Ethnographies of Belonging and the Future in Kyrgyzstan Introduction to themed section of AEER

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Abstract: Until the end of the 1980s, the vision of the now for the Kyrgyz pastoralists was elaborated in the framework of an omnipresent state. The running of herds over mountain pastures was organized by state entities (kolkhozes and sovkhozes) and the great majority of animals were effectively state-owned. The state system maintained roads and vehicles for livestock transport, the provision of veterinary services, and the marketing of wool and meat, as well as the provision for the other needs of Kyrgyz pastoralists' livelihoods. Today, the pastoral landscape is scattered with the ruins of large livestock shelters, the doors and roofs of which have been pilfered for the needs of a much more small-scale, privately organized economy. As ownership of livestock and machinery passed to private hands in the mid-1990s, there was initially a catastrophic collapse of livestock herding as a basis of livelihood for most herders. As communities sought to reconstruct their future in the absence of the reliable state, their sense of belonging shifted from state entities to traditional concepts of relatedness remembered from their primordial past. Yet while the initial privatization was organized on the premise that collectivities based on extended kinship would replace the state organization, this proved unworkable in many ways. Such collectivities then fragmented and livelihoods became organized around families in the narrower sense. Thus, in a twenty year period, Kyrgyz herders have shifted from relying on the state organization of their lives, to an unstable primordial kinship, and now to a new set of orienting principles which hinge on complex assessments of what can assure the future. In this paper, based on fieldwork in Narïn Province, we will examine how these transformations have taken place in pastoral livelihoods, as well as the challenges that have emerged in this environment of rapidly changing belonging in relation to livelihoods, kinship and the state.

A sense of belonging is commonly thought of as being forged from common historical experiences and enduring kinds of closeness in the present. What this description misses is the way in which claims to - and feelings of - belonging are also oriented towards a future. The lack of future, as Pierre Bourdieu has noted, is perhaps the most painful of wants. (Bourdieu 2000: 221) If the desirable future seems blurred, if there is no sense of purpose in life, no imaginable path towards an achievable future, then action itself loses its meaning. We argue that people's sense of belongings and desirable futures are mutually constitutive. This relationship has largely been neglected in the social sciences in favor of studying belonging in relation to the past. The ethnographies in this collection; however, demonstrate that people actively operate on their sense of fragility and fixity, opportunity and insecurity to make livable futures and co-existences. In this special issue, Féaux de la Croix describes, for example, how a Kyrgyz dam worker chose to educate his children entirely in Russian in the late Soviet era. We focus on ideas of belonging in conjunction with imaginations of - and attempts to build - desirable futures in Kyrgyzstan. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, which offered not only pragmatic guarantees of future welfare, but also a vision of utopia to work towards, Kyrgyzstani citizens were forced to recast their pasts and futures. What are the practical and conceptual tools through which a livable future is articulated and worked upon? Since the upsurge in inter-ethnic violence in 2010, what changes in such orientations can be traced? And how can we explore, ethnographically, the ways in which imaginations of the

future have practical effects in the here and now, informing everyday practice and shaping boundaries of belonging?[1]

Kaleidoscopic ethnographies of Kyrgyzstan: notes on radical, normalized uncertainty

Like other countries of the former Soviet Union, in the 1990s Kyrgyzstan entered what was presumed to be a period of 'transition' that offered a new grand vision of the future, characterized by democracy and a liberal market economy. Anthropologists have long criticized the concept of 'transition' for its empirical failings and dubious teleological assumptions. (Verdery 1996, Hann 2001, Humphrey 2002) They have shown, for example, that a great number of people have experienced the post-socialist period not so much as a trajectory towards a goal, but rather as a loss of economic, social and existential security. (Howell 1996, Yurchak 2006) The widespread upsurge in 'identity politics,' (Dave 2010) the blossoming of interest in writing new and uncovering old histories as well as religions is often explained as satisfying the need for other forms of belonging and hope, to fill the ideological vacuum after the demise of the promise of Communism. Comparatively less explored than these losses and the consequent rediscovery of alternative pasts and religious affiliations, are the ways in which people orient themselves toward future scenarios. These are perhaps less grandiose than the futures of transitology, but no less important in creating feelings of belonging and a meaningful existence. Together, such commitments to certain futures and belongings provide life-sustaining ties of entitlement and inter-dependency. These orientations include and go beyond daily coping mechanisms in what is widely felt as a period of disorder and crisis. As the contributions by Féaux de la Croix, Isakov and Schoeberlein make clear, late Soviet concepts and ways of life - as other or older ways of life - are very present in providing the 'status quo' from which these new ideas and practices take their departure. Although the sensibilities we trace in this collection are related to Soviet life-worlds, they are often also far removed from these. For example, in Sierra Leone the civil war seems to have created enduring sense of crisis. Vigh argues that such a drawn-out sense of crisis, both radical and normalized, elicits quite different concepts of agency and orientations towards the future than more 'stable' environments and moments. (2008:6) Vigh's description seems also broadly true of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan: '...*the normalisation of crisis leads to an acute awareness of social movement and change as well as the imagining of lives elsewhere.*'(2008:15-16) Such tendencies have elsewhere been linked to the growth of mass media and mass migration, factors certainly weighing heavily in contemporary Central Asia. (Appadurai 1996, Bauman 2000)

This special issue adopts the rather unusual strategy of examining a phenomenon and question of global theoretical importance by homing in on a relatively small society of five million people rather than discussing a geographically wide range of case studies. By bringing together ethnographies from one particular country our intention is certainly not to reify the nation-state or to suggest some Kyrgyzstani 'exceptionalism'. Future imaginaries and expressions of belonging are, after all, rarely bound by the nation-state. Our aim, rather, is to point to some of the diversity of expressions of futurity and belonging that coexist in a region that tends, still, to be treated as a rather undifferentiated 'Central Asia' or 'post-Soviet condition' in the scholarly literature.

As Reeves sets out in her article, Kyrgyzstan has over the past twenty years developed an extremely active culture of political contestation on the streets, quite unlike the more authoritarian Central Asian states surrounding it. These political struggles succeeded in toppling two successive governments in 2005 and 2010, and continue to dog virtually every government move. Many Kyrgyzstanis are often uncertain whether their country will even exist a few months down the line. We argue that the condition of crisis shaped by economic

restructuring and political struggle, which Kyrgyzstanis have been accustomed to over the last two decades, is a kind of extreme case of the sense of crisis that pervades many early 21st century societies. Economic collapse, perceived moral disorientation, rapidly accelerating inequality, widespread unemployment, environmental destruction and subsequent spontaneous and organized street uprisings led by young men are features lately shared with southern countries in the Euro-zone as well as the Middle East and North Africa. (Shore 2012, Vradis and Dalakoglou 2011, Winegar 2012) The Kyrgyzstani case is then not a parochial or exceptional case, but rather illuminates people's responses -using the ideational, social and material resources available - to emerging patterns on a global scale.

This comparison in fact mirrors the analytic moves many of our informants make, continually comparing their life situation to (usually better) *elsewheres*: Kazakhstan, New York, Moscow in the 1980s. We find paying attention to such interplays of projections past and future, relating experience, and narratives of future and past crucial to the life-projects of our informants. We argue that focusing on Kyrgyzstani trajectories highlights interrelations of notions of future and belonging that can only clearly emerge by examining different aspects of people's lives who roughly share a political and social context. By focusing closely on just one such context and by foregrounding the diversity of our informants' imaginaries, we seek precisely to question singular accounts of the future. Acting as a kind of kaleidoscope, this collection allows us to highlight the multiplicity of futures and belongings invoked. Our strategy will allow readers to relate Kyrgyzstani life-experiences and aspects such as resource ownership, discursive constructions of political community and kinship bonds to each other: we hope that such juxtapositions allow further questions to emerge What becomes clear through this strategy is that, people often deploy several different frameworks of belonging and futures at once.[2] Since both 'belonging' and the future (or futures) present rather thorny theoretical fields, with a tangled set of related concepts and approaches surrounding them, we will sketch out our analytical path through these below.

Ethnographies of the Future Tense

Although time-keeping, history- and memory-making have long been central concerns for anthropology and sister disciplines such as history, they are rarely related explicitly to the possibilities, the future(s) and present(s) these understandings make possible – or obstruct.[3] In other words, we highlight that it is not only the relation to the past that is politically charged, but equally, the sense of future(s). We employ the term 'temporality' as a useful way of describing the kind of relationships people create between past, present and future. (Ox and Gingrich 2002: S3)

Interestingly, the anthropology of the post-Soviet region (itself an awkward, temporally-anchored label) has offered some explanations of current attitudes and behavioral patterns as stemming from a particular view of history. (Pedersen and Højer 2009, Oushakine 2009) This literature has however largely emphasized the disablements that a particular view of history seems to have produced. Key terms here have been loss and 'being lost' in the face of '*everything that was forever is no more*,' (Yurchak 2006) nostalgia for Soviet times amid a sense of chaos. (Boym 2002, Nazpary 2002, Wanner 1998)[4] Our collection seeks to go beyond taking the 'Soviet' as the only, undifferentiated historical reference point that needs to be understood, to the multiplicity of pasts and futures that people juggle. While not ignoring which avenues particular narratives and images of past, future or belonging may close down, and who might be excluded from ideas of the future or from belonging in the present (cf. contributions here by Féaux, Ismailbekova and Reeves), we also hope to highlight what avenues of action and empowerment this jugglings open. We attempt to show how people handle different horizons of expectation, (Koselleck 1989: 112) from different

weightings of 'grand schemes' such as apocalyptic or utopian visions, this- or other-worldly success, or simply attempting to secure a meal in the evening. In some cases, there is a sense that decisions and life-changing actions are only possible at certain historical or life points, for example in the revolutionary moments described by Reeves (this issue, see also Humphrey 2007: 146-7) and we have to deal with the difference between expectations of the inevitable, and of judgments of possibility. (Graw and Schielke 2012:8) This includes different degrees of certainty, and different degrees of hope that people have about what has happened and what will come to pass.

Anthropologists have become quite comfortable writing of historicity, senses of the past and memory. But relations to the future seem to throw up many more methodological questions. (Harding and Rosenberg 2005) This is a result of our own scientific conception of linear time: the past seems knowable at least through traces, experience, or representations. But how to investigate the future, or people's notions of the future, if the past and future are ontologically different beasts? The growing anthropological literature on futurity continues to feel fairly raw and piecemeal, circling around somewhat ephemeral concepts such as imagination and prediction, hope and trust, fear and risk.[5] Pelkmans (2013:3) pays attention to the cycles of hope, belief, doubt and disillusionment by claiming that are intrinsic to the human condition. An early contributor to anthropology of futurity is the literature on oracles and prediction, (Evans-Pritchard 1940, an interest continued for example in Swancutt 2012) while recently the study of fore-casting has been extended to the notion of planning. (Abram & Weszkalnys 2011, Scott 1998)

Recent literature on multiple, or alternative notions of future than those associated with progress have recently concentrated on religious sensibilities in relation to macro-economic processes. (Coleman 2011, Comaroff and Comaroff 2000, Guyer 2007) Such sensibilities also play an important role in the Kyrgyzstani context under the growing influence of Islamic and other religious movements from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan, India, and Iran, which its adherents describe as a 'renaissance', its critics as an invasion of foreign influence. (Ismailbekova and Nasridinov, 2012; Balci, 2012; Louw 2010, Mostowlansky 2010) Since the beginning of the 1990s, Central Asia has been the area where the Fethullah Gülen and Tablighi Jamaat movements have been actively focusing their strategies of development as transnational networks. This was done through missionary schools, media, and economic life. (Balci, 2003, 2012) Talking about the role of missionary movements, Ismailbekova and Nasridinov (2012) argue that Kyrgyz tablighi members are not just as passive recipients of outside influence from Pakistan, but they are also very dedicated transnational actors themselves who actively engage in cross-border exchange of religious ideas and networking practices in other part of Central Asian countries as well as in Russia. There are not only Islamic influences, but also Kyrgyzstan is opening its doors to a large number of new Evangelical Christian organizations. (Borbieva, 2007; Pelkmans, 2006) This shift in faith and spirituality of Kyrgyz is linked to how people identify themselves, and the sense of change with time.

The ethnographies presented here concentrate on the mundane, the unspectacular but relatively successful speculations of life-projects attempting to gain a little security for their children, (Ismailbekova) to ward off poverty and isolation, (Féaux de la Croix, Isakov and Schoeberlein) to establish (conflicting) forms of social cohesion and belonging. (Isakov and Schoeberlein, Ismailbekova, Reeves) These practices include ones aimed at achieving a measure of self-respect and faith in the survival of Kyrgyzstan as a nation and state, (Féaux de la Croix, Reeves) such as personal investment in state dam-building projects. In navigating the triangle of notions of future, past and belonging, our collection highlights that there is often a price attached to particular strategies and combinations of belonging and orientations to the future.

The Belonging- Futures Nexus

This theme issue illustrates how individual and group specificities are deployed in a context where cultural difference rather than Socialist equality has become the basis of entitlements in relation to the state. In doing so, these essays engage with the lively discussion of home and identity and narrative in anthropology, (Rapport and Dawson 1998, Jansen and Löfving 2007) conceptions of time and their relationship to agency and ethnographic practice itself. (Fabian 1983) Whereas senses of belonging have widely been discussed in relation to memory and past events in the post-Socialist space (Abashin 2007, Tishkov 1997, Brubaker 2006) senses of allegiances and entitlements as intimately connected with projections of the future are only beginning to be explored in Eastern Europe. (Fox 2009, Gilbert et.al. 2008, Haukanes and Trnka 2013) Scholarship on the region treats belonging in the main as ethnic and national, and has examined the specificities of Soviet nation-building in drawing on elements of pre-Soviet culture and creation of national identities in Central Asia, while at the same time integrating their distinct cultures and identities into supra-Soviet citizenship. (Brubaker, 1994; Hirsch 2005, Sokolovksy 2011) This collection goes beyond ethnic or national identity and belonging to delineate the construction of belonging in connected domains of friendship, kinship and religiosity.

In the above, we have easily invoked both senses of 'belonging' and 'identity'.[6] In the following, we differentiate these according to the benefits and drawbacks in their use. Brubaker and Cooper reject the concept of identity wholesale as an analytical category, arguing that its multiple meanings (e.g. personal, collective) blurs attempts to analyze social relations. (2000:14) Donahoe, Brien et.al. (2009) reject Brubaker and Cooper's criticisms, because they see identity as an essential tool in analyzing nationalism. They argue that '…*employing the concept of identity is not the same as assuming that identities have a reality beyond their significance for various actors. Ignoring people's representations of nation, race, or, more generally, collective identity will not make them go away, nor will it lessen their effect*.' (Donahoe, Brien, et al 2009:6) We share Donahoe and et.al's view of the usefulness of 'identity' as concepts to analyze the *instrumental* aspects of social relations. 'Collective identities' are representations containing normative appeals to potential respondents and providing them with means of understanding themselves, or being understood, as members of a larger category or assemblage of persons. (Donahoe et.al. 2009) In this volume, it is particularly ethnic Kyrgyz kinship identities that are revealed as ways of accessing economic resources in the post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan context. Ismailbekova highlights extended kinship systems in shaping patronage networks while Isakov and Schoeberlein's shepherds claim group identity through a common ancestor as a way of organizing cooperation for cattle breeding.

Nevertheless, the 'identity' concept does not do justice to the full range and subtleties of human interrelating, to its situational and processual character. (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011: 201) Identity relates to categories, sharp boundary drawing and particularism. The term 'belonging' on the other hand usefully emphasizes emotional aspects rather than instrumentality. Pfaff-Czarnecka defines belonging as a central dimension of life that involves a complex interrelation between commonality, mutuality and attachment. (2011: 201) One advantage in using the term 'belonging' is that it points to the need for one's own recognition of belonging by relevant others: it implies mutuality. The term 'belonging' also usefully takes us into the terrain of affect and politics, which is examined particularly in Reeves' and Féaux de la Croix's contributions: it allows both an emotional component of 'feeling at home' and a political element of claim-making for space and for recognition.

(Bell, 1999, Scheibelhofer 2007, Rasanayagam et al., 2013) Belonging is not static or fixed, rather it is transitory and fluid. (Leach 2002: 286) Further, the English term 'belonging' establishes links between notions of collective attachment and property. As Reeves highlights, significant changes in our material surroundings, such as the change from public banners in Russian to Kyrgyz, will have an impact on citizens' sense of belonging. The new Kazakhstani capital city Astana is a case in point: here, an entirely new infrastructures and 'dreamscape' has been financed to legitimize the state, a project which has apparently successfully hooked the imagination and loyalty of many Kazakhstanis. (Laszczkowski 2011) In the case of Kyrgyzstan, people's feeling of belonging is differentially tied to access to places and resources, (Féaux de la Croix, Reeves) reminding us of the interplay between 'ideational' and 'material' resources. The difference in ties also relates to the fact that the post-Soviet Kyrgyzstani state, and its incarnation in a succession of instable governments, is a very different one than the presidential rule of Nayarbayev in neighboring Kazakhstan. This includes different official 'politics of the future', of including and excluding certain kinds of citizens and ways of life.[7] The phrase ‚politics of the future' is adopted from Boyer's discussion of Ostalgie in unification-era Germany. (2006) Zounazi has explained the current rise globally of right-wing governments and sentiments as providing 'a kind of future nostalgia, a "fantastic hope" for national unity charged by a static vision of life and the exclusion of difference.' (Zournazi 2002:15) Certainly, increasingly competing and strident demands for inclusion and exclusion of certain kinds of people as full citizens are evident in contemporary Kyrgyzstan. Though our contributions do not deal directly with the ethnification of conflict, participation in 'standardizing uniqueness' (Lien and Melhus 2007: xvii) according to the schema of the nation-state are clearly observable.

We have so far argued that belonging and identity are appropriate concepts for studying the relationship with the future, because it allows us access to the territory where belongings and futures become mutually constitutive. For example, parents in Kyrgyzstan find themselves engaging in securing the future livelihoods of their children by establishing new interactions with distant relatives, connecting them not only to particular people, but to their future in a novel way. (Ismailbekova) These social imaginaries of belonging make the future livable and future-oriented practices make relationships viable. Finally, we provide an overview of the kaleidoscope of future/belonging orientations in each article, and their relation to the other ethnographies.

Aksana Ismailbekova's article discusses new practices of assuring basic securities. She takes the case of fictive kinship ties, a kind of god-parenthood which she also describes as patron-client relations. The article focuses on Rahim, a particularly powerful patron and political player in his own right, who marshals his supporters at election time. What can parents' gain for their children's future in asking him to be a god-parent, and how do they create such a relationship? Ismailbekova details the elaborate ritual investments in establishing such fictive, yet emotionally legitimate kinship bonds, and their effect in guaranteeing grown children access to work and financial safe-guards. Networks are woven in which Rahim has obligations to his many god-children, and is due loyalty, gratitude and honor. Ismailbekova critically views these structures of security as patron-client systems that also congeal social hierarchies and dependencies. The political consequences of patronage networks are also crucial in times of election, especially in exchanging votes for various kinds of social support. (Ismailbekova, 2014)

Continuing the elaboration of shifting kinship structures to compensate the falling away of 'solid' soviet livelihoods, Baktybek Isakov and John Schoeberlein outline the coping practices in conditions of privatization of what might be considered 'quaint', but also hard-nosed survivalists: mountain shepherds. Isakov and Schoeberlein detail the practices and structures of mutual help established in collective farms, and how these mutated into a

plethora of relationships based on degrees of trust. Rather than seeing kinship, friendship or collegial bonds as a single set of bonds, the authors differentiate a sophisticated system of 'collective self-reliance' as it were, during the Soviet period as well as in the post-Soviet context.

Jeanne Féaux de la Croix's article highlights other aspects related to high mountain pastures. She contrasts the pastures with the soviet and post-soviet dam-building projects co-existing in the same valley. She demonstrates that both sites embody concrete dreams of a national future. Diametrically opposed as their temporalities and ideals seem (eternal/primordial nature and ethnic life ways on the one hand, conquering nature and wielding regional power and modernizing technology on the other) they are also resources for getting by, and gaining the kind of social security invoked by Ismailbekova, Isakov and Schoeberlein. However, such pastures and dams are conceptual and material resources claimed more or less successfully by different categories of citizens: Soviet workers, post-Soviet citizens, post-soviet state or ethnic Kyrgyz as titular nationality. The materialization of these hopes and desires, of a particular version of national pride frequently excludes non-Kyrgyz citizens from visions of how Kyrgyzstan should look in the future. Madeleine Reeves' article turns from the material to the political temporality of 'solidifying' such notions of who belongs to 'the people'.

Reeves examines the elaboration of a category of 'the people' in the capital Bishkek in the aftermath of Kyrgyzstan's 2010 overthrow of the government. She asks how political community is made to happen at certain moments and how this comes to delineate new boundaries between groups. In this case new boundaries are drawn between the ethnic Kyrgyz, whose young men were the main actors and victims of the revolution, and non-Kyrgyz people who soon come to feel like minorities. There are parallels here to the revolutionary moment of privatization in the 1990s outlined by Isakov and Schoeberlein, the consequent new and multi-layered calls of attachment and mutual support.

All the practical and conceptual tools for creating a livable life among the fundamental insecurities described above are associated with a very specific set of Kyrgyzstani citizens, i.e. the ethnic Kyrgyz titular nationality. Practices around god-parenthood or high pasture economies are not easily extended to non-ethnic Kyrgyzstanis. In each case, we are dealing largely with rural or peri-urban sites and relationships – areas that are indeed largely inhabited by and associated with ethnic Kyrgyz. The inter-related ethnographies in this collection spell out the effort and degrees of satisfaction in 'working' these notions of belonging and building individual, familial, national futures. At the same time, these very efforts are evidence of fears and hopes that are worked upon: it is clear from the simmering unrest (governments overthrown in 2005, 2010 and many open conflicts in between) across the country that residues of insecurity and frustration easily become a tide. This is related to the fact that democratic reform and free market economy created conditions where revolutionary action would be realizable. While democratic reforms allowed people to express their thoughts more freely, neo-liberal policies caused the living standards of people to decline hugely. This led to a provisional alliance between the rural poor and certain political leaders in 2005. (Pelkmans, 2005) Some of the new social configurations of belonging resulting from these tensions are pinpointed in Reeves' article.

Our exploration of the conjunctions between notions of belonging and the future in a context of normalized, radical uncertainty allows us to link up themes that coincide in people's life-projects, and yet have hitherto rarely been thought through together, conceptually. This pulling together of the theoretical fields of belonging and identity with that of fears, hopes and plans for the future highlights the affective dimensions of politics orientated to past and future. Holding them in view together also re-focuses anthropology's analytical lens on belonging - in relation to the future, as well as the past.[8] These include

resource ownership, discursive constructions of political community and kinship bonds. One aspect that the authors do not dwell on are generational differences in life-projects, in attempts to create meaning. This aspect has been focused on elsewhere in the post-socialist world. (Haukanes and Trnka 2013, Pine 2013) As we show, there is often a price attached to different strategies and combinations of belonging and orientations to the future. While Kyrgyzstani citizens often express yearning for a unifying ideology of some kind, such solidarities are actually dispersed in more personalized solidarity networks (Isakov and Schoeberlein, Ismailbekova) and ones that clearly exclude certain contingents of people, as in Reeves' description of contesting access to land. Counter-currents that are less explored in these contributions include appeals to the Islamic *umma*, to human rights through development projects backed by powerful donors such as the UNDP, and government actors' efforts to elicit loyalty and hope.

Another social phenomenon that had been reshaping Kyrgyzstan since 1991 is the boom in labor or 'returnee' migration which have not been touched by us in this volume. However, we are aware of the importance of this phenomenon for Kyrgyzstani people in general, their future trajectory, and also their sense of belonging to Kyrgyzstan. Migration was the result of the economic crisis, mobilization of ethnic group policy, and high unemployment rates in Kyrgyzstan. Schmidt and Sagynbekova (2008) have argued that Central Asia has always been characterized by the movement of people, goods and ideas throughout history. However, the mass character of migration[9] of Kyrgyzstanis to Russia has resulted in complex adaptations and new social interactions. There are three stages of migration, such as migration of Europeans, informal traders 'chelnok', and labor migrants. The analysis of the previous studies on migration mostly dealt with perceptions and experiences of migration and their consequences for different generations, and for those who have remained behind. (Reeves, 2011, Thieme, 2008, Isabaeva, 2011, Hegland, 2010) Research on multi-local livelihoods focuses on one part of the family migrating in search for better job opportunities, some members being left behind, and thereby establishing multilocal livelihoods. (Thieme, 2008:326-327) Even though many Kyrgyzstani migrants spend a lot of time in Russia, they sustain social networks in Kyrgyzstan through various kinds of lifecycle events by sending remittances, sponsoring weddings, and telling themselves that their current condition is temporary. (Reeves, 2012) In this line, Isabaeva (2011: 551) also demonstrates how remittances are a guarantee of remaining a part of the community. (Isabaeva, 2011: 542)

The kaleidoscope of ethnographies included here allow the reader to perceive the dance –sometimes joyous, sometimes violent – of people's multiple operations and orientations in relation to striving for a desirable future: through kinship, friendship, 'tolerant' or fiercely possessive and proud inhabitations of space, through pragmatic and emotive sensibilities towards other people and places. If in Croix's case study, landscape features such as high pastures and dams serve as a kind of solid, reliable ground in uncertainty, the two diverge in who this sense of belonging includes. By emphasizing the relatively mundane and unspectacular dimensions of striving for a good future, it becomes clear that coping strategies, for example those associated with a highland pasture economy, are analytically difficult to isolate from some grander projects such as 'eternal' nationhood. To our mind, this implies that a measure of self-respect and hope, a positive horizon of expectation is indeed necessary to making more out of life than a daily grind.

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[2] The capacity for such flexibility and tolerance of disjunctures has also been noted by Haukanes and Trnka (2013:9)

[3] One interesting exception is the collection of essays named after the 'Lilies of the Field' invoked in the Bible as trusting to God to provide for the next day. (Day, Papataxiarchis and Stewart 1999) This collection deals with marginalized groups of people who 'live for the moment', associating any long-term visions of the future with powerful actors and institutions that they try to avoid.

[4] Literature on post-colonial Africa highlights similar sensibilities. (Ferguson 1999, Piot 2010)

[5] The literature on hope includes Amsler 2007, Crapanzo 2003, Hage 2003, Miyazaki 2006 examinations of uncertainty (Burawoy and Verdery 1999, Pedersen and Højer 2008, Johnson-Hanks 2005, Pelkmans 2013)

[6] Fredrik Barth's *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries,* treated ethnicity as a continuing ascription which classifies a person in terms of their most general and inclusive identity, presumptively determined by origin and background. (Barth 1969:13) While ethnic identity should be taken to refer to a notion of shared ancestry (a kind of fictive kinship), in this line Evans-Pritchard, (1940) shows that the Nuer's social order was maintained through community values and a system of segmentary lineage. Similarly, Gluckman, (1956) extensively discussed social networks analysis and its relations to identity.

[7].As Reeves et.al (2014) examine how people imagine their state, whether strong and weak, and show ethnographically how politics can be performed in everyday life.

[8] A different way of examining people's life-projects can be found in the special issue on Well-being in Central Asia. (Central Asian Survey. 2013, 32:4)

[9] It is hard to estimate the exact numbers of migration, but according to the Labour Ministry, in 2010, Kyrgyz migrants' remittances were estimated as 40% of the government's budget which is almost US $1 billion. Alisher Karimov. (2011) Kyrgyz labour migration to be studied. Government seeks to alleviate migrants' plight http://centralasia online.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2011/03/18/feature-01 Accessed 30 January, 2014

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