Symbolism, Space and Revolutions:
a Curious Case of Kyrgyzstan

by

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Abstract

This study investigates how the population of Kyrgyzstan was engaged in two revolutions after the collapse of the Soviet Union, during which the capital of the republic has gone through a chain of shifts of the symbolic meaning of Bishkek, which resulted in the division of the population on "Kirgiz" and "myrks" and thus enforcing the regional detachment of the centre and periphery. The division of the country on north and south, centre and periphery has played a major role during the revolutions, where the overall perception of the city and events has been radically different between the two parties – citizens of Bishkek, and demonstrators of the revolutions, who were mainly rural residents. Drawing on the anthropological works of the spatial influence on the social and political life of the society, and political analyses of the events of 2005 and 2010 in Bishkek, I study how the urban space of the city had an impact on the process and effects of the revolutions.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

The last five to ten years have shown the world that the collapse of the Soviet Union was not the end of political flips in that region, with various people-driven revolutions taking place in Georgia (the Rose revolution), in Ukraine (the Orange revolution), and in Kyrgyzstan. And although one might be tempted to view all these revolutions that followed one another in several months as similar in roots and structure, it is necessary to remember that they were, in fact, very different. The revolutions in both Georgia and Ukraine were driven by progressive West-oriented liberal-democrats (Halpin, 2007). However in Kyrgyzstan both of the revolutions (2005 and 2010) were driven by people disinterested and uninvolved in theoretical politics or debates on liberalism and democracy, which makes the case of Kyrgyzstan stand out from the chain of recent revolutions.

Although numerous articles and policy reports have been written on the subject of Kyrgyz revolutions, there is only a very small number of academic studies on the Kyrgyz revolutions. Without special investigation of the roots of these political disturbances, as well as to their common structure, however, Kyrgyzstan might be forced to face revolutions cyclically – every 5-10 years. So my thesis is a modest contribution to a field of study that requires greater attention from scholars and policy-makers alike globally and locally.

To start the discussion, it must be noted that both of the revolutions followed an almost identical scenario in their movement and their aftermath. First, the protests moved from the peripheries of the country to its centre – Bishkek, the capital city of Kyrgyzstan and the apex of political power. In 2005 the first president of Kyrgyz Republic Askar Akayev, who ruled the country since its independence in 1991, was overthrown as a result of heavy riots in front of the White House. Five years later in 2010 the second president Kurmanbek Bakiev, who came in place of Akayev, was ousted out of the White House much in the same way as the first president. As such, it could be confidently said that these coups in the capital city, where the seat of the power was, became the culmination of smaller scare riots that started out in the

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peripheries. And second, the aftermath of both of these revolutions was similar – destruction of the city infrastructure, day and night-time marauding, and the stand-off between the rural participants of the revolutions and the urban observers.

In analyzing the socio-political context in which these revolutions took place in Kyrgyzstan, I argue that the infrastructure-related destructive outcomes of the revolutions were influenced by the symbolic meaning of the city space of Bishkek and Bishkek itself as a symbol of the center-periphery relationship that had an impact on the formation of aggressive and destructive moods amongst the people who were engaged in demonstrations. The social composition of the revolutions was diverse with both people from rural regions and citizens of Bishkek being engaged in the demonstrations. However, the two groups had different perceptions of the events and of the urban space of Bishkek in general, as those from rural areas were spatially alien to the city. Accordingly, the social differentiation of the people who participated directly in the revolutions has influenced the overall perception of the protests and events that followed the accomplishment of the revolutions' goals. The internal division of population into those who live in the city and those who come from the rural area, or rather the opposition of the center and periphery reflects how the former is detached from the latter by means of concentration of power and control.

I use several theoretical concepts to support my hypothesis on the inter-relation of symbolism and space with the center-periphery relations in influencing the aggressiveness and violence of the two Kyrgyz revolutions. The main concepts that I base my argumentations on are Henry Lefebvre's concept of "spatial triad" and "spatial agency", and the "centre-periphery" theory introduced by John Freedman, with a focus on AbdouMaliq Simone's urban periphery concepts.

I employ Lefebvre's concept of "spatial triad" (1974) which includes conceived, perceived and lived spaces to show how they come into conflictual interaction with each other,

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to better represent my case of the revolutions and the internal opposition of citizens and participants of the demonstrations. "Spatial agency", another concept of Lefebvre is meant to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of the interrelation between the urban space and social and political changes. The concept of 'spatial agency" and its understanding engages both physical space and an agent, and seeks to explain the influence and role of space in social and political movements in the city, particularly in Bishkek, during the spring of 2005 and 2010, when people went out against the ruling regimes.

The centre-periphery theory, originally introduced by political economists to explain the interaction of the central and peripheral regions in the process of their development, is applied in my study to reflect the interdependency of both regions, and how the disengagement between the two led to the negative perception of each other. The concept of centre-periphery sets some general boundaries where the inter-relation between the societies that are on different levels of political, economic and technical development is found (AbdouMaliq, 2007). Within the framework of my research I define centre as a region, which controls the most developed technologies, production processes, and which possesses better forms of labour organization and bears a strong state ideology that is denied by the periphery, and leads to social unrest and revolutions.

The research will shed light on such complex phenomena as revolutions within the context of spatial agency theories in an attempt to understand and perhaps even prevent the violence that always follows any kind of social disturbances. In this connection, the main contribution of this research is to fill the gap in fragmented and not fully empirically represented phenomenon of space-object-movement relations. The analysis of 2005 and 2010 riots, their representation in the media, the reconstructed memories of participants in conjunction with thorough theoretical analysis of the subject will, it is projected, contribute to the general theory of inter-relation between space and human actions.

In addition to this contribution to the general theoretical framework, this research will contribute to the generally under-represented area of academic interest, which is Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan in particular. Owing to the country's less significant geopolitical status, the socio-political happenings within the country are not given the attention that they indeed deserve. Meanwhile, these events have the same potential for analysis and discussion as their counterparts in bigger countries. Understanding the inter-relation between physical space and social space, and their culmination in social action – regardless of the geopolitical latitude within which this action takes place – could be an important development for many intersectional areas of study, including security studies.

This paper consists of 5 chapters: Chapter 1 is introduction. Chapter 2 outlines the existing scholarship on the relationship of the urban space and the symbolic meaning it bears for social movements and how the internal division of the population within one country creates an unstable and conflicting mutual perception. Chapter 3 describes my research methodology which I have used in my 3 week ethnographic research in Bishkek, during which I have interviewed 12 people who represented various social groups engaged (and not engaged) in the revolutions. Chapter 4 reflects my empirical data, which supports my main arguments about the influence of the symbolic assets in Bishkek on the formation of the revolutions in 2005 and 2010. Chapter 5 discusses the major findings of the research and brings up key conclusions of the whole paper.

Chapter 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is aimed to review relevant theoretical literature to conceptualize and corroborate my argument regarding the interrelation of the space and social movements. It will also reflect the applicability of the concept of centre-periphery with regards to the city space of Bishkek becoming a representation of centralized power, and causing clashes between the urban and rural populations of Kyrgyzstan. I assume that space represents a mobile and dynamic set of various associated actors and objects that are in a state of constant mutual dependency rather than being a fixed, indifferent and static material object of human production.

In my research I argue that the massive protests in spring 2005 and 2010 were influenced by the symbolic meaning of the city space of Bishkek that had an impact on the formation of aggressive and destructive moods amongst people who were engaged in demonstrations. In order to investigate this non-human factor of the protests I intend on focusing on Henry Lefebvre's and other scholar's concepts of space and centre-periphery theories.

Henri Lefebvre was one of the first theoreticians, who started to see space as something that can be produced in social and economic lives. Without denying the presence of the physical and natural space, Lefebvre believes that the actual space in which people live is produced and reproduced by the society in the process of cultural and economic functioning. He states that any historical or other mode of production includes fixed spatial practices, for example types of distributing wealth, capital, human resources, and also ways of organizing family and social lives in the space of the city, village, and any territory in general. (Chernyaeva, 2005) Lefebvre sees space inseparable from the society, economy and other products of human life, and so he introduces various categories of spatial representations which consist of types of knowledge, signs and codes that come out on the basis of "spatial practices".

Merrifield (1993:519) considers the dialectics and dualism of space and place and also its relation to time and changes of Lefebvre. In the "Production of Space" by Lefebvre, he highlights the meaning of the space and how people apply it to their lives by attributing various symbolic characteristics and reflecting their "interests of classes, experts, the grass- roots, and other contending forces". Space is always in the state of being constructed, it is not simply inherited by nature, or by ancestors, every new person appropriates new meaning to the space he is in. "Space is produced and reproduced through human intentions, even if unanticipated consequences also develop, and even as space constrains and influences those producing it." (Moloth, H. 1993:887). Lefebvre suggests a unitary theory of space which combines the physical, the mental and the social, he also draws distinctions between those levels, and lays out their interrelations without ignoring the conflicts among them. From the point of Lefebvre, it becomes evident that everyday activities, as well as riots of 2005 and 2010 have a close connection to the three-dimensional perception and view of space, which incorporates lived space with mental and social spaces.

1. Spatial agency

In order to bring together the notions of space and agency into a unified concept I will use the term "spatial agency", a concept that has a deeper understanding of interrelation between architecture, social and political changes. The concept of 'spatial agency" and its understanding engages both physical space and the agent and seeks to explain the influence and role of space on social and political movements/disturbances in the city, particularly in Bishkek, during the spring of 2005 and 2010, when people went out against the authoritarian rule of the former two presidents.

According to Gotham (2001), the study of space and its influence on formation of the individual and the society in general has began with scholars such "as Marx and Engels, Weber, and Simmel who devoted much thought to the importance of the city, for example, as a

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seat of the emerging capitalist economy, a site of political and economic power, and force of cultural change that affects mental life". Amongst more recent thinkers on space it is Manuel Castells and David Harvey that stand out. Their theoretical inquiries derive from Marx's "ideas to explain uneven metropolitan development, urban industrial decline, and other urban trends" (Gotham 2001). Castells argued that urban scientists "focus on the collective consumption characteristic of urbanized nations and ways in which political and economic conflicts within cities generate urban social movements for change". David Harvey, in contrast, proposed that the focal point in making sense of urban spaces was not mere collective consumption, but "the more basic Marxist concern with capital accumulation".

Gotham (2001) mentions that by the late 1970s and continuing into 1980s, a new critical approach to the study of cities and urban redevelopment had developed, "…usually called the 'critical political-economy' or 'socio-spatial approach', this perspective emphasized several major dimensions of cities: (1) the importance of class in shaping urban development; (3) the role of growth-assisted government actors in city development; (4) the importance of symbols, meanings, and culture to the shaping of cities; (5) attention to the global context of urban development". Some Marxist urban scholars use the term "socio-spatial" approach or perspective as they believe it fully describes the critical emphasis on the fact that there is a certain synergy between the space and societies, and accent the versatile expressions of macrostructural process and local actions (Gotham, 2001:3).

Henry Lefebvre argues that the chaotic representation of space and lived and active space are not independent from each other, but are rather influencing each other on various levels. However it is difficult to distinguish between the physical, social or mental spaces, as they are all closely related to each other. In order to find a unifying theory that would bring together the physical, mental and social spaces, one should start from the notion that social space, as much mental and physical spaces is the production of human activity, thus making them inter-dependant and indistinguishable from each other. As such, the space is a social

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product, and knowing it assumes the reconstruction of the production of space (Swyngedouw, 1992:318).

Just as Marx sees the fetishisation of labour and commodity during the process of producing the labour, Lefebvre sees space to be fetishised in the same manner, which essentially devaluates it. He implies that re-conception of "things in space" into "production of space" is essentially appropriating the same shift "from "things in exchange" to "social relations of production". (Merrifield 2004:172) There is a generative aspect of space that makes it *actively produced*. So Lefebvre suggests to see space not as static and dead object, but rather "flexible and fluid, that flows and collides with other spaces"(Merrifield 2004:171). Following the Marxian thought of alienation and estrangement of the worker in the process of production, Lefebvre suggests that there are *present* spaces, which once built and created in their multiplicity are not so easy to recreate and erase (Merrifield 2004:175).

As there is a danger of perceiving space in "itself", it is important to note and pay attention to the fact that while space is actively produced as part of the capitalist strategy, space gets produced even before it is reproduced as they are in constant interdependency with each other. So from this point, Lefebvre makes it clear that capitalism and space are continuously interrelated, as one creates and reproduces the other.

2. Spatial Triad

The spatial triad in Lefebvrian definition reflects Marx's notions of space and time and refers to a class-based society in a classic linear understanding of space and time. According to these notions, the dominating class that possesses power will be overthrown through a revolution. Accordingly, the conceived space comes into conflict with the lived and perceived spaces, which leads to the emergence of opposition and social movements. That is exactly what happened in Bishek, as the dominating corrupted class, personified in the two ousted

presidents, were overthrown by a less powerful class, mostly workers and peasants from outside of the city.

> According to Lefebvre space is produced through the conflictual unity of a spatial triad: the perceived, the conceived, and the lived. "The perceived is captured as spatial practices, which embrace production and reproduction and are expressed in daily routines, in the practice of everyday life. The conceived embodies representations of space, which are tied to the relations of production and to the "order" those relations impose. It is the conceptualized (discursively constructed) space used and produced by, among others, planners, architects, geographers, and social engineers, which codify, textualize, and hence represent space. Lived space, or representational space, embodies complex symbolisms. It is the space of symbols and images, which the imagination continuously seeks to change and appropriate (the turf of gangs, for example). Perceived, conceived, and lived space constitute a unity, but not necessarily a coherence. Each of these categories is deeply conflictual - i.e., contradictory-and thus deeply political" (Swyngedouw, 1992:318).

Thus, social space unites social action and makes a process that undertakes an action of creation and production process. As such, the objects in the environment, if taken independently and separately mean nothing, and therefore there is a need in moving the focus from the study of object in the space to the actual production of space. In order to understand space with its whole variety of meanings, it is important to understand that space has its history. And every set of various forces and relations of production makes up its own appropriate and intended space. So the various socio-spatial practices such as social/civil or class struggles inevitably produce new spaces. (Lefebvre 1974). That is the case of Bishkek, when during and after the riots new social spaces have been created, and a new meaning along with the symbolism has been ascribed to these places. New monuments in the form of burned buildings, broken glass, and bullet holes have changed not only the physical look of the main square Ala-Too, but also the perception of the space in general, thus creating a new socio-spatial and spiritual space. Riots in Bishkek could be seen as class struggle over resources or against the authoritarian rule of the latter president. As Swyngedouw (1992) put it:

> "Class struggle, broadly defined as acts of social resistance to the totalizing force of commodities and money, has the capacity to differentiate, or to generate differences. As such, social struggle engenders difference through the re-appropriation or the re-conquest of space".

With new concepts and concerns developing in urban social studies in both theoretical and empirical studies, a new turn in the study of the city and space has emerged in recent years. This relates to the attendant thread associated with a broader study of social phenomena appearing in economics and politics that lead to "uneven metropolitan development" (Gotham 2001). Indeed, even a negligent glance at the construction of city areas reflects the socio-structural division of the society and class. One district is inhabited by a working class and symbolizes poverty and need, the other is reserved for rich and displays power and wealth, yet other areas and regions tend to serve commercial interests, entertainment, tourists and consumers (Gotham, 2001). These oppositional dimensions of the city represent inequality and uneven nature of the construction of the city planning, which reflects the subjective nature of space construction and its dependence on human relations.

Lefebvre (1987:7) states that space is the representation of certain symbolic conceptions through various references i.e. symbolic concepts of divine power, state, masculinity or feminine are attached to a material symbol – space. Accordingly the spatial symbols could be borrowed from those of nature, such as trees, or the conspicuous landscape, also they could be buildings, monuments and other material objects. Construction of the new spatial objects in Bishkek after the revolution, or the replacement of the old and damaged with new ones and placing new monuments or memorials– is an example of how new symbolism is being attached to strengthen the current state. If the space is being changed constantly, people's values tend to change as well. So the government that overtook the power as a result of this revolution, began producing new spaces by leaving destroyed administrative buildings as a monument in order to enforce its position – an example of an attempt to manipulate the social by ascribing new symbolism to material objects.

3. Centre-periphery and class struggle

Centre-periphery is a frequently referenced theoretical discourse in urban and spatial dialogue. It encompasses a wide range of trends and schools, and the ones I will look closely at

are the spatial and economic aspects of the centre-periphery theory, as these aspects, I believe perfectly represent the Kyrgyz case of riots in 2005 and 2010. By applying the centre-periphery theory I do not constrain myself to geometrical and spatial organization and disposition of objects in Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan in general.

The centre-periphery theory is a spatial concept which characterizes and attempts to explain the structural relationship between the technologically, politically and socially advanced centre and less developed and to some point dependant periphery (Marshall, 1998). The concept has been developed at the beginning of the XX century, as part of the geopolitcal economic system. The first scholar to articulate this concept was John Friedmann in 1966 in his book "Regional Development Policy: A Case Study of Venezuela" (Marshall, 1998). Later, the concept has been used by other academic fields and sociology in particular.

The concept of centre-periphery sets some general boundaries where the inter-relation between the societies that are on different levels of political, economic and technical development is found. Within the framework of my research I define centre as a region, which controls the most developed technologies, production processes and which possesses better forms of labour organization and bears a strong state ideology. So the elite and ordinary inhabitants of the centre region, in my research of Bishkek, have become the consumers of produced labour. And periphery is composed of regions, which experience lack of these attributes, but have higher amount of raw production. The well-being and functioning of these regions is determined by the elites in the centre, which aspire for supremacy in the region.

Thus, the regional division of Kyrgyzstan suggests the following definitions: centre – Bishkek, semi-periphery – suburbs, and remote villages and regions – periphery. Bishkek being the centre of the capital possesses the most varied forms of media and communication, embraces the greatest concentration of public and civic spaces and the greatest amount of concentrated information in the forms of libraries, archives and building, as well as the highest

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number of symbolic manifestations, such as monuments, squares and religious buildings. (Carrion, 2010)

According to urbanist AbdouMaliq Simone (2007), "the periphery is a region that is simultaneously included and excluded in the composition of an integral territory – be that of the nation, municipality or any other form of administration or polity." Thus, the periphery is located at an indeterminate level, where it falls under the jurisdiction of the local or national state and is subjected to its laws and policies, without playing a major role in terms of its overall contribution to the substance of the polity itself. This uncertain position of the periphery makes it comfortable for the centre to guide and lead it "since by this logic, the periphery is a space imbued with a sense of insufficiency and incompletion"(AbdouMaliq 2007:462).

Even under these conditions, the centre and periphery still remain detached and alienated from each other, as the centre does not fully provide overall protection to the periphery, and therefore suggests a fertile ground for potential instability in the region for the centre. The periphery then requires additional attention from the state, demanding the centre to broaden its "core" values and technologies to let the periphery become part of it. (AbdouMaliq, 2007:462). However, if the centre remains silent, and does not undertake any concrete actions towards exceeding its centralized power to periphery, the contentious situations occur.

> If the periphery poses a threat to the integrity of the polity and thus compels the centre to continuously enact its authority in relationship to it, then the periphery is constitutive of the centre, in that it provides the occasion for the centre to perform itself, which also means to exceed itself – i.e., to go beyond what the prevailing norms, rules or policies would authorise. (…) Thus the (mixing), where more direct forms of confrontation among entities – cities, regions, nations and so forth – are dispersed through a space that is positioned to absorb the tensions inherent in any intersection of distinct "regimes" (AbdouMaliq, 2007:463)

The historical and to some extent artificial division of Kyrgyzstan into South and North and the mutual negative image of each other, has played a major role in the development of negative regionalism in the country. The aversion of Bishkek, as the capital on the North of the

country makes the periphery deny its dependence on the centre, thus increasing dissent between the two, which has eventually resulted in the two revolutions and consequent space transformations.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Current research has been undertaken to investigate the inter-relation of space and social movements in general, and the influence of the capital city's symbolic meaning in the formation of revolutions that have taken place in Bishkek in springs of 2005 and 2010 in particular. Accordingly, the focal point of my research is centered on the revolutions in Kyrgyzstan, which resulted in the overthrowing of the government and formation of the new one, with specific focus on the way space was used to demonstrate rage and disagreement with the ruling regimes. As the main questions to be answered in my research is how the city space comes into cooperation with social and political actions, and how the city space becomes the triggering factor of the social unrest among the population, my research is mainly structured around the following questions:

1. How did the urban space shape the protests of 2005 and 2010 in Bishkek? Although the two revolutions had different actors, why did they choose to use the same routes to get to the main buildings in the city?

2. Was there a symbolic fight over the territory of the city between the protesters (who mainly were not residents of the city) and citizens? What is the difference in perception of the city space between protesters and citizens?

3. How did the revolutions affect the urban space of Bishkek?

4. For whom has the space changed and why?

Obviously one of my methods would be looking at events at Ala-Too square where the main events have taken place, from a more theoretical basis, and then accumulating a conception of that mutual interaction, which could be derived from a more in-depths look at the case of mass protests in Bishkek in spring 2005 and 2010. As a methodology in my research I will focus on the historical usage of the Ala-Too square, construction processes of it and other buildings which were involved during the revolutions, as I argue that the meanings

given to those places by their architects and the meaning it has gained in recent years are quite opposite to each other. Considering this aspect would also help me to understand how people manage and adapt static spaces to their needs according to situations forming around them, and how does this shift is later reflected on the use of space.

The methodological inquiry I used to answer the above stated and other minor questions involves conduction of semi-structured and structured interviews with participants of the revolutions, residents of Bishkek (who did not participate in neither of the revolutions), media representatives and political experts. Most of my interviewees were young and middle-aged males, from rural areas, who directly participated either in both of the revolution or one of the two revolutions. The rest of my respondents were residents of Bishkek, middle-aged, working in the private sector or as academicians.

The questions of the interviews were mainly organized around the following topics: perception of the revolutions, chronological mapping of the revolutions, opinion on the urban space of Bishkek, what are the main strategically and symbolically valuable objects in Bishkek, their opinion about participants and non-participants of the revolution and socio-economic position of the country after the independence in 1991. Aside from engagement with interviewees, a vital part of my research is based on the actual observing of space around the main objects of the revolutions, namely the Ala-Too square, central streets of Bishkek, and damaged administrative and other buildings in order to analyze whether the symbolic assets have shifted from what they were before, and how that shift is spatially represented and perceived by people. Observation thus favoured the understanding of what meaning people tend to attribute to places they see, pass by, work or live at, and how they differ based on the age, origin and social status of the interviewees. Accordingly, observation has supplemented data gathered from interviews, particularly regarding the question of the streets and their role in the sociation process among people, and how this can change in various social groups.

I also looked at the chronological written reports on the spring events of 2005 and 2010 to analyze the similarities and differences of using and occupying space to demonstrate the will to overthrow the power, and what symbolic actions and places were used to declare it. As my research is mainly twisted around the revolutions in Kyrgyzstan that happened within the period of 5 years, I had a rather good access to various archival and analytical materials. These materials, were broadly available in various news reports, newspapers, internet news agencies and online internet forums, as civil society was very actively engaged in discussing them during and after the revolutions. A certain difficulty in analyzing materials of the two riots is represented by the subjectivity of some reports and newspapers, as they could be biased by their affiliation to certain political parties.

Chapter 4: EMPIRICAL PART

The outline of this empirical chapter highlights three main subjects of the revolutions: causes of revolution, the process and consequences of them. Each one of them is discussed further in my thesis, as they are academically relevant to the topic of the study. This chapter explores the notion of space in the context of Kyrgyz revolutions in 2005 and 2010 and how it was perceived and used by two main actors of the revolutions – rural inhabitants that were actively engaged in the revolutions and residents of Bishkek, who were commonly just passive observers. It will reveal how the revolutions triggered the symbolic fight over the city between the two actors and what forms has it appropriated during and after the revolutions.

1. The socio-economic and political background of riots in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan was once one of the fifteen republics of the USSR, and in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union it gained its independence. According to Larin (2010), by the 1990 it was one of the leading Central Asian republics in terms of industrial and agricultural production per head. But in 20 years since the collapse of the USSR there was a significant growth of social inequality and economic recession. Like in many other post-soviet states, during the process of re-distribution and privatization of industrial funds, the capital was concentrated mostly either in the hands of bureaucracy or businessmen (Larin, 2010). However, politically, the country was one of the most progressive states not only in the Central Asian regions, but among all former Soviet Union(FSU) countries. The first president of the independent Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaeyev, proved to be a reformer and a democrat, who in 1993 initiated and supported one of the most democratic constitutions in the Central Asian region – making Kyrgyzstan known abroad as the "oasis of democracy" (Kislov, 2010).

The events of 2005, called the "Tulip revolution" by local and international media, started to unfold on the 17th of March and reached its peak on the 24th, when the president Askar Akayev was forced to leave the country, and later signed his resignation as a president.

By that time President Akayev had been ruling the country for more than 14 years. The constitution had been rewritten several times, expanding the authority of the president and dispelling the limitations for re-election (Larin, 2010). People's dissatisfaction with the President was growing.

Apart from his general failure to fulfill his socio-political and economic promises, Akayev had committed or allowed to happen a number of acts that were not forgiven by the people. In the first place there was a violent military dispersion of protesting people in 2002 in Uzgen (southern Kyrgyzstan), as a result of which six people were killed and tens of people were injured. Secondly, after the events in September 11th 2001, when the USA and allies decided to conduct military operations in Iraq and Afganistan, Akayev and the parliament let them station a military airbase at the local airport Manas, which was highly undesirable in the eyes of people, as they tended to stay politically and economically close to Russia (Larin, 2010). Thirdly, president Akayev's son Aidar had won the first round of deputy elections in March 2005, bypassing former chairman of the parliament Kurmanbek Bakiev. The last invoked a social and political unrest, which lead to protests against the electoral fraud which began in various, mostly southern, regions of the country.

> "(participant of both revolutions) Akayev turned our country into his own family business. His family did not have any sense of shame, they wanted to grab more and more. His son Aidar was controlling the whole business sphere in Kyrgyzstan, he was making raids to successful business owners, and made them pay taxes to him, in order to be able to work further. That is robbery, where are we, in some feudal state? And then, he wanted to be a deputy in the parliament! Akayev's daughter has already been sitting there for a long time, and then he decided to make his son an official. And that military airbase, I'm sure his family gets a lot of dollars from them, for the permission to stay in the country. People could not live like that anymore, we wanted changes, and we made the revolution". (Bakyt, male, small-scale businessman, 39)

On March 17th 2005, a memorial day for those six people that were killed in 2002, a meeting of protest was planned to be held in Bishkek. Over a few days the meeting gained a more massive and rough character with people coming from all over the country to join the protest. When it was clear that thousands of people were supporting protesters in their demand

of Akayev's resignation from the presidency, he left the country along with his family by the evening of March 24th 2005.

With Akayev's departure and resignation from presidency, a search for a new president began and was shortly concluded. Kurmanbek Bakiev, whose demonstrative loss at the parliamentary elections to Akayev's son had partially triggered the revolution, was seen as a perfect candidate for the president of Kyrgyzstan. During his years of presidency, Bakiev tried to follow the promises he made after the revolution and at the electoral campaign. There was a slight economic growth, and the practice of raids on businessmen had been significantly decreased.. However it was only a ruse to earn people's confidence in order to get away with his future autocratic decisions, such as the introduction of enormous taxes for leading a business. Moreover, the taxation system was controlled by his close relatives – brothers and son. Resumed and more aggressive raids on business showed that Bakiev and his relatives decided to convert their power into property. (Larin, 2010)

As a result, in the period of five years since the beginning of Bakiev's regime the economic situation in the country has not considerably changed from that during Akayev's reign, and the strait of other spheres has become even worse, than it was before the "Tulip revolution" of 2005 (Larin, 2010). The general economic problems resulted in the deterioration of the agricultural sector. In the spring of 2010 this deterioration reached a critical point. Since most of the population resided in rural area, the area of agricultural fields was decreasing with the growth of population. (Larin, 2010) The agricultural sector began to collapse, as farmers did not have means for proper harvesting and ploughing fields, thus making ordinary people get negative feelings towards the government.

> "(participant of the revolution in 2010) People in Bishkek and big cities live a normal life, and you don't know what happens in rural areas. I had to participate in the revolution because it was the only way for ordinary people, for farmers to show that our life is not a life of a human being. He increased taxes, we had to pay for everything, and nothing was left for ourselves. He and his family made prices rise, and we couldn't buy solar oil to work on our fields. We had to pay for water, and we couldn't make money from vegetables we grow in our fields, everything was too expensive". (Sovetbek, male, farmer, 47)

During Akayev's rule there was an attempt to maintain a balance of national and ethnic representatives in the governmental body of the country. However, after the "Tulip revolution" the situation has radically changed. Bakiev's manpower policy consisted of advancing people of titular ethnic group originating from the southern regions – Osh and Jalal-Abad. So the political and economic resources were more and more concentrated and controlled by Bakiev's relatives and people who shared the same political views and regional origin with him (Knyazev, 2010)

Political repressions, increasing prices for utilities, privatization of strategically important state companies such as KyrgyzTelecom, SeverElectro through straw companies has lead to a nation-wide social unrest and dissatisfaction (Kislov, 2010).

> "(participant of the revolution in 2010) Life has become absolutely unbearable. He increased utility prices, invented 60 tyin (~0,003 $) tax for successful connection on the mobile phone. 60 tyin is nothing, but when you gather this money from the whole country, it is a lot of money. And then SeverElectro and KyrgyzTelecom, they sold it out! People only knew things we heard from the TV, and it was promoting Bakiev, so we didn't have access to truthful information. We were really on the way of becoming a state of dictatorship, where you could not even breath without permission of Bakiev's clan. They occupied all resources in the country." (Kalych, male, truck-driver, 44).

The last straw that broke people's patience was the presidential elections of 2009, when Bakiev officially won with more than 80% of votes. After that he implemented constitutional reforms, and eventually his son Maxim came to manage the National Agency on Development, Innovations and Investments, which was specially created for him and which in fact gave him access to state treasury (Kislov, 2010). Later, several of his brothers became deputies and ministers, thus controlling the whole country.

The population did not leave all these actions without attention, and on 17th of March, coinciding with the memorial service in honour of the six killed in 2002, the opposition held a *Kurultai* (people's court). The *Kurultai* declared an ultimatum to the president demanding his resignation, reduction of taxes and utilities prices and removal of his relatives from the

governmental body. The mass protests started on the 25th of March throughout the northern part of the country culminating on 7 April 2010, which became the day of the second revolution (Larin, 2010). Unlike Akayev, however, Bakiyev did not peacefully resign from presidency. Instead, he used an aggressive and militaristic way of calming people down by suppressing the massive disturbances with professional snipers – resulting in the murder of 90 people and wounding of thousands more (AKIpress, 2010).

The similarity in main social-economic and social-political patterns resulted in the development of the same general scenario between the "Tulip revolution" and the overthrow of Bakiev's regime. The major difference is that the main forces of the "Tulip revolution" were brought from the south of the republic to fight the northern regime of Akayev, and in the revolution of 2010, the situation was reversed, the most active protests began to develop in the northern regions – Talas and Naryn, while the southern regions kept silent (Kislov, 2010).

2. Spatial representation of the revolutions: how it happened

The revolutions in Bishkek not only had similar socio-economic and political contexts for their emergence, but also had similar patterns in their physical development in the city space. As it was stated before, the major difference is seen in the main actors of the revolutions – during the first revolution in 2005 the main forces of the revolution came from the south of the country, while in 2010 forces came from the north, thus highlighting the regional division of the country by people's opposition towards the power that was representing either north or south. This is an important factor while looking at the chronology of the revolutions that shows the initial places where the protests began, which later triggered the whole country to be engaged in the revolutions. It is also a significant factor towards the understanding of who participated in the revolutions and why the residents of Bishkek were against their presence in the capital.

The understanding of events that happened in Bishkek requires an understanding of the specific spatial objects that were used by protesters to make the revolutions successful. It is important to remember that the use of the spatial objects and streets during the revolutions has been put into action by non-residents of Bishkek, who could not freely orient in the city, thus making the spatial research of greater curiosity.

2.1. The manifestation of dissatisfaction through spatial objects in Bishkek

One of the main spatial objects that were actively used by protesters was the Ala-Too square where the masses of people began to gather from various districts of the city and regions of the country during both of the revolutions in Bishkek. Among the main streets leading to the square and which had been occupied by the marchers were Alma-Atinskaya, Sovetskaya, Gorkogo, Mira, and Chui. These are the main streets of the city and most of them either crossed in the downtown of Bishkek or lead there and they serve as the reflection of the cognitive map of Bishkek in the minds of people coming from the rural areas. Along these streets various administrative and official buildings are located; however most of them were not damaged in any significant way, except for those which were located in a relative proximity to the centre of the city and the Ala-Too square. This fact is connected to the symbolic place of the Ala-Too square in the minds of Kyrgyz citizens.

Ala-Too, which means *'bright or blood-red mountains'* in Kyrgyz language, plays a major role in the life of Bishkek, not only because main governmental buildings are located close to it, but also because of its open and wide (public) space, and the meaning it bears since the early years of its construction during the Soviet Union. Historically, the square has served as a marching place for various celebrations, labor and military parades and sometimes religious prayers on national holidays. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the square has gone through several changes: for example, a flagpole with the Kyrgyz flag, and the monument of freedom have appeared, as well as other architectural novelties.

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In general, the square has always been a tool to demonstrate the power of the state – so, the square has gone through a number of transformations while being at the disposal of different rulers. First, it was the Soviet Union, with its marches on the Labour Day, Victory Day and other. The square has been built in the end of the 1980's and had a typical Soviet symbolism in it – Lenin's monument, International Friendship monument, fountains, and museums. With the fall of the USSR and Akayev's advent to power, the symbols on the square gradually began to be replaced with national symbols of freedom and independence – the flagpole of Kyrgyz flag and the Erkindik[1] monument which literally replaced Lenin's monument. Later with Bakiev's accession to power, the square has undergone other changes – the demolition of the fountains built during the Soviet era, and construction of a new fountain complex with a public green space, and the replacement of the small flagpole with a monumental one. And finally, after the ousting of president Bakiev, the new government had initiated yet another transformation – memorials for people who died during the revolution of 2010.

Before the springs of 2005 and 2010 the Ala-Too square has been perceived only as a place for massive gatherings of people on holidays for celebrating various events, but since then the symbolical meaning of the square has turned into the opposite. Ala-Too square is now seen by people as a symbol of freedom, and "the will of people", a place of tragic deaths of hundreds of citizens, who were killed in the spring of 2010. The official government now avoids risking the organization of celebrations at the Ala-Too square in the fear of having yet another protest against the government. Respondents of the survey noted:

> "(participant of the revolution in 2010) How can one not change his perception of the square after those bloody events? It is now totally different. I can't freely walk around the square and in near parks without remembering those events. And moreover, current government has placed several monuments in memory of those heroes that passed away during the revolutions. Before the central Ala-Too square was a place of joy and gatherings on national celebrations. This is the place where almost all of the cultural events took place, and people went there to participate in them. But now, it is not only a place of joy, it is also a strong reminder of those events. (…) Some people

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[1] Erkindik – translates as "freedom" from Kyrgyz language

still go there to show respect and perform some rituals for their passed away relatives and friends." (Nurlan, male, photographer, 43).

Another respondent recalls:

"You still can see the bullet holes on the walls of the nearby buildings. There was blood all over the square, and the strips where killed people were lying were enclosed with stones, according to Kyrgyz tradition. Right on the asphalt of the square. And there were flowers on those strips." (Mirbek, male, freelancer, 27).

The road map of the protesters marching to the Alatoo square was not planned, but it was not accidental either. Both revolutions did not have obvious leaders, who would lead them throughout the city, but nevertheless they used the same streets to get to the centre of the city – Alma-Atinskaya – Chui – Ala-Too square, or Sovetskaya – Chui – Ala-Too square[2]. The schematic movement of people that is shown on the map 1 is relevant for both revolutions. The black arrows on the map show how people from regions outside of Bishkek were gathering at the "Forum"[3] on the crossroad of Gorkogo and Alma-Atinskaya streets to further towards the Ala-Too square the White House. The black arrows on the map approach the city mostly from Jibek-Jolu and Alma-Atinskaya streets, which identifies the route which people from rural areas used to come to the city, as these streets connect Bishkek with both north and southern regions.

"(participant of the revolution in 2010) You know that events took place before it actually came to Bishkek. It started on the 5-th of april in Naryn, then it was Talas on the 6-th. People were angry all over the country. We hardly could sit here, on our places, and wanted to go join them, but we knew that it will take time to get to Bishkek. So, on the 7th it reached Bishkek. Well, for those who came from other towns, they used marshruktas and buses to get to the city. And naturally they used the main route that can lead right to the center of the city. You know the route right? (-Tell me). This is Jibek-Jolu street. Then we gathered at the "Forum" on Alma-Atinskaya street. We had some minor fights with Bakiev's people there, because he prepared himself for that and then waited for other people to gather. Then around noon we started marching when about 3 000 people gathered. Alma-Atinskaya street is a big street, so we marched down the street to another big and central Chui avenue. And from Chui up to the west, towards the Ala-Too square and the White House to the president." (Kalych, male, truck-driver, 44)

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[2] See map 1 for location of the streets
[3] Headquarter of the SDPK (СДПК) - Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan. When the first protests began in Naryn and Talas regions, leaders of the oppositional parties, including SDPK have been arrested, so the revolution of 2010 was truly spontaneous and did not have explicit and apparent political interest and intervention.
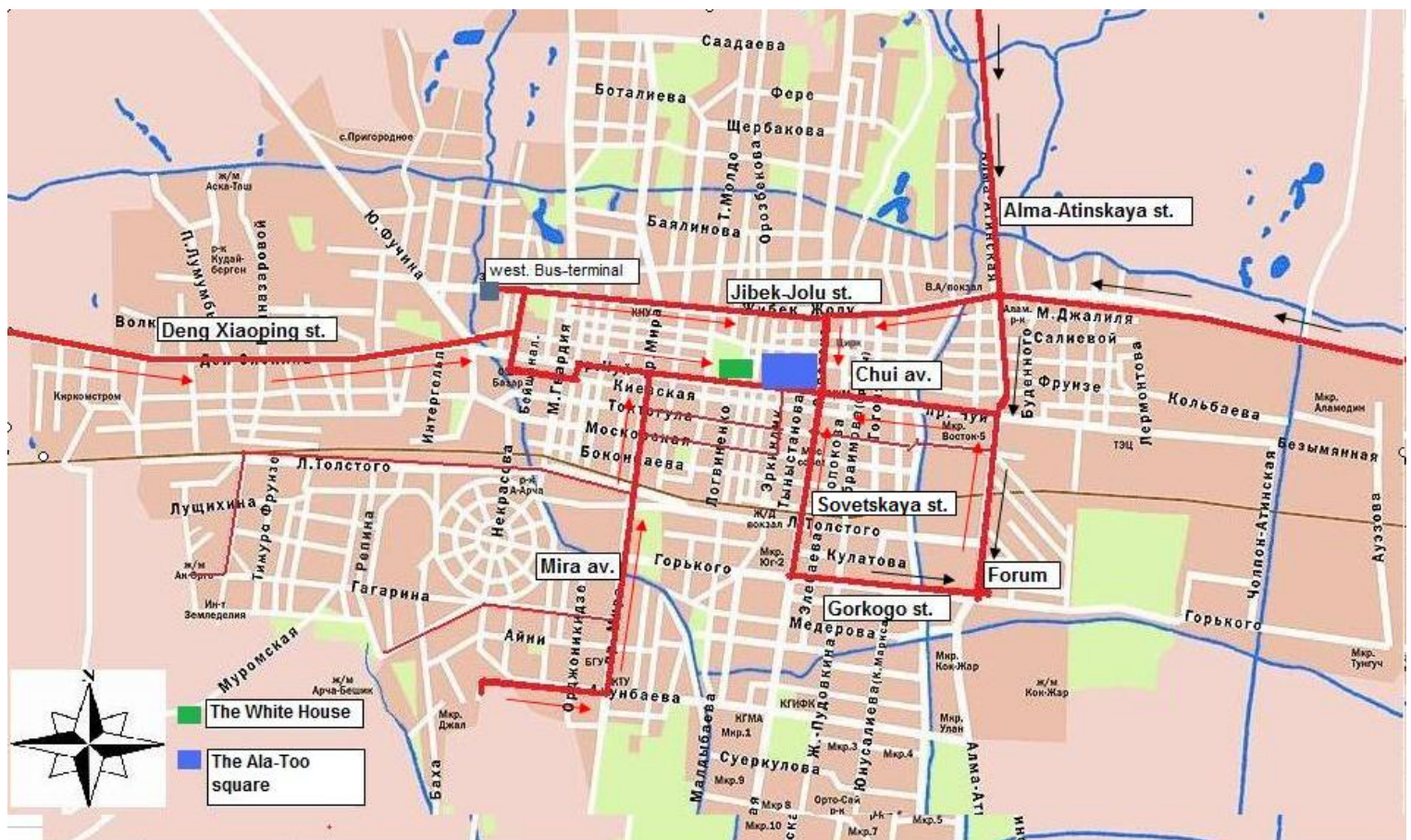
1. Map of Bishkek, and the spatial representation of protesters' movement during the revolutions

Bold red lines on the map indicate the major movement using the streets of the city during the revolutions. And the red arrows show the movement of people after they gathered at the "Forum" and marched further to the Ala-Too square and the White House. The main marching masses came from Alma-Atinskaya and Chui. Other slightly smaller marches came from the west, from the Deng Xiaoping street, where Sokuluk village is located, and from the east, where Jibek-Jolu street connects with the main route of the country using which people from Naryn, Talas and Issyk-Kul regions came. Mira avenue was blocked due to marches as well, but the quantity of people coming from the south of the city was not that massive.

"(participant of both revolutions) By the time we reached Chui avenue and turned to it from Alma-Atinskaya street towards ZUM[4] we were about 30 000 already. People were joining us all over the city, and others were coming from regions – Naryn, Talas, Kara-Balta and Tokmok[5]. And when we reached ZUM we had about 50 000 people. We had order, and there was no hooliganism. At the Ala-Too square part of the

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[4] ZUM (ЦУМ) – Central Universal Mall, located in a very close proximity to the Ala-Too square
[5] Kara-Balta and Tokmok are small towns close to Bishkek, appr. 2 hours by car.

people decided to go to the SNB[6], and the other to the White House." (Nurdin, male, revolutionary – head of the "Heroes of 7-th April" movement, 46)

Once on the Ala-Too square, the main mass of people that had gathered has divided into different groups heading towards various administrative buildings of the city – City Hall, General Prosecutor's Office, National Security Service and other. This was done mainly to stop the proper functioning of the city, by blocking the communication between them, and make them support the protests.

> "(participant of the revolution in 2010) When the revolutionaries, simple farmers, Kyrgyz people gathered at the square, and the amount reached 60 - 70 000 we split to go to other buildings in the centre of the city, to block them, and to let them know we are serious. We wanted them to stop uniting against Kyrgyz people." (Sovetbek, male, farmer, 47)

The schematic movement of people in the city represents the way how people who are not born to Bishkek and live in the rural areas imagine the urban space of Bishkek. The streets that have been mainly occupied during the revolution are the main streets of the city, which connect various administrative regions with the centre. Along these streets many important state and governmental offices are positioned as well as the major shopping and cultural centres. As such it becomes obvious that the unintentional choice for blocking exactly these streets and marching on them would represent the whole urban space of Bishkek in minds of the demonstrators. But the symbolic meaning of these streets as the centre of Bishkek is not limited only for those coming from rural area, the residents of Bishkek, also tend to perceive the occupied space during the revolutions as the central regions of the city, and a demonstration for that could be seen in the fact that apartments in the range of the occupied space during the revolutions are traditionally more expensive. In other words the streets and objects occupied or damaged during the revolutions represented Bishkek in minds of the demonstrators, who were not born and did not live in Bishkek for a considerable amount of time.

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[6] SNB (СНБ) – National Security Service

3. Internal opposition of people and fight over the city

The first revolution in 2005 was a complete novelty for Kyrgyz people - people did not particularly know how to react to those events. The reaction of people who did not participate was mostly positive, rather than negative, as people believed that such a radical change in the rhythm of their lives would certainly lead them to a better future. However the night following the revolution had yielded some tragic and shocking facts of marauding and robbing shopping malls in Bishkek. The panic among the residents of Bishkek had been stirred up by the preconceived idea of aggressive and uncouth revolutionaries who came to the city from regions whom the residents of Bishkek refer as "*myrks*"[7]. Various social networks and internet forums have been discussing the danger of those masses who participated in the revolution to attack dwelling houses of Bishkek residents.

The night of the 24-th and 25-th of March 2005 have been shocking for the whole population of the city, as marauding of the many shopping centers had disturbed the proper functioning of the city. More than hundred sales outlets had been destroyed and looted as a side-effect of the revolution the night before. Thousands of people went bankrupt and the country was on the way of facing financial crisis.

> "People that came from Osh and Jalal-Abad in 2005 were the most real "myrks". They came to the city, it was absolutely alien for them, and compared to their villages and small towns, it was Eldorado for them. Blinded by their victory and the resignation of Akaev, they began to crush everything on their way. Everything! I own a shop in one of the shopping centers, and it was totally robbed. Nothing was left out there. (…) Same happened in 2010, fortunately, we already had experience five years ago, so we knew, that we should protect ourselves, buildings and the city from them." (Ajara, female, shop-owner, 36)

> "What could we do against those "myrks"? There were lots of them, and these are not only people from rural areas. The worst things is that people who lived in Bishkek for tens of years, also participated in this action which destroyed our city. Personally I did not lose anything during nights of looting, but I just feel sorry for other people, and especially for the city. We live here, and we should not destroy it." (Meder, male, engineer, 39).

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[7] Myrk (Мырк) – degrading sobriquet for people perceived as uncultured, uncivilized and uncouth in Kyrygzstan. The sobriquet is used by urban citizens of Bishkek mostly against people from rural areas. Lately it is also often addressed to all people who show above mentioned characteristics.

Quite a number of people who were leading a business in the sphere of trade economically suffered from marauding that followed the revolutions. Most of the urban population was blaming people from rural areas, whom they saw as intruders and aliens in Bishkek. As a result of growing anxiety local communities in Bishkek began to create so-called "*drujinas*" or vigilante squads consisting of civilians which were organized according to their administrative belonging. These "drujinas" were initiated by urban residents at the administrative districts of the city and were designed to protect the city and the property of citizens from marauders and against the most aggressive members of the revolutionary masses - mostly young men, who were not residents of Bishkek. The information on the creation of "drujinas" spread very fast among townsmen, and thousands of people joined them the day following the revolution[8]. Other informal Social Activism Movement towards protecting Bishkek have also emerged during the times of revolutions.

> "There is a need of creating squads that would patrol the city, because the population is scared. We want to show the population that not the whole city gone mad." (Elden Kalchakeev, male. An excerpt from the interview to the radio "Echo Moskvy")

> "(…) this was really scary. Almost all TV channels were blocked, internet was too slow, and we couldn't check any information about the situation in the city. We heard some information from our neighbours that aggressive demonstrators were robbing apartments and houses, so we wanted to protect ourselves, and our city, and joined drujinas. We wanted to protect our city from intruders who came from outside the city…" (Igor, male, taxi-driver, 37)

Igor's feelings towards active participants of the revolution were quite common among the urban population of Bishkek. It clearly shows that one of the purposes of forming "drujinas" was protecting houses and the city from robbers, who were primarily thought to be non-Bishkek residents.

Among numerous shopping centers that were destroyed and sometimes burned down, ZUM has been one of the few (but certainly the biggest) objects that survived both revolutions

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[8] This is relevant for the revolution of 2005, when the practice of "drujinas" was a novelty for residents of Bishkek. During the second revolution of 2010, "drujinas" were formed before the actual revolution happened, i.e. when protests in Naryn and Talas have begun two and one day earlier respectively.

without big losses because of the support of "drujina" squads who had to physically resist the marauders. The reason for its outstanding livability is that it is the oldest shopping center in Bishkek built during the Soviet era, and which used to be a governmental central shop, but privatized into a corporation with the country#s independence. ZUM, along with the Ala-Too square and the White House is considered to be the centre of the city, and has a great symbolical meaning for residents of Bishkek, as a place for a lively cultural and social life.

"When all shopping centers were destroyed, we were absolutely shocked. And when we found out that ZUM has survived, we wanted to go there and protect it from those "myrks" with patrol squads we have formed. I see ZUM as almost heart of the city, I've spent quite a lot of time near ZUM when I was young – and not only me spent their youth there. ZUM has been the biggest shopping centre for a long time, and no wonder it has a big meaning for all residents of Bishkek. This is place of our youth." (Meder, male, engineer, 39).

As it was the second revolution in 2010, people already knew what to expect from it, and began to form "drujinas" even before the actual day of revolution, as the disturbances and demonstrations in front of the White House began during the first days of April. So on the day of the revolution, some "drujinas" have been protecting the White House from the destruction it has gone through during the first revolution, when the protesters physically entered the White House and partially destroyed its outer and inner interior, including all of the cabinets, and president's as well.

The activity of "drujinas" has been thoroughly supported by the interim governments of both revolutions, and thus the movement has acquired more vertical state of power and became legitimate. The amount of volunteers who joined "drujinas" is quite impressive (it reached the amount of 15 000 people), by the next day of the revolution in 2010, and in a period of about a month "drujinas" have been patrolling the city every night, beginning from 16.00 to 08.00 (AKIpress. 2010). As they were supported by governmental offices, they were provided with buses to ease the patrolling of the city during the night time, and to enlarge their accessibility to various "hot" spots during the following days of the revolutions. Various civil rights organizations in the city also organized citizens into bringing food for members of drujinas.

The open clashes between the citizens and marauders occurred in the revolution of 2010, when the residents, having previous experience were expecting marauders have prepared themselves to protect their property at the shopping centres. Shop-owners and members of the "drujina" squads have united to resist the looters (AKIpress, 2010). Such spots where the actual fight for the urban space objects have been quite numerous – "Narodnyi", "Beta Stores", "Vefa Centre" and other major shopping centres.

> "Well, we have managed to resist and protect "Narodnyi". We were fighting the whole night! People from the neigbouring dwelling houses went out to help and used mere bludgeons. We have resisted 3 waves of marauders. By the morning the forth wave was approaching us, but we fought them back as well. And then "drujina" squads came." (Meder, male, engineer, 39).

However, it was not only urban residents who experienced negative feelings towards protesters. The feeling was mutual, as protesters also did not feel quite comfortable with urban residents.

> "(participant of both revolutions) We had a common identity of patriots and revolutionists. We were part of a bigger Kyrgyz nation, and we thought of ourselves as representatives of Kyrgyz people. We were incorporated into one big whole and we had our aim of taking out the president Bakiev and Akaev from power. We thought that people, the revolutionists were outside, in the streets, and those who were sitting in their warm houses and watched news on TV were not our supporters. Mainly Bishkek citizens did not go out to join us; this was only us, people from outside Bishkek, who did the revolution. But we do not blame them, it was their choice, and Bishkek citizens in general are more scared of openly protesting, because they might lose their jobs if seen protesting". (Kasym, male, farmer, 52)

> "(participant of the revolution in 2010) When we were doing the revolution we did not think about anything. We were all together, we were united, we were together with our people, and we were not afraid of snipers and special military forces Bakiev sent to beat us. All those, who considered themselves as people of Kyrgyz nation, who were patriots, were there with us in the streets. And I am forever thankful to them, and I will always remember those who died in the name of the revolution." (Sovetbek, male, farmer, 47)

There were some open clashes between the protesters and citizen, and certainly there was an internal tension that occurred in the form of the symbolic fight over the city during and after the revolutions. Destruction of a number of important administrative and state buildings

has been a symbol of opposition to the centralized power and city as an actual bearer of power. Burning of the White House, Prosecutor's General Office, Tax administration have all become the manifestation against the power and people holding the power. Aside from governmental buildings, the houses and mansions of the president and prime-minister have also been destroyed and burned.

> "(participant of both revolutions) I wasn't one of those of who burned these buildings, moreover I accuse them for burning Tax administration and Prosecutor's office, as these objects are very important, and could help to accuse the leaders of their deeds. Anyways, I see the point why people around me were so eager to do that. They hated everything that was related to Akayev and Bakiev. I think they burned these buildings because they knew that this is power, and as they didn't like that power, they wanted to destroy it… After all, I am glad we did that, I am glad the city got some shake-up." (Aliyasbek, male, farmer, 54)

The opposition of active participants of the revolution and the citizens is based on the mutual feeling of supremacy of one group over another. In case of Bishkek residents who usually do not like people from rural areas and call them "myrks", while people from outside Bishkek also oppose them in a verbal form by referring to them as "Kirgiz" in Russian style of pronunciation, and refer to themselves as "Kyrgyz" as it is pronounced in Kyrgyz language. The feeling of supremacy that people from rural areas have is based on the idea that "Kirgiz" in the city have lost their traditional roots, and prefer speaking Russian, rather than Kyrgyz. Aside from that, villagers regard themselves as those who are more courageous and therefore powerful revolutionaries who made the revolutions come to reality and bring changes to the society, while simultaneously destroying the alien city.

> "(participant of both revolutions) I don't know…There were people from the city who participated in the demonstrations too, but mostly citizens of Bishkek were scared. They were scared to lose their jobs, they were scared that protesters were under the effect of drug and alcohol. And I understand their fears, they have things to lose, so they didn't want to risk. But I think that if they were real Kyrgyzs, those who have the blood of great Manas[9] running in their veins, they wouldn't be so afraid to come outside and join the revolution. They preferred to stay home and just watch TV instead." (Kasym, male, farmer, 52)

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[9] Manas – the main hero of the Epic Manas claimed by Kyrgyz, dating back to the 17-th century

This division on "Kirgiz" and "Kyrgyz" does not have explicit nationalistic pattern, rather it is more an opposition of the center and periphery, which are detached from one another by means of concentration of power and control, in spite of the fact, that they live in the same country. And it appears to be an evidence of the estrangement of the city from the village, similar to the estrangement of the power from the people.

4. The effect of revolutions on the physical space of the city

Kyrgyzstan and the two revolutions that it has gone through are seen by some political analysts as those from the category of "colour" revolutions that have been breaking out on the post-soviet space. However, Kyrgyzstan does not quite fit this category, as the main feature of these "colour" revolutions were the significant political or social reformations. The revolutions in Kyrgyzstan did have a significant transformation in a different sense, however – it was in the way physical space of the city was transformed after the revolutions. Among some of the striking examples of transformed city space are the destroyed shopping centers, offices and administrative buildings. The space of Bishkek has also been redefined by means of new monuments mainly at the centre of the city and unauthorized seizure of lands on the border or within the city.

Destroyed administrative and governmental offices and other commercial objects have gone through a temporary spatial transformation. By temporary I mean that they were destroyed, but in a period of month or two they have been reconstructed and renovated, although their new appearance strayed away from the previous ones, creating a different space with the same function as before. Especially the shopping centre have changed their outlook – while before the revolutions of 2005 and 2010 there was a plethora of outlets with glassy windows and walls, after the revolutions the absolute majority of shopping malls have become like fortresses with no glassy windows – all concrete and metal. And although buildings have

been reconstructed, they have had an impact on the spatial image of the city, and changed the way people perceived those objects.

> "The first revolution of 2005 was something out of imagination. We did not know that such thing could happen to our country and our people. And the consequences were terrible, the city was just ugly, buildings were empty and they somehow even seemed dark. (…) Me and my two sons used to go to Vefa Centre[10] quite often, because it had many things to offer to its clients, but after 2005, Vefa Centre does not really exist for me. I don't know, I just don't see it as place for gatherings, shopping, everything. So I don't go there much now." (Nargiza, female, accountant, 35)

> "First two days, especially in Bishkek, I had a strong feeling that I have somehow got to an absolutely different country. It seemed like people were the same, the same architecture, but there was something definitely different. By the way, I did not have this feeling in 2005, when the overthrow of power happened. I think that (physical) setting of the city has changed. It felt like it was the period of "perestroika", when everything was dark and undefined." (Mirbek, male, freelancer, 27)

During the first revolution the number of destroyed shopping centres and administrative buildings had been slightly higher, than during the second revolution. However, the second revolution has shown itself to be more destructive towards administrative buildings, as several important and strategic objects were burned – General Prosecutor's office and Tax administration, which symbolized people's aversion towards the centralized power and city in general. The White House has also been damaged as a result of the demonstrator's rage – professional snipers were sitting on the roof the building to prevent demonstrators to enter the territory, but this fact only made the numerous demonstrators angrier.

> "The snipers were shooting people whom they considered internal leaders of the movement, so they were targeting people who were talking on the phone and looked around themselves. The fact that the government was killing its own people made the demonstrators even angrier. So eventually they forced through the snipers shots and took the White House, it was the moment of victory. (…) After that, many people died, and the square is not a place for celebrations now. Some were suggesting and even the leader of the interim government supported it, that the White House and the General Prosecutor's offices should not be repaired, and that they should make them into museums. I support that idea, but the White House has been repaired, and it serves its function. But the Prosecutor's office is still standing there, all burned and reminds people of the bloody events of 7th of April." (Nurlan, male, photographer, 43)

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[10] Vefa Centre – a shopping centre located on the crossroads of Sovetskaya-Gorkogo, considered to be the edge of the centre of the city.

The acts of unauthorized seizure of lands have first appeared after the first revolution in 2005. Just as the revolution itself and marauding of the city, illegal land seizure appeared to be a new social phenomenon and has provoked the development of the negative feelings towards demonstrators and people who tried to make use of the chaotic situation in the country. The main lands that these people were demanding to be given into their disposal were (planting) lands close to the southern neighbourhoods of Bishkek. Approximately 3 000 people, mostly internal migrants gathered and squatted the lands, while building improvised houses and shelters without getting official permission from the new government in the person of Bakiev. They have occupied those lands for about a month, and then under the persuasions of the government representatives agreed to wait until the final decision was made. As a result, people did not get lands they demanded, instead some of the luckier squatters have been given lands in other remote parts of the city.

The small success of selected people after the revolution of 2005 has given hope for the second wave of squatters, who appeared after the second revolution. This time they were seizing lands on the west of the city, where croplands are situated, aside from the lands in the city, separate groups of squatters have been seizing lands in neighbouring villages of Bishkek where violent fights have taken places between squatters and owners of the lands, mostly farmers. The squatting this time had a more organized inclination, and various informal commissions were created to distribute lands among the squatters. The interim government, having learned the lesson from the previous revolution and the squatting practice, has decided to apply a more resolute rebuff to disperse the seizers. In a period of a month, the land-seizing has been slowed down.

The reaction of the population in Bishkek to land-seizers has been very negative which has been actively discussed in news blogs, internet forums and similar web-resources. Land seizing, marauding and revolutions have all been mixed into one, in the minds of most of the citizens.

"This is a total gang rule everywhere. Demonstrators now feel themselves as gods, and I tend to think that they do not take the law seriously. And the power has given them freedom, and does not really do anything to prevent violence, robbery and land seizing. The power has promised to give them lands! Good! And what would happen if tomorrow other people would come, and they would not be only 1,500-2000, but 10-15 thousands or even more, and would demand lands for themselves? Should we give up our own houses and property then?"(Kairat, male. An excerpt from an online-discussion, 19.04.2010)

Kairat is not the only person, who thinks that way. Many people from the capital share his thoughts, and were confused by the land-seizing process that happened after the revolutions. The transformation of space that has taken the form of destroyed buildings and seized lands has certainly been fired up by the revolutions, which in turn appeared to be the result of the internal opposition of citizens of Kyrgyzstan. Divisions on north and south, "Kirgiz" and "myrks" have all been triggered by the aversion of the centralized power and power-holders by the majority of the population. And the city of Bishkek has been spatially represented as the very symbol of the concentrated and centralized power and most importantly alien to people in the regions in the eyes of the demonstrators, marauders and land-seizers.

The transformation of space in Bishkek, was a necessity for the social change, and the demonstrators who were in their majority aliens to the city could only manifest it through the destruction of the main symbols of power in the city. "To build something new, one has to first destroy the previous construction" – was the main message of the revolution and the following chaos, the connotation which comes up from the interviews I have conducted with people who have participated in the revolution. The city should have been shaken up, and so the residents should have woken up from the dream, where they were detached from the other parts of the country. The very process of the revolution, and the streets that were chosen by the protesters was meant to bring attention to the demonstrations and stop the everyday rhythm of the city. And one has to admit, they were successful, many governmental and private offices were closed, the city literally stopped before the people full of rage against the power.

Many objects that have been affected during the revolution bore a special symbolic meaning for the people and the state which controlled it. The Ala-Too square has always been

associated with its historical context during the Soviet Union, when it was used as a place for the sociation of people through marches and through the symbolic and conceptual characteristics of it, which were ascribed by the state, and later accepted by the population. The wide open public space of it represented the power of the state, and the reason why the revolutions happened at the square becomes evident – it is full of symbols of power, and it is located in a strategic proximity to the White House.

After the revolutions the square and other objects affected by the revolutions are not only perceived as places for socialization and intermediate places between everyday activities, but also as a place of hope for changes and better life, as well as the memorial to the chaotic, nightmarish, carnival-like nights and tragic events.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union the Ala-Too square has been partially loosing its social function and value, as the state, mainly used the square to display its power by means of mass festivals and celebrations. The display of power was not militaristic, which could create a vertical understanding of power by instilling the image of the state as an authority, which should be respected and feared to some extent (as it was during the Soviet era). The power and state in the independent Kyrgystan have, on the contrary, been displayed and as such perceived by people in a horizontal level, where every other person is your relative, thus making the state authoritarian, corrupted and nepotic. Horizontal perception is especially typical for the residents of rural areas, as they tend to follow traditions more than those in the capital.

Chapter conclusion:

Since the acquisition of independence the Ala-Too square has gradually turned into a place for "social games" and displays of sociation among people, rather than a place for (aggressive) power display by the state. The very process of two revolutions evidences to how protesters, who in their majority were rural residents made use of the urban space – blocking

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the strategically important streets and destroying the symbolic assets of the city, to manifest the detachment and alienation of them from urban citizens. Constant change of the symbolic assets in the city due to the changes of the ruling regimes has alienated rural residents from Bishkek as a centre of the country and power. This in turn has become a cause for the emergence of mutual indifference and rupture in the overall economic, social and political development between the two. Accordingly the spatial representation of the revolutions which was schematically represented in Map 1 serves as a cognitive map of how demonstrators perceived the space around them, and what they considered to be important in the whole urban space of Bishkek. The schematic movement of people thus is the intuitive spatial image of Bishkek, and it is important to note that the main buildings that were damaged or marauded during the revolutions were located in close proximity to the centre, which reflects the demonstrator's movement in the city.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSION

This study has investigated how the population of Kyrgyzstan was engaged in two revolutions after the collapse of the Soviet Union, during which the capital of the republic has gone through a chain of shifts of the symbolic meaning of Bishkek, which resulted in the division of the population on "Kirgiz" and "myrks" and thus enforcing the regional detachment of the centre and periphery. Drawing on the anthropological works of the spatial influence on the social and political life of the society, and political analyses of the events of 2005 and 2010 in Bishkek, I studied how the urban space of the city had an impact on the process and effects of the revolutions.

The ethnographic research I have conducted to support my research has revealed corroboration of my theoretical and empirical implications. The division of the country on north and south, centre and periphery has played a major role during the revolutions, where the overall perception of the city and events has been radically different between the two parties – citizens of Bishkek, and demonstrators of the revolutions, who were mainly rural residents. This rupture in the sensing of the urban space of Bishkek, has resulted in the destruction of the main administrative and state buildings, partial damage of the Ala-Too square where main events have taken place, the shopping malls that have been increasing the sense of alienation of the city from the usual rural landscape and illegal land seizing during the next months after the revolution.

As such the concepts of "spatial triad", "spatial agency" and "centre-periphery" have come to be empirically relevant to the whole study. Henry Lefebvre's "spatial triad" in my research is represented in the main spatial objects that were affected during the revolutions in Bishkek: conceived space is the space that has been ascribed and given meaning by the government officials, architects and urban planners, in my particular case these are the Ala-Too square, Tax administration, General Prosecutor's office, architectural and cultural monuments in the centre of Bishkek; perceived space is the daily routines of the conceived space, and is

represented by the same buildings with the difference that the way they are perceived by people does not have a clear symbolic and ideological meaning; and finally the lived space which is encountered in everyday life by people and is surrounded by the daily life and practices of people (Lefebvre, 1974). The conflictual nature of the 'spatial triad' is very representative in the case of the revolutions in Bishkek, where the revolutions happened twice at the same square and used the same streets and buildings to manifest the rage and dissatisfaction with the ruling power and the centre of the country. In this regard, the revolutions in Bishkek appears to be a result of the confronting application of the triad where the state could not find the balance between the three, as the very spatial look of the city claimed its alienation from the rest of the country, and emphasised the detachment of the city from the rural area, as well as the detachment of urban residents from rural residents. "Spatial triad" also is reflected in the way how the schematic movement of people during the revolutions represented the cognitive map of people engaged in the revolutions. The choice of exactly those routes was not ever accidental, indeed it was rather significant, taking into consideration the fact that they were used twice during both of the revolutions. It shows that Bishkek appeared to be "concentrated" exactly on those streets and buildings in the minds of the demonstrators, which affected their manifestation of the rage through exactly those spatial objects.

The complex phenomenon of the revolutions in Kyrgyzstan is a product of the inter-relation between architecture, social and political changes which is best represented by the concept of "spatial agency" (Gotham, 2001). The concept and its understanding engages both physical space and the agent to explain the influence and role of space on social and political movements in Bishkek, where the inter-dependence of spatial symbolism, political regime in the country and social inequality in the form of regionalism have not been independent from each other, but rather were influencing each other on various levels. Kyrgyzstan's historical, and to some point artificial division on north and south has been one of the main reasons for

the overthrowing of the presidents by northern or southern regions depending on the origin of both presidents. This division has been fired up by another division that has developed in its full range during the period of independence, when the rupture of the centre and periphery has grown to be fatal for the ruling regime. The centre-periphery division of the population and the country in general has begotten linguistic and cultural differentiation of the urban residents and those who live in the periphery. Mutual dependency, and simultaneous mutual dislike of the centre and periphery found its peak during the revolutions, when the violent masses of protesters have literally occupied the city, while destroying the symbolic manifestation of power and ideology in the capital, and also marauding the shopping centres and administrative buildings as a display of disregard towards the symbolic supremacy of Bishkek as a centre and capital of Kyrgyzstan.

Given all the above mentioned aspects of the revolutions, it is appropriate to mention that the horizontal perception of power has developed in Kyrgyzstan after the fall of the USSR, when the vertical line of power is not applicable and thus overlooked by degrading the meaning and power of Bishkek and the ruling elite in general. This horizontal perception when every other person is your relative, made the whole process that preceded the revolutions possible. The "spatial triad", "spatial agency" and "centre-periphery" conceptions are all interrelated and flow one into another, thus making them inseparable from the case of Kyrgyzstan, as they all explain the phenomenon of Kyrgyzstan and the two revolutions in a row in the post-soviet area.

Further implications on the topic include the development of a more vertical system of power, when the state and the centre are articulated by means of power display not only in the capital, but also in the peripheral regions of the country. This would lessen the rupture and detachment of Bishkek from other regions of Kyrgyzstan, and also would effect on the homogeneous identity of the population, thus strengthening the economic, political and social

potential of the country for further development of Kyrgyzstan in the world political and social arena.

Current field of research is extremely underrepresented in Kyrgyzstan, and Central Asia in general, thus further studies are highly important for the general well-being of the region, as Central Asian countries sharing similar historical past are deeply interrelated with each other. This study with a particular focus on Kyrgyzstan might serve as an example of how the capital's rupture from the rest of the country influences on the social unrest and general dissatisfaction of the population. Accordingly, Kyrgyzstan and other neighbouring states with similar historical and cultural backgrounds should incorporate their forces into joint development and advancement in the world.

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