviet Bishkek: ‘host’ and ‘migrant’ perspectives*, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 2014,

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 357

<sup>98</sup> *Dinara Isaeva: Bishkek obros samannym poyasom*, *Vecherniy Bishkek*, online edition, 2012, [http://www.vb.kg/doc/179285\\_dinara\\_isaeva\\_bishkek\\_obros\\_samannym\\_poyasom.html](http://www.vb.kg/doc/179285_dinara_isaeva_bishkek_obros_samannym_poyasom.html) (accessed on April 15, 2015)



economy or in crimes.<sup>99</sup> People assume that new settlements in Bishkek are the most criminal districts in Bishkek because the residents are poor, illiterate, and lack high culture. One can hardly meet police there, people are afraid to visit new settlements, emergency carriages also do not arrive there. Therefore, the authorities are not fully aware of the real situation and activities are going on there. For instance, in Ala-Too settlement the witnesses reported that in one of the houses the residents have organized a madrasah (religious school) which is illegal.<sup>100</sup>

Media also intensifies the negative image of new settlements in their publications. News entitled as “A man was arrested in *novostroika* near Bishkek who beat a woman to death”<sup>101</sup>, “Five men residing in *novostroika* are arrested for beating a man to death”<sup>102</sup>, “A little girl died when falling into the well in *novostroika Ak-Ordo*”<sup>103</sup> contribute to the idea that all *novostroikas* are criminalized. There were few cases of rape, murder, infanticide in new settlements. News emphasize that such instances happen in *novostroikas* as if they are not part of Bishkek, that the delinquents are the residents of *novostroikas* not of Bishkek. Sometimes the news do not include the exact names of the settlement which creates an impression that crimes happen every day and in every each of the settlements. Besides, media and government representatives often refer to *novostroikas* as “shahid belt”<sup>104</sup> meaning that they are the source of violence and instability.<sup>105</sup> In 2011 the residents of Ak-Zhar

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<sup>99</sup> *Nikto ne znaet istinnyh masshtabov vnutrennei migratsii v Kyrgyzstane*, Time.kg

<sup>100</sup> *V zhilmassive Ala-Too organizovali medrese*, by the reader, AKIpress, 2015, <http://reporter.akipress.org/news:38133> (accessed on April 15, 2015)

<sup>101</sup> *V novostroike pod Bishkekom zaderjany muzhchina izbivshiy zhenschinu do smerti*, AKIpress, 2009, <http://svodka.akipress.org/news:20271> (accessed on April 15, 2015)

<sup>102</sup> *Zaderzhany pyatero zhitelei novostroiki izbivshie muzhchinu do smerti*, AKIpress, 2013, <http://www.svodka.akipress.org/news:131383/> (accessed on April 15, 2015)

<sup>103</sup> Elena Tsoi, *V novostroike Ak-Ordo devochka pogibla upav v kolodec s vodoi*, K-news, 2015, [http://www.knews.kg/action/63324\\_v\\_novostroyke\\_ak-or-do\\_devochka\\_pogibla\\_upav\\_v\\_kolodets\\_s\\_vodoy/](http://www.knews.kg/action/63324_v_novostroyke_ak-or-do_devochka_pogibla_upav_v_kolodets_s_vodoy/) (accessed on April 16, 2015)

<sup>104</sup> Interview, Emil Nasritdinov, March 2015, Bishkek

<sup>105</sup> Andrey Oreshkin, *Novostroiki: kogda rvanet poyas shahida?*, MSN (MCH), socio-political newspaper, 2011, <http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/35863/> (accessed on April 16, 2015)

*novostroika* blocked the road leading to Dordoi market.<sup>106</sup> Back in 2011 the settlement belonged to the Alamedin district and in 2014 it was added to Bishkek. There are around 10.000 residents and its one of the poorest settlements among other 48 *novostroikas*. There is no proper sanitation, electricity and water supply, the children do not attend schools, and the residents cannot get medical treatment because of *propiska* issue. In 2005 prior to the seizure the land was in property of MP Arslanbek Maliev who appealed to the courts to return his property, and attempted to sell the plots to the land grabbers who refused. Few thousands Ak-Zhar residents demanded to officially legalize the territory. The first meeting by Ak-Zhar residents occurred in 2010 when they asked to install electrical equipment and lay on water supply. The government had installed the electrical equipment for 9 million soms; however, residents said that this was not enough to cover the whole area.<sup>107</sup>

Moreover, there is an assumption that *novostroikas* are the “suppliers of revolutions” (*postavschiki revolyuciy* in Russian) which cause chaos and anarchy. Revolutionary movements such as “OBON”<sup>108</sup> (*Otryad Bab Osobogo Naznacheniya* in Russian) the members of which emerge among internal migrants are ready to overthrow the government at any time.<sup>109</sup> In Osh members of OBON are also active; they try to grab the land of local entrepreneurs in local market to set up their own trading spots. Entrepreneurs are constrained

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<sup>106</sup> Askar Aktalov, *Rassledovanie K-news: Komu prinadlezhit novostroika “Ak-Zhar”*, K-news, 2011, [http://www.knews.kg/action/1572\\_rassledovanie\\_K-News\\_komu\\_prinadlejit\\_novostroyka\\_ak-jar/](http://www.knews.kg/action/1572_rassledovanie_K-News_komu_prinadlejit_novostroyka_ak-jar/) (accessed on April 17, 2015)

<sup>107</sup> Iliya Karimdzhanov, *Zhiteli zhilmassiva Ak-Zhar trebuyut ot vlastei svet i vodu*, Kloop.kg, 2011, <http://kloop.kg/blog/2011/08/08/zhiteli-zhilmassiva-ak-zhar-trebuyut-ot-vlastej-vodu-i-svet/> (accessed on April 17, 2015)

<sup>108</sup> OBON (Special Purpose Women’s Detachment) - established informal groups, consisting mainly of women, and deliberately formed to achieve the objectives of specific customers (government and other political structures, business, semi-criminal elements) regularly use aggressive, violent, not legal practices. OBON does not belong to the true civil society groups, as does not represent their interests, or the interests of vulnerable groups. Report of the "Obon" like a mirror ..., Ferghana News. The main difference of OBON is illegitimate actions, that is, everything that falls under the Administrative and Criminal Codes: disorderly conduct, public disorder, threats, blackmail, some physical actions. Intimidation, seizure of buildings, blocking of roads, removal from office. (Aigul Alymkulova, director of Public Association "Women's Support Center"), <http://www.ferghananews.com/articles/7546> (accessed on April 18, 2015)

<sup>109</sup> Aibek Turgunov, *Postavschiki revolyuciy*, Informacionno-Analiticheskiy Centr, 2011, <http://ia-centr.ru/expert/11794/> (accessed on April 18, 2015)

at preventive measures because women use their status and seek the population's and the authority's sympathy to realize their aims. However, some experts believe that OBON is also about bringing justice to the marginal and vulnerable groups of the country.<sup>110</sup> Internal migrants actively participate in social and political life of the cities.<sup>111</sup> Mayor of Bishkek, Kubanychbek Kulmatov stated that internal migrants desire changes because they are constantly in the "survival mode" while the local residents are passive because they need stability. He also emphasized that the authorities need to use their energy in righteous course by providing them opportunities for development. One of the ways to do it is to legalize their status, meaning promotion of their social and political rights and do not discriminate them on the basis of absence of registration.<sup>112</sup> Yet, he did not mean the legalization of the land seizures because they belong to the municipal administration so that the lands can only be granted to them for temporary use.

Urbanites are indignant at the unreasonable demands and illegal activities of *novostroikas*' residents. Not only that they have illegally seized private and agricultural lands but they dare to request the authorities to provide them proper facilities. Thus, the city budget allocated 4 billion soms since the first settlements were established.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, Community Development and Investment Agency of the Kyrgyz Republic initiated a "Bishkek and Osh infrastructure" project to assist 37 *novostroikas* in Bishkek and 8 residential neighborhoods in Osh. The project aimed at building roads, installing electrical utilities and water supply especially in the South.<sup>114</sup> New settlements are considered to be the freeloaders (*halyavschiki* in Russian) that do not pay the taxes to the city budget, the social fund deductions, and utility

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<sup>110</sup> Interview, Elmira Satybaldieva, April 2015, Skype interview

<sup>111</sup> Leila Saralaeva, Kubanychbek Kulmatov: "Nash lozung – bezopasnost, udobstvo i uspeh", Jany Jyzdor newspaper, 2015, [http://www.gezitter.org/interviews/37753\\_kubanyichbek\\_kulmatov\\_nash\\_lozung\\_-\\_bezopasnost\\_udobstvo\\_i\\_uspeh/](http://www.gezitter.org/interviews/37753_kubanyichbek_kulmatov_nash_lozung_-_bezopasnost_udobstvo_i_uspeh/) (accessed on April 18, 2015)

<sup>112</sup> Kulmatov predlozhil legalizovat` prava zhitelei novostroek, Sputnik Kyrgyzstan, 2015, <http://ru.sputnik.kg/Kyrgyzstan/20150310/1014616020.html> (accessed on April 19, 2015)

<sup>113</sup> Kulmatov predlozhil legalizovat` prava zhitelei novostroek, Sputnik Kyrgyzstan, 2015, <http://ru.sputnik.kg/Kyrgyzstan/20150310/1014616020.html> (accessed on April 19, 2015)

<sup>114</sup> Bishkek and Osh infrastructure project, ARIS, 2008-2011, [http://www.aris.kg/en/projects\\_ev/pgibo\\_ev/](http://www.aris.kg/en/projects_ev/pgibo_ev/) (accessed on April 19, 2015)

taxes. For instance, in Ala-Too settlement there is an urgent issue of refuse collection because “Tazalyk” municipal enterprise in Bishkek refused to collect the garbage because the residents do not pay the tax and owe around 1 million soms.<sup>115</sup> In Kok-Zhar there was a major theft of electricity by the clothing manufacturer and vegetable storage.<sup>116</sup> Urban residents blame the government which does not prevent the land grabbing and bow to the wishes of criminals. In March 2015 the Department of individual housing construction of Bishkek’s Mayor’s office revealed 6382 illegal houses including in *novostroikas*.<sup>117</sup> The construction works run every day because there is always something to change and improve, yet the Department is also doing its work. In 2014 120 buildings were demolished, 790 orders were issued, since January 2015 there were 39 demolished constructions.<sup>118</sup> After “Tulip Revolution” in 2010 local residents organized volunteer public order squads (*druzhiny* in Russian) to maintain order and to prevent lootings and land grabbing.<sup>119</sup> “Patrioty” and “Sakchy” squads assisted in preventing land seizures in Maevka events in 2010, in Karagachevaya grove. The government and law enforcements agencies are not capable to stop the furious squatters, therefore, ordinary people can be much helpful.<sup>120</sup> This creates a legal precedent and moral lesson for the land squatters but also increases the discontent of internal migrants who believe that they are realizing their constitutional rights for life of dignity.

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<sup>115</sup>Kaliya Duishebaeva, *V nekotorykh zhilmassivakh goroda musor ne vyvozyat mesyacam*, KirTag, 2014, [http://kyrtag.kg/news/v\\_nekotorykh\\_zhilmassivakh\\_goroda\\_musor\\_ne\\_vyvozyat\\_mesyatsami/](http://kyrtag.kg/news/v_nekotorykh_zhilmassivakh_goroda_musor_ne_vyvozyat_mesyatsami/) (accessed on April 20, 2015)

<sup>116</sup>Zinaida Sorokina, *Krupnoe hischenie elektroenergii obnaruzhili v zhilmassive Kok-Zhar*, Vecherniy Bishkek, 2013, [http://www.vb.kg/doc/229343\\_krupnoe\\_hishenie\\_elektroenergii\\_obnaryjili\\_v\\_jilmassive\\_kok\\_jar.html](http://www.vb.kg/doc/229343_krupnoe_hishenie_elektroenergii_obnaryjili_v_jilmassive_kok_jar.html) (accessed on April 20, 2015)

<sup>117</sup>Zinaida Sorokina, *V Bishkek tysyachi samovolnykh stroeniy podlezhat snosu*, Vecherniy Bishkek, 2015, [http://www.vb.kg/doc/306713\\_meriia\\_v\\_bishkeke\\_tysyachi\\_samovolnykh\\_stroeniy\\_podlejat\\_snosy.html](http://www.vb.kg/doc/306713_meriia_v_bishkeke_tysyachi_samovolnykh_stroeniy_podlejat_snosy.html) (accessed on April 20, 2015)

<sup>118</sup>*S nachala goda v Bishkeke snesli 39 ob`ektov nezakonnogo stroitel`stva*, Kabarlar, 2015, <http://kabarlar.org/44660-s-nachala-goda-v-bishkeke-snesli-39-obektov-nezakonnogo-stroitelstva.html> (accessed on April 21, 2015)

<sup>119</sup>*Narodnoe opolchenie Kirgizii vnov formiruet druzhiny dlya zaschity stolicy*, Thenews.kz, 2010, <http://thenews.kz/2010/04/19/329165.html> (accessed on April 21, 2015)

<sup>120</sup>Zinaida Sorokina, *Zemlya kak detonator bezzakoniya*, Vecherniy Bishkek, 2012, [http://rus.kg/news\\_rus/obshetvo\\_rus/6519-zinaida-sorokina-zemlya-kak-detonator-bezzakoniya.html](http://rus.kg/news_rus/obshetvo_rus/6519-zinaida-sorokina-zemlya-kak-detonator-bezzakoniya.html) (accessed on April 21, 2015)

## Picture in Bishkek and Osh

The specificity of internal migration in Kyrgyzstan lies in its massive dimension, repetitive character, waves of land seizures and growth of new settlements.<sup>121</sup> According to Maamatkul Aidaraliev, director of Arysh<sup>122</sup> and Emil Nasritdinov<sup>123</sup>, each case of land acquisition by rural migrants is different and should not be generalized. They have not gotten it for free but paid for the ownership, yet, the framework in which they have acted is illegal. Experts say that the first *novostroika* Kok-Zhar is the one that was indeed seized in 1989.<sup>124</sup> Some people had titles to the land but they did not obtain planning permit and licenses from Department of individual housing construction of Bishkek's Mayor's office. Others were deceived by the corrupted officials who provided them false documents on territories which are prohibited to live. There are both legal and illegal settlements, and some legal settlements have illegal areas; for instance, somewhere in Ala-Too residential community there is a burial of anthrax which dates back to Soviet regime.<sup>125</sup> According to sanitary norms, it is prohibited to build anything at 500 kilometers away from the burial; however, there are many houses around it and the authorities are not able to remove them and provide any alternative housing to the residents. Altyn-Kazyk (Adilet) settlement cannot be legalized because it is built near the city dump. There is a gas pipeline under Ak-Zhar settlement which represents a threat to the residents and the officials do not want to be responsible for any accidents if they legalize it. TEC-2 is also illegal because it is on the territory of fuel-burning power plant. The main problem in *novostroikas* is the absence of free space for the construction of social objects like

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<sup>121</sup> *Exploring "North" and "South" in post-Soviet Bishkek: discourses and perceptions of rural-urban migration*, 2012, 463

<sup>122</sup> Interview, Maamatkul Aidaraliev, March 2015, Bishkek

<sup>123</sup> Interview, Emil Nasritdinov, March 2015, Bishkek

<sup>124</sup> Emil Nasritdinov, Bermet Zhumakadyr kyzy and Diana Asanalieva, *Myths and Realities of Bishkek's Novostroikas*, 2014, 9

<sup>125</sup> Elvira Temir, *Bishkek pod ugrozoi zarazheniya sibirskoi yazvoi*, 2013, Vecherniy Bishkek, [http://www.vb.kg/doc/222261\\_bishkek\\_pod\\_ugrozoy\\_zarajeniia\\_sibirskoy\\_jazvoy.html](http://www.vb.kg/doc/222261_bishkek_pod_ugrozoy_zarajeniia_sibirskoy_jazvoy.html) (accessed on April 22, 2015)

educational and medical institutions.<sup>126</sup> It negatively contributes to the gene pool of the country.<sup>127</sup> Children are usually left alone, parents are at work, and there are no schools or kindergartens nearby. Youngsters often work to help their families and grow up into adults with no education, poor health, psychological and moral complexes. It is common that parents have to bribe the school administration and children travel far to the city schools or in neighboring *novostroikas*. Further it creates a problem of overcrowded classrooms and hospitals and the growth of corruption. The same pattern is observed in Osh.

Yet, non-governmental organizations both in Osh and Bishkek are assisting internal migrants to acquire legal status and improve the infrastructure. With the help of NGOs like Osh Advocacy Center and “Arysh” rural migrants organize self-help groups (*gruppy samopomowi* in Russian) which mobilize own financial resources and allocate them on certain projects. Thus, in 13 years “Arysh” assisted in creating 109 groups in 19 *novostroikas*<sup>128</sup>. Precisely, they have taught 1 203 families to seek for resources, lobby their interests by initiating strategic development documents to address their interests to state agencies. Self-help groups were successful in improving the infrastructure, legalizing their property rights in Archa-Beshik settlement, and initiating strategy for the development of Ak-Zhar and Adilet settlements, the poorest *novostroikas*. As a result, 36.5 million soms from state budget were appropriated to the project. Recently, residents of Zhenish and Ak-Bosogo *novostroikas* initiated their own development strategy which was discussed among district administration, rural migrants, and municipal administration.<sup>129</sup> In documents they list their primary issues, the solutions to them, the capacity of *novostroikas* themselves and the assistance which they need from the authorities and donors. *Novostroikas*’ residents have a

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<sup>126</sup> Interview, Emil Nasritdinov, March 2015, Bishkek

<sup>127</sup> Interview, Ulan Bekmuratov, March 2015, Osh

<sup>128</sup> PA “Arysh”, *Pomosch` NPO vopreki...*, 2014, [http://kgcode.akipress.org/unews/un\\_post:2292](http://kgcode.akipress.org/unews/un_post:2292) (accessed on April 22, 2015)

<sup>129</sup> *Zhiteli zhilmassivov Zhenish i Ak-Bosogo prinyali strategii razvitiya svoih novostroek*, Arysh.kg, 2015, <http://aryshkg.kloop.kg/2015/02/17/zhiteli-zhilmassivov-zhenish-i-ak-bosogo-prinyali-strategii-razvitiya-svoih-novostroek/> (accessed on April 22, 2015)

significant capacity to contribute to the implementation of the project; there are educated residents who can teach, there are Ashar groups (assistance in Kyrgyz) who can build, and unity and a strong will to improve their lives. “Arysh” also involve the migrants in social and political activities. With their assistance 568 children participated in educational trainings, numerous social and sport activities are organized, 1.895 residents were trained as observers in divisional election committees who oversaw parliamentary, presidential, and local elections in 220 polling stations in Bishkek. 6000 residents of Ak-Zhar, and 7000 residents of Altyn-Kazyk, Ak-Bata, and Adilet included themselves in 2015 elections.<sup>130</sup> In Osh Advocacy Center has trained 11 self-help groups which include 80 activists from the representatives of rural migrants. They learn to legally lobby their interests, to practice their rights, and to avoid the unlawful participation in violent meetings and land seizures.<sup>131</sup> The government also did not completely turn its back on internal migrants. Ministry of health assisted in building first-aid obstetric stations<sup>132</sup> in *novostroikas* so that residents do not travel far to get medical treatment. In Osh the state clinics have started to see the rural patients as well. Therefore, it is wrong to conclude that only rural migrants are uneducated, violent, uncivilized freeloaders who instigate revolutions. In fact, most *novostroikas* grew in number and size after revolutions in 2005 and 2010.

In 2014 “Arysh” and “Adilet” legal clinic together with the DCA Central Asia and European Union in Kyrgyzstan have started the project on “Simplifying civil registration, securing human rights” aimed at cooperating with the government on *propiska* provisions, development of simplified registration mechanisms, and identifying “invisible” citizens to

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<sup>130</sup> *Pomosch` NPO vopreki...*, [http://kgcode.akipress.org/unews/un\\_post:2292](http://kgcode.akipress.org/unews/un_post:2292)

<sup>131</sup> Interview, Ulan Bekmuratov, March 2015, Osh

<sup>132</sup> *V Bishkeke otkrylsya novyi fel`dshersko-akusherskiy punkt*, Kabar, <http://www.kabar.kg/health/full/14300>, 2010 (accessed on April 23, 2015)

ensure their participation in decision-making process and elections.<sup>133</sup> Single registration will allow effective allocation and mobilization of resources for the state budget on development of the urban and rural areas.<sup>134</sup> Rural areas are abandoned but the state is still assigning finances for the non-existing residents which go to the pockets of officials, whereas the cities lack the funds for the overcrowded settlements, schools, and hospitals. Moreover, the urbanites and officials often complain that the rural migrants do not pay taxes but only ask for money, this is because they are either invisible, or without registration, which means that they cannot be legally employed in cities and are not able to pay taxes. The officials argue that the project initiators are imposing alien western values to Kyrgyz society; however, the state just does not have capacity to understand the project details and implement them.<sup>135</sup> “Arysh” and “Adilet” have introduced a pilot project on simplifying the registration system. Since State Registration Service is failing to provide service to internal migrants, and municipal service are unaware of the real number of city residents the project will oblige the local territorial administration (*mestnye territorialnye upravleniye*) to keep records of newcomers while providing them with tickets (B-tickets for Bishkek, and O-tickets in Osh) for temporary residence which ensures their civil and political rights. It will become easier to send kids to schools, get a medical treatment, and find a job. The records will be then sent to the Mayor’s Office and further to State Registration Service.<sup>136</sup> This will systemize the registration procedures and ensure the rights of internal migrants.

On the other hand, some MPs are trying to use the situation in their own benefit in the run-up to the 2015 parliamentary elections. MPs from Ata-Meken party proposed a bill on

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<sup>133</sup> *EU will support new project in Kyrgyzstan: "Simplifying civil registration, securing human rights*, EEAS, 2014, [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kyrgyzstan/press\\_corner/all\\_news/news/2014/news03042014\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kyrgyzstan/press_corner/all_news/news/2014/news03042014_en.htm) (accessed on April 23, 2015)

<sup>134</sup> Cholpon Dzhakupova, director of “Adilet”, *Parlamentskie vybory – tolchok dlya reseniya problemy s registrom naseleniya*, K-news, 2014, [http://www.knews.kg/columnist/50388\\_parlamentskie\\_vyboryi\\_-\\_tolchok\\_dlya\\_resheniya\\_problemy\\_s\\_registrom\\_naseleniya/](http://www.knews.kg/columnist/50388_parlamentskie_vyboryi_-_tolchok_dlya_resheniya_problemy_s_registrom_naseleniya/) (accessed on April 23, 2015)

<sup>135</sup> Interview, Abdiraim Jorokulov, March 2015, Osh

<sup>136</sup> *Vnutrennih migrantov budut uchityvat` s pomosh`yu bi-talonov*, Sputnik, 2015, <http://ru.sputnik.kg/migration/20150304/1014566694.html> (accessed on April 30, 2015)



“On the legalization of land with illegally built private houses erected before August 3, 2012” which would legalize 3 589 buildings out of 6 382 in 47 settlements, including 1000 plots in Osh.<sup>137</sup> Land squatters were justified because they were deceived by the corrupt officials and due their inability to buy a property in Bishkek and Osh. In April Tekebaev’s bill was rejected in Zhogorku Kenesh.<sup>138</sup> MPs claimed that if they legalize those plots others will come with the same appeals. Still, the head of Department of individual housing construction Bolotbekov they cannot legalize plots which are under special buffer zones. Yet, some experts believe that rural migrants have “moral rights” for property ownership due to their economic and social hardships because “property ownership is based on reasonableness and propriety”, therefore, the state must fulfill its “moral responsibility” before them.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, according to Elmira Satybaldieva internal migrants represent a great political force which pushes for changes in society.<sup>140</sup> Despite their negative perception some scholars believe that internal migrants are a vibrant growing middle class consisting of educated and high-skilled professionals.<sup>141</sup> They possess a great economic and political potential which can contribute to the development of Osh and Bishkek.<sup>142</sup>

Although rural-to-urban migration is economically profitable for the families both who migrate and stay back at home, after 2010 the process has been “ethnicized”. In 2010 in both cities there were attempts to seize the lands which mostly belonged to ethnic minorities. In August around 1000 people gathered around suburban Ishkevan in Osh each protecting the

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<sup>137</sup> Askat Turusbekov, *Samozakhvatchiki. Vse zakonnyim putem?* Azattyk radio, 2015, <http://rus.azattyk.mobi/a/26857948.html> (accessed on April 24, 2015)

<sup>138</sup> Elvira Temir, *Deputaty otklonili ocherednyuyu iniciativu Tekebaeva v pol`zu samozakhvatchikov*, Vecherniy Bishkek, 2015, [http://www.vb.kg/doc/308780\\_depytaty\\_otklonili\\_ocherednyuyu\\_iniciativy\\_tekebaeva\\_v\\_polzy\\_samozakhvatchikov\\_v.html](http://www.vb.kg/doc/308780_depytaty_otklonili_ocherednyuyu_iniciativy_tekebaeva_v_polzy_samozakhvatchikov_v.html) (accessed on April 24, 2015)

<sup>139</sup> Balihar Sanghera and Elmira Satybaldieva *Ethics of property, illegal settlements and the right to subsistence*, International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, 2011, [http://www.academia.edu/532814/Ethics\\_of\\_Property\\_Illegal\\_Settlements\\_and\\_the\\_Right\\_to\\_Subsistence](http://www.academia.edu/532814/Ethics_of_Property_Illegal_Settlements_and_the_Right_to_Subsistence)

<sup>140</sup> Interview, Elmira Satybaldieva, April 2015, Skype interview

<sup>141</sup> *Moving towards the brink? Internal migration in the Kyrgyz Republic*, 185

<sup>142</sup> Interview, Emil Nasritdinov, March 2015, Bishkek

land plot.<sup>143</sup> The agricultural land belonged to the Uzbek minority group since the Soviet period. Furthermore, Uzbek migrants occupy southern cities still they also have been migrating to the North after ethnic conflicts. This has caused a mono-ethnicization in the country with predominantly Kyrgyz, but also Uzbeks and Tajiks.<sup>144</sup> This process has encouraged the ethnic intolerance and struggle over the same resources. Experts also highlight the clear link between internal migration and June events in 2010.

“Ethno-squatting” of lands which belonged to Meskhetian Turks occurred in Leninskiy and Maevka villages in Bishkek in April.<sup>145</sup> The ethnic character of internal migration can be observed in Ak-Sai village of Batken which is experiencing a “creeping migration”<sup>146</sup> from Tajikistan. Vacant lands and empty houses are actively occupied by Tajiks who are forced to Batken due to overpopulation of Vorrukh enclave. Ak-Sai has a population of 2.000 people while Vorrukh has 30.000 residents and Chorkukh has 35.000.<sup>147</sup> Batken residents want to travel to abroad or to Bishkek to earn for living and by illegally selling their lands and houses to Tajiks they obtain finances to implement their plans. There is a constant supply and demand for land in Batken region despite the illegality of the activity. Ethnic tensions often turn into violent clashes, blocking the roads which stop the transportation to Tajikistan. The two governments are reluctant to accomplish the demarcation process. Economic factor of internal migration has also acquired an ethnic tone which spill over to ethnic tensions.

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<sup>143</sup> *V Oshe predotvraschen samovol'nyi zakhvat zemli*, Azattyk radio, 2011, [http://rus.azattyk.org/content/Kyrgyzstan\\_meeting\\_Osh/3400724.html](http://rus.azattyk.org/content/Kyrgyzstan_meeting_Osh/3400724.html) (accessed on April 24, 2015)

<sup>144</sup> *Moving towards the brink? Internal migration in the Kyrgyz Republic*, 174

<sup>145</sup> Dil'begim Mavloni, *Bakiev ob `yavilsya v Belarusii, poka v Kyrgyzstane jgli doma i otbirali zemlyu*, Azattyk radio, 2010, [http://rus.azattyq.mobi/a/kyrgyzstan\\_maevka\\_massing/2019213.html](http://rus.azattyq.mobi/a/kyrgyzstan_maevka_massing/2019213.html) (accessed on April 24, 2015)

<sup>146</sup> *Moving towards the brink? Internal migration in the Kyrgyz Republic*, 193

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, 194

## Conclusion

It is obvious that internal migration had negative impact on demographic situation in peripheries, reproductive rates, and created big gender and age imbalances.<sup>148</sup> Rural areas are losing their labor force which impedes the economic development of these areas. Consequently, internal migration has negative implications on socio-political stability in Kyrgyzstan. First and foremost, it is because the migration is stipulated by segregation on legislation level of rural migrants. Migrants are trapped by *propiska* policy which impedes their potential for development. Feeling excluded they often go on strikes to address their issues to the authorities. According to the urban instability and relative deprivation theory after arriving to the cities the rural dwellers realize their marginal role in society.<sup>149</sup> Thus, newcomers feel growing relative deprivation so that their inclination to being heard with the help of political opposition rises. According to Kyrgyzstani activists political rallies are the fastest and most effective ways to address the social problems of citizens. Around 70% of rallies aim at resolving the social issues of society.<sup>150</sup> However, it is wrong to say that all political meetings are paid and organized solely by political elites for their interest. However, the general population does not believe in their conscientious purpose after witnessing popular lootings, murders, and disturbances in 2005 and 2010 upheavals.<sup>151</sup> There were instances when people from labor exchange on Lev Tolstoi Street claimed to participate in the meeting of National opposition movement for 500 soms.<sup>152</sup> Dordoi workers were also

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<sup>148</sup> *Moving Toward the Brink? Migration in the Kyrgyz Republic*, 176

<sup>149</sup> Peter Gizewski and Thomas Homer-Dixon, *Urban Growth and Violence: Will the Future Resemble the Past?* part 2, Hypotheses and Evidence on the Links Between Urban Growth and Violence, <http://www.homerdixon.com/projects/eps/urban/urban2.htm> (accessed on April 25, 2015)

<sup>150</sup> Anna Kapushenko and Aidai Algozhoeva, *Mitingi v Kyrgyzstane*, Institute for Public Policy, <http://ipp.kg/ru/print/2745/> (accessed on April 25, 2015)

<sup>151</sup> Ibid

<sup>152</sup> Marat Uraliev, *Lyudi s birzhy truda prishli na miting iz-za 500 somov*, Vecherniy Bishkek online edition, 2014, [http://www.vb.kg/doc/268814\\_bezrabortnyy\\_rasskazal\\_o\\_predlojennyh\\_500\\_somah\\_za\\_ychastie\\_v\\_mitinge.htm](http://www.vb.kg/doc/268814_bezrabortnyy_rasskazal_o_predlojennyh_500_somah_za_ychastie_v_mitinge.htm) 1 (accessed on April 26, 2015)

called to participate in meeting.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, political elites also exploit the grievances of internal migrants in their campaigns to gain votes for their electorate.

Besides, internal migrants use illegal practice of land seizure to ensure their constitutional right for land plot and life of dignity. After popular political upheavals the process has turned into “ethno-squatting” of plots which undermines the fragile interethnic relations in the country and in borderlands. As stated by some experts the migration and land questions are much politicized in Kyrgyzstan. Locals especially believe that migrants are not the engine of changes in society but rather the instruments of political elite who strive to gain power. Moreover, the urban environment allows intense communication with political groups which also contributes to fast and effective mobilization of masses.<sup>154</sup> Yet, violent strikes and land seizures symbolize the face of the ruling elites in the government who resort to the same methods. However, it is obvious that the popular uprisings would not have happened without the gradual growth of grievances of rural population.<sup>155</sup>

In addition, due to endless arrival of rural dwellers to the cities the local authorities and the national government have to solve multiple tasks given a limited capacity. Urbanites feel that internal migrants have increased the social and economic pressure in cities and most often two social groups struggle for the same resources. Such dilemma does not burst out into open conflicts but represents a potential for further escalation. Especially young migrants feeling the economic and social inequality and opportunities provided to the local youth create potential for social conflicts.<sup>156</sup> Besides, police and government representatives are unaware about the real lives of *novostroikas*’ residents. The issue of radicalization is a

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<sup>153</sup> *Predprinimatelei “Dordoya” prizyvali na miting za 500-1000 somov*, “Aibat newspaper”, 2014, [http://ns1.gezitter.com/society/29136\\_predprinimateley\\_dordoya\\_prizyvali\\_na\\_miting\\_za\\_5001000\\_somov/](http://ns1.gezitter.com/society/29136_predprinimateley_dordoya_prizyvali_na_miting_za_5001000_somov/) (accessed on April 26, 2015)

<sup>154</sup> *Urban Growth and Violence: Will the Future Resemble the Past?*, <http://www.homerdixon.com/projects/eps/urban/urban2.htm> (accessed on April 26, 2015)

<sup>155</sup> Interview, Elmira Satybaldieva, April 2015, Skype interview

<sup>156</sup> Anar Musabaeva, *Kyrgyz politicians take advantage of activism of the young*, Institute for Public Policy, 2011, <http://ipp.kg/en/news/2111/> (accessed on April 27, 2015)

burning issue in Kyrgyzstan, and mostly young rural people fall the victims to recruitment of radical religious movements. It is to say that internal migrants' invisibility to the authorities is a bomb of a delayed action which may erupt at any time.

Yet, the situation is not that straightforward. Internal migrants are a socially dynamic group which initiate development projects and collaborate with non-governmental organizations and domestic government on their implementation. What is more, they are economically much active because they are the most hard-working people. Rural migrants are politically active because they desire to improve their well-being. NGOs and authorities work with migrants to raise their awareness about their rights and obligations and assist them in legalizing their civil and property ownership rights. Moreover, both in Osh and Bishkek migrants organize self-help groups to mobilize resources on development of infrastructure.

Unfortunately, the perception of internal migrants remains negative despite their hardships and attempts to resolve them. Media and urbanites portray rural migrants as uneducated and violent criminals. The land seizures and protests have contributed to this image. The background of rural migrants is also a basis for social discrimination which creates a big cleavage in Kyrgyzstani society. Hence, unaware of newcomers' lives and concerns the urbanites and media portray them in a negative manner. The government itself creates such situation with introduction of discriminatory domestic migration policy and procedures which put internal migrants at bay. Policies deprive their moral right for development which further spills over into political and social instability.

However, policy amendments ease the tensions and prevent the violence. Moreover, with the development of *novostroikas* and legalization of their civil rights the migrants have significantly improved their status. Today they contribute to the economic well-being of their rural compatriots and to the more or less stable urbanization of cities. Therefore, the inclusion

of such a great potential political and economic engine into the lives of the cities will facilitate their integration and contribute to the development of Bishkek and Osh.

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