

**THE CITY AND THE STEPPE: TERRITORY, TECHNOLOGIES OF GOVERNMENT, AND  
KAZAKHSTAN'S NEW CAPITAL**

by

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## ABSTRACT

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Koch, Natalie Rochelle (PhD, Geography Department)

The city and the steppe: Territory, technologies of government, and Kazakhstan's new capital

Thesis directed by Professor John O'Loughlin

This dissertation explores how various actors in Kazakhstan have constituted the state's sovereign authority since gaining independence in 1991, and it contributes to a broad range of literatures, from political and urban geography, to post-Soviet and Central Asian regional studies. Considering both elite and popular actors, I stress the positive effects of power (rather than solely seeing it as "dominating" or "coercive") to explain the genuine popularity of the "developmental regime" that has evolved under President Nazarbayev's leadership. Using a case-oriented approach that focuses on the new capital city, Astana, the project employs mixed qualitative and quantitative methods, including data from a country-wide survey, interviews, participant observation, focus groups, and textual analysis. These tools are used to examine a set of interlocking political economic and territorial practices, as well as the geopolitical imaginaries on which they depend. I argue that the urban development project in Astana has been vital to the paternalist state-building project, which has conditioned new state-society relations since independence. Theoretically, this dissertation elaborates a Foucauldian "practice-based" approach, which attends to material and rhetorical practices, technologies of government, and geopolitical imaginaries in establishing three key structural effects, or "transactional realities" in independent Kazakhstan: the "state," "territory," and "society." Thus, the main question I answer is: Since 1991, what forces and power relations, spatial imaginaries, practices of government and representation, and which actors are involved in creating and sustaining the transactional realities of Kazakhstan as a coherent "state," governing a demarcated "society" and "territory"?

*This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Jenn Dinaburg*

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*Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation, or any other granting organization.*

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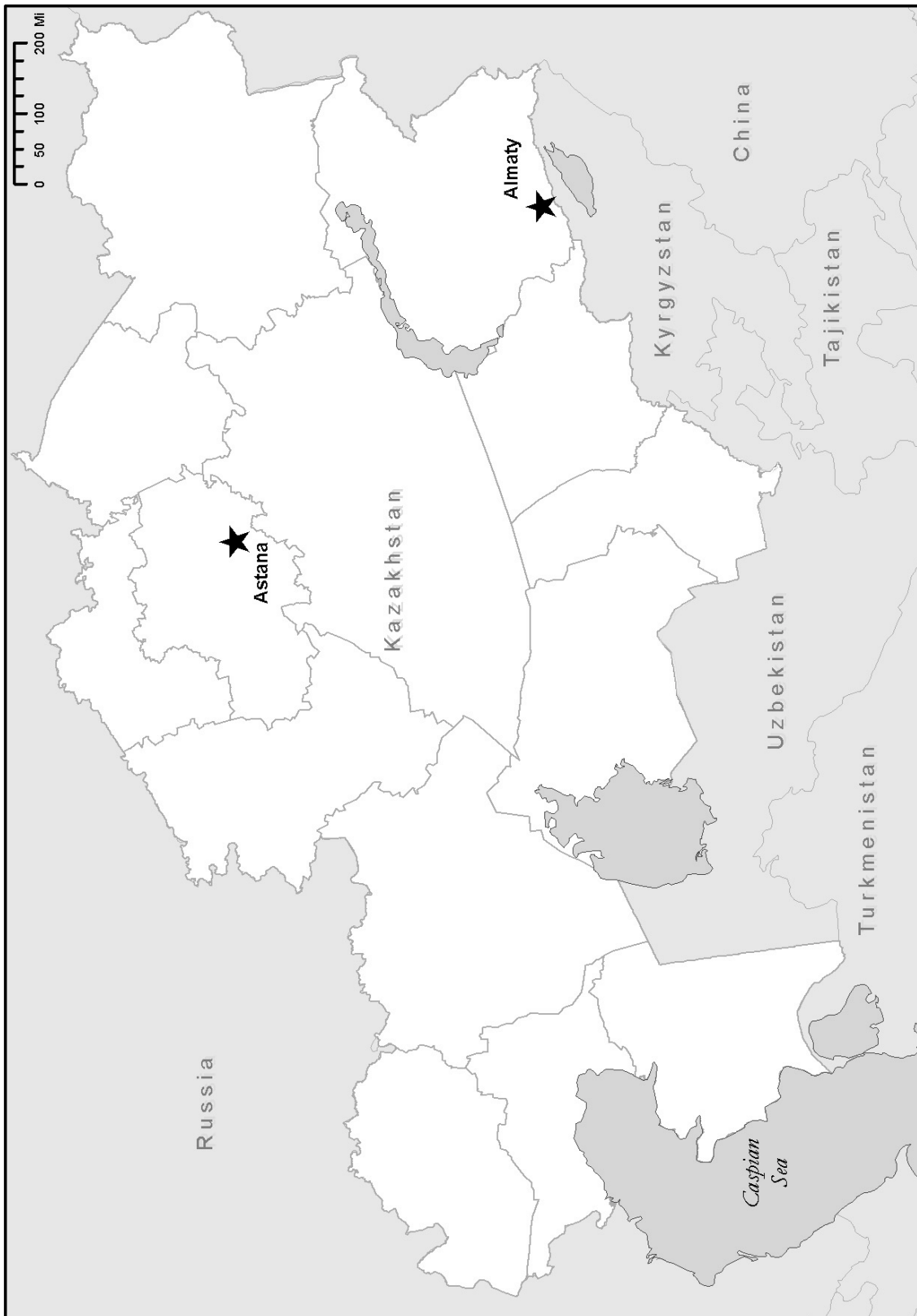
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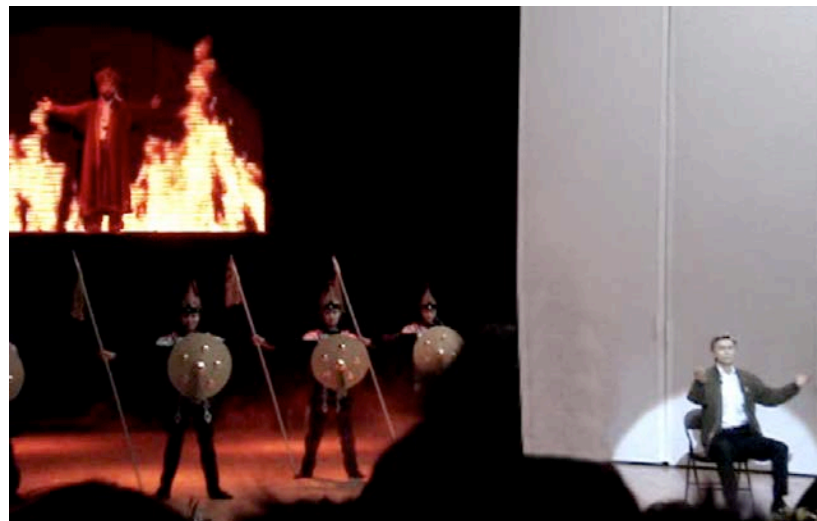
## MAP OF KAZAKHSTAN



## **I. Introduction**

Nursultan Nazarbayev, who became the Communist Party Secretary of the Kazakh SSR in 1989, has been president of Kazakhstan since the republic gained independence in 1991. In 1994, he announced to the Parliament that the new state was to have a new capital city, Aqmola (later renamed Astana). He argued that the move from Almaty was necessary for a number of good reasons: Almaty's insufficient space for government expansion, its dangerous location along a seismological fault line and environmental problems, the relative depopulation of Kazakhstan's northern territory, and the fact that a capital city should be close to the center of a country far from external borders (Nazarbayev 2006b, 338). Since the capital was officially moved in 1997, the Nazarbayev regime has privileged representations of Astana in its nation-building and international prestige-building projects. Nazarbayev is framed as the author and father of the new capital, and the city assumes a mythological dimension in official discourses. This is exemplified in the 2009 opening ceremony of the Astana Day celebrations (a national holiday since 2008), at which a theatrical enactment portrayed President Nazarbayev receiving the vision, blessing, and command to move the capital from Ablai Khan<sup>1</sup> (see Figure 1.1).

There is debate about why President Nazarbayev “really” elected to move the capital. Speculation abounds and it is a popular subject of discussion among ordinary citizens. Some suspect that it was an attempt to de-center the political power of Almaty-based clans, while others suggest that it



**Figure 1.1.** Nazarbayev receiving the vision to move the capital from Ablai Khan. July 2009. Source: Author.

was because Almaty was too susceptible to invasion from China, and yet others see it as an attempt to hamper

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<sup>1</sup> Ablai Khan (r. 1771-1781) was a Kazakh khan from the Middle *zhuz*, known for his efforts to create a unified and centralized Kazakh state.

threats of irredentism in the Russian-dominated north. In this dissertation, rather than search for a “true” motive, I examine the political geographic implications of the very act of speculating about motives. I argue that fore among these implications is the structural effect of inscribing a naturalized and coherent “state” and “territory” – with their myth of coherence being woven in the imaginaries and practices of citizens and elites alike. Not only has the discourse been a key avenue for articulating geopolitical imaginaries (equally about “domestic” space as about “foreign” spaces), but it has also factored prominently in subject-making processes, in which ordinary citizens (and elites) frame themselves as national subjects (and agents) of the “state,” situated in its geographically-conceived “territory.” So while the capital change discourse, as promoted by political elites, is instrumental to creating the impression of a the “state” as an authoritative actor, ordinary people also participate and, in so doing, confirm their role as part of “society,” subject to external to state rule.

The capital change is thus an ideal place to begin discussions with bureaucrats and ordinary citizens alike, in order to shed light on the socially and territorially uneven nature of independence-era state-making in Kazakhstan. As we shall see, Astana’s development is linked to various imaginaries about the country’s domestic geography (e.g. a north/south divide, and an urban/rural divide), but also to broader geopolitical imaginaries about Kazakhstan’s place in the world. In particular, Astana has been promoted by the regime as the “geopolitical center of Eurasia,” an image that is inscribed in and through the city’s symbolic and urban landscapes. By focusing on Astana, I am able to examine the co-constitution of geopolitical and nationalist scripts, not only rhetorically but also materially: through the built environment, lived experience, spectacle, sport, international statecraft, and regional differentiation. Domestically, the target audience of the Astana development project is not just Astana’s residents, but the country’s population at large, since the image of the city is projected around the country in various visual media, such as photographs, television clips, and billboards, as well as the spectacles surrounding Astana Day. It is also projected to an international audience, as part of what has been called the country’s *imidzh proyekt* (“image project”), i.e. the elite project to improve Kazakhstan’s prestige and name recognition internationally.

While Astana is the centerpiece of this dissertation, I treat it as an avenue for opening up a number of other questions about Kazakhstan’s new regime’s attempt to territorialize itself and thus naturalize a variety of interlocking power relations – which are, of course, unstable and always shifting, but generally support the broader effort of key individuals to inscribe the state as a meaningful rhetorical construct, grounded in a particular material (i.e. spatial) reality. These key individuals include President Nazarbayev and his circle of “intellectuals [who] think

that they *are* the State” (Gramsci 2008, 16). But ordinary citizens are also implicated in the processes of state-making through certain “technologies of government,” which encompass the joint phenomena of governing others and governing the self, and include “an assemblage of forms of practical knowledge, with modes of perception, practices of calculation, vocabularies, types of authority, forms of judgement, architectural forms, human capacities, non-human objects and devices” (Rose 1999, 52).

This theoretical approach of examining “technologies of government” not only complicates the humanist assumptions about political agency and the concomitant one-dimensional notion of power as domination, but it also challenges the humanist neglect of the material forces of things and space. It is informed by a Foucauldian practice-based approach (see below), originating in what has recently come to be labeled as the “practice turn” in the social sciences (Jones and Murphy 2011). By applying this approach to some of the enduring questions of political geography, I move beyond conventional approaches to territory and state-society relations. The crucial shift I make is to shift attention away from “things” themselves to the *practices* of objectifying things or “transactional realities” (*réalités de transaction*), i.e. not “primary and immediate” realities, but “those transactional and transitional figures [...], which although they have not always existed are nonetheless real, are born precisely from the interplay of relations of power and everything which constantly eludes them, at the interface, so to speak, of governors and governed” (Foucault 2008, 297).

From this standpoint, the state as a “governor” cannot be understood separately from a contingently-defined objectivization of the “governed” (Veyne 1997, 160), e.g. “territory” (or the “homeland”) and “society” (or the “nation”) as in the modernist state system. As Veyne (1997, 155) notes in the case of bread and circuses in ancient Greece and Rome, it would be impossible to explain a “phenomenon as particular and as precisely dated as bread and circuses–” (and in my case, as “territory” as a site of government) “unless we allow specifications, historical accidents, and ideological influences to proliferate, at the price of endless verbiage.” The imperative is thus to start “with that practice itself, so that the object to which it applies is what it is only in relation to that practice” (Veyne 1997, 155). For the concept of territory, this practice would *not* be “territoriality” as geographers often seem to assume (e.g. Antonisch 2011; Paasi 2009), but rather *government*. The practice of territoriality already implies the existence of territory as a site of intervention, whereas the practice of government could imply any range of sites of intervention. I thus reject political geography’s common division between “territorial” and “non-territorial” strategies for controlling people, objects, and relationships (as in Sack’s (1983) profoundly influential theory of

territoriality). By taking the practice-based method seriously, I argue that this dichotomy not only obscures the highly political processes of objectifying space as “territory” and people as “society” (or “citizens” or the “nation”), but it also obscures the untenable division between these two sites of intervention. “Territory” in my understanding is thus a geo-historically-contingent correlative of practices of government and their corresponding political technologies.

My goal is thus to explore the political technologies, spatial imaginaries, material forces implicated in the spatially and temporally contingent objectivizations of these transactional realities. I limit myself to three in this dissertation: the state, society, and territory. My primary research question is thus:

*Since 1991, what forces and power relations, spatial imaginaries, practices of government and representation, and which actors are involved in creating and sustaining the transactional realities of Kazakhstan as a coherent “state,” governing a demarcated “society” and “territory”?*

The processes implicated in their contemporary (but by no means static) form long precede Kazakhstan officially gaining independence, being most recently rooted in Soviet power arrangements and arts of government. However, the state-society-territory relationship is comprised of a set of bordering practices that stabilize the meaning of each conceptual node, and it must constantly be reproduced rhetorically and in the imagination of the governors and the governed. I thus attend to some important ways in which the state-society-territory relationship has shifted in Kazakhstan’s independence era. In doing so, I examine both rhetorical and material practices. This is because the state-society-territory bordering processes are not confined to some alternate “mental” realm, but are co-constituted with the material environment (Billig 1995; Giddens 1979; Mitchell 1991; Painter 2006). In this dissertation, I explore some of those material practices, and how they have factored into producing the transactional realities of the state, society, and territory in Kazakhstan.

In this work, I adopt a broad understanding of what constitutes the “geopolitical,” challenging its conventional equation in political geography and political science with the realm of international affairs. Arguing that the “domestic” and the “international” constitute each other in and through the international state system. Any geopolitical project is just as much about international politics as it is about domestic politics, and it necessarily involves constantly inscribing the state as a spatial imaginary and material reality. There are countless state- and nation-building processes that underpin the strategic power relations of those acting in the name of the “state,” and a fundamental characteristic of these strategies is that they are spatially, socially, and temporally uneven. As such, I

seek to draw out this uneven nature of state- and nation-building through a broad consideration of places, people, and politics in Kazakhstan. That said, this dissertation gives special attention one particular place: Astana, Kazakhstan's new capital city as of 1997.

## **II. Methods and literature**

### *A. The practice-based approach and mixed methods*

Theoretically, this dissertation develops a Foucauldian “practice-based method,” which I detail in Chapter 2. Preferring Michel Foucault's approach to power and domination, I find that his major contribution, and where he arguably stands apart from others (especially Marxist or quasi-Marxist thinkers such as Gramsci, Bourdieu, Giddens, etc.), is his rejection of “ideology”: “The difference is simply that Foucault undertakes to speak about practice *precisely*, to describe its convoluted forms, instead of referring to it in vague and noble terms.” “Ideology” has the problematic effect of separating practice from consciousness, but also because it tends to smooth over the complexities and apparent incoherence of everyday practice (Veyne 1997). With this goal of speaking “precisely” about practice, I take my inspiration primarily from the work of Michel Foucault (but also those who have worked explicitly with this method, e.g. Mitchell 1988, 1990, 1991, 2002; Veyne 1990, 1997). I argue that the practice-based method that I outline in Chapter 2 provides a useful way to overcome many of the challenges of conducting research in a place where people are not governed and do not govern themselves through “freedom” (as in liberalism), and where the voicing of “opinions” is far from the most salient political practice.

By attending to the routine and the non-routine practices (rhetorical and material), my methods are not designed to “unveil” some hidden social reality, but instead aim to trace the outcomes (intended or otherwise) and structural effects of practices. In Chapter 3, I provide an extensive discussion of the specific methods that I employ in this dissertation, as well as the literature bodies to which I aim to contribute. Through empirical research on “disaggregated and localized” geopolitics (Ó Tuathail 2010), I unite some of the theoretical emphases of political geography, with the thick regional accounts found in the Central Asian studies literature. This approach is connected to recent trends in political geography, which have stressed localized studies utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods (Brubaker 2006; Hyndman and de Alwis 2004; Megoran 2004a; Mills 2007; Ó Tuathail 2010). In this vein, I bring together interviews, focus groups, and textual analysis with country-wide survey data – ultimately with the aim of reaching beyond problematic habit in geography of seeing qualitative and quantitative



approaches as essentially incompatible (Barnes 2009; Elwood 2010; Kwan 2002, 2004; Kwan and Schwanen 2009; Sheppard 2001).

### *B. Political geography*

This dissertation contributes primarily to the subdiscipline of political geography, and particularly to discussions on state theory, territoriality, nationalism, and critical geopolitics. Through the case study of Astana, I also continue a long tradition in political geography of considering the role of state capitals in nation-building projects and the inscription of domestic power relations (Adams 2008; Anacker 2004; Beer 2008; Bell 1999; Claval 2000; Ford 2008; Gilbert and Driver 2000; Gritsai and van der Wusten 2000; Houston 2005; Knight 1977; Šír 2005; Ter-Ghazaryan 2010; van der Wusten 2000; Wagenaar 2000; Wolfel 2002; and in other disciplines, see Agricola 2000; Kolbe 2006; Miháliková 2006; Schatz 2004b; Stronski 2010; Vale 2008). However, much of this previous work has been primarily descriptive, whereas I approach the subject from a localized critical geopolitics perspective (Ó Tuathail 2010). Previous studies on monumentality in urban design have demonstrated that it is an important expression of a state's identity project – and even more so under nondemocratic regimes than in more democratic settings (Adams 2008; Ford 2008; Gilbert and Driver 2000; Sidirov 2000; Šír 2005; Smith 2008; Wagenaar 2000). As the study of capital cities has largely been the arena of urban and historical geography, this research extends such studies by attending more explicitly to the political geographies of the capital city development project in Kazakhstan.

This project also addresses a shortcoming of most the critical geopolitics studies, which have failed to analyze the geopolitical cultures and traditions in regions *within* a given state (Kolossoff and Toal 2007, 203), despite a theoretical recognition that nation-building takes place differentially across state territories (Agnew 1987, 40; Agnew 1994; Brubaker 1996, 65; Painter 2006, 764; Wilson and Donnon 1998, 16). Kazakhstan's marked regionalization and demographic diversity make it an ideal empirical case study for this process, which I argue has an important effect on site-specific geopolitical cultures. By narrowing in on one particular country, I tease out various and contrasting geopolitical imaginaries, which may oppose or confirm those articulated by state-scale actors.

### *C. Central Asian regional studies<sup>2</sup>*

A further reason to focus on Kazakhstan is that the considerable diversity of the post-communist space means that a country-specific study promises to provide more concrete insight than a broad regional study. By engaging most directly with Central Asian regional studies (i.e. rather than post-communist or post-Soviet studies), I emphasize the unique social, cultural, political, and economic history of this region. Laura Adams (2010, 13) has argued that Central Asia *can* usefully be compared with other post-communist settings because they share the following similarities:

postcolonial dilemmas that are expressed through public debate about belonging (to Europe, to the East) and the alternately respected and resented role of Russian culture; discourses of normalcy that were often framed in national terms; hybridity of Soviet, traditional, and globalized culture in the postsocialist reconstruction of national identity; and the lasting importance of a Soviet habitus in shaping how post-Soviet national cultures were reinvented.

While I do not dispute the claim that these constitute useful grounds for comparison, I simply advocate a research agenda that prioritizes highly contextual and grounded empirical work.

This localized critical geopolitics perspective, I argue, is an important antidote to much existing literature on authoritarian regime resilience and legitimacy in the region and globally. In political science, for example, researchers too frequently presume a liberal conception of power and agency, which cannot properly account for the unique paternal power relations that tend to characterize “authoritarian” settings. Often framed as studies in democratization, this work tends to start with the question of how the regimes differ in terms of their tactics for and success in gaining popular approval and/or complacency (e.g. Adams and Rustemova 2009; Cummings 2002, 2009; Denison 2009; Fumagalli 2007; Ilkhamov 2007; Linz 2000; Marat 2009; March 2002, 2003; Matveeva 2009; McFaul 2002; Megoran 2008; Murzakulova and Schoeberlein 2009; Schatz 2006, 2008, 2009c; Shnirelman 1996; Šir 2005; Suny 1999, 2006a, 2006b).

Finding that this work does not adequately account for the agency of a uniquely “passive” citizenry, I expand on existing work in the social sciences to address the issue of their complicity (Adams 2010; Javeline 2003; Wedeen 1999, 2008, 2009; Yurchak 1997, 2003, 2006). Doing so requires a more nuanced understanding of power and government. As such, I work with the theoretical insights of three writers (Michel Foucault, Paul Veyne, and

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<sup>2</sup> In this dissertation, I use the term “Central Asia” to describe the Soviet successor states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. While the categorization of these states as a “homogenous” region is problematic, I use it as shorthand, for heuristic purposes, and in following with the vast majority of current scholarship. Although there are important differences between them, these states have inherited very similar and very important historical legacies from the Soviet Union that merit their grouping in the discussions presented here.

Timothy Mitchell), in order to theorize power more explicitly. This approach eschews liberal notions of power as domination being exercised over autonomous agents, who are seen as supporting their autocratic rulers either through their apathy, being brainwashed, or being “co-opted” by agitating ethnic nationalist elites. I instead stress an understanding of power relations being just as much about positive effects than about domination and coercion.

President Nazarbayev’s regime is indeed popular among Kazakhstanis, despite the fact that it is wildly corrupt and undemocratic. But it has offered them a modicum of comfort, which is notably situated in “a certain hierarchy of regional disasters, making people think that ‘here it is still not as bad as elsewhere’” (Matveeva 2009, 1107). Astana has also been an important source of pride for citizens, who see the city not only as home to great economic opportunity, but also for increasing international prestige through the “modern” image of their country that it provides the world. By employing methods that highlight thick regional knowledge, my research moves beyond seeing the country’s stability and regime resilience as a function of state-scale “legitimation,” but as a complex interaction of power relations in and through a series of “technologies of government” – of both the self and others – as well as broader geopolitical contexts.

#### *D. Limitations and silences of the dissertation*

Given certain contextual and logistical limitations, there are a number of silences of this dissertation. Although some of these silences are deliberate, laying too far outside the research questions to merit full attention here, others simply could not be adequately researched in the framework of the project. The constricted nature of Kazakhstan’s political environment was the most determining factor in what could or could not be researched. Although there is little in the way of overt state-scale violence<sup>3</sup>, Nazarbayev’s political regime is generally characterized as authoritarian. Freedom House rankings are one of the simplest ways to illustrate how the political situation in Kazakhstan compares to other places around the world (despite my recognition of the political sensitivity of the institution and the practice of reporting). On their 1 to 7 scale of “free” to “not free,” Kazakhstan’s 2012 score for political rights is 6, and civil liberties is 5 (Freedom House 2012, 16). This gives it an overall categorization of “not free” – the lowest ranking assigned to about 1/4 of countries in the world – meant to designate those countries “where basic political rights are absent, and basic civil liberties are widely and systematically

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<sup>3</sup> With the exception of an incident in December 2011, in which police forces in Zhanaozen (a Western town along the Caspian coast) fired on protesting oil workers, killing 16 and injuring many more.

denied” (Freedom House 2012, 2).<sup>4</sup> This situation in Kazakhstan is reflected in a certain “culture of fear” (an idea I explore in more depth in Chapter 2). Citizens may not experience fear on a day-to-day basis, but “in a very basic way, in a culture of fear, meaning itself is made possible by what is missing” (Mitchell 2002, 153). The specifically translates into a reticence to engage in discussions that are deemed “political,” and the “political” is defined precisely as those subjects which could endanger one’s safety.

The contemporary situation is similar to that of the Soviet Union, where citizens were hyper-aware of the consequences of their words and whether these conformed with the prevailing official line: a falsely placed noun or adjective could cost a person their life. In independent Kazakhstan, it is illegal to speak negatively about Nazarbayev, and indeed few people actually mention his name when they do speak about him (typically saying “he” (*on*) or “our president” (*nash president*)). Accordingly, I generally refrained from discussing him, and was extremely careful to avoid putting participants in a situation, in which they might directly criticize Nazarbayev (criticism of elites abstractly was somewhat more acceptable). Yet the situation is not so dire as it was under the Soviet regime – when people were encouraged to turn in fellow citizens. However, there are still systematic infringements on press freedom, as well as idiosyncratic ones – such as a newspaper editor who recently suffered serious consequences over something as simple as a crossword clue. The prompt was, “Name the house of a Kazakh street bum,” and the correct answer was “yurt,” the traditional home of Kazakh nomads. For this, he was found guilty of “igniting ethnic hatred,” fined heavily (around US\$1000), and the newspaper was closed (RFE/RL 2011b). This crime of “igniting ethnic hatred” is frequently used to squelch opposition voices, and generally contributes to a silence about inter-ethnic relations in Kazakhstan. Given popular awareness of the political sensitivity of this issue, I only superficially addresses ethnic issues (see Chapter 5), but cannot give them the treatment they deserve.

Another major silence pertains to religious freedom: though the situation is not as dire as in neighboring Uzbekistan, free expression of religion is broadly restricted. Despite pervasive official rhetoric about religious harmony (exemplified in Nazarbayev’s World Religions Conference initiative), there have been increasing official restrictions placed on religious freedom (most recently in September 2011; see Najibullah, 2011). Though Kazakhs typically identify as Muslim, overall observance is quite low, and there is a significant intolerance for overt displays

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<sup>4</sup> For a full explanation of the criteria, see Freedom House 2012, 34-35. For political rights, they include questions on the electoral process, political pluralism and participation, function of the government, and some additional discretionary questions. For civil liberties, the criteria include freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, and personal autonomy and individual rights.

of Muslim religiosity – ostensibly because of the threats of extremism and terrorism in the region.<sup>5</sup> There is also an lack of tolerance for religious diversity, and proselytizing is strictly forbidden.<sup>6</sup> Given this situation, I do not dedicate any serious discussion to the issue of “political Islam” or the role of religion in contemporary Kazakhstan. These issues are, of course, relevant to understanding current affairs, but religion is a heavily muted subject that I could not adequately address in the framework of my study.

### **III. Chapter overview**

This dissertation consists of 7 chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. Chapters 2-3 are primarily theoretical, while Chapters 4-6 present the empirical data. These three analysis chapters are loosely structured according to what I see as the three major roles that have been accorded to the “state” in Kazakhstan since independence. First, it is cast as a geopolitical actor, i.e. an autonomous agent in global affairs (Chapter 4). Second, in a similar fashion, it is imagined as a territorial unit, lined up alongside other ostensibly coherent and internally homogenous state units (Chapter 5). Third, it is conceived of as a governmental apparatus, or an external body, which governs autonomous subjects who constitute the “society” (i.e. the nation or the citizenry) (Chapter 6). All three visions of the state depend on one another, and all three are just as spatial as they are political. As each chapter demonstrates, these visions may be dominant, but as sets of practices, they are far from stable or static. My goal throughout this dissertation is thus to illustrate how the myth of coherence gets woven from these infinite and diverse practices, pointing to how the “transactional realities” of the state, territory, and society have been materialized in contemporary Kazakhstan.

In Chapter 2, I introduce how I will treat “power” in this dissertation, challenging one-dimensional understandings of power that counterpose coercion and persuasion. As an alternative, I propose a Foucauldian practice-based approach of studying “technologies of government,” which treats material and rhetorical practices as empirical data in the effort to discern their structural effects. Such an approach examines how the actors, who see

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<sup>5</sup> The following experience I had in summer 2011, for example, is typical: when traveling to Astana from a nearby town, I was seated next to a Kazakh woman reading the newspaper. When she arrived at an article about religion in Kazakhstan, she pointed to the accompanying picture of a veiled Muslim woman and proceeded to tell me how awful it was that there were ‘such’ people in Kazakhstan – implying conservative Muslims who dress to reflect their beliefs, as opposed to most Kazakhs, who consider themselves Muslim but do not wear ‘Muslim’ attire. This was not an isolated occurrence; women who veil in Kazakhstan are deeply stigmatized and openly degraded, primarily by other women.

<sup>6</sup> Christian missionaries, for example, tend to resort to unconventional means of reaching out to people; e.g. a Protestant woman in Astana owns a café/bookstore, where religious conversations can be overheard and religious books found on the shelves, but all of which is carefully controlled so as to limit grounds for official harassment.

themselves “as” the state, seek to colonize these practices and channel them into the broader goals of constructing a the myth of a coherent and unitary “state.” I have set this theoretical discussion as a standalone chapter in part as a matter of convenience, but also because I find that a detailed theoretical coverage of power should be the keystone to any study of political geography. The issue of power is, after all, strongly implicated in every aspect of the research process (Moss 2002; Thrift 2007), and as a study of political geography, this dissertation is also an act of inscribing a particular political geography. In Chapter 3, I continue to elaborate my theoretical approach, and begin to introduce some central Soviet legacies and their implications for the technologies of government that have evolved in independent Kazakhstan. I then present the empirical methodology that I employed in order to assess them, and to answer the research questions outlined above.

I begin to present the empirical data in Chapter 4, concentrating on how discussions about the capital change (i.e. from Almaty to Astana) reflect popular and elite imaginaries about all the major geopolitical questions faced by independent Kazakhstan. I focus on imaginations about two of Kazakhstan’s regional neighbors, Russia and China. I argue that, through discussions about Astana and the decision to move the capital, elites and ordinary citizens alike are able to articulate certain geographically-based fears, as well as concerns connected to the political economy of domestic and regional relations and politics. In Chapter 5, I also consider geopolitical imaginaries, but instead emphasize how the capital change discourse sheds light on various popular geopolitical imaginations about Kazakhstan’s territory and its internal, regional divisions. I argue that discourses and material practices surrounding the Astana project constitute a crucial way for elites to constitute their authority as agents of a coherent and sovereign actor (by defining a new state) in space (the new territory) and in the minds of its inhabitants (the new society).

I continue this argument in Chapter 6, where I argue that this authority is tied to the Nazarbayev regime’s developmentalist focus on providing citizens with economic improvement and “progress.” Elite projects in Astana are designed to give the impression of a “benevolent” regime and are highly dependent on a synecdochic imaginary, whereby mega-projects are supposed to stand in for country-wide (spatially and socially diffuse) developments. As with all the previous chapters, I demonstrate how these imaginaries simultaneously depend upon and help to materialize various material practices. Through a case study of spectacle, sport, and education in Astana, I argue that elite projects always produce a set of practices that overflow the original idea, as they provide many openings for elites and ordinary citizens alike to work opportunistically within the system to improve their own life chances or

material objectives. In Chapter 7, I conclude with a more general discussion of how these various materialities, practices, and technologies of government have come together to produce a unique arrangement of the relationship between the state, territory, and society in contemporary Kazakhstan.

### I. The “practice turn”

In this chapter, I will outline the theoretical-methodological approach I employ in my analysis, which I refer to as a “practice-based method.” In brief, this approach rejects the search for some hidden reality “underneath” social practices (Veyne 1997, 153). As I detail below, my approach also takes seriously Giddens’ (1979) emphasis on the “duality of structure,” as a way to emphasize the fact that certain “transactional realities” (Foucault 2008) are both the medium and outcome of social practices.<sup>7</sup> Although my understanding of it is unique, a practice-based method stems from and speaks to what is increasingly being called the “practice turn” in the social sciences. The “practice turn” – i.e. a turn away from structuralism and functionalism – refers to a broad intellectual movement, which privileges “relations” (social and material) and “practices” (rhetorical and material), rather than “structures” in social analysis. Today firmly rooted in poststructuralist theory, the works that might be considered part of the practice turn cover a wide variety of analytical approaches in the social sciences, such as governmentality, performance theory, relational materialism, actor-network theory (ANT), non-representational theory (NRT), etc. There are, of course, important differences among these methodologies – the central one being the role accorded to the “material” or the “nonhuman.” Though the practice-based method I am invoking attends to the material, the analytical focus on practices fundamentally privileges human actors. It should also be emphasized that by “practices,” I mean both material (e.g. driving a car) and rhetorical (e.g. discussing the Almaty-Astana capital change).

Although geographers have only recently been framing their work as part of the “practice turn” (Jones and Murphy 2011), the approach is not new. Jones and Murphy (2011) argue that the theoretical turn (which stretches across the social sciences) has its roots in the work of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, but they overlook the even deeper roots in Marxist historical materialism (e.g. Marx 1898) and phenomenology, to which Foucault was responding with his genealogical method (Foucault 2003a; Veyne 1997). Also understood as a “relational” approach

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<sup>7</sup> Other than my own careful reading, I do not claim to have privileged knowledge of these theorists’ oeuvre, nor do I seek to position myself as an expert on their work. As Matt Hannah (2007) notes regarding the discipline of geography, “Foucault” has in many ways become a key rhetorical construct that people tap into to add credibility to their arguments. I prefer instead to follow Rose’s (1999, 5) lead and advocate a looser relation to his work (and that of the other theorists): “I am less concerned with being faithful to a source of authority than with working within a certain ethos of enquiry, with fabricating some conceptual tools that can be set to work in relation to the particular questions that trouble contemporary thought and politics.”



in geography, the methodological concern with “practice” was initially couched in the framework of phenomenology (e.g. Buttimer 1976; Gregory 1978; Jackson 1981), as well as the structure-agency debates of the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Agnew 1981; Giddens 1979, 1984; Massey 1984; Paasi 1991; Pred 1986, 1990; Thrift 1983). Space does not permit a detailed presentation of each of these extensive debates (see Livingstone 1993), so this chapter will be forward-looking insofar as I will selectively discuss those elements of this history that pertain to the practice-based approach I utilize in this dissertation. Before I outline this approach, I want to first discuss the “problem,” i.e. the intellectual and theoretical puzzles that I aim to resolve through its application. Too often in the literature on methods and theory does this issue remain completely unaddressed, contributing to a certain detachment of theory from empirics. The “problem,” as I understand it, is two-fold. First, how can we understand and speak about power without falling into the trap of positing a binary between persuasion and coercion? Second, how can we theorize the relationship between agency and structural effects? I will divide my discussion in this chapter accordingly, illustrating throughout how and why I believe the practice-based approach can overcome certain difficulties and offer a way forward.

## **II. Power and the Foucauldian approach**

### *A. Counterposing persuasion and coercion*

Political science, arguably more than any other discipline, has staked out an agenda of classifying political and governmental systems, and has developed an extensive grammar of regime typologies (e.g. Linz 2000). With the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the sudden proliferation of new political systems in the successor states, political scientists have dedicated extensive attention to the post-communist space. In an effort to qualify the diversity of non-democratic regimes that arose in the region, political scientists have generally tried to slot them somewhere on a normative scale of liberalism (read as democracy) to illiberalism (read as authoritarianism) (Diamond 2002; Eke and Kuzio 2000; Hale 2005, 2006; Ilkhamov 2007; Levitsky and Way 2002; McFaul 2002; Ottaway 2003; Roeder 2001; Schatz 2009; Schedler 2002; Zakaria 1997). Not only do these accounts frequently assume an essentialist understanding of what constitutes “real” or “full-fledged” democracy (especially, e.g., Zakaria 1997), but they all take for granted an implicit understanding of how power relates to coercion. This implicit vision is based on a negative and one-dimensional conception of power, which also carries with it implicit and *liberal* conceptions of agency, subjectivity, and government.

A common figure in academic efforts to understand coercive regimes is the brainwashed citizen who “believes” government propaganda. This individual is a particularly liberal character: we assume that she is a free agent, who operates rationally and independently. Her logical reasoning is merely led astray by the cunning propaganda of a coercive regime. In Marxist framings, this is referred to as “false consciousness,” i.e. the ideological control or manipulation of the lower classes by the bourgeois, of which the dominated are unaware. A variant of this brainwashed citizen is the citizen that “plays along,” but does not “really” believe in the regime. This character may or may not condone or support the regime, but simply follows the rules and “keeps their head down” – a habit of “inner migration,” as it was called in the German Democratic Republic, or “social schizophrenia” in some accounts of Soviet subjectivity. This reading is exemplified in Scott’s (1985) *Weapons of the Weak*, in which he argues that elites may control the outward behavior of the poor, but not their minds – effectively relying on a distinction between “a public (and behavioral) acquiescence and a realm of private (and largely mental) autonomy” (Mitchell 1990, 551).

This binary view has important implications for the methods social scientists then employ to analyze these people’s political behaviors: they are evaluated for their “‘truth conditions’ – as either *true* (‘real’ support) or *false* (‘dissimulation’ of support)” (Yurchak 2003, 483). Thus:

Even though these models describe a subject that is “split,” they, ironically, reproduce the Western-centered understanding of a normal person as a bounded, sovereign individual with a “unitary speaking ego” whose authentic voice can be hidden or revealed. These models interpret concrete discursive events in terms of “truth conditions.” (Yurchak 2003, 483)

In the case of both the brainwashed citizen and the citizen who plays along, the scholar assumes a strategic position of unveiling the private or the “real,” which is invariably assumed to be resistance to the state’s oppression. In this liberal vision, “agency” is defined as *subversive* action (Nealon 2008, 102; Yurchak 2003, 483). The problem with such a vision, however, is that it overlooks an enormous range of agencies, in which citizens of “illiberal” regimes support the system, willingly or otherwise. Yurchak elaborates through the case of the USSR:

What may get lost in these accounts is a crucial and paradoxical fact that great numbers of people living in socialism genuinely supported its fundamental values and ideals, although their everyday practices may appear “duplicitous” because they indeed routinely transgressed many norms and rules represented in that system’s official ideology. The particular knowledge about Soviet socialism that privileges its divided oppressive or immoral nature and de-emphasizes the values, ideals, and “normal” life that it represented to millions of people, is produced in the language and categories of “Western” knowledge. (Yurchak 2003, 484-485)

Equally a liberal figure, and an especially romanticized figure in Western media and academia<sup>8</sup>, is the resistant citizen who will not acquiesce to the coercive regime, and strategically positions himself as a political opponent (on the Soviet *dissident*, see Yurchak 1997, 169-171). Resistance, in this line of investigation, becomes a “high-end or very expensive commodity, revealed magician-like by unique men and women, and available only at scarce or obscure locations, such as academic monographs” (Nealon 2008, 106). Unfortunately, scholars have been too quick to look for “resistance” to power, while failing to acknowledge that the notion is largely a “holdover category of humanism” (Nealon 2008, 95) that “is merely the obverse of a one-dimensional notion of power as domination” (Rose 1999, 279). This scholarship leaves unexamined assumptions about freedom and agency that underpin the idea of resistance, and which operates on the basis of a more fundamental binary between persuasion and coercion. And as Timothy Mitchell (1988, 1990) convincingly argues, counterposing persuasion and coercion is about counterposing the mind and the body. As with the liberal figures just described, this dualism is the result of liberal, humanist assumptions about agency (Mitchell 1990, 559) and the notion of “an internal autonomy of consciousness” which “obliges us to imagine the exercise of power as an external process that can coerce the behavior of the body without necessarily penetrating and controlling the mind” (Mitchell 1990, 545). The dichotomy is likewise tied to the notion of a “two-dimensional” world of “two neatly opposed realms, a material order on the one hand and a separate sphere of meaning or culture on the other” (Mitchell 1990, 546).

Mitchell’s work is influenced by Foucault, who more explicitly traces the origins of the mind/body dualism in *Madness and Civilization* (1965) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault demonstrates how in the shift away from bodily torture, novel practices of incarceration and punishment helped to create the mind/body dualism by carving out the “mind” or the “soul” as a distinct site of intervention. The distinction drawn by the penal reforms was further about articulating new moral boundaries in the shifting economy of punishment. Intervening at the site of the “mind” could give the illusion of a somehow more humane form of punishment, and thus endow it with moral justification (of course, the corporeal element can never be erased, even if it is shielded from sight in this imaginary). Foucault thus argues that the “soul” is not a “substance,” but rather “the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge,” and which serves as the foundation for a variety of “scientific techniques and discourses, and the moral

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<sup>8</sup> E.g., Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in the media, in “radical” academic work (Rose 1999, 279) and in neohumanist political theory (Nealon 2008, 105).

claims of humanism” (Foucault 1975, 29-30). He stresses, however, that the soul does not substitute the “real man” as the object of knowledge, but “is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy” (Foucault 1975, 30).

### *B. The Foucauldian approach*

Foucault’s line of critique firmly rejects the notion of autonomous selves “consenting to domination,” and challenges liberal notion of agency as subversive action. Following on Antonio Gramsci’s argument that individuals are “always man-in-the-mass or collective man” (Gramsci 2008, 324), Foucault’s notion of subjectivity is predicated on a similar understanding of the individual’s shifting relation with the collective social body (Foucault 2007) and he fundamentally rejects the possibility of an preexistent, autonomous actor (Nealon 2008; Oksala 2005; Rose 1999). Poststructuralist scholarship more broadly has also challenged humanist notions of political agency based on a “latent notion of a subjectivity or selfhood that pre-exists and is maintained against an objective, material world” (Mitchell 1990, 562), arguing instead that “an agent is an effect generated in a network of *heterogeneous* materials” (Law 1994, 24) and that individuality “cannot be realised and developed without an activity directed outwards” – encompassing both natural and social relations (Gramsci 2008, 360).

These theorists also challenge the liberal conception of “consent” as rooted in some free-standing decision-making process outside of social and material constraints. Foucault has also argued that “power is not a function of consent,” nor “a renunciation of freedom, a transference of rights” (Foucault 1982, 788). He problematizes approaches that seek to pinpoint where “one says yes or no to power” as a particular articulation of juridical understandings of sovereignty and the social contract (Foucault 1980, 140), and they thus obscure the more important questions of subject-formation which is always already in relation to an existing socio-political apparatus (Foucault 1982). Unlike many other theorists who seek to break down the consent/coercion binary by simply demonstrating that they are intertwined (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Gramsci 2008; Veyne 1990), Foucault effectively bypasses the question by reframing it in terms of subjectivity and the operation of power relations:

Let us not, therefore, ask why certain people want to dominate, what they seek, what is their overall strategy. Let us ask, instead, how things work at the level of on-going subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours etc. In other words, rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in his lofty isolation, we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts etc. We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects. (Foucault 1980, 97)

Foucault (1982, 788) insists that power is neither “a function of consent” nor “a renunciation of freedom, a transference of rights.” He sees his method as “replacing the history of domination with the historical analysis of procedures of governmentality” (Foucault 2010, 5): “Here the shift did not consist in analyzing Power with a capital ‘P’, or even institutions of power, or the general or institutional forms of domination. Rather, it meant studying the techniques and procedures by which one sets about conducting the conduct of others” (Foucault 2010, 4).

Sometimes referred to as an “analytics of government” or “governmentality” (as a *method*; see Huxley 2008 on the two uses of the term), this approach employs a “broad concept of technology that encompasses not only material but also symbolic devices, including political technologies as well as technologies of the self” (Lemke 2007, 44). Further, technologies are not limited to social practices, but include the nonhuman:

A technology of government, then, is an assemblage of forms of practical knowledge, with modes of perception, practices of calculation, vocabularies, types of authority, forms of judgement, architectural forms, human capacities, non-human objects and devices, inscription techniques and so forth, traversed and transected by aspirations to achieve certain outcomes in terms of the conduct of the governed (which also requires certain forms of the conduct on the part of those who would govern). These assemblages are heterogeneous, made up of a diversity of objects and relations linked up through connections and relays of different types. They have no essence. (Rose 1999, 52)

An analysis of technologies of the self, then, involves “identifying the ways in which human beings are individuated and addressed within the various practices that would govern them, the relations to themselves that they have taken up within the variety of practices within which they have come to govern themselves” (Rose 1999, 43). This approach derives from Foucault’s understanding of the ways in which power *constitutes* the individual, who simultaneously becomes its vehicle (Foucault 1980, 98). From this starting point, a one-dimensional understanding of power as a negative force is thoroughly inadequate. Foucault effectively reframes the debate in terms of “how actual relations of subjugation manufacture subjects” instead of asking how, why, and by what right subjects agree to being subjugated (Foucault 2003, 45). He identifies two meanings of the word “subject”: a person can be both a “subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (Foucault 1982, 781).

This dual but interconnected understanding of the subject is central to Foucault’s attempts to develop a grammar of subjectivity, and is paralleled by his dual understanding of government – of the self and others (Foucault

2010) – which are inextricably connected (Lemke 2007).<sup>9</sup> In bringing the two together, Foucault takes up Gramsci's concern for the individual's relationship with the collective. He transforms Gramsci's (2008) attempts to theorize the "educative" role of the state, vis-à-vis hegemony and ideology, into a question of practices of government, vis-à-vis power (while retaining the centrality of the individual-collective relationship). Foucault (2007) is particularly interested in tracing the evolution of this relationship in the West, for he sees it as the basis of the forms of government found there. In short, he identifies the Christian pastorate and its institutions as the "prelude" to Western arts of government that are deployed from the sixteenth century on (Foucault 2007, 184). It is a prelude because of its peculiar procedures of individualization – "analytical identification, subjection, and subjectivation (*subjectivation*)" (Foucault 2007, 184) – coupled with procedures of totalization, in which the entire "flock" (the prelude to "population" and the biopolitical) is manufactured as a site of government. Yet the individualization/collectivization found in pastoral power is not yet the notion of the "population as constituted by economic subjects who are capable of autonomous behavior" (Foucault 2007, 277), rooted in the notion of the "economic man" (*homo æconomicus*), as "an atom of freedom" (Foucault 2008, 271).

By historicizing *homo æconomicus*, Foucault highlights the very specificity of the notion of freedom and the atomistic individual that is so central to the liberal project. From this point of view:

[Freedom] is not a universal which is particularized in time and geography. Freedom is not a white surface with more or less numerous black spaces here and there and from time to time. Freedom is never anything other—but this is already a great deal—than an actual relation between governors and governed, a relation in which the measure of the 'too little' existing freedom is given by the 'even more' freedom demanded. (Foucault 2008, 63)

Here, Foucault again follows on Gramsci's line of questioning: "But how will each single individual succeed in incorporating himself into the collective man, and how will educative pressure be applied to single individuals so as to obtain their consent and their collaboration, turning necessity and coercion into 'freedom'?" (Gramsci 2008, 242). Although freedom is a technology of government in Foucault's understanding, "it is not thereby an illusion" (Rose 1999, 63). As a technology of governing others, the notion of freedom is also a technology of governing the self. "Freedom," explains Nikolas Rose (1999, 96), "is the name we give today to the kind of power one brings to bear upon oneself, and a mode of bringing power to bear upon others." In his analysis of contemporary liberal societies, he notes how domination is increasingly justified in liberal contexts on the grounds of liberation (Rose 1999, 10).

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<sup>9</sup> This is an important starting point because it immediately negates one of the more influential recent critiques of Foucault on this topic – namely Agamben's claim that Foucault fails to reconcile "the *political techniques* of the state with that concerning the *technologies of the self*" (Humphrey 2004, 419).

Through a variety of institutions in these contexts, “individuals are not merely ‘free to choose’, but *obliged to be free*, to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice” (Rose 1999, 87). Both Foucault’s and Rose’s observations are deeply contextual, but their work points to a clear *method* for questioning the “technologies that will enable people to be governed, and to govern themselves” (Rose 1999, 84).

One critique of this approach is that “the denial of an autonomous subject leads to the denial of any meaningful concept of freedom, which again leads to the impossibility of emancipatory politics” (Oksala 2005, 1; for an example of this claim, see Berman 1989, 34-35). Yet Foucault’s search for what he calls “counter-conduct” is an explicit attempt to locate resistance to normalizing power in the form of subjectivity. Technologies of the self again assume a key role here, since they “materialize and further stylize the possibilities that are opened around themselves. Care of the self as a practice of freedom means challenging, contesting and changing the constitutive conditions of subjectivity as well as its actual forms” (Oksala 2005, 12). Denying the autonomous subject underscores the ways in which these technologies of the self “are culturally and historically intelligible conceptions and patterns of behaviour that subjects draw from the surrounding society” (Oksala 2005, 4). Liberalism, then, is nothing more than a broad (and heterogeneous) set of governmental technologies, which draws on socially and discursively constructed technologies of the autonomous self. And insofar as it “manufactures” freedom and constitutes power relations (including domination) through such freedoms, it cannot be placed on some ideal spectrum of coercive *versus* free political technologies. This focus on government and subject-forming processes thus allows us to abandon the persuasion-coercion dichotomy.

In a Foucauldian analytic of government, then, what defines a relationship of power is not that it acts “directly and immediately on others,” but instead “acts upon their actions” by guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome” (Foucault 1982, 789). This is the fundament of his conceptualization of the government of others: “To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others” (Foucault 1982, 790). For Foucault, the exercise of power is thus about the “conduct of conduct.” He argues that an analysis of power should not just “concern itself with power at the level of conscious intention or decision,” and his focus on the “conduct of conduct” is the analytical move that enables such an analysis (Foucault 1980, 97). If governing “is to structure the possible field of action of others” (Foucault 1982, 790; see also Foucault 2007), then the disposal of space and material technologies figure centrally in the constitution/government of subjects and the constitution/government of the self. Foucault’s attention to how power operates through practices of ordering things,

space, and institutions effectively transforms the persuasion/coercion debate by breaking down its humanist subjectivist bent.

In his oft-cited study of Bentham's Panopticon (Foucault 1975), he examines how the architectural apparatus creates and sustains a power relation "independent of the person who exercises it," meaning that the inmates are "caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers" (Foucault 1975, 201). This relationship is the basis for Foucault's conception of "disciplinary power," which facilitates the operation of power (both productive and dominant alike), that "without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, it acts directly on individuals" (Foucault 1975, 206). Disciplinary power operates "not so much through terror and the certainty of apprehension, but by placing a grid of norms of conduct over urban space and regulating behavior according to the division of the normal and the pathological" (Rose 1999, 73). Various scholars have applied this approach to the analysis of colonial and nineteenth-century town planning (e.g. Haussmann's Paris), which aimed to produce "governable" spaces (e.g. Mitchell 1988, 2002; Rabinow 1982, 1989). However, such spaces are not "fabricated counter to experience; they make new kinds of experience possible, produce new modes of perception" (Rose 1999, 32). Like the Panopticon, the "artificial town" makes individuals visible and, in so doing, allows for "a sort of spontaneous policing or control [...] carried out by the spatial layout of the town itself" (Foucault 2003, 252). Disciplinary strategies constitute only one genre in a vast array of technologies of government, but Foucault's concern with space here has important implications for the manner in which we theorize coercion/persuasion. By considering how space and material things can be sites of strategic intervention in the development and constitution and perpetuation of relations of domination, Foucault not only bypasses the mind/body dualism, but also challenges the humanist privileging of consciousness and agency.

In addition to disciplinary power, Foucault (2003, 2007) analyzes another series of power relations; "bio-power" and "governmentality (security)." Where disciplinary power intervenes at the level of the body and space, biopolitical technologies are said to intervene at the level of the norm and the "general phenomena" characterizing "populations," i.e. not "man-as-body but at man-as-species" (Foucault 2003, 243-6). In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault (2007) outlines three predominant modes of power in European history: sovereignty, discipline, and security. He is careful to emphasize that these strategies are not mutually exclusive or consecutive, but frequently coincident: "In fact we have a triangle: sovereignty, discipline, and governmental management, which has population as its main target and apparatuses of security as its essential mechanism" (Foucault 2007, 107-108).



As we see in this quote, in developing his notion of “security,” Foucault sometimes uses it interchangeably with “government” and “biopolitics.” This has led to some confusion in the governmentality literature, with some scholars treating government as one dimension of Foucault’s triangle of technologies (e.g. Dean 2010, 28).<sup>10</sup> This confusion is easily abated if we stick with the notion of security or biopolitics, as Foucault articulates it here:

To summarize all this, let’s say then that sovereignty capitalizes a territory, raising the major problem of the seat of government, whereas discipline structures a space and addresses the essential problem of a hierarchical and functional distribution of elements, and security will try to plan a milieu in terms of events or series of events or possible elements, of series that will have to be regulated within a multivalent and transformable framework. The specific space of security refers then to a series of possible events; it refers to the temporal and the uncertain, which have to be inserted within a given space. The space in which a series of uncertain elements unfold is, I think, roughly what one can call the milieu. (Foucault 2007a, 20)

By analyzing these modes of power, Foucault makes a heuristic move, but emphasizes that “you have a series of complex edifices in which, of course, the techniques themselves change and are perfected, or anyway become more complicated [...]. In other words, there is a history of the actual techniques themselves” (Foucault 2007, 8).

In the case of security, Foucault argues that calculation is fore among these techniques: “The mechanisms introduced by biopolitics include forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures” (Foucault 2003, 246). These mechanisms have become the subject of extensive study in geography and ancillary disciplines, with an enormous focus on statistics and the production of “calculable” space (e.g. Crampton 2006; Legg 2006, 2007; Hannah 2000, 2009; Harvey 2000; Huxley 2006, 2008; Merry 2001; Murdoch and Ward 1997; Rabinow 1982, 1989; Rose 1999; Rose-Redwood 2006, 2012). While this scholarship has produced a number of meaningful insights, few have taken their analyses much further than a demonstration of how space and people become calculable – often with strongly normative undertones of this being inherently “bad,” without following through with an analysis of how and why calculability matters. In large part, this normative script stems from a certain a liberal romanticism of existing “off the grid” or somehow “outside” of power. Indeed, in one such study, Rose-Redwood (2012) recounts a number of vivid scenes in which US citizens refuse governmental readdressing schemes out of the desire to remain unlocatable – a sentiment I would venture to guess many academics share.

This normative script in current scholarship also probably derives from the fact that Foucault’s insights on calculation have been applied to the analysis of colonialism and its coercive outcomes. This is, of course, a legitimate agenda, but the liberal (and frequently Marxist) academic endeavor to “uncover” domination strays

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<sup>10</sup> I argue that we are best advised to restrict our understanding of “governmentality” to his use of the term as an analytics of government, which is most clearly articulated by Lemke (2007).

somewhat from a Foucauldian analytics of government, which firmly rejects the notion that the operation of power as such can be judged as “good” or “bad”:

The analytical tools developed in studies of governmentality are flexible and open-ended. They are compatible with many other methods. They are not hard-wired to any political perspective. What is worth retaining above all from this approach is its creativity. We should not seek to extract a method from the multiple studies of governing, but rather to identify a certain ethos of investigation, a way of asking questions, a focus not upon why certain things happened, but how they happened and the difference that that made in relation to what had gone before. Above all, the aim of such studies is critical, but not critique—to identify and describe differences and hence to help make criticism possible. (Rose et al. 2006, 101)

Foucault bypasses the issue of normativity through his conception of the “economy of discourses of truth,” which serves as the condition of possibility for any and all relations of power (Foucault 1980, 93). Insofar as power can be neither “good” nor “bad,” Foucault shifts the analytical focus to how individuals position themselves in relation to “truth.” What is so foundational in Foucault’s method, Foucault believes is inherited from Nietzsche and Marx: the ability to go beyond the moral binaries of good and evil through a scholarship that substitutes analysis for denunciation (Nealon 2008, 21). The site of analysis then is how people cope with their quotidian environment, justify what exists (Veyne 1990, 379), and actualize the self (Veyne 1997, 163). This approach explicitly differs from one such as Scott’s (1985) mentioned above, which searches for “hidden tactics of resistance.”

In a Foucauldian framework, one simply cannot “resist” power, “insofar as any kind of effective or productive critique will have to work toward redeploying those very resources of power, truth, and/or wealth” (Nealon 2008, 95). Power is thus “more or less efficient, totalizing, or dominating not in its *intentions*, but in its *outcomes*” (Nealon 2008, 100). In order to understand these totalizing effects, the central academic puzzle is then to explore how and why various practices and power relations persist – why some economies of power, institutional arrangements, and concepts are “stickier” than others, i.e. more enduring and transcendent than others (Murphy 2012, 167). Here we arrive at the second “problem” raised above: how can we theorize the relationship between agency and structural effects? As I detail in the following section, the Foucauldian framework provides guidance that was largely overlooked in the postmodernist rush to tear apart the coherence of metanarratives and explore the chaotic networks and spatio-temporal disjunctures of “globalization.”

### **III. The production of transactional realities**

#### *A. Practices all the way down?*

A central question of social theory is how to adequately conceptualize the relationship between human agency and the apparent “thingness” of social structures, institutions, and concepts, such as the “state,” the “nation,” “madness,” etc. This question has even more salience in the wake of poststructuralist theorizing about the relational and discursive nature of things, ideas, and selves. For, if we are to understand the social world as a dense and chaotic network of materialities and relations, how do concepts, such as “territory” or “capitalism” or “gender” calcify, and come to acquire an undue image of coherence? How are social constructions actually constructed? Scholars across a number of disciplines have addressed these questions through a highly varied vocabulary, including studies of “reification” (e.g. Berger and Pullman 1965), “structuration” (e.g. Giddens 1979), “objectification” (e.g. Bourdieu 1977), “transactional realities” (e.g. Foucault 2008), “enframing” (Mitchell 1988) and “fabrications” (Mitchell 2007), or “structure as verb” (e.g. Law 1992). Of these various terms, all which I understand to be concerned with the same issue, I prefer and adopt in this dissertation Foucault’s notion of “transactional realities.” This is because the term implies a broader conception of social structures than is found in the early work in sociology, anthropology, and linguistics. Foucault (2008, 297) explains:

Civil society is like madness and sexuality, what I call transactional realities (*réalités de transaction*). That is to say, those transactional and transitional figures that we call civil society, madness, and so on, which although they have not always existed are nonetheless real, are born precisely from the interplay of relations of power and everything which constantly eludes them, at the interface, so to speak, of governors and governed.

For Foucault, the concept of a transactional reality depends on deconstructing the real/imaginary divide, which is itself a bordering project implicated in arts of government and the production of power relations. Before I discuss how such a standpoint can be articulated with respect to three central concepts in political geography – the “state,” “territory,” and the “nation” – I will first address the issue of agency and my understanding of “practices.”

I will frame this discussion by identifying three tenets: 1) practices are not just material, but rhetorical (i.e. verbal, discursive) – and the two are intertwined; 2) practices are not solely intentional, and frequently have unintended outcomes; and 3) practices are constituted in and through time and space. Although I draw primarily from a *Foucauldian* practice-based method, I am also influenced by a number of diverse sources, not solely limited to the poststructuralist theoretical repertoire.

*1) Practices are not just material, but rhetorical – and the two are intertwined.* A common critique of Foucauldian analytics is that the approach “does not leave much room for individual agency.” Jeffery Nealon (2008) has expressed his puzzlement at this assertion because, in his understanding of agency in Foucault’s work, “it’s

virtually all there is. Foucault studies practices, agents doing things, plain and simple (and recall it's actually agency that he studies, insofar as it's the actions that make the agents, rather than vice versa)" (Nealon 2008, 101). French historian Paul Veyne (1997) elaborates on Foucault's practice-based method:

It consists in describing in quite objective terms what a paternalistic emperor does, what a head herdsman does, *without presupposing anything else at all*, without presupposing the existence of any goal, object, material cause (the governed masses, relations of production, an enduring State), or type of behavior (politics, depoliticization). It consists in judging people by their actions and in eliminating the eternal phantoms that language arouses in us. Practice is not some mysterious agency, some substratum of history, some hidden engine; it is what people do (the word says just what it means). (Veyne 1997, 153)

Further, "For historians concerned not with what people do, but what they say, the method to follow is the same; the word *discourse* comes into play just as naturally to designate what is said as the word *practice* does to designate what is practiced" (Veyne 1997, 156). Foucault's turn to Greek and Roman history in his late work is largely the result of his close relationship with Veyne, and his study of ancient Greek *parrhesia* (Foucault 2001, 2010; i.e. "truth telling," discussed at length in Chapter 3) is perhaps the best illustration of how Foucault treats discourse as a practice.

Rather than adopt Veyne's formulation of discourse:said::practice:practiced, I find more clarity in simply emphasizing that discourse is a sort of "rhetorical" practice, i.e. versus a "material" practice, such as shaking a person's hand or assembling goods in a factory. Of course, this division is completely heuristic, for in the Foucault's understanding of subject-formation – as well as that of Jacques Derrida (1988) and Judith Butler (1990) – "selves" are "summoned into existence" through any number of practices: "the idea of performativity here is that the actions performed are intrinsic to, not separate from, daily life. Selves, on this account, do not exist, as if in some authentic mode, independently of the actions by which they are constituted" (Wedeen 2009, 87). So too do rhetorical practices have material implications:

[T]hey are also much more than narratives, if by these we mean stories that order nothing beyond their telling. This is because they are also, in some measure, performed or embodied in a concrete, non-verbal, manner in the network of relations. [...] But they are also, to a greater or lesser extent, *acted out and embodied* in all these materials too. I'm saying, then, that they are imputable ordering arrangements, expressions, suggestions, possibilities or resources. (Law 1994, 20)

It is important to emphasize that the division between rhetorical and material practices is a heuristic one to alleviate the confusion about the use of the term "practices," which is frequently accompanied by an assumption that this is separate from the production of discourse. Accordingly, the method of studying practices is the same, with the goal

being to describe them and their effects for the operation of power relations, while negating the impetus to search for “belief” located in some alternate mental realm ostensibly in contrast to the physical.

2) *Practices are not solely intentional, and frequently have unintended outcomes.* Returning to Nealon’s commentary about being puzzled at the alleged “agency problem in Foucault,” he explains that the issue arises only when critics are tied to a liberal notion of “agency” as “doing something freely, subversively, not as a mere effect programmed or sanctioned by constraining social norms” (Nealon 2008, 102). As we saw above, “there is literally no such thing as unconstrained subjective action in Foucault” (Nealon 2008, 102), *but there is still space for change* – this generally being the ultimate concern of these critics. In Foucault’s analytic of power, social life is constituted through individuals’ daily responses to various “forces” in any number of places, situations, interactions, or things. Nealon (2008, 111) elaborates:

[O]ne has to start where one is, with the provocation to respond to ‘today,’ a particular problem or set of problems, and one is forced to end with something other than a condemnation or judgment—the tautological conclusion that X or Y is ‘dominating,’ ‘bad,’ or ‘false.’ Let’s give credit where credit is due: it’s really not a matter of whether anyone *believes* the bullshit served up by her boss or his elected officials, or whether this bullshit is really true or not. Those binary questions of hermeneutic depth aside, we are nevertheless left with the forceful fact that this bullshit certainly does produce effects: we certainly do have to *respond*—outside the economies of representation, assured failure, moralizing judgment, and meaning. (Nealon 2008, 111)

But those responses, as contingent practices, are unpredictable – and this is where the possibility of change introduced into Foucault’s schema of power. He makes change or rupture (or in Giddens’ (1979) formulation, “de-routinization”) a central concern in the method he terms a “history of thought,” i.e. as opposed to a “history of ideas.” He explains:

But what I am attempting to do as a historian of thought is something different. I am trying to analyze the way institutions, practices, habits, and behavior become a problem for people who behave in specific sorts of ways, who have certain types of habits, who engage in certain kinds of practices, and who put to work specific kinds of institutions. The history of ideas involves the analysis of a notion from its birth, through its development, and in the setting of other ideas which constitute its context. The history of thought is the analysis of the way an unproblematic field of experience, or a set of practices, which were accepted without question, which were familiar and ‘silent,’ out of discussion, becomes a problem, raises discussion and debate, incites new reactions, and induces a crisis in the previously silent behavior, habits, practices, and institutions. (Foucault 2001, 74)

The issue of “habit” is an important one, and highlights the way in which various actors frequently do not have fixed or more purposeful intentions behind their practices, or cannot articulate them as other than “commonsense.”

Habit and commonsense are also an important theme in the work of Pierre Bourdieu, for whom habituses and cognitive frames are not limited to a separate mental realm, but are “dispositions of the body.” In his analysis of the statist system, for example, he argues:

But in order fully to understand the immediate submission that the state order elicits, it is necessary to break with the intellectualism of the neo-Kantian tradition to acknowledge that cognitive structures are not forms of consciousness but *dispositions of the body*, and that the obedience we grant to the injunctions of the state cannot be understood either as mechanical submission to an external force or as conscious consent to an order (in the double sense of the term). The social world is riddled with *calls to order* that function as such only for those who are predisposed to heeding them as they *awaken* deeply buried corporeal dispositions, outside the channels of consciousness and calculation. It is this doxic submission of the dominated to the structures of a social order of which their mental structures are the product that Marxism cannot understand insofar as it remains trapped in the intellectualist tradition of the philosophies of consciousness. (Bourdieu 1999, 69)

Responding to Bourdieu’s work, Giddens (1979, 218) emphasizes how practices of “habit” or “convention” – like the production of language – are relatively unmotivated. Indeed, “many of the most deeply sedimented elements of social conduct are cognitively (not necessarily consciously, in the sense of ‘discursive availability’) established, rather than founded on definite ‘motives’ promoting action; *their continuity is assured through social reproduction itself*” (Giddens 1979, 218). Paul Veyne (1997, 157-158) makes a similar argument through his discussion of that which “goes without saying,” whereby practices and discourses tend to have a grammar that is more or less “hidden” to actors – not because they repress it, but because it is “preconceptual”:

Similarly, the governor who gives his flock free bread or who denies it gladiators believes he is doing what every governor has to do, when dealing with the governed, owing to the nature of politics itself; he is not aware that his practice, observed in and of itself, conforms to a specific grammar, that it embodies a specific politics. (Veyne 1997, 154)

There is, of course, “agency” involved in all these practices, but the point is that agents themselves are frequently “going through the motions,” without necessarily attending to the very politics of those infinite motions. As Veyne (1997, 157) underscores, “The role of consciousness is not to make us notice the world but to allow us to move within it.”

Continuing the critique of agency as intentionality, Giddens (1979) stresses the need to attend to the “unintended” outcomes of practices. In his analysis of spatial technologies of government, Foucault draws attention to how subjects might “be formed by practices of which they might be unaware, and to which their consent is neither given nor withheld” (Li 2007, 25), but he distances himself from the discussions of “consciousness” that Giddens engages in his theory of structuration. While the issue of “consciousness” is a troubled one, Giddens successfully draws our attention to how agency is frequently equated with intentionality – with the effect of simply ignoring

unintended consequences of actions. By contrast, Giddens accords them a prominent place in social analysis, given that: “The escape of human history from human intentions, and the return of the consequences of that escape as causal influences on human action, is a chronic feature of social life” (Giddens 1979, 7), and “in so far as such unintended consequences are involved in social reproduction, they become conditions of action also” (Giddens 1979, 59). Thus, in Giddens’ theory of structuration, exploring the “regularities” of unintended consequences (e.g. the perpetuation of traditions, structural effects, etc.) is a valid line of inquiry, but it must be “preceded by investigation of how the practices in question themselves are reproduced” (Giddens 1979, 214).

As we have just seen, one such method of reproduction is simply “routine.” But so too are some practices understood by their actors as “intentional,” implying “an uncommon degree of mental application given to the pursuit of an aim” (Giddens 1979, 56). Giddens develops the notion of “reflexive monitoring of conduct,” which treats intentionality as a process:

When lay actors inquire about each other’s intentions in respect of particular acts, they abstract from a continuing process of routine monitoring whereby they relate their activity to one another and to the object-world. The distinctive feature about the reflexive monitoring of human actors [...] is what Garfinkel calls the accountability of human action. I take ‘accountability’ to mean that the accounts that actors are able to offer of their conduct draw upon the same stocks of knowledge as are drawn upon in the very production and reproduction of their knowledge. (Giddens 1979, 57)

Here we return to the issue of discourse production: Giddens (1979, 2) insists that in addition to “practical consciousness” (what Veyne (1997) refers to as the “preconceptual”), there is a level of “discursive consciousness.” Sometimes people *do* have a degree of intentionality behind their practices, while in other cases they may not. While I do not dispute this point, in the practice based approach that I employ in this dissertation, I do not interrogate these two levels of consciousness, but focus on the practices themselves. This is because too often the analysis of what people do versus what they say becomes collapsed into a search for “truth,” “reality,” or “belief.” Alexei Yurchak explains:

For instance, the question, ‘do you support the resolution?’ asked during a Soviet Komsomol meeting invariably led to a unanimous raising of hands in an affirmative gesture. However, to participants this was usually an act of recognition of how one must behave in a given ritualistic context in order to reproduce one’s status as social actor rather than as an act of conveying ‘literal’ meaning. In this sense, the raised hand was a response to the question, ‘are you the kind of social actor who understands and acts according to the rules of the current ritual, with its connection to the larger system of power relations and previous contexts of this type?’ To analyze this act only for its truth conditions—as ‘real’ support or ‘dissimulation’ of support—is to miss the point. (Yurchak 2003, 485-486)

For him, the solution is to bypass the true/false binary and instead to focus on how people lived, practiced, and interpreted the realities of Soviet socialism (Yurchak 2003, 485). This gets to the heart of a practice-based method,

and negates the scholar's role as an all-seeing unveiler of some hidden social reality, while simultaneously creating space for the analysis of the various "unintended" outcomes of practices (including the production of transactional realities, detailed below).

3) *Practices are constituted in and through time and space.* As we have just seen, a Foucauldian practice-based method shifts the focus away from a search for "resistance" (i.e. as the antithesis of power as domination, in its one-dimensional conception) to an analysis of "the ways in which creativity arises out of the situation of human beings engaged in particular relations of force and meaning, and what is made out of the possibilities of that location" (Rose 1999, 279). The possibilities of a given location and point in time simultaneously act as constraints and opportunities, and are not just "neutral" settings, but are parameters "mobilised *as part of* the interaction" (Giddens 1979, 207, emphasis added). Despite the emphasis Giddens (1979) places on the importance of time-space relations in his theory of agency and structuration, he does not develop this argument as fully as he could have – which is where this dissertation, as a study in geography, is positioned to contribute to the study of practices. And here, I return to Foucault's studies of "transactional realities" for additional inspiration.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, the notion of a transactional reality has various counterparts in the history of social theory (e.g. "reification," "structure," "objectification," "fabrication," etc.), but Foucault's articulation of the concept is especially useful in his emphasis on its very instability. By developing a "philosophy of relations" (i.e. as opposed to a "philosophy of things"), Foucault makes spatio-temporal contextuality paramount to his method:

*[T]hings exist only through relation [...] and the determination of this relation is precisely what explains things.* In short, everything is historical, everything depends on everything else (and not on relations of production alone), nothing exists transhistorically, and to explain a so-called object amounts to showing on what *historical* context it depends. (Veyne 1997, 169-170)

A philosophy of relations entails "refusing to give oneself a ready-made object," and instead "grasping the movement by which a field of truth with objects of knowledge was constituted through these mobile technologies" (Foucault 2007, 118) – that is, the "historicity" of all things. Veyne elaborates:

Here, then, is a wholly *material* universe, made up of prediscursive referents that remain faceless potentialities; in this universe practices that are never the same engender, at varying points, objectivizations that are never the same, ever-changing faces. Each practice depends on all the others and on their transformations. Everything is historical, and everything depends on everything else. Nothing is inert, nothing is indeterminate, and, as we shall see, nothing is inexplicable. (Veyne 1997, 171)



Accordingly, one cannot make generalizations about transactional realities, for “there can be no truth and no error, since these ‘things’ do not exist; one cannot make true or erroneous statements about the digestive or reproductive processes of centaurs” (Veyne 1997, 176). Instead, “there can only be successive structures, *each* of which had its own genesis, a genesis that is explained in part by the transformations of the preceding [...] structure and in part by the transformations of the rest of the world” (Veyne 1997, 172). In this understanding, no structure can be “entirely explicable in terms of the preceding structure” nor “should the successor structure be completely foreign to its predecessor” (Veyne 1997, 172). Not only are these practices implicated in producing these structures ever-shifting, as they are incorporated or excluded from the operation of various power relations, but so too are “the governor, the governed, the self” thoroughly indeterminate. This is where a focus on “technologies” (which are a means to describe *relations* between the governors, the governed, the self) becomes necessary. Rather than linger at the level of abstraction, I will now turn to some specific examples of transactional realities, which I consider in this dissertation: the state, territory, and nation.

#### *B. The state*

Sovereignty is typically understood as a state’s absolute authority over a defined territory, which is recognized by other sovereign states (Weber 1995, 1), but this narrative was challenged by a flurry of writing about “globalization” across all social sciences in the 1990s and early 2000s. Not only did scholars begin to reconceive of the meaning of sovereignty (e.g. Agnew 2005; Weber 1995), many sought to destabilize conventional narratives of the state as the primary unit of global politics (e.g. Appadurai 1996; Brenner 1999; Ferguson 2006; Harvey 1989b; Luke 2003; Slater 2003; Tsing 2005). In geography, these globalization discussions led to broad criticism of statist modes of thought, i.e. modes of thought that endow the state with the appearance of an empirical object “laid out before the mind’s eye like a map” as an autonomous, freestanding unit (Mitchell 2002, 230-231), fixed and rigid, like a “container” (Giddens 1994; Taylor 1994).

In reaction to the early, sensational accounts that the territorial state no longer “matters,” studies of globalization in recent years have tempered this discourse, suggesting that the state still matters a great deal, but that it has been alternately thought about and engaged with in this contemporary era of globalization (Agnew 2003; Kuus and Agnew 2008; Newman 2006; O’Loughlin et al. 2004; Paasi 2009; Sparke 2004, 2006, 2008; Taylor 1994). As Roitman (2005, 197) argues, the question about whether there is anything “new” about the role of the state in this

era is better framed in terms of “whether we can discern changes in the organization of knowledge, or the production of valid statements about what the state *is*, or is not.” Likewise, “sovereignty” from this standpoint “performs as a referent for the term ‘state’ so long as ‘sovereignty’ stabilizes the meaning of ‘state’” (Weber 1995, 124). Sovereignty is thus conceived of as historically and spatially contextual and cannot be analyzed by searching for a “‘real,’ ‘true’ meaning of sovereignty but by focusing on how these historically specific meanings affect forms of being or states” (Weber 1995, 9). In her critique, Weber’s work draws extensively on the Foucauldian understanding of the state as a set of practices.

Responding to criticism that he inadequately theorizes the state, Foucault (2008, 76-77) once said: “Well, I would reply, yes, I do, I want to, I must do without a theory of the state, as one can and must forgo an indigestible meal.” Although the “state” has historically been a contested theme in political geography (Herb 2008), since the critical theory turn associated with the introduction of post-structuralism and postmodernism in geography and international relations, scholars have overwhelmingly agreed about the socially-constructed nature of the state and rejected treatments of it as a “thing” with a discernable “essence.” Despite Foucault’s concerns about indigestion, he does offer a succinct definition of the state that ties it to the practice of government: “The modern state is born, I think, when governmentality became a calculated and reflected practice” (Foucault 2007, 165). Elaborating, he later asks:

What if the state were nothing more than a way of governing? What if the state were nothing more than a type of governmentality? What if all these relations of power that gradually take shape on the basis of multiple and very diverse processes which gradually coagulate and form an effect [...]? (Foucault 2007, 248)

As with many of Foucault’s questions, one easily finds his answer in the form. Foucault’s work on liberal governmentality aims to show how “the state is only an episode in government, and it is not government that is an instrument of the state” (Foucault 2007, 248). For him, “‘statification’ (*étatisation*),” i.e. the “gradual, piecemeal, but continuous takeover by the state of a number of practices, ways of doing things” (like the army or taxation) (Foucault 2008, 77), or the “governmentalization of the state” is precisely what has enabled the state to survive (Foucault 2007, 109).

This perspective tears apart the myth of the state’s coherence, and suggests that the state lacks the importance, “unity, individuality, and rigorous functionality” often attributed to it (Foucault 2007, 109). Foucault’s goal of challenging the coherence of the state is a direct response to early Marxist state theory, which was plagued by a tendency to cast the state as a “thing,” rather than a relational set of processes. Foucault’s initial response was

to develop an analytics of power instead of theorizing the state (Jessop 2007a, 35-36), and his later work went on to argue that if the state “is not a cold monster” but “the correlative of a particular way of governing,” the important questions are “how this way of governing develops, what its history is, how it expands, how it contracts, how it is extended to a particular domain, and how it invents, forms, and develops new practices” (Foucault 2008, 6). And if the state “is nothing else but the effect, the profile, the mobile shape of a perpetual statification (*étatisation*) or statifications” (Foucault 2008, 77), the important questions are how this myth of coherence is achieved. Foucault’s analytics of government is specifically designed to provide a grammar for interrogating this “state effect”:

The concept of government is meant to historically situate statehood, to reflect on its conditions of existence and rules of transformation. An analytics of government studies the practical conditions under which forms of statehood emerge, stabilize and change – combining and connecting different and diverse ‘elements’ in such a way that retrospectively an ‘object’ appears that seemed to have existed prior to the historical and political processes, presumably guiding and directing it. (Lemke 2007, 47)

While I agree with the agenda Lemke outlines here, few scholars have taken it seriously – typically dwelling instead on deconstructing the state, without outlining the specific practices and technologies implicated in producing the state effect.

More broadly, this focus on analyzing the networks and practices that constitute the state is understood as a “relational” theory of the state, and it is important to note that Foucault was not alone in promoting such a view. Indeed, Marxist state theorists themselves were developing a similar argument. Foucault’s work should thus be contextualized in relation to the Marxist literature on the state, which has a lengthy history and covers a broad spectrum of perspectives. In the essentialist or “classical Marxism” constructions, the state is seen to “stand above” the people and its primary function is to guarantee hegemonic class relations (Tedman 1999; Wolff 2005). From this perspective, it is viewed as an extension of the bourgeoisie’s exploitative power, being “little more than a neutral instrument of class domination” (Jessop 2007b, 59). A combination of trends and developments in Marxism and the social sciences more broadly led to a precipitous decline in Marxist state theory in the 1970s (Jessop 1990, 2-3) – especially as these essentialist treatments of the state largely failed to account for “historical variability of political regimes and the diverse forms taken by capitalism” (Jessop 2007b, 58). Marxists were also increasingly susceptible to accusations of “economic determinism.” Although contemporary theorists tend to preface their work with a rejection of this criticism (e.g. Jessop 1990, 4), their focus nonetheless remains on production as a social relation and see relations of production as the starting point to analyze the state.

In addition to this economic focus, Marxist scholars tend to adhere to historical materialism both “as a research programme and guide to political action” (Jessop 2007b, 118). This approach is inspired by Nico Poulantzas (1978) and readings of Marx’s (1898) *The Eighteenth Brumaire* as sources of inspiration for state theory, rather than previously “standard” readings of *The Communist Manifesto*, the *Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, and *Capital* (Jessop 2007b, 84-85). Marxist historical materialism, along with the phenomenological oeuvre (e.g. Buttimer 1976; Gregory 1978; Jackson 1981), are treated simultaneously as critiques and sources of inspiration for Foucault’s practice-based method, best articulated by his close friend and colleague Paul Veyne (1997). I believe it is important to consider how their approach differs, but a full treatment of this question is beyond the scope of this discussion. In brief, however, Veyne (1997) argues: “The difference is simply that Foucault undertakes to speak about practice *precisely*, to describe its convoluted forms, instead of referring to it in vague and noble terms” (Veyne 1997, 156). For this reason, both thinkers reject the notion of “ideology,” in which “practice is separated from consciousness” (Veyne 1997, 165). Unlike Marxist historical materialism and phenomenology, Veyne (1997, 162) argues, Foucault’s is a “philosophy of relation” rather than a “philosophy of objects taken as end or as cause.” Marxists have largely tried to combat this image by asserting that there can be no “general theory of the state” as a constant object plodding through history (Poulantzas 1978, 19). They argue, however, that it *is* possible to theorize the *capitalist* state (Jessop 2002; Poulantzas 1978). Poulantzas’s (1978) account of the state as *relational* in *State, power, socialism* represented a major turning point in Marxist accounts of the state, and this work is treated as the primary source of inspiration in Bob Jessop’s (2007b) attempt to develop a “strategic-relational” approach to the state. Although Poulantzas and Jessop both stress a relational understanding of the state, that would seemingly be compatible with the practice-based approach I am taking, there are several reasons I prefer to instead employ Foucault’s model.

First, Marxist work on the state is generally limited to theorizing about the capitalist state (Poulantzas 1978, 19). This is of limited use in the case of Kazakhstan or other postsocialist settings, where the states are increasingly accepting market capitalist economic forms, but are still far from anything traditionally conceived of as the “capitalist state.” So when the Marxist approach implies the need to attend to “how political class struggle is reproduced and transformed within the state apparatus so that bourgeois political domination is secured” (Jessop 2007b, 123), this is no mystery in the case of Kazakhstan: as in many of the Soviet successor states, the Communist Party elites overwhelmingly retained their positions of power and exploited the transition to the “market economy”

to solidify their status (Cummings 2002, 2005; McFaul 2001; Weinthal 2002). Of course, it was not predetermined that the old Soviet elite would retain their positions of power – and in some parts of the post-socialist world, the former elites do *not* retain their dominance – but this was Kazakhstan’s trajectory. Although there is partial engagement with the “free market,” it would be highly dubious to apply the label “capitalist state” in the sense that it is meant by the Marxist literature. Instead of “private” capitalists colluding with those in the state apparatus, scholars of various post-communist states have demonstrated a unique arrangement, in which those in the state apparatus (especially in Russia, China, Central Asia, and the Caucasus) are more or less openly in control of the market mechanisms themselves (e.g. Bremmer 2010; Gonzales-Vincente 2011; Koch 2010; Müller 2011). This has been referred to as “state-controlled capitalism,” and the political economic dynamics are fundamentally different from those arrangements in the West, insofar as the practices of delineating between “public” state activities and “private” capitalist activities is fundamentally different.

The second reason I prefer the Foucauldian approach to the relational Marxist approach to that state is that, even if power is treated as something positive and constitutive (Jessop 2007b, 121-122, 144), I see the Marxist approach as necessarily predicated on an understanding of power as negative and external. Everything comes back to the relationship of exploitation and domination, which is inherently defined as a negative. This is especially apparent in the Marxist emphasis on class struggle and resistance. In any relationship of “resistance” to an external dominating power, there is little room for a two-directional relationship, in which the subordinated are “complicit” in their status. The only possibility it allows for people to actively support their subordination is through the idea of “false consciousness.” Like the notion that everything is ultimately class domination, this places the Marxist analyst in the unique position of being the expert unveiler of social reality. No one has more privileged a perspective than the Marxist, who not only sees all, but *a priori* knows all. Not only is this will to power untenable in a Foucauldian approach, so too is the problematic worldview of a social “reality” underneath the “false” ideology, in which the mental is separated from the practice. It is thus fundamentally incompatible with the practice-based approach I employ in this dissertation.

### *C. The nation and the territory*

One of the fundamental assumptions of the “territorial trap” is that “the boundaries of the state define the boundaries of society such that the latter is totally contained by the former” (Agnew 2003, 51). But in a Foucauldian framework, the state/society binary is a strategic bordering practice, which provides concrete material resources:

[T]he state is not only an effect but also an instrument and a site of strategic action. It serves as an *instrument* of strategies insofar as it establishes a frontier regime that is defined by the distinction between inside and outside, state and non-(51)state. The borderline does not simply separate two external and independent realms, but operates as an internal division providing resources of power. It constitutes a differential frontier regime that establishes and reproduces structural gaps between private and public, residents and foreigners, and so on. As a result, the fact that some actors and processes are regarded as private may secure them a privileged role or, alternatively, may deprive them of financial and organizational resources and legal protection. (Lemke 2007, 52)

Similarly, as Mitchell (1991, 2007) demonstrates in his case study of the Aramco oil company: “The appearance that state and society are separate things is part of the way a given financial and economic order is maintained” (Mitchell 1991, 90). The argument is not that some “pure” state is surrounded and supported by non-state social forces, but that the boundary of the state “never marks a real exterior” (Mitchell 1991, 90). Thus, an alternate approach examines the ways in which this border between state and society is demarcated and asks, “what is the significance of effecting this distinction?” (Mitchell 1991, 89). It is imperative to examine the borders drawn between the state, territory, and society, and how they are objectivized differently (but jointly) in practices of government.

Territory, Foucault (1980, 68) has argued, “is no doubt a geographical notion, but it is first of all a juridico-political one: the area controlled by a certain kind of power.” As an objectivization and spatialization of a site of government, territory is inextricably connected to this process of imagining the nation, which is in turn one form of objectivizing the “governed.” Defined as “a specific type of human territoriality and a territorial form of ideology” (Kolossov and O’Loughlin 1998, 262), nationalism has been an important theme in geography, especially as it is connected to space and territory. This emphasis has produced a large literature on the “homeland” (Bell 1999; Diener 2002, 2005b; Herb 1999, 2004; Kaiser 1994b, 2002; Knight 1982; Kolossov and O’Loughlin 1998; Mayer 2000, 2004; Newman 2003; Paasi 1996, 2003; Penrose 2002; Smith 1996, 1998; Taylor 1994; Tolz 1998a, 1998b; Williams 1980; Williams and Smith 1983; Yiftachel 2002), as well as the emotional power of built landscapes and places of memory (Bell 1999; Duncan and Duncan 2010; Foote 1997; Forest and Johnson 2002; Johnson 1995; Kong 1999; Sidirov 2000; Till 1999, 2003), and the role of state capitals in the inscription of national identity projects (Adams 2008; Anacker 2004; Beer 2008; Bell 1999; Claval 2000; Ford 2008; Gilbert and Driver 2000; Gritsai and van der Wusten 2000; Houston 2005; Knight 1977; Šir 2005; van der Wusten 2000; Wagenaar 2000; Wolfel 2002).

The recent introduction of Foucauldian methodological imperatives, together with critiques stemming from earlier writing about globalization, have led many political geographers to attend to contemporary reorganizations of

knowledge about state territoriality, concentrating on how “state power is discursively and practically produced and spatially operationalized in both territorial and non-territorial forms” (Kuus and Agnew 2008, 104). This quote from leading political geographers, Merje Kuus and John Agnew, raises an important distinction between the “territorial” and the “non-territorial,” which pervades much contemporary political geography. Though certainly having much deeper roots, this analytical division in contemporary political geography has mainly stemmed from Sack’s (1983) theory of territoriality, which drew a distinction between these two strategies for controlling people, objects, and relationships.

In this dissertation, I do not take this division for granted. Seemingly non-territorial practices are often intimately tied to territoriality and geographic imaginaries, and this assumed division rapidly becomes untenable. If we take the practice-based method seriously, we see that:

It consists in describing in quite objective terms what a paternalistic emperor does, what a head herdsman does, *without presupposing anything else at all*, without presupposing the existence of any goal, object, material cause (the governed masses, relations of production, an enduring State), or type of behavior (politics, depoliticization). (Veyne 1997, 153)

The distinction between “territorial” and “non-territorial” strategies of control, I believe, is a presupposition. Although some governing mechanisms may be more explicit in targeting a population (e.g. education), others may seem to intervene at the level of space (e.g. urban planning), leading to the impression that there are “territorial” and “non-territorial” technologies of government. The fundamental problem with this dichotomy is that it forgets that space is also being objectivized as an object of government, i.e. as the “territory.” By defining “territorial” strategies as distinct from “non-territorial” strategies, we confirm the separation of two sites of government – the social body and the territory.

Yet government can never be just about controlling territory *or* a population; it is a false dichotomy.<sup>11</sup> Astana, the main example of this dissertation, has been explicitly designed to intervene at the level of space and

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<sup>11</sup> Foucault addresses this dichotomy (albeit somewhat tangentially) through exploring sovereign, disciplinary, and biopolitical modes of government. In the era of sovereignty, government is said to target “individuals as a set of legal subjects capable of voluntary actions” (Foucault 2007, 21) – with the implication that they are sites of intervention separate from the territory. In disciplinary thought, space is an objective backdrop, but one to be used instrumentally. This is exemplified in Le Maître’s disciplinary abstraction of the capital city located in the capital in the center of the state’s geometrically-conceived territory. However, even here, the object of government is both space and a population. In the era of security, the “milieu” was to become the site of government. The notion emerged as a set of natural givens, forming the environment of the biologically-conceived human species, and understood to be external to social processes – a “backdrop” comprised of various “givens” associated with territory (Foucault 2007). Although Foucault (2007, 15) describes the “milieu” as site-of-government as the “fastening together” of the social and the territorial, I think the notion is better seen as a new way of discursively demarcating the ‘social’ from the “territorial.”

concrete forces, i.e. the built landscape of the city and a geometrically-conceived territory. These spatial constructs, as sites of intervention, are then imagined to assume a certain agency – as vehicles of social modernization. But the city’s development, seemingly a “territorial” intervention cannot operate independent of the “social” intervention: a fact that President Nazarbayev (2006a, 358) evidently knows, as we see in his description of Astana’s physical development: “Looking at all these plans, I always imagine people behind them (*za nimi*). For all these plans in themselves mean nothing without people, ready to incarnate (*voplashchat*) them” (Nazarbayev, 2006a, 358). Likewise, no “social” intervention can be “non-territorial” – and especially not, if we take seriously Partha Chatterjee’s (1993) profound contribution to nationalism studies, in which she shows how women’s bodies are constructed as national “territory” (see also Mayer 2004).

We are thus reminded of the importance of Foucault’s analysis of various regimes of *government*, rather than objects of government, such as “territory.” As a philosophy of relation, versus a philosophy of objects (Veyne 1997), Foucault is not interested in tracing the history of territory as a thing: “The whole difficulty arises from the illusion that allows us to ‘reify’ objectivizations as if they were natural objects. We mistake the end result for a goal; we take the place where a projectile happens to land as its intentionally chosen target” (Veyne 1997, 161). In following Sack’s (1983) distinction between territorial and non-territorial forms of control, scholars are merely classifying two distinct practices of objectivizing certain material forces as sites of government. How these are delineated, e.g. as “social” and “spatial,” fundamentally depends on historically- and geographically-contextual conceptions of space, demanding that we study the operation of political technologies – *which draw on spatial imaginaries and material forces to a varying extent* – in order to give the impression of a “natural” “territory” *as a geo-historically-contingent iteration of objectivizing a site of government*.

This methodological tack draws much inspiration from Foucault, who has stressed the functional role of the state-society division, identifying the notion of “(civil) society” as a governmental technology originating in new liberal arts of governing in the eighteenth century (Foucault 2008, 295-296). This new concept, as a site of intervention and subject of history (Foucault 2003, 134), represented a new “reality” – not primary and immediate – but “transactional” (*réalité de transaction*) insofar as it did not always exist, but is nonetheless real. This notion of “civil society” eventually gave rise to the basic concepts of nineteenth-century nationalism (Foucault 2003, 134), with the “nation” being “one of the major forms, [but] only one of the possible forms, of civil society” (Foucault 2008, 302). In the earliest conceptions of the “nation,” it was not tied to a territorial unit, but it was something that



“circulated” behind frontiers and institutions (Foucault 2003, 134). But with the naturalization of “society” as a pre-given entity, combined with nineteenth-century nationalist thought, state sovereignty became laden with territorial contradictions:

One the one hand, the doctrines of popular sovereignty conceive ‘the people’ as a territorial community, defined by the state. On the other hand, these doctrines also evoke an image of the people as a pre-political community that establishes state institutions and has the final say on their legitimacy. (Kuus and Agnew 2008, 99)

This raises the question of the coincidence of “society” or the “nation” in the spatial imaginary of the territorial unit – a mismatch built into and denied by the nation-state ideal that arose out of nineteenth-century nationalism. In its unique(-ly pernicious) way, this form of arranging practices of government bound together new practices of making the state, society, and territory.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

As I asked at the outset of this chapter, what theoretical work can this sort of analysis do for us? Following the path cleared by Foucault and others employing his method, I believe it allows us to dispense with the coercion/persuasion dichotomy, recognizing that it ties us too much to the liberal conceptions of an autonomous individual subject to external force. Especially in the context of Kazakhstan, which is not characterized by a stereotypically “liberal” conception of agency, these liberalist presumptions are not only unhelpful, but counterproductive. As such, I seek to bypass the coercion/persuasion binary by exploring the “technologies of government” that have developed in Kazakhstan since the state gained independence in 1991. In this umbrella term, I include and focus on practices of governing the self and others, as well as the role of space, spatial imaginaries, and material forces in constituting, channeling, producing, and sustaining these relations of power. A key dimension of this argument is that practices of self-government cannot be detached from practices of governing others – habits of relating to the self can be “colonized” (i.e. promoted or restricted) by a “governor” when objectivizing the “governed.” But all practices are necessarily performed in a field of power relations, and work with various material forces (e.g. the natural resources of Kazakhstan’s territory, or Astana’s landscape). To govern, after all, is to act upon action: “to govern one must act upon these forces, instrumentalize them in order to shape actions, processes and outcomes in desired directions” (Rose 1999, 4). In brief, diffuse practices are variably “technologized” in different contexts: “The practice is the response to a challenge, to be sure, but a given challenge does not always lead to the same response” (Veyne 1997, 161).

In this chapter I have illustrated two theoretical imperatives that I take from my readings of Foucault's work, and which inform the remainder of this dissertation. Although I find the insights of other theorists to be useful at times, I believe that Foucault's *method* (i.e. as opposed to the content of his works) provides the best tools to understand how power operates in Kazakhstan, and especially through the Astana project. As a study in political geography, Foucault's unified consideration of space, subject-formation, and power provides a useful starting point. Yet it is not an end point. As I mentioned at the outset of this chapter, I take a loose relation to his work and am less concerned with following through with his individual arguments, and more concerned with how his methodology can help to raise and address challenging new questions. The persuasion/coercion dichotomy is far from new, but as I have sought to demonstrate in this section, Foucault's analytics of government and the subject are helpful in thinking outside this binary, humanist worldview.

In this chapter, I will provide some of the background necessary to understand the specificities of the Kazakhstan case study. I outline some of the important Soviet legacies that have informed certain technologies of government that have evolved since 1991, focusing on Soviet nationalities policies and a progress-oriented “developmental regime.” I further articulate my theoretical framework through considering and rejecting an approach of framing the Kazakhstan case study as an example of “non-liberal governmentality.” I also problematize Western-centric approaches to non-liberal/nondemocratic settings that focus on people’s “opinions,” without considering the “opinion” itself as a constructed political technology. Lastly, I turn to a detailed outline of the methods I employed to answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1, and further justify my use of a mixed-methods, practice-based approach to the case study.

## **I. Soviet legacies and post-Soviet technologies of government**

### *A. Nationalities policies to nationalism*

As countless studies in geography have illustrated, the “nation” and “its” territory are called into being in very particular socio-historical contexts. The history of the Soviet Union provides one of the most informative examples of this joint targeting, constituting, and operationalizing of territory and nation. If the Western European imaginary of the “nation-state” entails the precise coincidence of a “nation” within the borders of a geometrically-conceived “state” territory, the Soviet imaginary was fundamentally different: the “state” was always imagined to consist of many nations, which only sometimes coincided with “their” national (“titular”) homeland. As in European nationalism, however, the nation as an object of government in the Soviet Union still aided in the project to spatially operationalize a coherent state. This was achieved primarily through centrally-planned nationalist policies, which I introduce in this section.

In the Soviet Union, “nationality” had two distinct meanings: one as a marker of citizenship (i.e. of an autonomous republic within the USSR) and another as a marker of ethnicity, which effectively became a “biological attribute” of an individual (and especially in Central Asia) (Akiner 1997, 376; Slezkine 1996, 224; Suny 1999, 154). These two meanings corresponded to a “dual conception” of national autonomy in the Soviet Union’s 15 republics (Brubaker 1996). In the first conception, autonomous territories were seen as “belonging” to the titular nations; in the second conception, national autonomy was conceived of as independent of territory (Brubaker 1996, 39-40). The

Soviet nationalities policies went to great lengths to transform the many local attachments into attachments to a broader homeland (Kaiser 1992; Martin 2001), and the resulting lack of spatial and conceptual congruence between nationalities and titular “homelands” (Brubaker 1996) has had important implications for the way that ethnicity has been conceived of and accounted for in the post-Soviet era.

Soviet nationalities policy (and especially *korenizatsiia*, the policy of ceding control of ethnic republics’ administration to titular elites) was, at least in the rhetoric, always about achieving an ultimate end of inter-national unity and equality. It was seen as a “temporary evil” to 1) make Soviet power seem more “intimate” and “local,” and 2) to avoid the perception of empire (Martin 2001). This stemmed primarily from Lenin’s deep fear of “Great Russian chauvinism,” articulated through the “greatest danger principle” (Chinn and Kaiser 1996; Martin 2001; Slezkine 1996; Smith 1996). The idea rested on an analytical division between “oppressor-nationalisms” and “oppressed-nationalisms,” with revolt immanent from the “oppressed-nationalisms” if the power inequality was not taken seriously and rectified. Lenin accordingly called for “positive action” – not neutrality – to address these inequalities (Martin 2001).

Stalin, however, disagreed with Lenin about the seriousness of the “Great Russian chauvinism” threat, and saw *local* nationalisms as equally threatening (Martin 2001; Suny 1993). Although Stalin eventually proceeded to remove many of the privileges afforded to the ethnic republics in the early years (Martin 2001; Suny 1993), he agreed with Lenin that the major cause of ethnic nationalism was the inequality between groups (Smith 1996). Thus, Soviet policy toward Central Asia was decidedly committed to “civilizing” and “modernizing” the “backward” populations there (Crews 2006; Edgar 2004; Kamp 2006; Khalid 2006, 2007; Northrop 2001). Marginalized as the “younger brother” of Russians, Central Asian cadres were also limited to the political ranks of their “home” republics (unlike Russians and Europeans, who dispersed throughout the Soviet Union).

In the case of Central Asia, perhaps more than anywhere else, Soviet nationalities policy was a modernist ordering project. It began with attempts to delineate republic boundaries, which shifted extensively in the 1920s. Prior to this project, there were no other identities operating at a similar (“national”) scale in Central Asia, but were highly localized (Roy 2007). National delimitation was not, as in the common misperception, an attempt to “divide and conquer.” Rather, as many scholars have pointed out, identities throughout the new Soviet territories were so intermingled, ambiguous, and dispersed, that no borders could have been entirely rational (Kaiser 1992; Martin 2001; Roy 2007; Slezkine 1996). Farrant’s (2006) careful analysis of the Central Asian delimitation project amply

demonstrates that republican territorial delimitation there resulted from a combination of ethnographic research and complex political negotiations between local elites and Moscow. And in fact, there was very little resistance to the territorial partitioning in Central Asia because there were no alternative identities operating at a “national” scale, and the project “left infra-ethnic solidarities intact, and in a rural society these were the building blocks of identity” (Roy 2007, 73).

Indeed, the idea of linking an ethnic group to a territory was new to this region – much of which was historically nomadic and forcibly settled by Russian imperial and Soviet forces. But thanks to the nationalities policies, and in particular *korenizatsiia*, titular nations in Central Asia, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, viewed the territories named for them to “belong” to them (Martin 2001, 151). The result of this territorial relationship was the *de facto* privileging of titular nationalities in “their” republics. Nationality became a key criterion for distributing socioeconomic benefits in the ethnic republics, implying concrete advantages and disadvantages depending on one’s place of residence in the Soviet Union (Brubaker 1996; Dave 2004; Martin 2001; Slezkine 1996). So even though the 1924 national division of Central Asia generally left localisms and key as “patronage networks”<sup>12</sup> intact, the broader-scale national identities were “adopted by the population with surprising vigor” (Martin 2001, 72) and “powerfully internalized” (Kandiyoti 2002, 290).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, came the collapse of the era of “ideologically” framing world politics (Agnew 2003, 102) and the emergence of a new dominant script about “ethnic” divisions to describe the prevailing geopolitical order (Brubaker 2004). Ethnic frames were commonly used to explain the collapse of the Soviet Union, in large part because of the way in which elites in the successor republics played up ethnic symbols.<sup>13</sup> They broadly employed ethnic symbols in an effort to gain/increase their international legitimacy in a perceived global context characterized by the nation-state ideal (Billig 1995; Gellner 2006) – for ethnopolitical entrepreneurs “may live ‘off’ as well as ‘for’ ethnicity” (Brubaker 2004, 10). Owing “their initial promotions and their current

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<sup>12</sup> Some scholars are content with using the term “clan” (e.g. Collins 2006; Schatz 2004a), while others have preferred to find another term. Khalid (2007, 90), for example, rejects it for its connotations of backwardness, preferring instead to refer to these “sub-ethnic affinities” (a term Schatz (2004a) uses intermittently in his book) as “patronage networks.” Roy (2007) prefers “solidarity groups” and Ilkhamov (2007) “patron-client relations” – both because they see them as more broadly incorporating goods distribution. Instead of designating a different term to get at this same issue, Kathleen Collins (2006) prefers to simply offer a broader definition of clans to include kinship and “fictive kinship” (e.g. schools, location of residence, etc.). I simply follow Khalid’s (2007) phrase of “patronage networks,” in order to underscore their relational nature, and in an effort to emphasize their broader meaning than simply kinship, and in recognition that the patronage benefits and obligations they comprise are not quite unique to Central Asia (Ledeneva 2006).

<sup>13</sup> See for example, Suny’s (1993) account of the Soviet Union as a “prisonhouse of nations.”

legitimacy (such as it was) to the fact of being ethnic,” political and cultural entrepreneurs effectively “owed their allegiance to ‘their own people’ and their own national symbols” (Slezkine 1996, 229).

There are two dangers of an “over-ethnicized” reading of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which results from accepting the discourse of these ethnopolitical entrepreneurs at face value. First, it fails to account for the economic factors leading up to the collapse. Kotkin (2001) has highlighted the central role of oil revenue peaking in the 1970s and then rapidly declining thereafter in weakening the Soviet state and leading to a nearly unsolvable financial crisis (see also LeVine 2007 and O’Loughlin 1993 on the Soviet state’s dependence on oil revenue). This was an important factor in Gorbachev’s economic focus of *perestroika* on efficiency in the place of equality. But particularly in Central Asia, this effectively meant the loss of crucial patronage from the center (Chinn and Kaiser 1996; Kaiser 1994b). While this increased resentment amongst local cadres, it did not contribute to an increase in separatist sentiments. Rather the opposite occurred: Central Asian elites clamored for continued central involvement in the economy, and when it became apparent that the Union was going to dissolve, Central Asian Party leaders were the most reluctant to declare their republics’ independence – and were indeed the last to do so (indeed voting to retain the Soviet Union in 1991). Second, such a reading of the USSR’s collapse ignores the fact that there was very little popular mobilization around ethnic/national identity in Central Asia. To be sure, there was a great deal in the Baltics and the Caucasus, but it was relatively limited in Central Asia. As Khalid (2007, 127) has highlighted, nationalism in Central Asia was *not* a subversive phenomenon, but was actually a means through which elites sought to retain their privileged positions in networks of power.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to such an “over-ethnicized” account of the collapse of the Soviet Union, an alternate approach would look to the practices of ethnopolitical entrepreneurs and other structural explanations, such as economics and the shifting geopolitical environment. By focusing on the practices and decisions of key decision-makers, we can also draw parallels between the Soviet collapse and Foucault’s (2007a, 262) discussion of *coup d’État* as a “self-manifestation of the state itself.” In his analysis, the *coup d’État* is a violent aberration from *raison d’État*, which is non-violent “precisely because it readily avails itself of laws as its framework and form” (Foucault 2007a, 263). The

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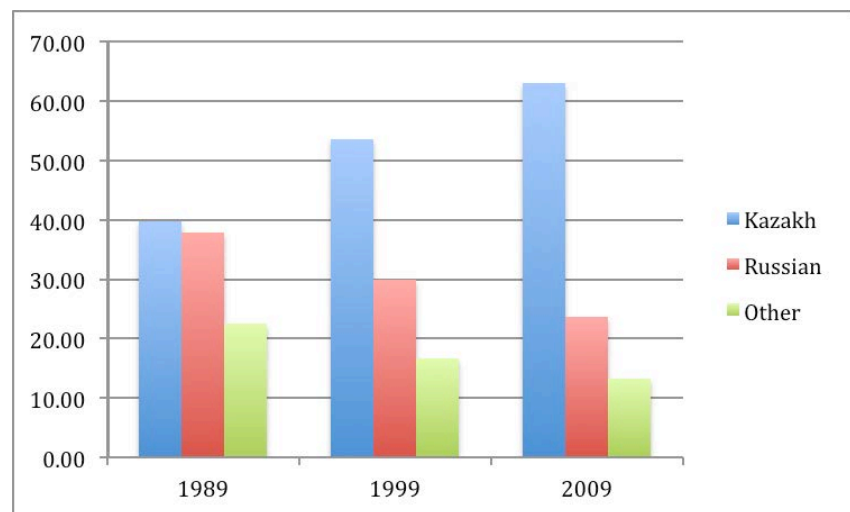
<sup>14</sup> This is not to say that popular nationalist mobilization was completely absent in Central Asia, however. March (2002), for example, has demonstrated how Uzbek President Karimov’s nationalism was politically calculated to marginalize popular opposition groups, Birlik and Erk, by simply co-opting the nationalist scripts they used to mobilize opposition to the regime. Markowitz (2009) has similarly demonstrated that popular movements in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan made strategic blunders that led to their demise. Specifically their use of ethnic nationalist “master frames” failed to recognize the importance of the local contexts and wrongly assumed that techniques that worked in the Baltics, Ukraine, and elsewhere would work just as well in their resident republics.

*coup d'État* is thus an assertion that “the state must be saved, whatever forms may be employed to enable one to save it” (Foucault 2007a, 262). In the case of the Soviet collapse, the final stages of which was precipitated by a failed coup in August 1991, the republican leaders not only sought to hold onto their strategic positions – and their lives (on Nazarbayev’s fear for his life at this stage, see Robbins 2008, 168), but they also validated the role of the state as a territorial and political entity, which must be saved at all costs. Born into a world of territorial states, and inheriting a Soviet sense of national entitlement to their territories, the newly sovereign states (personified by the republican elites) were enacting a particular vision of sovereignty that tore apart the Soviet *raison d’État* and substituted it, through an act of *coup d’État*, that nonetheless asserted the preeminence of the territorial state.

A central question considered by all students of the post-Soviet space is how the successor states have negotiated the dual understanding of nationhood derived from the Soviet nationalities policies (Kaiser 1994a, 1994b; Kolstø 2000). This discussion is often simplified through reference to the nationalist spectrum of “civic” (i.e. drawing on more inclusive, non-ethnicity based notions of citizenship) versus “ethnic” (i.e. exclusive, ethnicity-based notions of citizenship) strategies. Demographic, political, economic, and other social conditions were different in each successor state, meaning that elites faced broadly different state- and nation-building challenges. For example, scholars have suggested that Kazakhstan’s demographic diversity – and especially the presence of a large ethnic Russian minority – has had a profound impact on the kind of identity promoted by the political elites since independence (Anacker 2004;

Chinn and Kaiser 1996; Dave 2007; Diener 2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007, 2009; Kaiser 1992, 1994a, 1994b; Laitin 1998; Sarsembayev 1999; Schatz 2000, 2004a, 2005; Suny 2006b; Wolfel 2002).

Upon gaining independence, Kazakhstan was home to the most



**Figure 3.1.** Ethnic distribution as a percent of Kazakhstan’s overall population since 1989 (ASRK 2010a).

demographically diverse population in the region. Given the tumultuous ethnic relations throughout the post-Soviet

space, Kazakhstan’s elites have overwhelmingly seen this diversity as a liability. In order to address this perceived threat, they have, on the one hand, sought to homogenize (or “Kazakhify”) the country and, on the other hand, to discursively overwrite it through the new notion of a civic “Kazakhstani” identity.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Kazakhstan’s population balance has changed dramatically since 1991. This is in part due to mass out-migration of ethnic Russians, Germans, and others, but also due to natural growth, in-migration of Kazakhs (the so-called *oralman* (“returnee”) Kazakhs coming primarily from Mongolia and China; see Diener 2005a), and the increasing tendency of children from mixed-ethnic partnerships to identify as Kazakh. The 2009 census shows a dramatic trend of “Kazakhification,” with the population now comprised of 63.1 percent Kazakhs, 23.7 percent Russians, and many other ethnic minorities (see Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1).

**Table 3.1.** Ethnic distribution of Kazakhstan since 1989 (ASRK 2010a; Sinnott 2000, 240).

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>1989 Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>1999 Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>2009 Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Kazakh	6,534,616	39.69	8,011,452	53.48	10,096,763	63.07
Russian	6,227,549	37.82	4,480,675	29.91	3,793,764	23.70
Uzbek	332,017	2.02	370,765	2.47	456,997	2.85
Ukrainian	896,240	5.44	547,065	3.65	333,031	2.08
Uighur	185,301	1.13	210,377	1.40	224,713	1.40
Tatar	327,982	1.99	249,052	1.66	204,229	1.28
German	957,518	5.82	353,462	2.36	178,409	1.11
Korean	103,315	0.63	99,944	0.67	100,385	0.63
Turk	49,567	0.30	75,950	0.51	97,015	0.61
Azeri	90,083	0.55	78,325	0.52	85,292	0.53
Belorussian	182,601	1.11	111,924	0.75	66,476	0.42
Dungan	30,165	0.18	36,945	0.25	51,944	0.32
Kurd	25,425	0.15	32,764	0.22	38,325	0.24
Tajik	25,514	0.15	25,673	0.17	36,277	0.23
Pole	59,956	0.36	47,302	0.32	34,057	0.21
Chechen	49,507	0.30	31,802	0.21	31,431	0.20
Kyrgyz	14,112	0.09	10,925	0.07	23,274	0.15
Other	372,996	2.27	206,879	1.38	157,215	0.98
Total	16,464,464		14,981,281		16,009,597	

<sup>15</sup> Nazarbayev’s “Eurasianist” discourse, although also a variant of Lev Gumiliev’s Eurasianism, operates as a separate discursive field from Russian Eurasianism (Duncan 2004; Laruelle 2008; Megoran 2004a; O’Loughlin and Talbot 2005; Tsygankov 2007). In order to eliminate redundancy, it should be assumed for the remainder of the dissertation that, unless specified otherwise, the “Eurasianist discourses” described are those particular to Kazakhstan.



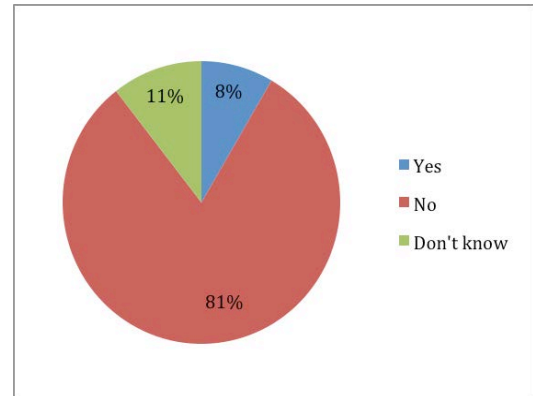
In addition to this demographic trend, cultural and political life in Kazakhstan has likewise undergone a steady set of Kazakhification processes. On the more “ethnic” nationalist end of the spectrum, these processes are nonetheless rhetorically denied via the hegemonic “Eurasianist” script of nationalism in independent Kazakhstan. The “civic” language of Eurasianism (as well as a similar identity marker, “Kazakhstani”) is purportedly designed to undermine nationalist attachments, in favor of a certain “peaceful coexistence” of various groups residing in the country. In the text of the Kazakhstan-2030 strategy, President Nazarbayev (1997) describes how Kazakhstan will look in the year 2030: “It would be inhabited by representatives of numerous nationalities sure of equal opportunities enjoyed by all the nations but deeming themselves to be citizens of Kazakhstan, first and foremost.”

In the intervening years, these rhetorical flourishes have been consistently undermined by a number of measures to “nativize” governmental power structures, especially through measures promoting the Kazakh language (Dave 2007; Sarsembayev 1999; Schatz 2000, 2004a). Furthermore, the first article of the 1993 version of Kazakhstan’s constitution declared that the state “is based on the ‘the Kazakh people’s statehood,’ thus endorsing an ethnically based concept of the nation” (Dave 2004, 129). Changes in 1995 meant that “the civic categories ‘Kazakhstani’ and ‘Kazakhstani patriotism’ were enshrined in the new constitution, but it also included a new formulation referring to Kazakhs as the ‘primordial’ owners of their land” (Dave 2004, 129). Nonetheless, the census does not provide the option to select “Kazakhstani” or “Eurasian” for the question: “To what nationality (*natsional’nost*) or national (ethnic) group do you belong?” (Sinnott 2000, 240).

Despite this civic nationalist script of “Eurasianism,” many scholars have interpreted it as “little more than a public relations effort” (Olcott 2002, 11-12) to glorify President Nazarbayev, and obscure the realities of ethnic Kazakh empowerment at the expense of other nationalities. Schatz (2004a, 78) argues that “this Eurasianist vision of internationalism was directed to foreign audiences, as the elite deliberately cultivated an image of commitment to integration in international economic and political structures.” This “symbiotic” vision of coexistence and identification inherited a great deal from Soviet discourses of the “friendship of the peoples” or “ethnic rapprochement” (*sliianie*) (Adams 2010; Akiner 1997; Edgar 2007; Gorenburg 2006; Schatz 2000). But in Kazakhstan, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, these internationalist discourses never broke down nationalist bordering practices. Those who migrated to an ethnic republic outside their “own” overwhelmingly retained their unique social practices, and “rarely learnt more than a smattering of the language of the titular people, or interested themselves in the local traditions” (Akiner 1997, 382).

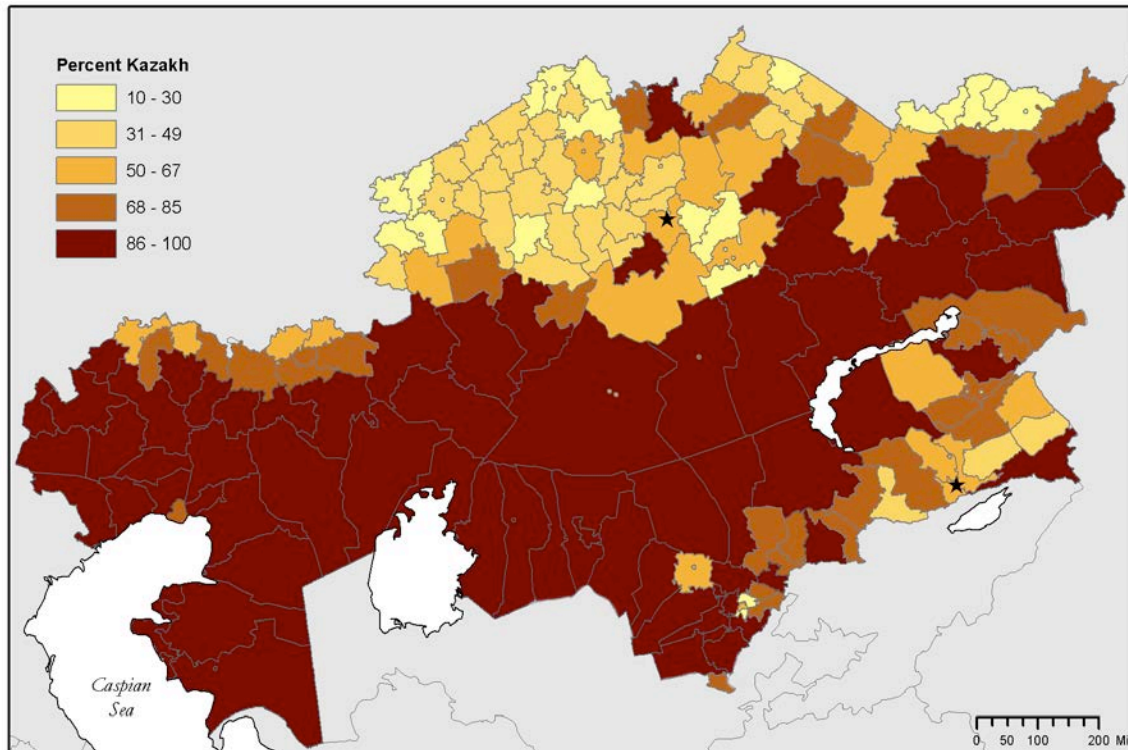


**Figure 3.2.** Billboard in Ust'-Kamenogorsk, reading “The nation that could achieve unity has high goals!” It depicts individual ethnic groups in traditional clothing populating an outline of Kazakhstan’s territory. August 2009. Source: Author.

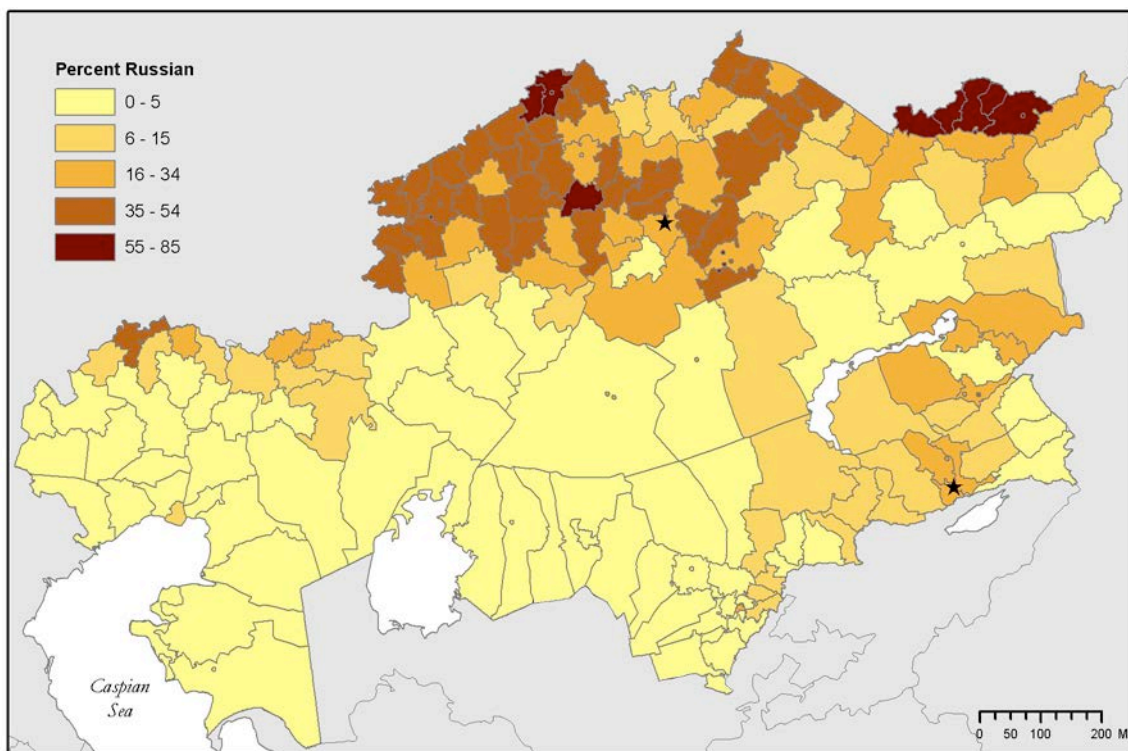


**Figure 3.3.** Do you agree with the statement, “Territorial segregation will improve ethnic relations”? Source: Author’s survey, October 2010, n = 1233.

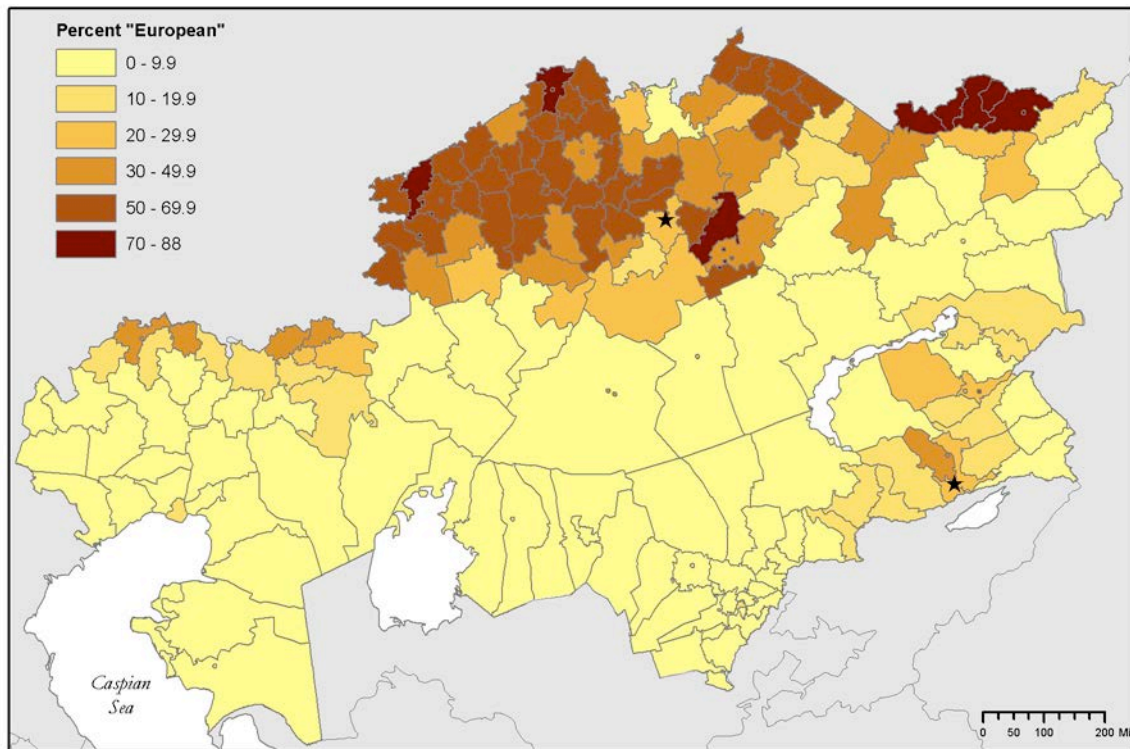
The internationalist ideal contemporary Eurasianist discourses cultivate in Kazakhstan is one of peaceful coexistence of separate ethnic and religious groups (as static things), but one that does not encourage challenging or crossing ethnic boundaries. “Coexistence” is effectively about defining the boundaries and practices of separate group identification (see Figure 3.2). As Figure 3.3 demonstrates, however, it is interesting to note that in contemporary Kazakhstan, the persistence of interpersonal bounding processes are not readily translated into territorial exclusivity, and a “civic” sensibility seems to prevail (or the legacy of internationalist rhetoric is so strong, that my survey respondents easily recognized the “right” answer – both possibilities being equally telling). Arguably more than any other post-Soviet country, Kazakhstan illustrates that these ethnic bordering practices are not just “floating” social processes, but are enacted in and through various spatial contexts. The image that the Eurasianist discourse vaguely promotes is that the various ethnic groups are equally dispersed throughout the country. Yet Kazakhstan’s marked demographic diversity has a broadly regional character (see Figures 3.4-3.11).



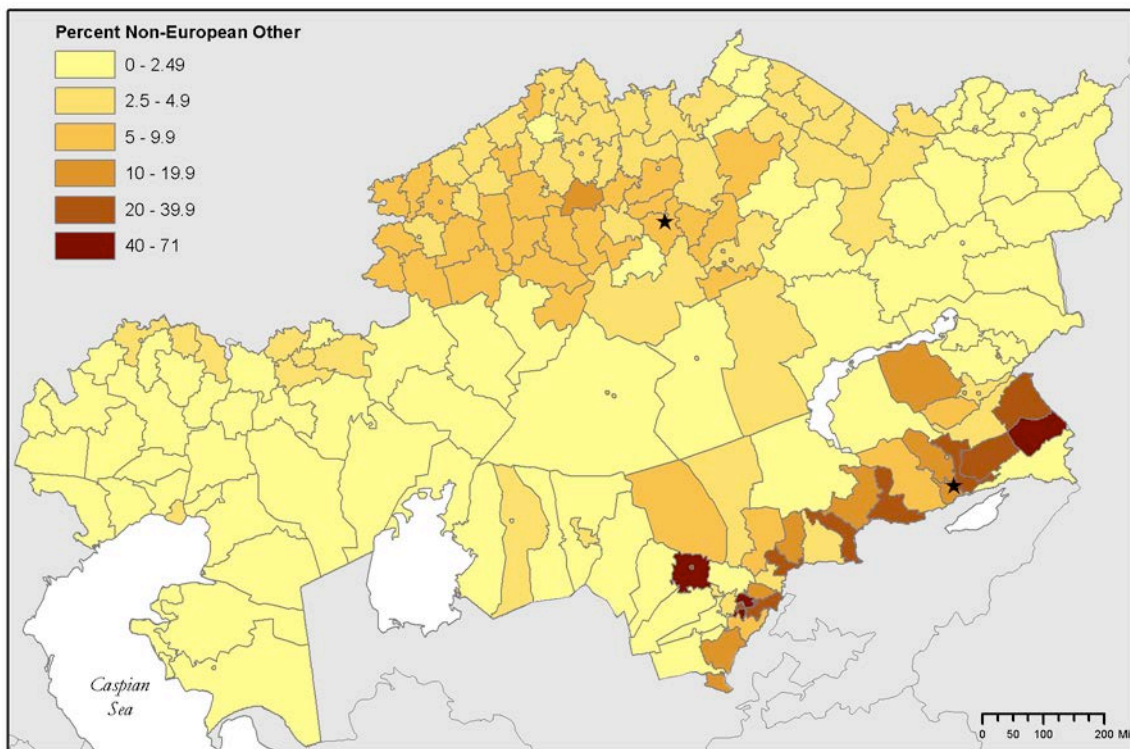
**Figure 3.4.** Kazakhs as a percent of total raion population. 2010 census data from the Agency for Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan (ASRK 2010a). Map source: Author.



**Figure 3.5.** Russians as a percent of total raion population. 2010 census data from the Agency for Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan (ASRK 2010a). Map source: Author.

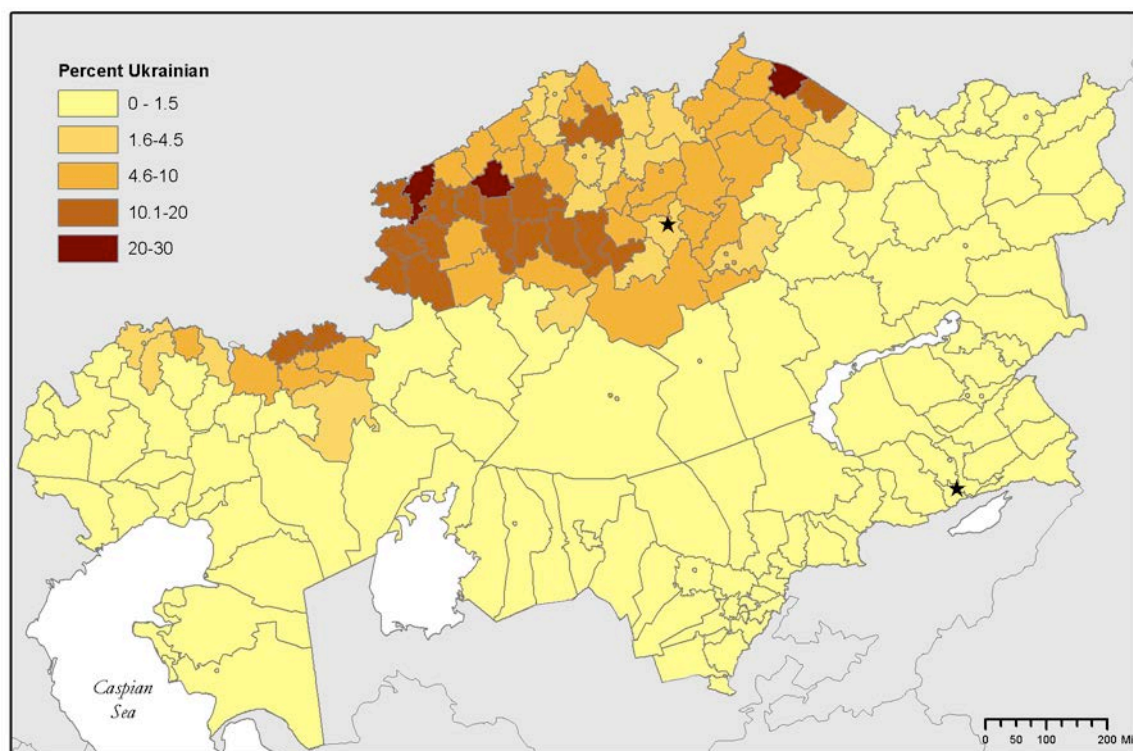


**Figure 3.6.** “Europeans” as a percent of total raion population (Russians, Ukrainians, Belorusians, Germans, Poles, Moldovans, Lithuanians, Greek, Italian, Bulgarian, and English). Map source: Author.

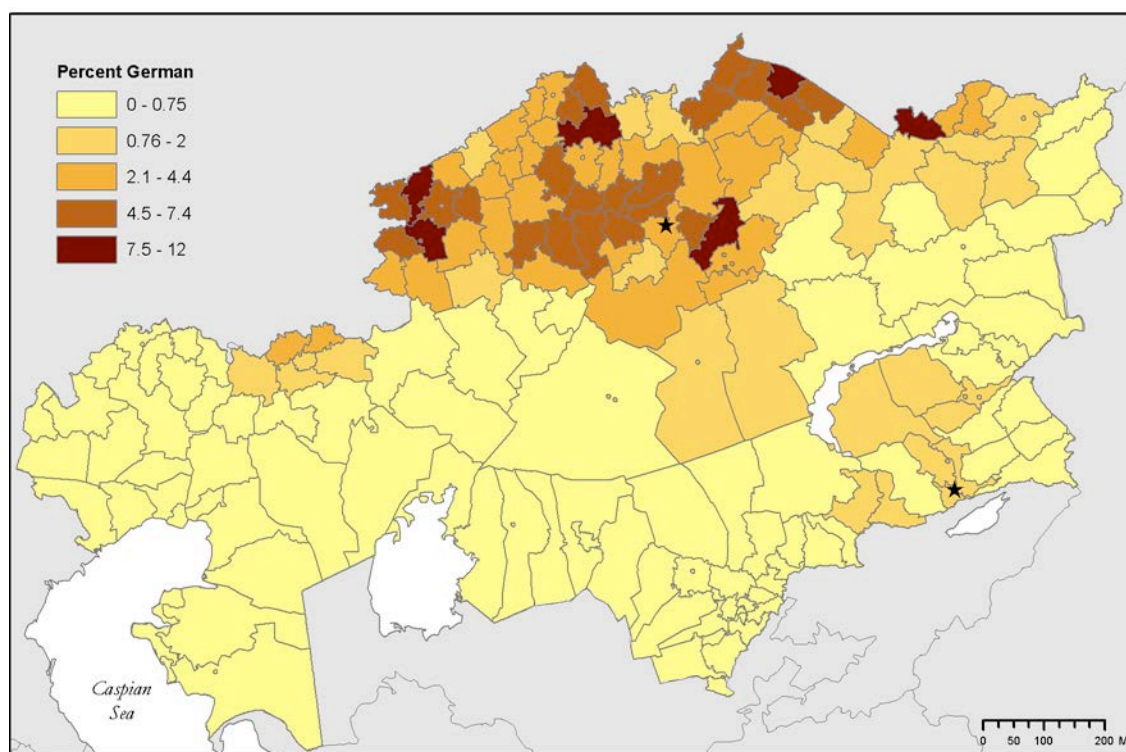


**Figure 3.7.** “Non-European” others as a percent of total raion population (Armenian, Azerbaijani, Bashkir, Chechen, Chuvash, Dargwa, Dungar, Georgian, Ingush, Karakalpak, Korean, Kurd, Kyrgyz, Lak, Lezgian, Mari, Mordva, Ossetian, Persian, Tajik, Tatar, Turk, Din, Udmurt, Uighur, Uzbek, and other). Map source: Author.

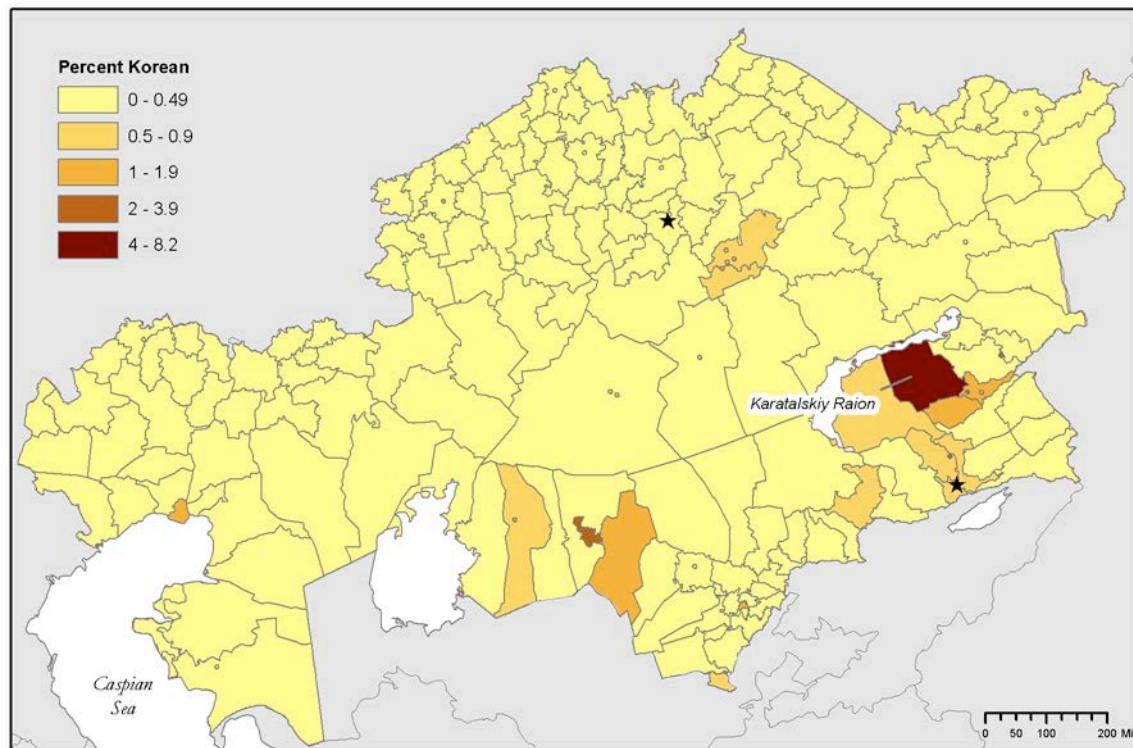




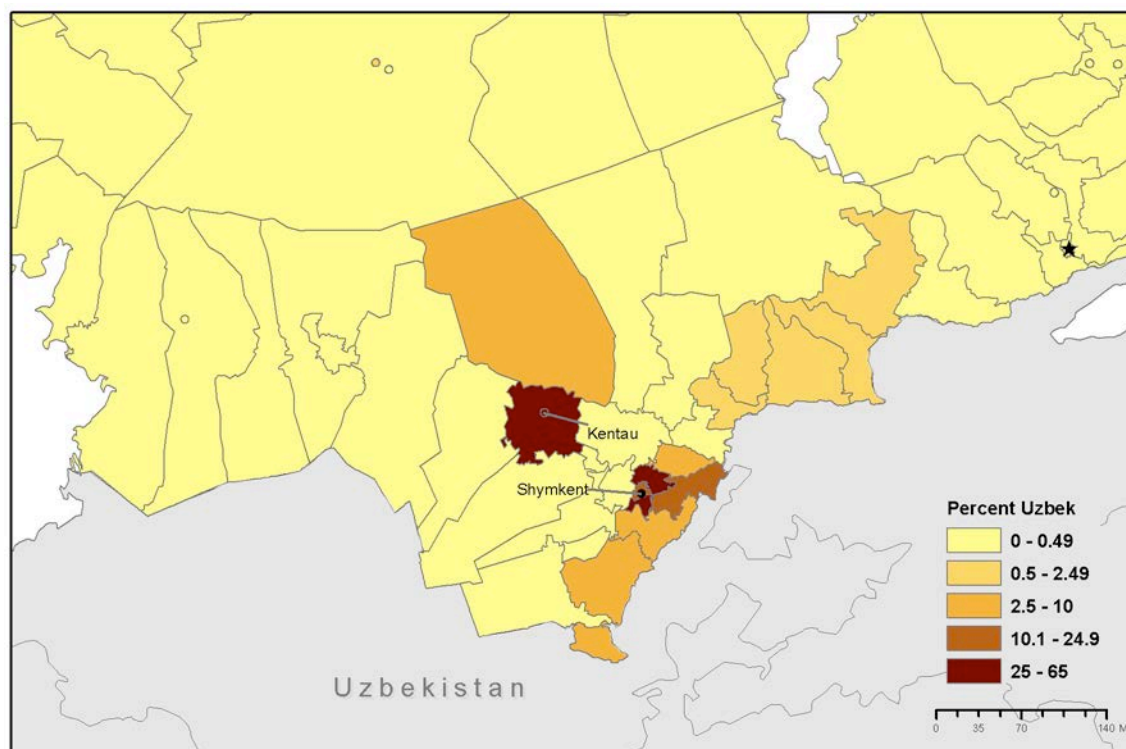
**Figure 3.8.** Ukrainians as a percent of total raion population. 2010 census data from the Agency for Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan (ASRK 2010a). Map source: Author.



**Figure 3.9.** Germans as a percent of total raion population. 2010 census data from the Agency for Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan (ASRK 2010a). Map source: Author.



**Figure 3.10.** Koreans as a percent of total raion population. 2010 census data from the Agency for Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan (ASRK 2010a). Map source: Author.



**Figure 3.11.** Uzbeks as a percent of total raion population. 2010 census data from the Agency for Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan (ASRK 2010a). Map source: Author.

### *B. The developmental regime*

Whereas the Soviet system of titular republics strongly bound the practice of nationalism to decidedly ethnic scripts, there is nonetheless an increasing trend in Kazakhstan toward a more vague, developmentalist expression of nationalism, revolving around symbols of the state (e.g. the flag or the state seal) and a “future-orientation tied closely to Kazakhstan-2030” (Adams and Rustemova, 2009, 1262), i.e. President Nazarbayev’s (1997) vision of what Kazakhstan will look like in the year 2030. This development strategy provides the metanarrative, around which essentially all policy developments in the independent state are framed. Kazakhstan-2030 is broken down into a series of five-year plans, as in the Soviet system. Also like the Soviet Union, Nazarbayev’s leadership is productively understood as a “developmental regime,” i.e. one with the stated goal of propelling “society” on a path of “progress” (albeit differently defined in independent Kazakhstan). The notion of progress is a troubled one, but its very vagueness is an important source of its power – and developmental regimes thus seek to dominate its very definition, as noted in Adams’ (2010, 5) argument above. Drawing on Johnson’s (1982) study of post-war Japan, Olds and Yeung (2004) give a more specific definition of a developmental regime as one whose top priority is economic development,

defined for policy purposes in terms of growth, productivity, and competitiveness rather than in terms of welfare. The substance of growth and competitiveness goals is derived from comparisons with external reference economies which provide the state managers with models for emulation. (Olds and Yeung 2004, 511-512)

In such a system, an “elite economic bureaucracy” tends to guide the market, while the role of state bureaucrats and politicians is less about creating policy than about creating “economic and political space for the bureaucracy to maneuver” (Olds and Yeung 2004, 511-512).

As I have already noted, in a developmental regime, one of the key technologies of government is the practice of articulating a “great goal” of progress, which generally obviates the need for competitive politics (March 2002, 373; Olds and Yeung 2004, 512). It does so by establishing a pre-political consensus about the validity of this goal, “held by the entire political community and from which no loyal member of that community could possibly dissent” (March 2003, 309). March (2003, 332) further classifies a developmental regime as authoritarian when the goal’s formulation is reserved for elites, and when it is entrenched in a binding political system that uses authoritarian means to suppress dissent from the goal (March 2003, 332). Means of suppressing dissent, however, vary broadly across “illiberal” regimes and have much in common with professedly “liberal” regimes. One obvious example in both cases is police. Foucault demonstrates that the basis of police (as it developed from the seventeenth

century) lies in an ultimate goal of aiding the state's growth of its "forces," which links the state's strength and individual felicity: "This felicity, as the individual's better than just living, must in some way be drawn on and constituted into state utility: making men's happiness the state's utility, making men's happiness the very strength of the state" (Foucault 2007, 327). The foundational state-society relationship – i.e. the practices of delineating and enacting the boundaries between the two transactional realities – is what makes the developmental state unique from states dominated by development projects of external international aid agencies.

Whereas international aid organizations' actors tend to monopolize "expertise" and objectify themselves as "experts" (Mitchell 2002), developmental regimes' actors seek to monopolize the "state" itself and to articulate themselves as key agents of the state. Their projects are instrumental in inscribing the state's supremacy in affairs of economic development, and in short, delineate who and what constitutes the state and its domain. This issue of domain is also tied to the issue of territory, and therein lies one commonality among developmental regimes and international development organizations: the need to define a territorial object as a site of intervention, from which the planners stand apart. But notably, imagining the state or a development organization "as a rational consciousness standing outside the country, is in fact a central element in configurations of power within the country" (Mitchell 2002, 233). This image of the state as a freestanding, empirical object is a central characteristic of statist modes of thinking about space, which tend "to put statehood outside time [...] and thus to impose an intellectual stability on the world" (Agnew 2003, 53).

While development discourses depend on the notion of the state as a timeless and "natural" partitioning of political space, they also tend to map time back onto space as a designation of developmental status.<sup>16</sup> Such discourses can also be found in "domestic" politics, i.e. between enlightened actors aiming to "be" the state (elites/bureaucrats) and the unenlightened others who constitute society (ordinary citizens). Modernist developmental projects across the world generally assume "a backward society of silent and mostly ignorant citizens who [need] to be brought into modernity by an illuminated and elite avant-garde" (Caldeira and Holston 2005, 407). In developmental discourses, the state's primary problem is understood to be underdevelopment, not social inequality (Caldeira and Holston 2005, 407) or the lack of democracy. This is an important distinction because the

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<sup>16</sup> In the contemporary geopolitical imagination, designations of "backward" or "modern" provide "a natural link between European past, on the one hand, and the global present outside of the modern world, on the other, in terms of what the latter lacks and what the former has to offer to make up for this deficiency" (Agnew 2003, 35).



latter conception would require certain undesirable political realignments in broadly “illiberal” contexts – and which the citizens may, in fact, not even demand in a particular historical context.

Given the frequent connection between illiberalism and developmentalism, one might ask, do improvement schemes result in illiberal methods, or are they merely favored by illiberal regimes? The answer is probably both. James Ferguson (1990) has famously characterized development as an “anti-politics machine” for the way that aid projects systematically exclude politics through defining development problems as “technical.” As many have pointed out, defining a problem is often simultaneously an act of defining a solution (Ferguson 1990; Li 2007; Mitchell 2002; Scott 1998). One of the key characteristics of development discourses is the constant deferral of the desired social arrangement in the present to an imagined, utopian future (Buck-Morss 2000; Corbridge 2008; Li 2007; Scott 1998). This “colonization” of the future and the sacrifices demanded in the present are generally justified by the supposed availability of a technical solution (offered either by the state’s schemes or something broader like engaging with the global capitalist market). The technical specifics of the “solution” can absorb the attention of critics (Li 2007, 276), while failure is often simply portrayed as a matter of improper implementation rather than fundamental issues of arrangements of “the networks of power and privilege that pass through the state and tap into the wealth it appropriates” (Mitchell 2002, 226).

### *C. “Illiberalism” and technologies of government*

It is sometimes remarked that liberalism governs through freedom whereas illiberalism governs through obedience, yet this simple binary obscures more than it reveals. “Non-liberal forms of rule,” Dean (1999, 147) argues, “can be distinguished from liberal forms of government in that they do not accept a conception of limited government characterized by the rule of law that would secure the rights of individual citizens.” Non-liberal strategies may be found in pockets within a liberal system (e.g. the prison) or more broadly in unfree societies (e.g. the Soviet Union). While “liberal” regimes may employ various non-liberal technologies of government, so too can actors in non-liberal settings employ liberal technologies, as Hoffman (2006) and Ong and Zhang (2008) vividly illustrate in their work on post-Maoist China. Even where certain liberal technologies are deployed, it cannot be assumed that they “will give rise to social and political programmes of a liberal character” (Dean 1999, 138). Indeed, in discussing “those two ‘diseases of power’ – fascism and Stalinism,” Foucault (1982, 779) notes: “They used and extended mechanisms already present in most other societies. More than that: in spite of their own internal

madness, they used to a large extent the ideas and the devices of our [i.e. Western/liberal] political rationality.” While this may be so, Foucault suggests, when considering broadly illiberal regimes – “the totalitarian state, the Nazi, fascist, or Stalinist state” (Foucault 2008, 190) – they do not have the same root or origin as the welfare state; they cannot be traced to the same “governmentality born in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (Foucault 2008, 190-191). Regarding totalitarian states, he points to their origin in “what could be called a governmentality of the party” (Foucault 2008, 191).<sup>17</sup> While the idea of a “governmentality of the party” or a “non-liberal governmentality” is initially appealing, it runs up against a number of problems, four of which I suggest here.

First, while the party may have been a key technology of government in totalitarian states in recent history, this is arguably not so central today. China is the most important exception, but with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist regimes of Eastern Europe, party rule largely collapsed. Naturally, new technologies of government we put in place, drawing inspiration and validity from party structures, but a focus on a “governmentality of the party” would be much too narrow to describe the various arts of government at play in these contexts. Moreover, if we are to truly substitute a philosophy of relation for a philosophy of objects (Veyne 1997, 162), as discussed in Chapter 2, this would push us away from looking to the party as somehow being the “root” of totalitarian government. This sort of analysis would presume the untenable: a transhistorical mode of government whose genesis could be traced through time.

Its extreme diversity is a second problem with the notion of a “non-liberal governmentality”: the places which might be labelled “non-liberal” societies have dramatically different political environments, not to mention historical trajectories. And yet, it is clear that places like Kazakhstan, Sudan, North Korea, Egypt, or Columbia all stand apart from France, the United States, Canada, or Germany. Describing Egypt, Mitchell (1990, 569) notes the absence of “mass arrests and government death squads common elsewhere in Southeast Asia or in places such as Central America,” and points instead to “an efficient system of ‘everyday repression’ maintained by ‘diligent police work.’” But could we not say the same about Germany, where laws govern even the most mundane daily practices, which are diligently policed? So what do Kazakhstan, Sudan, North Korea, Egypt, and Columbia truly have in common? Among these illiberal regimes, some might adopt the “trappings” of a democracy and tout their democratic credentials, despite unquestionably nondemocratic forms of government (e.g. Kazakhstan), while others

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<sup>17</sup> This may originate in Gramsci’s (2008, 265) characterization of “totalitarian policy” as being party-based.

might have no interest in adopting the façade of democracy (e.g. North Korea). When we look at the internal power dynamics in these places, we can probably locate more differences than similarities.

Reflecting this enormous diversity, political scientists have developed countless labels in the effort to classify these ostensibly “hybrid” (Diamond 2002) regime types, such as “semi-authoritarianism” (Ottaway 2003), “competitive authoritarianism” (Levitsky and Way 2002), “illiberal democracy” (Zakaria 1997), “pseudodemocracy” (Diamond 2002), “partial democracy” (McFaul 2002), “virtual” democracy (Wilson 2005), “electoral authoritarianism” (Schedler 2002), “soft” and “hard” authoritarianism (Schatz 2009), soft and hard “neopatrimonialism” (Ilkhamov 2007), “Sultanism” (Eke and Kuzio 2000), “patronal presidentialism” (Hale 2006), and so on. But how helpful are these labels? Such categories necessarily assume a degree of constancy over time and space – a myth that essentially dooms it to failure. By pointing to the immense heterogeneity within “non-liberal” settings, I do not mean to suggest that there are no differences with broadly liberal settings, but I want to suggest that trying to consider such places under an all-encompassing banner would likely detract more than it would add to attempts to understand the operation of power relations and modes of government all over the world. We could, of course, search for similar technologies of government employed in these places (e.g. Stalin’s show trials and their Imperial Roman equivalent (Veyne 1990, 411)), but we would be ill-advised to search for some “genesis”-oriented analytics that would explain the operation of power relations everywhere the same. By instead focusing on technologies of government more broadly, we leave open the possibilities of multiple definitions of the “governed” that correspond with the multiple practices of government that develop in response to any number of challenges.

Third, a “non-liberal governmentality” would be impracticable because of its dependence on the notion of a “liberal governmentality” – which is itself a thoroughly indeterminate notion. In many ways, the label of “authoritarian state” or a “coercive context” is merely a political marker that delineates a certain place as *not* liberal, in turn reinscribing a particular vision of “liberalism.” Foucault’s (2007, 2008) discussion of liberal governmentality is largely effective (or not) because he can (or cannot) demonstrate the general consensus in liberal thought, which sees *homo oeconomicus* as generally constituting the “governed.” And yet, this is not a static phenomenon, nor is it applicable in much of the world, where countless ways of objectifying the “governed” have evolved historically. The “governed” is neither unitary nor a multiplicity: “There are only multiple objectivizations (‘population,’ ‘fauna,’ ‘subjects under law’), correlatives of heterogeneous practices” (Veyne 1997, 160). It is precisely the way in which the “governed” are constructed that we need to examine if we are to understand different political regimes. So we need

to begin the analysis from these strategies themselves and look to the consequent structural effect, rather than assume a type of regime as an explanatory framework.

Fourth, the division between liberal and illiberal contexts is often mapped onto a division between democratic and nondemocratic contexts, which can lead to some slippery and problematic reasoning. In the liberal/illiberal division, one key difference that I have already highlighted is the articulation and valorization of freedom and the free subject. As Rose (1999, 66) points out, “for most of human history, and for most of the non-Western world prior to Western contact, values other than freedom were supreme – glory, honour, power, nationalism, imperial grandeur, filial loyalty, hedonism, faith, self-abnegation.” But as scholars working on post-Maoist China have argued, there is an increasing valorization of the self-enterprising, autonomous subject – a subject that is being constructed through diverse and diffuse political tactics – but whose “liberty” is *not* at odds with the state’s authoritarian political configuration, nor in opposition to socialist, patriotic, and filial values (Hoffman 2006; Ong and Zhang 2008). Encouraging the development of a liberal, autonomous self is seen there as a vehicle in fostering national development (Hoffman 2006, 563), but the paradox of China “is that micro-freedoms coexist with illimitable political power” (Ong and Zhang 2008, 11). So in liberal settings, people may voice a stronger rhetorical commitment to “freedom” as the supreme value, such a commitment is not sufficient for constituting a liberal society. And if a state is nondemocratic, but still espouses such a commitment (or perhaps does not rhetorically do so, but is nonetheless engaged in practices to foster the development of a liberal, autonomous self, like contemporary China), then the issue is perhaps less an issue of liberalism and more an issue of democracy. And that raises a whole new set of issues, to which I will return below.

With these reservations, I return to the approach of technologies of government. As I have already suggested, the practices can be liberal in illiberal contexts or illiberal in liberal contexts, or nothing of the sort. Furthermore, even if the political strategies are the same, the result may not be; just as when two people face the same challenge, their reactions may not be the same. I believe this approach is a modest one: I neither want nor expect to explain methods of governing outside of Kazakhstan (except insofar as they are implicated in the bordering practices between the “domestic” and the “foreign”), and do not pretend that what I *can* explain applies universally within the country. My aim is to explain certain configurations and reconfigurations of power relations (which might be characteristically liberal, disciplinary, sovereign, biopolitical, or otherwise) in certain places and in certain moments in Kazakhstan. By tracing practices of government and their correlatives (the society-territory

nexus), I aim to shed light on an “economy of power relations” (Foucault 1982, 780) in the constitution of the “state” since Kazakhstan’s independence.

#### *D. Technologizing the opinion*

If liberalism is understood as technologizing the autonomous agent, then “democracy” might be understood as technologizing that autonomous agent’s “opinion.” Both the liberal subject and the opinion are sites of intervention, constitutive and constituting elements of particular arts of government. In democratic settings, the opinion carries with it an assumption that is similar to the liberal idealization of agency as “doing something freely, subversively, not as a mere effect programmed or sanctioned by constraining social norms” (Nealon 2008, 102). That is, the opinion is something held by an autonomous individual, outside the constraints of social norms and external forces. Yet in a Foucauldian framework, “there is literally no such thing as unconstrained subjective action” (Nealon 2008, 103) – let alone an opinion. Before we consider Foucault’s more explicit treatment of the issue of free speech and opinion, it is useful to return to Gramsci. Worth quoting at length, we can see how he problematizes the notion of the opinion by challenging democracy’s foundational myth:

[...] that in it numbers decide everything, and that the opinions of any idiot who knows how to write (or in some countries even of an illiterate) have exactly the same weight in determining the political course of the State as the opinions of somebody who devotes his best energies to the State and the nation, etc. But the fact is that it is not true, in any sense, that numbers decide everything, nor that the opinions of all electors are of ‘exactly’ equal weight. Numbers, in this case too, are simply an instrumental value, giving a measure and a relation and nothing more. And what then is measured? What is measured is precisely the effectiveness, and the expansive and persuasive capacity, of the opinions of a few individuals, the active minorities, the élites, the avant-gardes, etc.—i.e. their rationality, historicity or concrete functionality. Which means it is untrue that all individual opinions have ‘exactly’ equal weight. Ideas and opinions are not spontaneously ‘born’ in each individual brain: they have had a centre of formation, of irradiation, of dissemination, of persuasion—a group of men, or a single even, which has developed them and presented them in the political form of current reality. The counting of ‘votes’ is the final ceremony of a long process, in which it is precisely those who devote their best energies to the State and the nation (when such they are) who carry the greatest weight. (Gramsci 2008, 192-193)

Similar arguments can be found in a long tradition among US scholarship in the field of mass communication and “propaganda theory” (e.g. Bernays 1928, 1955; Ellul 1964, 1965; Lippman 1922, 1925; Lasswell 1927, 1941; Schattschneider 1975). While Gramsci challenges the democratic reasoning about the conception of “opinion” here – and starts to touch on its role as a political technology – he fails to consider how the notion is socially constructed and situated.

As Foucault (2001) clearly illustrates in his treatment of Greek *parrhesia*, the capacity and encouragement to express one's opinion is socially situated. True, "in *parrhesia*, the speaker makes it manifestly clear and obvious that what he says is his *own* opinion" (Foucault 2001, 12), but not everyone could participate in *parrhesia*, which was generally limited to male citizens, typically of means (Foucault 2001, 18). Foucault traces the evolving problematization of *parrhesia*, demonstrating how at the end of the fifth century BCE and into the fourth century, Athens underwent a crisis of democratic institutions, which revolved around the "*problematization* of some hitherto unproblematic relations between freedom, power, democracy, education, and truth" (Foucault 2001, 73). His lecture series amply illustrates how these relations facilitate and/or challenge norms surrounding free expression, but how they also factor into a relationship with the self, for "the *parrhesiastes* primarily chooses a specific relationship to himself: he prefers himself as a truth-teller rather than as a living being who is false to himself" (Foucault 2001, 17). This relationship shifts over time, away from the classical Greek conception of *parrhesia* as telling the truth to other people to "being courageous enough to disclose the truth about *oneself*" (Foucault 2001, 143). Again, we see the coincidence of practices of governing the self and others.

Paul Veyne (1990) takes up this issue of opinions in *Bread and Circuses*, similarly demonstrating the ways in which the *vox populi* was variably manufactured and technologized in and through shifting power relations in Greek and Roman history. In classical Greece, for example the *vox populi* was sought, but popular approval was seen more as an honor for the public benefactor (*euergetai*) rather than a mandate of what we now call "legitimacy" (Veyne 1990, 126). Elections during the Roman Republican Oligarchy had a similar role, with the oligarchs competing in them for honors, but which the electors generally considered "a charade from which they might at best expect to make a little profit" (Veyne 1990, 223). Veyne is also careful to point out that, because of the particular configuration of power relations in the Roman Empire, "*there did not then exist the phenomenon called public opinion*" (Veyne 1990, 295, emphasis added). He elaborates:

For public opinion does not consist in rebelling, suffering silently or being discontented, but in claiming that one has the *right* to be discontented and that the monarch, even when his ministers may have misled him, can nevertheless be at fault – whereas a property-owner cannot be at fault in relation to what is his own property. Of course the monarch is not a property-owner like other property-owners: he has duties to his subjects. But we know that he cannot fail in these duties, because he is infallibly good and euergetic. Therefore one cannot sit in judgement upon him. (Veyne 1990, 295)

Thus, “The Emperor is not politics” (Veyne 1990, 296). And as a result, people did not have “political opinions” about him; politics was rather conceived of in terms of local elections, disputes, discussions, and the necessities of life (Veyne 1990, 296).

Veyne’s discussion of right is important here because he suggests the social construction of what Foucault (2008) later calls “the subject of right.” The subject of right is governed by a specific “logic” (Foucault 2008, 274) that corresponds to specific configurations of power relations and modes of governing. Foucault thus expands on Veyne’s argument when he describes the shifting relations between these modes of governing and the constitution of a particular subject – and, in the case of liberalism, how this is articulated within the context of changing notions of freedom and the object of government (Foucault 2008, 41-42, 282-283). In the early development of liberal governmentality, which we will recall is a question of the individual’s shifting relation with the collective social body, we see the Christian pastoral notion of the “flock” serve as the prelude to a “population,” which is “constituted by economic subjects who are capable of autonomous behavior” (Foucault 2007, 277). But even before this new notion is fully introduced, it is alluded to in discussions of obedience and sedition found in Bacon:

When one speaks of obedience, and the fundamental element of obedience in government is the people who may engage in sedition, you can see that the notion of ‘population’ is virtually present. When one speaks of the public on whose opinion one must act in such a way as to modify its behavior, one is already very close to the population. (Foucault 2007, 277)

But the public, for Bacon, is not yet a collective of subjects capable of autonomous action. The public’s behavior is seen as a site of intervention/object of government, and its opinion is acted upon as a way to affect this behavior. But this notion of the “opinion” is not yet the opinion of liberalism’s autonomous person as an “atom of freedom,” who later enables “an art of government to be determined according to the principle of economy, both in the sense of political economy and in the sense of the restriction, self-limitation, and frugality of government” (Foucault 2008, 271), i.e. liberalism. As this particular conception of the “opinion” is so closely tied to the liberal art of government, we should indeed be wary of searching for it outside such a context.

An equally a problematic concept is “propaganda,” which is generally employed as a pejorative term that “likens state ideology to brainwashing” (Hoffman 2006, 561) – but it also presumes an autonomous public, whose reasoned opinion is to be swayed. Continuing the arguments cited above, Paul Veyne leads the way with his critique: “Propaganda and dictatorship can exist only in societies with a public opinion. How could one become a dictator in an old monarchy where there was no public opinion to master and befuddle? And to what end?” (Veyne 1990, 378). Propaganda designed to mobilize “public opinion so as to drag it out of the political indifference”

(Veyne 1990, 378) implies a particular relationship of government between individuals, which may not hold up in certain places (again, see the early American literature on this subject, e.g. Bernays 1928, 1955; Ellul 1964, 1965; Lippman 1922, 1925; Lasswell 1927, 1941). It is thus that Veyne (1990, 379-380) sees Greek and Roman *euergetism* as a type of “corporate apologetics,” perhaps more fundamentally reflecting a monarch or the *euergetai*’s relationship with *himself* (for they were all male), serving to demonstrate to themselves that they are just by performing this honorable identity. Hoffman (2006, 561) also makes this connection to a system of honor or “standards of respectability,” demonstrating how the expression of patriotism by Chinese educated urbanites – which often sounds like a rehearsal of state propaganda – is largely about conforming with these standards and norms, which are “important techniques of self-formation.”

Practices of self-government were similarly embedded in a particular moral order in the Soviet Union, which evolved together with the state authorities’ practices of governing others. This is vividly illustrated by the fact that even the “enormously dysfunctional” terror (Kotkin 1995, 357) did not prevent Soviet socialist ideals from motivating and inspiring millions of people into the early 1990s. As Kotkin (1995, 357-358) explains, we can either assume that these millions of people were ignorant or deceived, or we can try to understand why they reasoned the way they did, “holding apparently contradictory views, fearing terror yet believing that they had built, and lived under, socialism.” The fact that such a mass of people could be led to think so coherently about their situation “is a ‘philosophical’ event far more important and ‘original’ than the discovery by some philosophical ‘genius’ of a truth which remains the property of small groups of intellectuals” (Gramsci 2008, 325). In Gramsci’s (2008, 325) perspective, what makes this possible is the diffusion of constructed “truths” through socialization, and making them “the basis of vital action” and the intellectual and moral order. In the Soviet Union,

the process of articulating the sanctioned vocabulary and values of the new society in one’s own words was far from entirely voluntary, linked not only merely to access to food and housing but to one’s safety and the safety of one’s relatives. But the presence of coercion, subtle and unsubtle, does not mean the absence of a high degree of voluntarism any more than the holding of genuine ideals precludes the energetic pursuit of self-interest. (Kotkin 1995, 358)

The “truths” of socialism were disseminated not only by state organs and official propaganda, but articulated in the daily actions of Soviet citizens, for whom they were tied to issues of life and safety – but also to a genuine hope and idealism of the intellectual and moral order. The mode and manner in which these political “truths” were disseminated also had the effect of limiting sincere political discussion (see Yurchak 2003). Consequently, “few could imagine alternatives. Nor was anyone encouraged to do so” (Kotkin 1995, 358).



While the approach that I have outlined here explicitly rejects a one-dimensional view of power, I do not mean to deny the fact that there are many places characterized by a great deal of overt violence (e.g. conflict zones) or pervasive, but less open, threats to life (e.g. Stalinist terror). Such an environment is generally characterized by what Mitchell (1990, 558) has called a “climate of fear” or a “culture of fear” (Mitchell 2002, 153).<sup>18</sup> In such an environment, individuals – especially those who live difficult lives riddled with poverty, hunger or overt violence – may want or need to express their situation, but may be “unable to find the opportunity, the courage, or the language to do so. These are conditions that may express themselves not in attitudes or accounts of observable events, but in silences, an unwillingness to respond, or the sheer inability to narrate” (Mitchell 2002, 177). Unlike the *parrhesiastes* who speaks the truth at great personal risk (Foucault 2001, 15), individuals in these settings generally respond to their concrete daily experience through silence.

But the silence imposed by violence is never total: “A violence that erased every sign of itself would be remarkably inefficient. [...] Rather, in a very basic way, in a culture of fear, meaning itself is made possible by what is missing” (Mitchell 2002, 153). Responding to “today,” then, revolves around a combination of violence, its recollection, and rumor (Mitchell 2002, 154; see also Bond and Koch 2010; Tishkov 1995), since “the truth of a culture of fear is built upon absences” (Mitchell 2002, 158). As Kotkin explores in the case of Stalinist Magnitogorsk, “every urban inhabitant knew, even if only instinctively, what he or she needed to do in order to live,” but these absences were constantly explored: “That these new rules of urban life were often unspoken did not mean that they were less real. Even unspoken rules revealed themselves at their limits, that is, when tested, which they were all the time” (Kotkin 1995, 154). Contra Bourdieu’s (1977, 176) claim that people living difficult lives “socially repress” reality in order to preserve meaning in one’s quotidian existence, these silences might be better interpreted as indicating a particular configuration of power relations that does not technologize a relationship with the self such that a vocabulary for one’s condition can be articulated, or seen as worthy of being articulated. This is not to say that people are necessarily “resigned” to their fate, or that such settings are therefore void of people who actively try to “fight the system.” On the contrary, they are merely not encouraged (either through a moral,

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<sup>18</sup> Note that this is radically different than when Foucault (2008, 67) claims: “There is no liberalism without a culture of danger.” In this discussion of danger in liberalism, threats to the social body are more or less manufactured. What Mitchell is concerned with is actual danger in terms of a concrete potential of losing one’s life or livelihood.

bureaucratic, or other system) to relate to the self as a free agent capable of changing this fate, which is why the overall picture may be one of “passivity.”

However, it would be wrong to presume that a person’s failure to “vocalize” their situation or “opinion” means that they “do nothing.” Again, it is helpful to draw an illustration from Kazakhstan, which is not a democratic context where popular “opinion” is technologized as an instrument of endowing legitimacy. Most Kazakhstanis are aware of the Western preoccupation with “free speech” and “free elections,” but few seem to mind the fact there have only been unfree elections in Kazakhstan. This is not to say that people do not notice, but there is an overwhelming impression in the country their “opinions” about the world are not a matter of relevance in “high politics.” As I will argue in this dissertation, their very indifference and silence on political issues cannot be translated as “doing nothing” about the situation. Every day, people are coping with and responding to a variety of forces – which as I have argued above, might work just as much to support prevailing power relations as to counter them. During my first field visit in 2005, the presidential election campaign was in full swing. People in Almaty were particularly pleased that this meant new roads for parts of the city in preparation for the president’s campaign visit. People in other parts of the country were happy to receive a new toaster or small electric handout for participating in the election. As would be expected in a place where the ruling regime has complete control over the media, coverage of the election, as with the most recent one in April 2011, was only positive. Many people simply ignore the stories, while others read and watch them, but a very select few actively search out alternative coverage, like that provided by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. In March 2011, a number of the country’s leading pop stars got together to make a pro-regime music video about participating in the election. At a press conference in Almaty, they told journalists that “all citizens of Kazakhstan, especially young people, should participate in the early presidential elections ‘to show how they care about their motherland’” (RFE/RL 2011d). They also stressed that they organized the campaign voluntarily. All these cases represent choices made and practices enacted by individuals, which have as much to do with governing the self as they do with being governed by a particular political regime.

In his study of Egypt, Mitchell traces the connections between a climate of fear and disciplinary power, in the form of the state security apparatus working together with large landowners – but which is so pervasive that the individual becomes invested in continuously monitoring of his or her own actions (Mitchell 1990, 558). In the Soviet Union, and still in many of the successor states, the state disciplinary apparatus served a similar function of producing such self-monitoring. In addition to this form of self-government, people also monitored each other. As

Gramsci has explained, “we are all conformists of some conformism or other” (Gramsci 2008, 324) and everyone is a “legislator” who propagates the social norms that he or she follows by making certain that others are carrying them out too (Gramsci 2008, 266). In a culture of fear, this social regulation of a system of norms is largely a coping strategy. Any former Soviet citizen is fully aware that it is acceptable to discuss “kitchen politics,” and they do so freely in the privacy of the home, but any individual who attempts to breach this normalized space is sure to be chastised, or met with the conversation-stopper: “*V politiku ya ne lezu*” (“I don’t talk [get into] politics”). Laszczkowski (2010, 8-9) vividly illustrates this phenomenon in contemporary Astana, and Mitchell (2002, 176-7) describes a similar dynamic among peasants in Egypt. But as both point out, this absolutely does not indicate an absence of political consciousness. Rather, I would argue, it reflects a relation to the self as a conscientious individual who complies with social expectations of public silence toward political subjects (see Yurchak 1997 on the “normal” Soviet subject’s contempt of the “*activist*” and the “*dissident*”). Notably, this operates in conjunction with a circumscribed definition of the “political,” *which excludes precisely those subjects which could endanger one’s safety*. In Kazakhstan, for example, the President is not politics (Laszczkowski 2010, 9), just as the Emperor is not politics (Veyne 1990, 296). This circumscribed definition of the “political” is one of those “truths” built upon the absences of a culture of fear, but which is often probed and tested, and simultaneously worked into a system of social norms.

But this relationship with the self *can* change – as Foucault (2001) demonstrates in *Fearless Speech*, and as much of the new work on governmentality in China also demonstrates (e.g. Hoffman 2006, 2009; Jeffreys 2009; Ong and Zhang 2008). Creative and contingent responses to the material present are, of course, never “calculated in a manner that is context-free,” but will always “depend on estimations and suppositions that are the effect of a set of hegemonic relations” (Mitchell 1990, 555). Notably, these decisions and practices in response to a concrete situation may work to *support* these hegemonic relations, just as much as they may work to skirt them. Even in a culture of fear, this social regulation does not just silence or warn of potential transgressions. It can also encourage people to voice support, admiration, or even love of political elites, through a system of positive reinforcement. Gramsci (2008, 247) stresses this, when he insists on the fact that “prize-giving” activities are inseparable from the repressive aspect of law: “praiseworthy and meritorious activity is rewarded, just as criminal actions are punished (and punished in original ways, bringing in ‘public opinion’ as a form of sanction).” Foucault (1975) also amply illustrates that discipline’s penal system is as much about rewards as much as it is about punishment. Such a system

factors into a whole moral economy in which “docile”/“obedient” subjects are valorized and rewarded – rhetorically and materially. Overt expressions of nationalism (i.e. the case of the waved versus the unwaved flag, in Billig’s (1995, 41) felicitous formulation) are only one example of this. Dressing in patriotic clothes or “behaving” like a patriot (e.g. serving in the armed service or waving that flag) are all part of a normative system in which the surveying gazing is invited, often explicitly to achieve certain rewards. Women’s provocative clothing can serve a similar purpose – or, alternatively, so too can Islamist veiling practices (Secor 2002, 2005).

What I am describing is an issue of performance or “performativity,” i.e. “citational practices” that simultaneously enable, constitute, and discipline subjects (Gregson and Rose 2000, 434). Contrary to the predominantly Western-based literature on performance, which tends to assume the autonomous, liberal agent, research in non-Western settings suggests a more complex relationship between performance and agency. Lisa Hoffman (2006) illustrates how, in contemporary China, the autonomous self-enterprising subject can in fact coexist with a collectivist and non-liberal subject position “without great personal turmoil” (Hoffman 2006, 564). Nationalist imperatives to care for the “motherland” “affect how young professionals conceive of their present and future selves” (Hoffman 2006, 563). This is largely the product of a particular moral economy, which has evolved on the basis of new techniques of government in post-Maoist China. To reiterate, the question is decidedly *not* whether people “believe” the nationalist nonsense – for no iteration of nationalist rhetoric makes any analytical sense.<sup>19</sup> The question is how people align themselves (“their selves”) to the “truths,” established by the socially- and geographically-contextual system of norms, in which they are embedded. We need to ask instead, how is nationalist rhetoric responded to (or not) on a daily basis? What sort of forces does it represent and constitute? And how is it technologized in a particular arrangement of power relations? By focusing on these technologies of government, we can arrive at a much broader picture of how power operates in and through subjects and their practices. This focus on practice is the methodological imperative of Foucault’s positivism, i.e. “to speak about practice *precisely*” (Veyne 1997, 156), and thus to see how “power is more or less efficient, totalizing, or dominating not in its *intentions*, but in its *outcomes*,” namely “through the intense saturation of certain modes or practices” (Nealon 2008, 100). In the following section, I will shift gears somewhat to a more concrete discussion of how I sought to answer some of these question in the context of my case study in Kazakhstan.

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<sup>19</sup> This is why Gellner (2006, 119) usefully reminds us that the precise doctrines of the prophets of nationalism “are hardly worth analyzing.”

### III. The research project

#### *A. Mixed methods*

Though the history of geography is indeed one of mixed methods, the language of “mixed methods” is relatively recent. For this reason, Creswell (2003, 15) dates of the birth of mixed methods to psychology studies of the late 1950s. But as Cope (2010, 27) points out, geography as a discipline has always employed mixed methods (dating back to the days of exploration), but only recently have geographers paid more explicit attention to articulating and justifying their methodological tools as such. Although it is perhaps less common today to find individuals demanding a singular epistemological and methodological framework, there has long been a politics around defining what is “really” mixed methods, and which studies can “really” be considered to integrate quantitative and qualitative tools. In this debate, some individuals judge the work of mixed methods studies as not being quantitative/qualitative “enough, as if defining “real” mixed methods as some ideal (and idealistic) 50-50 split.

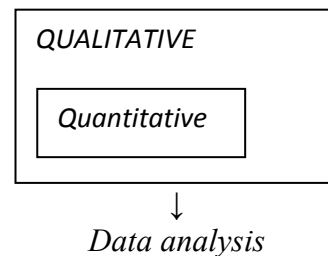
In large part, this preoccupation with what “really” constitutes mixed methods is an extension of the concern for methodological “purity” (Kwan 2004). Yet, as I argue, the power of the mixed methods approach lies in its ability to challenge unitary discourses about methodological purity. Whichever approach the researcher assigns greater priority (though this could also be equal priority), it does not change the fact that the approach is still one of “mixed methods.” Yet bringing together multiple epistemologies can certainly be a challenge in itself, and one that should not be underestimated. Elwood (2010, 95) enjoins all practitioners of mixed methods to ask how, can, and should different epistemologies be integrated? One of the most common justifications for this integration relies on the principle of “triangulation,” with the idea that “errors will be minimized by drawing from diverse sources and types of data” (Cope 2010, 31) and that “the weaknesses of each single method may be compensated by the counterbalancing strengths of another” (Kwan 2002b, 163-4; Kwan 2008, 614). Indeed, Creswell (2003, 15) even argues that the birth of triangulation was the birth of mixed methods, when researchers increasingly argued that “biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases of other methods.”

I argue that such a justification of mixed methods is problematic, for it tends to assume a real world “out there” that can somehow be more wholly described if the researcher just employs enough different approaches. More is equated with better. But as Haraway (1988, 173) argues, we have no need for totality, and “totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality” (Haraway 1988, 180). Mixed methods, from this perspective, is more about building a network of partial knowledges than trying to piece together some “more complete” picture of

“reality.” Furthermore, the problem is not the biases of a particular method itself – all approaches are of course limited and are going to provide a poor picture of “reality,” if such is the reified ideal one is striving for. If we instead take the view that knowledge is produced through experience and that the world is created and known through social processes, it becomes clear that mixed methods are much more productively treated as an attempt to get at a multiplicity of meanings (Elwood 2010), rather than a potpourri of tools that over-stretch the researcher (Kwan 2004). Acknowledging that mixed approaches have always characterized geography, we must interpret contemporary methodological debates about mixed methods as situated in the broader power plays of the discipline. Mixed methods, in this view, thus becomes a discourse of power to disrupt some thinkers’ single-paradigm ideal of epistemology/methodology that used to predominate in geography (Elwood 2010, 95).

The particular mixed methods model that I adopted was the “concurrent nested strategy,” in which quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously, but with one predominant method guiding the project (Creswell 2003, 218). As Figure 3.12 demonstrates, for this project, the qualitative approach was the

predominant method and quantitative methods were embedded within this. In such an approach, the nesting means that the embedded method seeks to address different questions than the dominant method, but the data collected through the two approaches are mixed during the analysis of the project (Creswell 2003, 218). One particular advantage of this approach is that the researcher can gain broader and different perspectives than by just employing the primary method, and do so in a single data collection phase (Creswell 2003, 218). I did not follow the convention of a separate “data collection” phase because I think this is a completely artificial divide, which neglects the nature of contemporary research – due in part to the internet terminating all sorts of previously enacted spatial barriers between home and the field, but also due to the eternal reality of how friendships and networks between collaborators and participants span across time and space. Regardless, the “concurrent nested strategy” was the best fit for this project because it enabled me to work with a predominantly qualitative approach designed for a “disaggregated and localized” geopolitics, but not at the expense of important quantitative tools needed to capture social, economic, and demographic transitions in space and time.



**Figure 3.12.** Nested concurrent approach (adapted from Creswell, 2003, 214).

Primary data collection took place during three field trips for a total of 16 weeks in Kazakhstan: 8 weeks in Summer 2009, 4 weeks in Fall 2010, 4 weeks in Summer 2011. This is approximately half the time originally planned for field time due to a series of visa problems in the wake of new visa regulations imposed on foreigners in March 2010.<sup>20</sup> Significant periods of time away from “the field” were thus factored into this schedule both voluntarily and involuntarily. This was initially designed to allow time for data analysis and readjustment of research questions. The nature of qualitative research (perhaps more than quantitative) is such that research questions evolve significantly over time, so these windows were productive opportunities to do additional literature reviews, assess tentative findings, share them with my advisors and peers, and thus receive essential feedback in the process of refining and redirecting the research methods and questions. Thus, there were no defined “stages” to how data was collected – not only because of the slippery notion of a spatially separate “field,” but also because of a recognition that we are *always* analyzing our data (Crang and Cook 2007; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Massey 2003; Monk 2004; Staeheli and Lawson 1994), and such interpretations in turn guide the flow of the methods employed (Bosco and Herman 2010, 203).

The central research question of this project is: *Since 1991, what forces and power relations, spatial imaginaries, practices of government and representation, and which actors are involved in creating and sustaining the transactional realities of Kazakhstan as a coherent “state,” governing a demarcated “society” and “territory”?* This is answered through a two-prong methodological approach, which was always woven together throughout the initial research design, data collection, analysis, and presentation of the results. The first part focuses on state-scale actors and their attempt to “channel” various rhetorical and material forces to sustain and create a field of power relations. The second part focuses on ordinary citizens and processes of subjectification/self-government, in which their daily practices can work to support or challenge the power relations cultivated by the state-scale actors. This divide between elite and ordinary citizens is artificially imposed, and reflects more on the analytical demands of this research project, rather than representing any sort of social “reality” in Kazakhstan. For heuristic purposes only, the methodological tools I employed were thus loosely divided accordingly:

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<sup>20</sup> These restrictions limited the length of time that foreigners could stay in Kazakhstan on a standard visa to 30 days. In Fall 2010, when I received a student visa for 7 weeks – thanks to a consulate official willing to bend the rules – my mobility in Kazakhstan was subsequently limited by the migration police and I was not allowed to leave Almaty. Having completed everything I could in Almaty, I opted to return in Summer 2011 on a 30-day tourist visa, which would allow me to get to Astana and travel to other cities in the country without being monitored by certain officials (as with a student visa).

1) Actors claiming to “be” the state: The primary method employed to examine these actors’ practices was textual analysis (Rapley 2007). Bureaucratic reports, political doctrines and policies, as well as political speeches, diplomatic and legal practices were examined through archival research. Given that Kazakhstan’s government has a strong control over the media, elite discourses are not limited to “conventionally” state-authored texts like policy documents, but also include government-controlled newspapers, which play an important role in articulating regime-sponsored views. In this element, I also employed visual methodologies, such as photography to document the urban landscape and the state rituals surrounding major public holidays (e.g. “Astana Day” on 6 July, which is also President Nazarbayev’s birthday).

2) “Citizens” of the state: The primary methods employed here were surveys, formal and informal interviews, participant observation, and focus groups. These various tools were used with the aim of elucidating the variation in how state- and nation-building strategies are interpreted, enacted, and articulated by different segments of the population (e.g. Russified Kazakhs versus non-Russified Kazakhs; class and age groups; national identity and strength of affiliation; rural versus urban populations; residents of various sub-state regions). It was expected that both contextual and individual factors, to a different degree, could explain much of this variation, so I commissioned a representative national survey (n=1234) to analyze axes of similarities and differences on a country-wide scale.

Using a case-oriented comparative method, the study sites have been selected primarily because of their geographic location within Kazakhstan. In sampling, this approach emphasizes the *variety* of meaningful patterns of causes and effects, sampling diverse geographic locations makes room for the emergence of more variation in the data, and the designated research sites have been selected based on their divergent socio-demographic, historical, economic profiles. For example, Almaty and Ust’-Kamenogorsk have higher concentrations of ethnic Russians, while Shymkent is home to more ethnic Kazakhs and a substantial Uzbek minority (see Figures 3.5-3.12). Ust’-Kamenogorsk traces its origins to a tsarist outpost, while Almaty’s growth stems from its role as the Kazakh SSR’s capital. Economically, Astana now draws much of its revenue from the relocated bureaucratic sector, while Atyrau is increasingly dependent on the oil and gas sector. Site selection was also based in part on accessibility and availability of research partnerships. In each location, I gained institutional support of various universities via individual connections established over the course of the three field visits. Institutional support at each of these universities was instrumental in gaining access to literature, interviewees, and focus group facilities, participants, and moderators. In terms of reaching potential participants, universities provided a unique setting because students

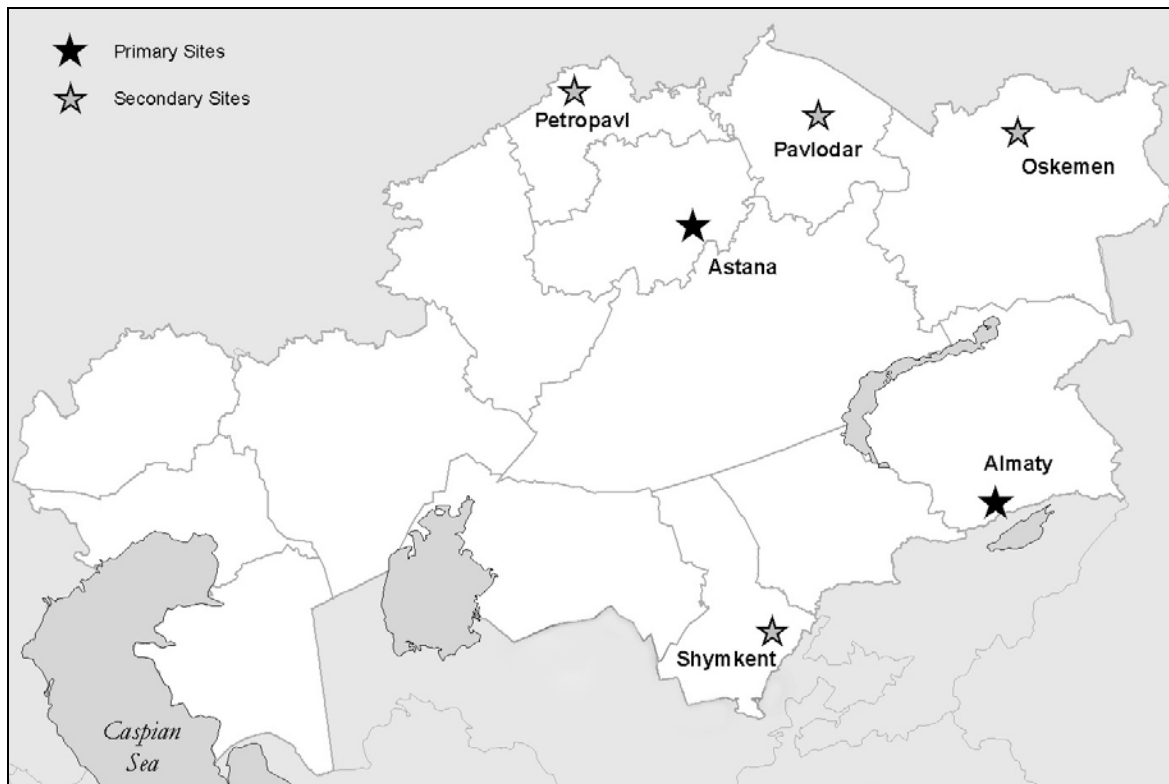


from all over the country come to study in the large cities, and they represent a broad range of age and socio-economic brackets.

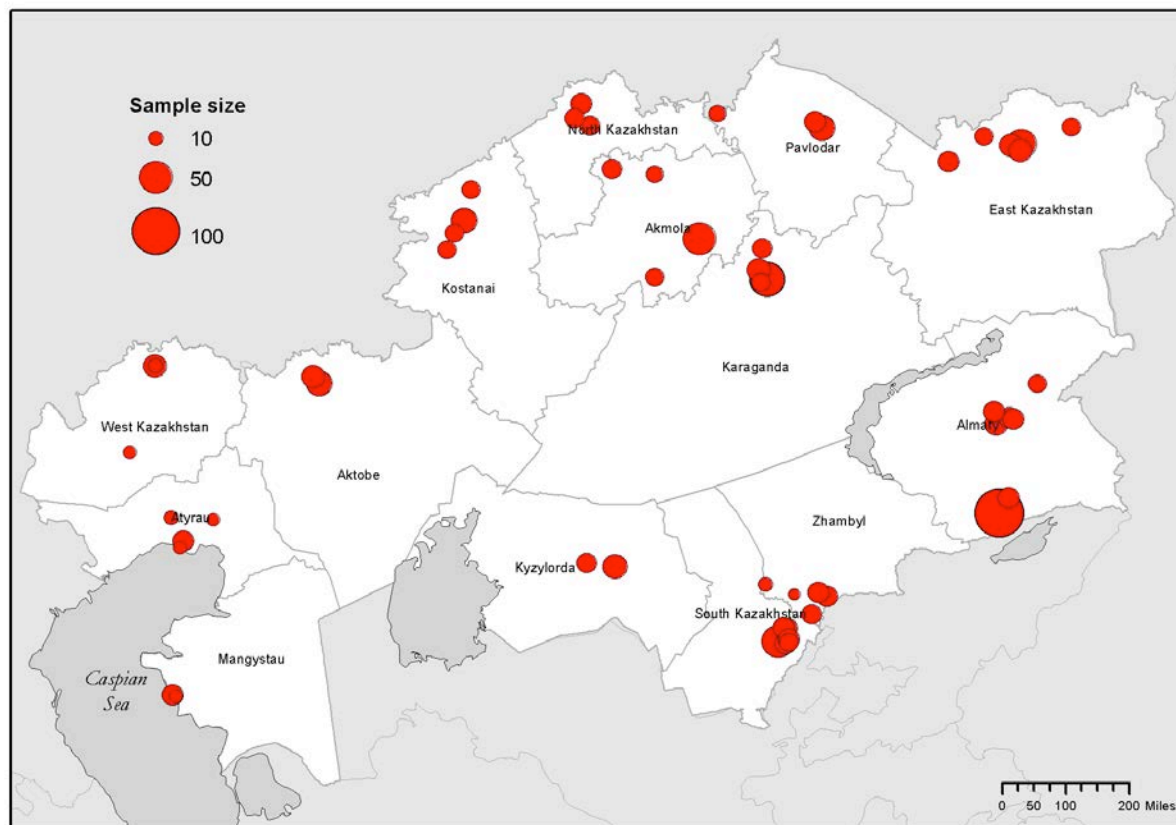
In addition to a country-wide survey (described below), qualitative data collection was designed to account for these social and spatial variations. Almaty and Astana were the two primary research sites, while secondary research sites included Pavlodar, Petropavl, Shymkent, and Oskemen (see Figures 3.13-3.14). The three field visits under the framework of this dissertation were supplemented by my experiences doing research in Almaty and Aral'sk as an undergraduate at Dartmouth College in 2005, and ethnographic research at Harvard University in 2007-2008 with Kazakhstanis and Kazakhstani-Americans living in Boston. In addition, various personal relationships have enriched my understanding of the country, its politics, and its citizens. These have included close friends and fellow students in the United States, and especially a group Bolashak students at the University of Arizona in Tucson, which is my hometown and the Sister City of Almaty. The "field" for me has never been limited to visiting Kazakhstan.

#### *B. Surveys and statistics*

Although qualitative methods are primary in this dissertation, I will first present the specific quantitative methods that I employed. Background research involved some simple quantitative methods, such as acquiring and mapping the most recent census data for Kazakhstan. Extensive survey data, however, required more sophisticated quantitative analysis. These data came from two primary sources: 1) a survey I commissioned and had carried out in September-October 2010 (funded by a National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement grant, and supplemented by my Graduate Research Fellowship); and 2) various surveys from other agencies and organizations, including the Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Centre for Euro-Asian Studies at the University of Reading, the International Republican Institute, Baltic Surveys Ltd., and the Gallup Organization. The remainder of this section is devoted to the specifics of the survey that was commissioned specifically for this dissertation research.



**Figure 3.13.** Map of qualitative data collection in Kazakhstan. Map source: Author.



**Figure 3.14.** Map of October 2010 survey sample sites in Kazakhstan. Map source: Author.

Eschewing simplistic assumptions that Kazakhstan can be neatly divided on ethnic lines, I employed a broad, country-wide sample in order to assess the salience of various societal fissures, such as socio-economic status, education, gender, religious affiliation, clan, urban/rural, and north/south divides. Although the survey did not focus on particularly sensitive subjects, the political situation in Kazakhstan is such that it has a high susceptibility to “acquiescence bias” – a propensity of respondents to agree with an assertion regardless of its contents (Javeline 1999, 2). This is most problematic when some groups (e.g. ethnic groups) in a sample are more susceptible to it than others. In the case of Kazakhstan, Javeline (1999) reveals that there is a difference between Russians and Kazakhs, but also between individuals at varying education levels. She argues that the best solution is just to avoid attitude statements (statements with scale of agree/disagree), which are the most prone to the bias (Javeline 1999, 24). Drawing on this research and the work of other survey research in the area (O’Loughlin and Talbot 2005; O’Loughlin et al. 2004), the questions were thus designed to limit these issues. The full-length survey is included in Appendix A, in both English and Russian, but Table 3.2 indicates the general themes covered by the questions.

**Table 3.2.** Question types.

Socio-demographic	Age, gender, nationality, family status, education, religious affiliation, occupation, socio-economic status, etc.
Prevailing identities	Open questions measuring the level of attachment to national, regional, local, ethnic, religious, class identities; measures of language use and preference, measures of inter-ethnic trust
Geopolitical imaginations	Questions on “Eurasianism”; attitudes toward other countries in the region and world
Capital change	Questions on perceived reasons for the capital change; costs, benefits; Astana’s symbolic and territorial image

A survey company, CESSI-Kazakhstan, was selected to conduct the survey, when preliminary fieldwork demonstrated that the breadth of the data to be acquired was not feasible without professional support. CESSI-Kazakhstan was recommended by a contact at the US State Department as the most reliable organization to conduct social science research in Kazakhstan. CESSI is a dependable research company, which covers Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and other post-Soviet countries. Their clients have included Phillip Morris, General Electric, CNN, the New York Times, and the World Bank. Given budget restrictions, the survey was limited to 30 questions to be conducted in both Kazakh and Russian. Translations were done by professionals and cross-checked by native Kazakh- and Russian-speaking research assistants to locate any discrepancies. Once finalized, the survey was submitted (in English and Russian) to and approved by CU Boulder’s Institutional Review Board. The

administration of the survey was scheduled to coincide with my primary field trip to Kazakhstan in Fall 2010, so as to capture the bulk of the data within one particular time frame and minimize potential issues with temporal lags between responses of the participants. From September to October 2010, professional CESSI interviewers conducted the survey as door-step interviews with individuals over the age of 18 in all 16 of Kazakhstan's *oblast's* (regions), to achieve a final sample size of 1233. The target sample size was 1200, and Table 3.3 shows CESSI's sampling calculations, broken down by broad geographic region, province, and urban/rural distributions. Table 3.4 shows the actual sampling that was accomplished according to this formula.

**Table 3.3.** Calculation of survey sample population.

<i>Region</i>	<i>1200</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>Total 18+ pop.</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>% total residents</i>	<i>% city pop.</i>	<i>% rural pop.</i>
<b>South</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>3401403</b>	<b>1419148</b>	<b>1982255</b>	<b>32.66</b>	<b>41.72</b>	<b>58.28</b>
Almaty	124	38	86	1073737	327775	745962	10.31	30.53	69.47
Zhambyl	74	35	39	644550	306028	338522	6.19	47.48	52.52
Kyzylorda	43	26	17	373395	224878	148517	3.59	60.23	39.77
South Kazakhstan	151	65	86	1309721	560467	749254	12.58	42.79	57.21
<b>North</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>1706076</b>	<b>930070</b>	<b>776006</b>	<b>16.38</b>	<b>54.52</b>	<b>45.48</b>
Pavlodar	63	42	21	547748	368746	179002	5.26	67.32	32.68
Kostanai	77	44	33	668495	383144	285351	6.42	57.31	42.69
North Kazakhstan	56	21	36	489833	178180	311653	4.7	36.38	63.62
<b>West</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>1407535</b>	<b>804946</b>	<b>602589</b>	<b>13.52</b>	<b>57.19</b>	<b>42.81</b>
West Kazakhstan	49	23	26	424540	197862	226678	4.08	46.61	53.39
Atyrau	34	19	15	295809	168491	127318	2.84	56.96	43.04
Mangystau	26	20	6	227853	177380	50473	2.19	77.85	22.15
Aktobe	53	30	23	459333	261213	198120	4.41	56.87	43.13
<b>East</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1062419</b>	<b>652962</b>	<b>409457</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>61.46</b>	<b>38.54</b>
East Kazakhstan	122	75	47	1062419	652962	409457	10.2	61.46	38.54
<b>Center</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>1496535</b>	<b>1080751</b>	<b>415784</b>	<b>14.37</b>	<b>72.22</b>	<b>27.78</b>
Akmola	61	30	31	527132	257228	269904	5.06	48.8	51.2
Karaganda	111	94	17	969403	823523	145880	9.31	84.95	15.05
Astana	48	48		414764	414764	0	3.98	100	0
Almaty city	107	107		925664	925664	0	8.89	100	0
Total	1200	718	482	10414396	6228305	4186091	100	59.8	40.2

**Table 3.4.** Actual survey sample size by region.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Population 18+</i>	<i>Percent of total 18+ population</i>	<i>Total respondents</i>	<i>Percent of total sample</i>
Akmola	527,132	5.06	64	5.19
Aktobe	459,333	4.41	55	4.46
Almaty	1,073,737	10.31	126	10.22
Atyrau	295,809	2.84	36	2.92
West Kazakhstan	424,540	4.08	51	4.14
Zhambyl	644,550	6.19	76	6.16
Karaganda	969,403	9.31	113	9.16
Kostanai	668,495	6.42	79	6.41
Kyzylorda	373,395	3.59	44	3.57
Mangystau	227,853	2.19	28	2.27
South Kazakhstan	1,309,721	12.58	153	12.41
Pavlodar	547,748	5.26	66	5.35
North Kazakhstan	489,833	4.70	59	4.79
East Kazakhstan	1,062,419	10.20	125	10.14
Astana	414,764	3.98	50	4.06
Almaty city	925,664	8.89	108	8.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,414,396</b>		<b>1233</b>	

Survey data was received from CESSI in the form of a raw database, which I then analyzed using R statistical software. In order to evaluate the relative significance of contextual (e.g. locality, region) and individual (e.g. nationality, age) factors, data were collected about socio-demographic indicators and each response was geo-coded (at the scale of the site locality, i.e. village or city). All responses were also assigned a code for the region (*oblast'*), and the province within the region, which allowed for the simultaneous consideration of multi-scalar effects. As detailed above, the analysis of the survey data was not divorced from the qualitative elements of the project. Rather, the data are used together with the fine-grain qualitative methods to raise new questions, challenge assumptions, and contribute to the partial knowledges of these other tools. Although quantitative methods can often be problematic for the rigid categories they impose (Kwan 2002, 164; Mountz et al. 2003, 35), the qualitative methods can help in exploring, rather than “editing out” “unreasonable” answers (Wolford 2006, 339).

### C. Textual analysis

This study contributes to the extensive work on geopolitical discourse analysis, which has exploded since the earliest interventions on “critical geopolitics” (Dalby 1988, 1990; Hepple 1986; Ó Tuathail 1986, 1996; Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992). Much of this work has focused on textual analysis of publicly-available texts, including books, government reports, official statements and speeches, conference proceedings, policy documents, comics, and newspaper and magazine articles, (e.g. Dalby 2008a, 2008b; Dittmer 2005, 2011; Dodds 2000; Falah 2005; Falah et al. 2006; Hyndman 2007, 2010; Kuus 2007a, 2007b; McFarlane and Hay 2003; Megoran 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2008; O’Loughlin 2001; O’Loughlin et al. 2004, 2005; Sharp 2000). Supplementing the methods more grounded in field-based research and social interactions, this dissertation also employs this textual approach.

I employed textual analysis as a means to delineate trends in various discursive tropes and frames about the “nation” and territory in Kazakhstan (see Table 3.5). Methodologically,

**Table 3.5.** Texts analyzed and primary data sources.

<b>Newspaper and magazine articles, domestic</b> Approximately 750 read	Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, Nur Otan website, Official Website of the President of Kazakhstan, Astana City Official Website
<b>Newspaper and magazine articles, foreign</b> Approximately 750 read	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, New York Times, Economist, BBC, Eurasianet, Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Monitor, Der Spiegel, various blogs
<b>Reports and formal analyses, domestic/foreign</b> Approximately 30 read	International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst and Silk Road Papers, International Crisis Group, various agencies of the Republic of Kazakhstan
<b>Built landscapes</b> 8 localities	Observations in various cities (Almaty, Astana, Oskemen, Pavlodar, Petropavl, Sairam, Shymkent, Turkistan)
<b>Billboards and advertisements</b> Over 300 documented in 8 localities	Observations in various cities (Almaty, Astana, Oskemen, Pavlodar, Petropavl, Sairam, Shymkent, Turkistan)
<b>Museums</b> Approximately 25 visited in 6 localities	Observations in various cities (Almaty, Astana, Oskemen, Petropavl, Shymkent, Turkistan)
<b>Monuments and memorials</b> Approximately 150 visited and documented in 8 localities	Observations in various cities (Almaty, Astana, Oskemen, Pavlodar, Petropavl, Sairam, Shymkent, Turkistan)
<b>Spectacles and performances</b> Approximately 60 events attended in 3 localities	Observations in various cities (Almaty, Astana, Pavlodar), including music, dance, theatre, sport, official ceremonies
<b>Film and television</b> Approximately 30 hours viewed	Television shows during field visits (e.g. KVN, news, soap operas), popular YouTube videos, films

textual analysis emphasizes multiple interpretations of texts and context-dependency, seeking to preserve contradictions, evaluate multiple layers of meaning, and search for silences in discursive strategies (Barnes and Duncan 1992; Dittmer 2010). By complementing textual analysis with interviews and focus groups, the multiple and context-dependent interpretations of texts are emphasized. Assuming an expanded definition of a “text,” I examine

both elite and popular sources, which in addition to written documents, included maps, built landscapes, monuments, photographs, billboards and advertisements, spectacles and performances, museums, paintings, and film (Crang 2005, 2010; Dittmer 2010; Duncan 1990; Duncan and Duncan 2010; Forest and Johnson 2002; Johnson 1995; Rapley 2007; Till 1999, 2003). Given that the contemporary social world is so densely saturated with symbols and texts, it is simply impossible to count all the documents and non-documents I have “read” over the years. This is not only because they number in the thousands, but also because it is difficult to quantify certain things like billboards or other visual images, to which I may have consciously attended, but which any visitor also subconsciously assimilates. I incorporate analysis of these texts variably throughout the dissertation and cite them accordingly, pulling out some of the most representative examples of a deep assortment of data.

With respect to the elite texts considered, I focus primarily on the texts “authored” by President Nazarbayev. The cult of personality surrounding Nazarbayev means that his writing has a monopoly on political discourse. Very little is published that does not simply quote, mirror or buttress those texts that are produced under his name. It should be clarified that Nazarbayev is rarely the original author of these books and speeches. Instead, he has an “entire staff” (*“tselyi sthab,”* according to one informant) which produces his manuscripts. If these writers, who might be philologists or historians, are not familiar enough with the local context or field of expertise, they outsource this work to locals or experts, who produce an initial text, which the team then works with through a game of “ping-pong” (according to the same informant). In the case of a print-only text, Nazarbayev presumably reviews and edits a final manuscript. In the case of a delivered speech, he often just improvises with the text on the spot – with the content sometimes being dramatically different. The text that is posted on official websites, however, is the transcription of what was actually said (author’s interviews, July 2011). This system suggests why there is very little deviation among the individual texts: an author’s job is made much easier by simply copying what has passed under his name before, so there is constant repetition of the same phrases, tropes, metaphors, and large sections are often simply lifted from other texts. By monopolizing the political discourse in this way, the presidential administration performs a coherent image of Nazarbayev as the wise, all-seeing father – but who is, ironically, completely nonhuman due to the machine-like repetition the discursive system produces. For clarity, I will still treat “Nazarbayev” as an individual actor and author, despite the difficulties raised here making this an impossible claim – but one that is needed for the narrative thread. Finally, regarding language issues, if I could find an official English translation, I have cited and quoted that text. If not, the translations are my own.

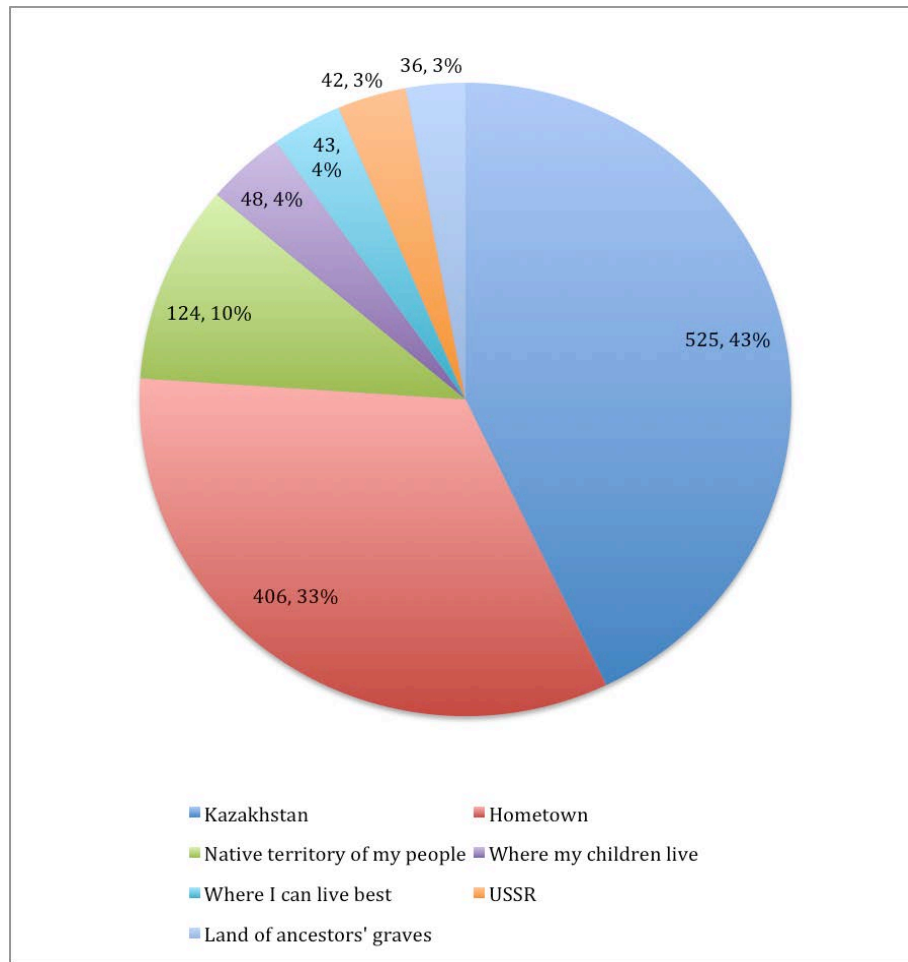
#### *D. Focus groups*

The primary value of focus group research lies in its ability to illustrate how individuals learn and develop opinions and identities *relationally*. This means that, in the analysis phase, social interaction and discussion among participants is foregrounded (Bosco and Herman 2010). Indeed this emphasis is the essential division between focus groups and “group interviews” (Crang 2002). In the literature, they are also seen as offering a good way to shift the balance of power away from the researcher (Bosco and Herman 2010; Pratt 2002) and to shed light on the performance of individual and group identity through the dynamic conversations they generate (Bosco and Herman 2010, 195). In addition to these potential insights, I chose a particular variant of conducting focus groups, in which participants were shown a series of visual “triggers.” This particular approach is inspired by the work of Megoran (2005), who has argued for its effectiveness in searching for unanticipated themes, and in avoiding a situation in which participants merely tell the researcher what they think he or she wants to hear, which can be a particular problem in Central Asia (Javeline 1999). Although I found the approach to be problematic in a number of ways, it was also very useful – but for different reasons than other scholars. In brief, the data generated by the focus groups could not be analyzed as much for the *content* of the discussions or mined for “factual” information, but were useful for examining the participants’ rhetorical *performances* and how these reflected certain *subjectivities* and geopolitical *imaginaries*.

Focus groups were initially informed by elements of the discourse analysis and my preliminary field research, and were conducted as a pilot project in Almaty, with the support of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. In each group, I variably experimented with group composition, methods, and “triggers” (see Appendix B for the triggers used). Each group consisted of 4 to 8 participants – the size suggestion made by most focus group guides, since a smaller group improves discussion flow and because each individual may meet various sampling criteria (Barbour 2007, 61). The final sample size across five groups was 36 participants. I experimented with controlling for gender, and found the division of the groups by gender to be essential; in the mixed groups, women were systematically silenced, ridiculed, and/or actively silenced themselves (the sample included 21 women and 15 men).

In the first 15 minutes of the session, participants filled out (in Kazakh or Russian) informed consent forms and a brief “pre-survey” covering simple demographics and other basic social attitudes questions (modeled on Kolossov 2010; see Appendix C for the full survey). Although some participants chose to give their first name, their





**Figure 3.15.** Responses to the country-wide survey question, “What do you consider to be your homeland?” (n = 1224) Source: Author.

identity remained anonymous by assigning each a number. The surveys were anonymous, but the participant’s number was recorded, so that I could later examine a person’s answers in order to contextualize their comments in the group. The participants were recruited via the snowball method and there were no controls for ethnicity (89 percent identified as Kazakh) or home region/*oblast’* (16 came from Almaty, 3 from Aktobinsk, 3 from Kyzylorda, 3 from South Kazakhstan, 3 from Zhambul, 2 from East Kazakhstan, 2 from West Kazakhstan, 1 from Atyrau, and 1 from Pavlodar). Participants’ age ranged from 18 to 25. A simultaneous advantage and disadvantage of this is that it is a highly selective sample of the general population, and represents a group whose life experience differs dramatically from older generations. This cohort was raised in independent Kazakhstan, and they few have memories from the Soviet Union, outside hearing their parents’ stories and the broader, national collective memory. Their schooling began in the new system, meaning that they were instructed in the newly nationalized

historiography (see Diener 2002). As such, they were well versed in the rhetoric of independence and showed a strong identification with this new definition of the *rodina*: 83.3 percent considered “Kazakhstan” their homeland, and 13.9 percent considered their homeland to be the locality where they were born (as compared to 42.6 and 32.9 percent respectively in the national sample; see Figure 3.15).

A paid moderator, a woman of about 50 years old, who did not know personally know the participants (except in one case), conducted the groups, while I observed outside of the circle, and kept a written record of the order in which participants spoke, so as to later match them with the audio recordings of the groups. The vast majority of participants spoke in Russian, and opted to fill out the survey and release form in Russian, but occasionally some participants felt more comfortable with Kazakh. In a couple of cases, participants chose to speak only in Kazakh, which the moderator then translated to Russian for the non-Kazakh speakers, including myself. She would then confirm the accuracy of the translation with the speaker, who would either agree or clarify. Topics consisted of three general themes: the capital change, patriotism, and geopolitics. Participants were shown a series of trigger images and asked to interpret them without a specific explanation of what they should be gleaned from the trigger (see Appendix D for possible images shown to the group). When conversation did not occur spontaneously, the moderator had a script, with a number of possible questions to choose from in order to guide the discussion (see Appendix E for the script). The sessions lasted no longer than one hour, and at the end, all participants received compensation of 300 tenge (about US\$2) (which, despite being mentioned in the release form, surprised and pleased them immensely). Afterward, I paid a native-Russian speaker to transcribe the audio recordings. I then coded and analyzed the transcripts in Russian. Translations into English were only made for specific quotes included in the dissertation text.

### *E. Interviews*

As with the other qualitative methods in this dissertation, I treat interviewing as an essentially *interpretive* methodology, which need not be cloaked in the false dressing of scientific objectivity, as with the 1970s-era idea of an objective “survey instrument” (McDowell 2010, 158). Interviews, from this perspective, “are not and can never be ‘typical’[...] but instead capture the variety of meanings and experiences” (McDowell 2010, 159). Furthermore, any veil of objectivity would be dishonest because the interview is not a simple exchange of information, but “a complex and contested social encounter riven with power relations” (McDowell 2010, 161). Yet in some respects, in

recognizing the interview as being tied up with power relations, I fear that some have taken this concern too far, often reflecting more on the interviewer's own positionality and colonial and/or feminist guilt (and perhaps the looming fear of the US Institutional Review Boards). The interview is of course a collaborative process, but I do not find it necessary to highlight how very collaborative my interviews were in order to assuage my western guilt. This is simply an unproductive way to address the power relations, which forever infuse our work.

As with textual analysis, the same issue arises with respect to quantifying the amount of interviews I conducted. Totalling in the range of 150-200 interviews, they ranged from semi-structured, to structured, to completely informal and casual discussions with friends, colleagues, or chance acquaintances. While some might see the informal discussions as falling into a separate category from interviews – namely ethnography / participant observation – I would not classify them as such because this generally implies the data gathered from various experiences and conversations while spending an extended period of time in a particular place (Herbert 2000; Megoran 2006; Watson and Till 2010). Although I lived with friends and their families, I did not spend such a lengthy period of time physically in Kazakhstan as is generally implied by the “ethnography” label. As such, I do not believe my countless conversations should be categorized as such, but are most appropriately understood as a form of interviewing. The topics of these interviews had a broad range, but for the purposes of this dissertation, they included the capital change and its built environment, nationalist attachments, political changes in Kazakhstan, and geopolitics (addressing similar themes covered by the survey, as outlined in Table 3.2).

Interviews were conducted with various cultural and intellectual elites (e.g. planners, architects, scholars and academics), who were reached through my existing connections (with both personal friends and key individuals at academic institutions), chance meetings, and the snowballing method. In a place where people tend to silence themselves if they know they are being recorded with audio equipment, I rarely recorded my interviews or even took notes, but relied solely on extensive field notes after the conversation. I did not target official bureaucrats for interviews, in part because of the difficulty of access (England 2002), but primarily because these individuals rarely present a discourse not scripted by their position – and especially not when speaking with a foreigner and/or stranger. Since this data is easily accessible through official texts, I employed the interview technique instead to explore certain discourses that are not often expressed in public spaces, or ones that are silenced by certain social hierarchies within focus groups or other settings (Elwood and Martin 2000; McDowell 2010; Pratt 2002). In this respect, the method was central to the final field visit, as a means to evaluate preliminary conclusions and get

feedback from new and previous contacts. The overarching intention of this final step was to both complicate an overly “tidy” explanation and to clarify discrepancies that may or may not be appropriate to preserve (Crang 2002; Mountz et al. 2003).

#### **IV. Conclusion**

This dissertation is based on a solid recognition that nation-building projects and practices of territoriality in the former Soviet Union cannot be understood in isolation from their Soviet heritage. Some of the most salient research questions in the regional studies literature revolve around determining the nature of the relationship between these legacies and new practices of government in Soviet successor states. I argue that they are best answered through nuanced empirical work in the various successor states, where political arrangements are increasingly divergent in nature. My case study of Kazakhstan is part of this effort to explore the newly arranged practices of government in this region, aiming to disaffirm concerns about the analytical purchase of a Foucauldian approach: “The criticisms of governmentality is too diffuse and all-encompassing to be a meaningful framework for research and analysis are countered by studies that examine specific, located instances of governmental projects revealing aims and strategies for the conduct of conducts” (Huxley 2008, 1653). Rather than frame this effort as an analysis of “non-liberal governmentality,” I have instead sought to destabilize certain assumptions about the nature of liberal regimes, and focus instead on the various technologies of government, which may be the same or different across so-called “liberal” or “illiberal” regimes. By employing a mixed-methods, practice-based approach, I do not seek to reveal hidden forms of domination under the nondemocratic Nazarbayev regime, but instead aim to develop an analytics of power that can help to explain the evolution of the “state,” “society,” and “territory” as distinct transactional realities in independent Kazakhstan.

Although Soviet legacies are central to understanding contemporary geopolitical imaginations in Kazakhstan, I argue in this chapter that there are also new territorial practices and imaginations at work there since independence. Using discussions about the capital change, I shed light on how Kazakhstan's citizens talk about and conceive of the country's "foreign" neighbors, specifically China, and demonstrate how this is intimately tied to "domestic" concerns. I argue that the capital change discourse has become a crucial way, for elites and average citizens alike, to articulate the major geopolitical concerns of the independence period, covering a broad range of issues such as sovereignty, foreign relations, borders, stability, economics, demography, development, and national identity. There are notable differences, however, in how certain individuals articulated and perceived these concerns. Accordingly, this chapter is divided into two sections. First, I will address the elite practices and policies toward Russia and China, through a brief case study of independence-era energy geopolitics. Second, I will address popular narratives about these two places, drawing on data from interviews, focus groups, and the country-wide survey I commissioned in October 2010.

By dividing the chapter this way, I do not mean to imply that the narratives are mutually exclusive, nor that elite and popular groups are internally homogenous. In fact, the crux of my argument is the exact opposite: popular and elites narratives influence each other in both directions, and there are major divisions within these two groups. The division I make in this chapter merely provides the necessary structure to make these arguments. Articulating these concerns has a crucial subject-forming effect, but it also inscribes a particular socio-spatial imaginary, whereby people and processes are located in a naturalized territory-unit over which the "state" exercises its authority. Through a case study of discourses about China – opened up by the capital change question – I will examine how various segments of the population articulate their geopolitical concerns, and in so doing, how they enact their subjectivity and actively construct the myth of coherence of the state and the territory.

### **I. Critical geopolitics**

Within geography, John Agnew has been one of the most vocal critics of essentialist treatments of the state (although his contributions have had little traction outside geography). His notion of the "territorial trap" (Agnew 1994) problematizes thinking about the state as the natural unit of world politics, which exercises exclusive power

within its territory. Political geographers and others have long challenged this idea of the free-standing state unit, as it is abundantly clear that: “The relations, forces, and movements that have shaped people’s lives over the last several hundred years have never in fact been confined within the limits of nation-states, or respected their borders” (Mitchell 2002, 230). Kuus and Agnew (2008, 95-96) thus argue that an alternate approach would not study the state as an autonomous subject, but as a set of processes of subject-making defined through policies operating under its name. This critique decenters the state as an object of analysis and looks instead to the practices of “state-making” – the weaving of the myth that the “state’s” actors tell themselves and citizens about its coherence (Lemke 2007). As I have been arguing throughout this dissertation, these elites who “think that they *are* the State” (Gramsci 2008, 16), as well as ordinary citizens, work with various material forces, practices, and imaginaries, in order to constitute the state materially and subjectivize themselves as its agents and constituents. In so doing, they also position themselves within a perceived “global” community of states, actors, and institutions.

This international context is an important dimension of state-making and one that is easily lost in a subject-focused analytic. Kuus and Agnew (2008, 96) point out that the internal organization of states is most often the subject of study, “rather than their external definition and legitimation.” This is curious, given that the conventional definition of “sovereignty” – a state’s absolute authority over a defined territory, recognized by other sovereign states – presupposes that “a community of sovereign states which abides by similar norms of conduct *already* exists” (Weber 1995, 5).<sup>21</sup> With this in mind, any political geographic study of state-making necessarily requires a consideration of practices of differentiating between “domestic” and “foreign” affairs as a “essentially separate realms in which different rules obtain” (Agnew 2003, 51). For where does the state’s jurisdiction begin and end? Typically, there is some distinction between the social and spatial realms, but which are intimately related. Any social constituency – frequently defined as the “nation” – “must be differentiated from both the realm of global politics and from other domestic communities” (Weber 1995, 6). But it also assumes a spatial partitioning, whereby foreign space is delineated from domestic space. These are bordering practices – a subject of tremendous interest in political geography (for recent reviews, see Häkli 2008; Paasi 2009, 2010, forthcoming-a, forthcoming-b).

While critical social scientists have shown great acuity in challenging essentialist understandings of the “state,” and interrogating the many forces and practices that are obscured by treating it as a coherent empirical object, one question is often left unexamined: how does the very image of coherence come into being? By that I do

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<sup>21</sup> Political geographers and others have long illustrated how “territoriality engenders more territoriality” (e.g. Agnew 2003; Billig 1995; Gellner 2006; Johnston 2001; Ó Tuathail 1996; Sack 1983; Taylor 1995).

not just mean the presumed coherence or object-like quality of the state and the social body imagined to constitute it (as in Lemke's (2007) framing of an analytics of governmentality), but also the territorial "unit," whose "economic functions, social interactions, and political processes—are understood as *internal mechanisms*" (Mitchell 2002, 230, emphasis added). In this chapter, I argue that by examining geopolitical imaginaries, we can begin to understand how they operate with certain material forces to enable and naturalize specific practices of government – all with the effect of creating this image of coherence. When analyzing geopolitical discourses and imaginaries from a critical perspective, the core concern is never "the specific content of what is said or written about geopolitics," but "the structures and rules that make particular political practices legible and legitimate while making other practices illogical, unfeasible, or illegitimate" (Kuus 2007a, 9–10).

In recent years, political geographers have systematized the analysis of these geopolitical contexts. "Schools of geopolitical thought" are understood by analyzing how states make sense of their identity, position, and role in the world (Kolossoff and Toal 2007, 203). Nationalist projects condition these traditions and a state's geopolitical culture—especially insofar as they shape the development of foreign policy institutions and actions. National identity and geopolitical culture are also conditioned by the forms of identification and boundary-formation that dominate social, cultural, and political life (Ó Tuathail 2006, 8). Geographers studying nationalism have thus highlighted the importance of borders in the articulation of national identity in opposition to a foreign other (Agnew 2007; Häkli 2008; Laitinen 2003; Kaiser and Nikiforova 2006; Kolossoff 2005; Kolossoff and O'Loughlin 1998; Krishna 1994; Megoran 2004b, 2005; Newman 2003; Newman and Paasi 1998; Paasi 1996, 1999; Wilson and Donnan 1998). Indeed, nationalist accounts often make a discursive division between "us" on the inside and "them" on the outside, which factor into narratives that state-scale actors tell about their place in the world and their "authentic" identity.

"Critical geopolitics," a sub-field of political geography, examines the intersection between these identity narratives and geopolitical culture, imaginations, and behavior. This analytical approach asserts the importance of such narratives for their role in shaping elite and popular attitudes about domestic and foreign policy alike (Kolossoff and Toal 2007; Kuus 2007a, 2007b; Ó Tuathail 1996, 2006). Critical geopolitics provides a useful heuristic division of geopolitical discourses into formal (e.g. strategic studies and political doctrines), practical (e.g. state actions and political speeches), and popular (mass media, state rituals, public opinion) categories (Kolossoff and Toal 2007, 203). Within the literature, however, scholars tend to focus on formal/practical geopolitical texts (Herb 2004;

Strüver 2007) *or* popular geopolitical texts (Dittmer 2005, 2008, 2011; Dodds 1996, 2003; Falah et al. 2006; Holland 2012; Kuus 2008; Mamadouh 2004; Sharp 2000), but rarely together (although Ó Tuathail's (1996) seminal work is an exception). However, there are notable efforts to take a more encompassing approach, specifically by those scholars employing ethnographic methods (Hyndman and de Alwis 2004; Megoran 2004b, 2005) and public opinion surveys (O'Loughlin 2001; O'Loughlin and Ó Tuathail 2009; O'Loughlin and Talbot 2005; O'Loughlin et al. 2004, 2005), in conjunction with textual analysis. In this dissertation, I consider elite/popular geopolitical visions as co-constitutive, and aim to contribute to this expanding literature that considers the multi-scalar discourses jointly.

Some have argued, however, that critical geopolitics today is an analytical dead-end, which can accomplish little more than deconstruction of (popular and elite) political texts (e.g. Kelly 2006; Smith 2000; Sparke 2000). Gearóid Ó Tuathail, one of critical geopolitics' chief voices, also seems to acknowledge its troubled state in his most recent article on the need to re-orient it as a “disaggregated and localized” geopolitics (Ó Tuathail 2010). Yet what Ó Tuathail argues for here and elsewhere (Toal 2003) is, in my reading, essentially a critical return to regional studies. He explains that despite his initial understanding of critical geopolitics as a “critique” of geopolitics (rather than an inscription of geopolitics itself), the reality of the political embeddedness of the entire academic enterprise makes this impossible (Ó Tuathail 2010, 257). The question then becomes how to develop a more geographically responsible geopolitics (see also Megoran 2004b, 2006, 2007). For Ó Tuathail (2010, 257), this “requires the supplement of regional expertise and fieldwork” to “‘big picture’ foreign policy analysis.”

By developing “thick” geographic knowledge, geographers can challenge the contemporary scientific community's “culture of technological fundamentalism that seeks technical solutions to challenges that really require cultural, geographic and linguistic learning” – and also to provide the understanding needed to contextualize and conceptualize the worth of these technical data (Toal 2003, 654). Thus, “empirical, regional and geographically embedded” fieldwork can be an important counter to non-empirical research, which tends to produce critiques that are “largely reactive, theoretical and political” (Ó Tuathail 2010, 257). Heeding the injunction of various political geographers to “re-assert” the emphasis on regional context (e.g. Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008; Murphy and O'Loughlin 2009; O'Loughlin 1988; Thrift 1998; Toal 2003), and taking my reading of Ó Tuathail's commentaries as essentially a redefinition of critical geopolitics as “critical regional studies” (a term Paasi (2002) introduced some



time ago), I follow this path to its logical conclusion and demonstrate what a “critical regional studies” approach might look like.

## II. State-making and energy geopolitics

### *A. Resource riches and corporate apologetics*

If geopolitics became a dirty word after World War II, “energy geopolitics” still borders on the taboo in critical academic geography – if only because it is most frequently approached through a “classical geopolitics” framework, flavored with no small degree of geographic determinism (on Central Asia, see e.g. Davis and Azizian 2007; Kleveman 2003; O’Hara 2004). Much of this stems from the fact that scholarship on resource-rich countries is often overtly politicized, if only for the very research questions that are posed. A particularly common concern is the connection between oil and violence (e.g. Behrends 2008; Le Billon 2004; Klare 2004; Kleveman 2003; Watts 2008) because, in the view of some, oil regions “are epicenters of extraordinary violence and conflict” (Watts 2010, 423). Yet these generalizing accounts tend to obscure the fact that many oil-rich places are *not* marred by the tremendous violence they seek to describe or predict. More explicitly economic accounts of geopolitics in and around resource-rich places tend to be less sensational, but these studies also have their clichés, commonly preoccupied with questions about the “Dutch disease” and the internal dynamics of “*rentier* states.”<sup>22</sup> While these analyses can offer some insight into the economic quandaries of resource-rich countries, they generally fail to cast a critical lens on the global political economic order that conditions outcomes – presuming internal dynamics to be the sole source of predictors. If we instead treat the division between the domestic and the foreign, the internal and the external, as a *political performance*, then this sort of state-centric approach becomes untenable.

Fernando Coronil’s (1997) *longue durée* study of Venezuela stands apart as an example of a thorough and critical account of the role of oil in the country’s various regimes and how it factored into evolving state-society and international relations. In Venezuela, like Kazakhstan, “the arduous establishment of state authority was achieved in intimate relationship with the exploitation of petroleum” (Coronil 1997, 4). Coronil shows how ruling elites (the “state”) sought to present itself as a representative of the citizenry (the “nation”) in negotiations with foreign oil companies, and benefited in many ways from the foreign oil industry’s presence “in the national territory” (Coronil

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<sup>22</sup> The Dutch disease refers to a phenomenon, in which the exploitation of a country’s natural resource wealth results in the collapse of domestic (especially manufacturing) industries. The *rentier* state is a country, where “the economy is dominated by rents from the production of oil and gas that are largely distributed in an opaque sequence of political machinations and business deals” (Domjan and Stone 2010, 41).

1997, 76). The ability of ruling elites to present themselves “as the state” means that they to be representatives of the people and the territory – thus justifying their role as arbitrator and extractor of the natural resources found there (ostensibly belonging to the “people”). This synecdochic imaginary is fundamental to very notion of political representation (Burke 1941, 427), but it is also a deeply geographical and politicized imaginary.

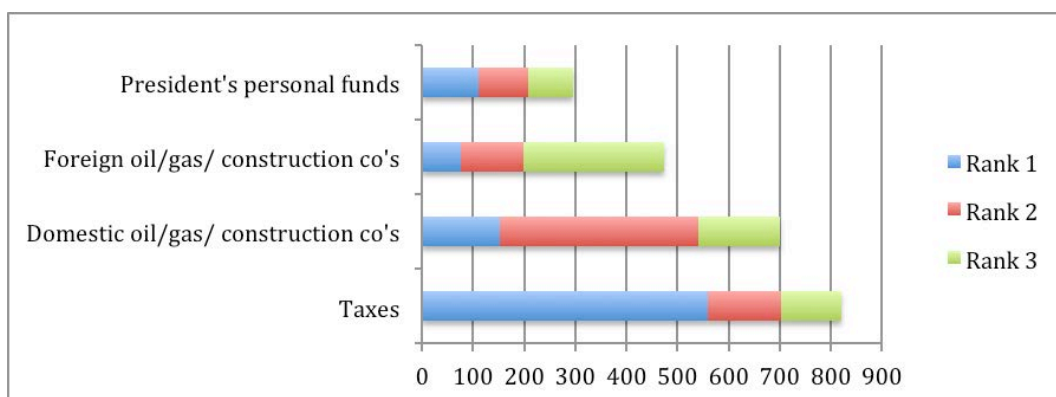
In Kazakhstan, the ability of the Nazarbayev regime to present itself as the agent of the state has offered them with this same ability to justify their arbitration of extracting the country’s natural resource wealth. This arbitration has allowed those in the regime to achieve extraordinary wealth (Cummings 2005; Follath and Neef 2010; Junisbai 2010; LeVine 2007). The construction of Astana, and the extra-legal avenues established through the regime’s development strategies there (e.g. designating it as a “Special Economic Zone”), has been instrumental in making this possible:

The Astana move consolidated the position of Nazarbaev and his clients by hiding rents from extractive industries. Oil and gas companies were routinely pressed to donate funds to the cause of building Astana’s infrastructure, thus allowing Nazarbaev to claim that only extra-budgetary funds built Astana. In the meantime, the President was able to reward his followers in the extractive industries by allowing them to launder their (often ill-gotten) spoils through construction projects. Moreover, foreign states whose extractive industries sought a foothold in the lucrative Kazakhstani market found themselves ‘donating’ to the construction of the capital city, in a clear bid for preferential allocation of contracts. (Schatz 2004b, 126)

If this is the case, it is obvious that the synecdoche – the part standing for the whole – is a strategic myth that allows elites to benefit disproportionately from the country’s natural resource wealth. Although it is reminiscent of many contemporary forms of political representation, this strategy in Kazakhstan is somewhat unique in the form of “corporate apologetics” (Veyne 1990, 379) that it takes on: Astana, as we will see in Chapter 6, is said to be “for the people.”

This double synecdoche (first, the elites standing for the state, citizens and territory alike, and second, the economic benefits elites derive from developing Astana standing for those of the entire population) stretches the imagination, sometimes into the realm of incredibility. After being forced into exile, Nazarbayev’s former son-in-law, Rakhat Aliyev, denounced the regime’s practice of laundering money from the extractive industries through Astana construction projects, claiming that the city’s development has been financed by millions of dollars stolen from the people (Follath and Neef 2010, 134; Saidazimova 2008). Aliyev’s accusations, however, do not appear to have much resonance among the general population of Kazakhstan – or at least, vocal confirmation. The most

popular responses are shown in Figure 4.1 to my survey question, “What do you think were the most important sources of funding for the capital change?”<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 4.1.** Most frequently cited answers to the presumed sources of funding for the capital change. October 2010. Source: Author.

Only 19 respondents from my October 2010 survey (~1.5 percent) claimed that the capital was funded by the “people’s money” (but *not* understood as taxes, which was a possible answer). It seems instead of aligning themselves with Aliyev’s accusatory viewpoint, many in Kazakhstan are willing to suspend their disbelief about the origin of the funds – or they have at least mastered the official rhetoric and know the “correct” (i.e. regime-sanctioned) answer to such a question.

When considering the elite practices of laundering “ill-gotten” spoils through Astana’s development, we should remember: “Self-justification is not universal” (Veyne 1990, 379). Of course, elites have the option of outright thievery – so why has the Astana project become the privileged site of “corporate apologetics” in independent Kazakhstan? The reasons, I believe, are many, but I will suggest just a few. First, the elites have already attempted the tactic of naked bribery, but this did not end well for anyone in the regime when, in 1999, Swiss investigations uncovered the laundering schemes devised by Nazarbayev’s U.S. advisor, Jim Giffen, and implicated Nazarbayev and various other senior Kazakh officials (for a thorough account, see LeVine 2007, 373-384). The story was banned from Kazakhstan’s media and when a Russian TV channel aired the story, the regime “blocked the station’s transmission into Kazakhstan for three days” (LeVine 2007, 374). Nazarbayev (whose ego knows no bounds, or whose advisors’ desire to inflate his ego knows no bounds – this being a second reason for the

<sup>23</sup> The “actual” sources of funding are so varied and dispersed that it would be impossible to “quantify” or trace them all, so this question is primarily designed to get a sense of people’s perceptions of the political economic dynamics behind Astana’s development.

“apologetics”) saw the investigations as a major setback to his efforts to increase “Kazakhstan’s” (and his own) international prestige. Eventually, in May 2007:

the Kazakh president tried finally to cut the political damage inflicted by the continuing Swiss bank scandal, agreeing to deal with U.S. prosecutors to forfeit the \$84 million in alleged bribes underlying the case against Giffen. Under the arrangement, the World Bank would supervise the distribution of the money to programs benefiting poor children in Kazakhstan. (LeVine 2007, 384)

Nazarbayev’s willingness to “forgo” \$84 million (it is doubtful that this money actually came at his personal expense) in bribes, suggests a third reason for the “apologetics”: they are a crucial way of disciplining and structuring elite behavior. When certain individuals (e.g. Aliyev or Giffen) or companies (e.g. Chevron; see Sharip 2011b) fall out of favor, those doing the disciplining have at their ready disposal a normative script of “stealing the people’s money” (but as we saw above, Aliyev redeployed the script to denounce the Nazarbayev regime itself, as did those 19 survey respondents).

Continuing with the theme of “apologetics,” Veyne (1990, 380) also suggests that it “is not a rational form of behaviour: very frequently it fails in its effect.” While some people may not accept the rationalization that the development of Astana is “for the people,” the fact remains that the city has undergone a dramatic transformation as the result of real material exchanges. Nazarbayev’s expressed goal to make Astana one of the largest “economic megapolises in Eurasia” (e.g. Nazarbayev 2006a, 336; 2010, 53) may never transpire, but he and his circle, Sembol Construction Company, Norman Foster, and many nameless others will have made millions of dollars regardless. Dubai’s 1.5 billion-dollar Burj Khalifa tower, which now stands almost completely empty, exemplifies the fact that certain individuals and companies will still enrich themselves through working with what are often labeled “utopian” or “megalomaniac” visions—no matter how outlandish they seem.

As in the case of Venezuela, the ability of elites to present themselves as the “state,” and thus the legitimate arbiters of its natural resources, is ultimately a more important accomplishment than whether or not people agree with the “state’s” spending of the money. This is because the fact that the entire conversation is taking place *is* the accomplishment: the state becomes a central actor, and the “people” subjectivize themselves as external to its workings. As in the synecdochic strategies I have been exploring, “Things flow outwards from centres to those who are the recipients. It is a colonial space, in which there is only one actor. The recipients are merely recipients” (Massey 2007, 22). The narratives that I explore in the remainder of this chapter tend to take this colonial space for granted.

### *B. Oilfields and existential dilemmas*

Elites narratives are particularly important because they are engaged in the very project of “state-making” and thus do not take the coherence of the state for granted. Indeed, it is often apparent that they are acutely aware of the fragility of the “state” – both in terms of territorial and economic “sovereignty.” Schatz (2006) has addressed this, to some extent, in his work on the Nazarbayev regime’s extreme multilateralism, i.e. the unusual obsession with documenting and presenting (largely for domestic consumption) the many activities of the state’s representatives on official visits abroad and vice versa, as well as the country’s membership in various international organizations. This has been labeled as the country’s “multi-vector foreign policy” (Hanks 2009; İpek 2007) which seems to assume an increased degree of “security” and recognition of the state as “sovereign” with increased international involvement. LeVine demonstrates how this tactic evolved during the foreign oil negotiations in the mid-1980s and early-1990s. In the early days of independence, the Nazarbayev regime viewed a failure to cooperate with Russia as possibility threatening the very existence of the new state. This perceived threat had not subsided by the time of the 1997 Kazakhstan-2030 speech, which details the strategy in a section on “national security”:

We shall advance to strengthening of our relationships with Russia, China, Central Asian neighbours, Islamic states and Western countries. Big business and companies from the USA, Russia, China, Great Britain will be involved in the development of Caspian Shelf and Karachaganak field, that will strengthen world powers interest [in] the country[’s] independence and continuous fuel supplies to the world markets. (Nazarbayev 1997)

İpek (2007, 1184) argues that Nazarbayev’s strategy of ensuring economic stability by turning to Western oil companies was primarily a response to Russia’s insufficient “financial clout and technology to develop the huge oil resources in Kazakhstan.” This may have a degree of truth, but Nazarbayev’s strategy toward Caspian oil and gas exploitation, with foreign assistance, was also developed in response to very real dilemmas with Russia under Yeltsin-Chernomyrdin, described below.

Before elaborating, I want to underscore that in the critical approach to state-making that I am employing here, I am not challenging the fact “that states’ foreign policy is shaped by material interests, but that these interests necessarily exist prior to foreign policy” (Kuus and Agnew 2008, 99). In brief, the economic interests that came into conflict over Caspian Sea resources in the 1990s *arose out of* a newly configured definition of the foreign and the domestic. What was once an issue of domestic policy for the Soviet Union suddenly became foreign policy for a number of newly independent states. Suddenly launched into the realm of “foreign policy,” then, new international

actors and forces entered the fray, and dramatically changed the political and economic arrangements that had hitherto prevailed.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Kazakhstan's new government was, for lack of a better expression, completely broke. But the country's new leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev, saw the remedy in its Caspian resources (LeVine 2007, 125).<sup>24</sup> It has since become a fundamental element of the country's development strategy, as articulated in the Kazakhstan-2030 speech:

We have every ground to believe that, given favourable conditions in the future of oil-and-gas extractive industry which is the vital basis of the country as well as of the entire extractive sector, they would experience a considerable rise. It offers us a starting point from which to proceed in building our structural policy. (Nazarbayev 1997)

As early as the mid-1980s, in the years of *perestroika* and the Soviet regime's desperation for a solution to its economic woes, Gorbachev and Nazarbayev were actively negotiating with Chevron (and BP for a short time) for a contract at Tengiz, a major oil field about 220 miles south of the city Atyrau (for a complete account, see LeVine 2007, 95-142).<sup>25</sup> These protracted negotiations, which were unfolding as the Soviet Union itself was unfolding, were the first opportunity for Nazarbayev "to test Moscow to see how far he could go" (LeVine 2007, 113) with his new claims to the republic's sovereignty and control of the Caspian resources.

It was not until 6 April 1993 that Chevron and the Nazarbayev regime signed a final agreement. Although the regime certainly considered it an astonishing feat to be the final authority on the future of Tengiz and Kazakhstan's other Caspian oilfields, and to have staved off Russian territorial claims, there was one major hitch. The final agreement left the task of developing an export pipeline to Kazakhstan's government (LeVine 2007, 141). The severity of this issue became evident in the years to come as "Moscow's most persuasive weapon was its ownership of the Soviet-era pipelines through which all Caspian oil was exported" (LeVine 2007, xiv) – and one that Boris Yeltsin and his Prime Minister (and founder of Gazprom) Viktor Chernomyrdin were willing to use (for a complete account, see LeVine 2007, Chapter 14). Both were especially displeased, not just about the presence of Chevron, a major US company (with significant diplomatic backing at the time), but also because they were not so

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<sup>24</sup> The following section relies heavily on LeVine's (2007) book on Caspian energy politics, which contains perhaps the most thorough and best-researched account of the new political and economic activities in the Caspian Sea, during and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It relies on over a decade of research and hundreds of elite interviews, while the author was a foreign correspondent for *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

<sup>25</sup> According to Russian economist Yegor Gaidar, best known as the architect of independent Russia's devastating "shock therapy" reforms, "Gorbachev and others regarded Tengiz as 'the Soviet Union's trump card in the game for the future'" (LeVine 2007, 122). For more on the Soviet Union's economic woes and the role of oil in the country's collapse, see Kotkin 2001.

ready to accept the loss of Tengiz: “From their point of view, they were owed something, and they intended to collect” (LeVine 2007, 241).

LeVine (2007) recounts various incidents, in which Russian leadership blocked Chevron’s exports from Kazakhstan because of “insufficient pipeline capacity” (LeVine 2007, 227, 280) or once, in the middle of negotiations, because “a freak storm had erupted on the Black Sea, and Russian pipelines could accept no more Kazakh oil exports until further notice” (LeVine 2007, 271). In a summit with Al Gore, who was questioning Chernomyrdin on these blockages, the Prime Minister openly admitted to the US Vice President, ““This is not about a shortage of pipeline space. [...] I have plenty of pipeline space. It’s about you going around us”” (quoted in LeVine 2007, 228). Russian oil companies also strong-handed their way into various deals in Kazakhstan oilfields, including Karachaganak (Gazprom; LeVine 2007, 247) and later, after the failure of the original Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) proposal, which had promised great wealth for the Russian government and its energy companies, in Tengiz (Lukoil; LeVine 2007, 279-280).

The Nazarbayev regime learned a hard lesson in the meaning of “sovereignty” during the 1990s: the physical control of the land where the oil and gas deposits lay was an insufficient condition to exploiting their potential value. This domestic territorial “independence” turned out to be a deep dependence on Russian pipeline infrastructure and an array of international oil and gas companies’ (IOCs) demands. The CPC pipeline fiasco and countless subsequent delays in IOC development projects became a source of great frustration for Kazakhstan’s elites, who felt paralyzed by the lack of cash, despite supposedly having great resources at their disposal. Especially since 2001, when energy prices increased dramatically, the slow oil- and gas-field developments led to increasing resentment that they were unable to capitalize on the high prices. Moreover, being tied to the Russian transport system meant that Kazakhstan’s industry became a “price-taker” (Domjan, author’s interview 2011). These factors combined with a series of transformations in the global energy market to push industry and government elites to reconfigure the arrangements that prevailed in the 1990s and early 2000s.

### *C. “Billions of dollars in profit”*

Before detailing these transformations, it is helpful to step back and consider the positionality of the elites decision-makers, responsible for how they have unfolded in Kazakhstan. Academics and analysts often assume that “geopolitics” is somehow distinct from “economics” – as if the practice of statecraft is detached from the pursuit of

purely material, financial desires, located in a somehow “loftier” realm. On the contrary, I argue that a fuller understanding of “geopolitics” can only be reached through an understanding that economics *is* politics, and vice versa.<sup>26</sup> Although the energy sector’s recent transformations (in both Kazakhstan and globally) seem largely “economic,” the energy sector itself has always been deeply political (Coronil 1997; Huber 2011; Mitchell 2009, 2011; Rice and Tyner 2011).

Consider, for example, what I judge to be the two primary concerns of Kazakhstan’s elites with respect to energy policy in the independence period: 1) affirming the political and economic independence of Kazakhstan, i.e. not being beholden to the Russian government and its state-owned energy companies and pipelines, nor to the demands of predominantly Western IOCs; and 2) getting rich as quickly as possible, without too deeply offending the sensibilities of international observers, the country’s citizens, and, perhaps most important, one’s political rivals. In the case of both goals, the internationally-accepted “trappings of statehood” ease the road to achieving them – for they provide ready-made justifications for various policies (e.g. the script of “sovereignty”), as well as access to various allies in the international community (e.g. Gore supporting Chevron’s interests, but also effectively the Kazakhstan elites’ interests, during his summit with Chernomyrdin – ostensibly, we might note, an act of “foreign policy”).<sup>27</sup> With this preface, I will now elaborate on the new developments of the mid-2000s, and further illustrate the impossibility of disentangling (geo)politics and economics.

The oil and gas sector now constitutes approximately 11 percent of Kazakhstan’s GDP (Revenue Watch Institute 2011) and 74 percent of its exports are currently “mineral products” (see Figures 4.2-4.3). However, many of the most promising fields in Kazakhstan have not yet, or are only just beginning, to produce (Domjan and Stone 2010; İpek 2007; Kalyuzhnova 2008). In the past 8 years, Kazakhstan’s natural resource sector has seen a fundamental shift away from cooperation with large Western firms, which are increasingly being squeezed out of

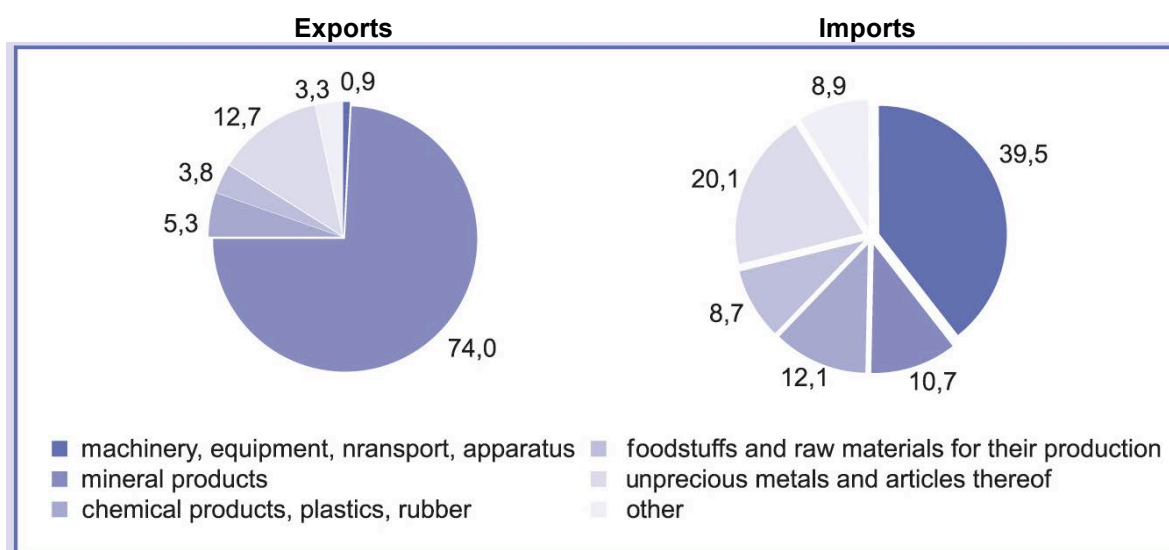
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<sup>26</sup> The fact that this division is reproduced in academic work on geopolitics is deeply problematic, for it tends to obscure the role of economics in the decisions of those actors who think they are the state. See Agnew and Corbridge (1995) for a full treatment of this argument.

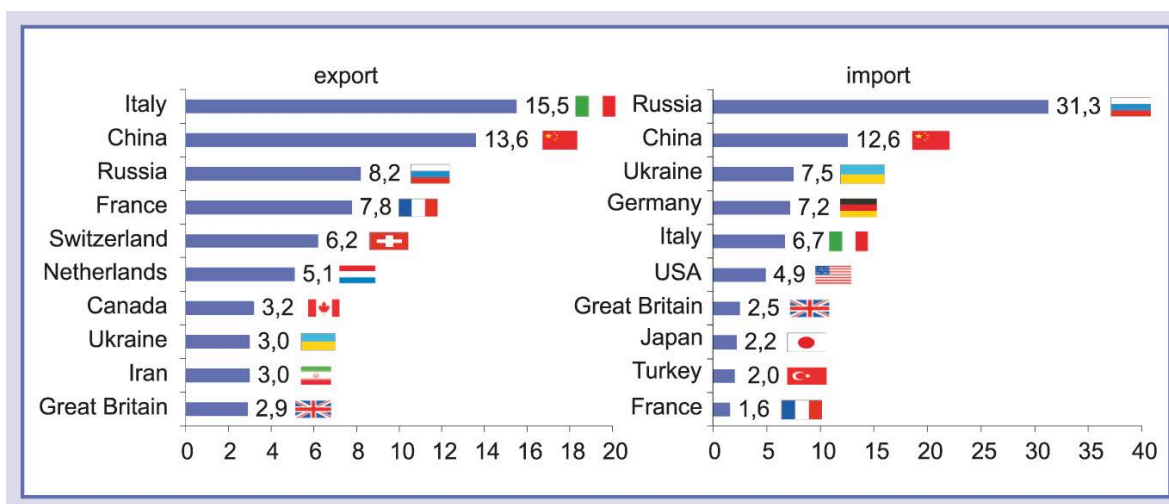
<sup>27</sup> The elite project of state-making also opens the door to various antagonists and/or actors (individuals and institutions) positioned to voice an opinion on elite behavior and government policy – and to be “obeyed.” This is especially the case in Kazakhstan, where state-making has been enacted through an exaggerated engagement with international organizations, resulting in what Ed Schatz (2006) has termed “access by accident.” This, he argues, raised the costs of openly pursuing violent and corrupt measures of achieving elite goals, and forced the regime “to keep up the appearance that it minimally met international norms” (Schatz 2006, 279). However, the very fact that Kazakhstan was granted the chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010 challenges the idea that these watchdogs have the capacity to effect any substantial change, and it is not clear that “the mask” will become “the face” any time soon, as Schatz (2006, 279) implies. Rather, it seems that organizations like the OSCE facilitate this division between the “real” and the “rhetoric” by rewarding those espousing the rhetoric and rarely more.



their contracts, and toward a consolidation of the industry in the hands of the state-owned company, KazMunaiGaz.<sup>28</sup> Simultaneously, there has been a shift toward increasing energy-related cooperation with the government of China and its firms (Greene 2011a, 2011b; Hosman 2009; Muzalevsky 2011a, 2011b; Pannier 2011a; SAFE 2010, 2011; Sharip 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011c; Socor 2009a, 2009b). In order to understand this shift, we will first need to first explore some recent changes in the international energy industry.



**Figure 4.2.** Structure of exports and imports of the Republic of Kazakhstan by main commodity groups in 2009 (as percent of total). Source: ASRK 2010b, 131.



**Figure 4.3.** Structure of exports and imports of the Republic of Kazakhstan by main trade partners in 2009 (as percent of total). Source: ASRK 2010b, 131.

<sup>28</sup> KazMunaiGaz was founded in 2002 by then-Prime Minister Nurlan Balgimbayev, and “was given a mandate to control no less than 50% of the ownership shares in future oil projects to be developed with foreign companies,” which became a law in 2005 (Hosman 2009, 22).

Since about 2005, international oil and gas companies have faced challenges to their three major selling points (Domjan, author's interview 2011). First, they have also lost their ability to claim a monopoly on technological expertise, as national oil and gas companies (NOCs) in places as diverse as Mexico, China, and Russia have acquired the skillset to develop some of the most difficult fields (Gustafson 2002). Second, they can no longer claim to have an unmatched execution ability, given that 3-year project delays have become standard, and the IOCs have recently experienced a series of high-profile disasters (e.g. Kashagan, Mexican Gulf). Lastly, they can no longer claim to be able to access capital no one else can by drawing on, for example, Shell's AAA credit rating. Not only is there a great deal of interest in loaning money to resource-rich countries, such as Kazakhstan, but *Chinese* companies, such as the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) can pay in cash, while Shell would have to go to the international capital market in order to finance its projects there (Domjan, author's interview 2011). Chinese NOCs are now important new players in today's energy market; not only has their position been strengthened by the collapse of the Western IOCs selling points, but China's state enterprises have also readily offered unprecedented infrastructural support to supplier countries.

China's contemporary leadership considers energy supply a major political priority, since it is seen as a major hurdle to the country's development. They have thus been willing to invest their readily available capital in infrastructure development to secure future supplies, irrespective of political boundaries. This sort of support is something that the IOCs have been either unwilling or unable (or both) to provide for Kazakhstan's extractive industry infrastructure – and in fact, infrastructure of all kinds throughout the country – which is in dire need of reform and/or development in order to achieve elite-articulated economic goals (İpek 2007, 1181). The fact that Chinese institutions can offer aid *before* oil production is particularly attractive in Kazakhstan, given the regime's frustration at being unable to readily access the financial (and political) benefits of having such large energy reserves. In recent years, this infrastructural support has taken many forms, including, for example, a gas pipeline linking Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to China, opened in December 2009 (Socor 2009a, 2009b). As I discuss in Chapter 6, it has also included basic infrastructural support for the regions and localities where operations are taking place (e.g. Aktobe *oblast'*, where Chinese companies fund road repairs, schools, etc.).

Energy trade with China has reached a grand scale, since the first tentative steps toward cooperation in 2001: Kazakhstan delivered 10 million tons of oil to China in 2010, it plans to deliver 11 million tons in 2011, and aims to increase the figure to 20 million tons by 2013 (Sharip 2011c). Chinese involvement in Kazakhstan's oil and

gas sector is now said to account for 26 percent of the total foreign investment (Sharip 2011a). When Nazarbayev traveled to China in February 2011, representatives of the two governments reached eight agreements in energy, transport, and infrastructure development, including a 10-year contract to supply of 55,000 tons of uranium (Muzalevsky 2011a). As part of these deals, Chinese officials pledged to: 1) lend \$1.7 billion to Samruk-Kazyna, Kazakhstan's sovereign wealth fund; 2) provide a \$5 billion dollar loan for a petrochemical complex; 3) develop the Urikhtau gas field in western Kazakhstan; 4) provide assistance with the modernization and construction of various hydroelectric and other power plants in Kazakhstan; 5) develop a uranium mine in Irkol; 6) provide technical expertise in the construction of nuclear power plants; and 7) construct a gas pipeline running from Kenkyak fields in Western Kazakhstan to the Chinese border at Alashankou; 8) help build a high-speed railway line between Kazakhstan's north and south by 2015; and 9) create a Kazakh-Chinese university "to facilitate technological exchange" (Blank 2011; Muzalevsky 2011a, 2011b; Pannier 2011a; Sharip 2011a).

The Nazarbayev regime has also undertaken energy cooperation with Russia, but some elites, such as Mukhtar Dzhakishev, former head of the government-owned nuclear company, Kazatomprom, are hesitant to endorse projects that would increase already-heavy reliance on Russia (Muzalevsky 2011a). Whatever the political persuasion with respect to Russian "dependence," Kazakhstan's elites are ultimately faced with the distinct fact that Russia cannot offer such an extensive source of support, both in terms of infrastructure development, but also in terms of the size of its market. This fact was highlighted by their boss, President Nazarbayev, after the February agreements: "Nineteen nuclear complexes will be built in China and 25 more are being planned. This is a huge potential market. In the long term, Kazakhstan can supply up to 40 percent of [China's] nuclear fuel. This is tens of billions of dollars in profit" (quoted in Muzalevsky 2011a).

In many ways, this dual shift cannot be read as a "foreign policy" reorientation away from the West and Russia toward China, but as an economic reorientation away from IOCs toward NOCs, reflecting global changes in the energy sector (Domjan, author's interview 2011). But this narrow economic reading obscures just as much as a purely geopolitical reading, which tends to script Kazakhstan's oilfields as the site of a "New Great Game" between super-powers (i.e. China, the US, and Russia) (e.g. Ehteshami 1994; Kleveman 2003; O'Hara 2004). The apparent "pro-China" impetus is undoubtedly a political and economic response to the domineering behavior of Russian energy elites, but so too is it a response to the failure of Western IOCs to deliver (with the desired speed) the sort of economic rewards that China is offering. As I am arguing, the geopolitical goes together with the economic.

Ultimately, the division of economics and (geo)politics is a bordering project that operates strategically to elevate politics to a noble realm of thought and rationality, and relegate economics to a less pure realm of naked desire. This division, I believe, is part of a broader representational practice, in which the “state” and “society” are coded as separate things. But as Mitchell (1991, 90) argues, this very appearance of separateness “is part of the way a given financial and economic order is maintained” (Mitchell 1991, 90).

This issue is particularly salient in the formerly communist settings, where the division between “state” and “private” sector activities is blurry at best. Müller (2011) amply demonstrates how this continues today, in the case of the Russian government’s heavy involvement in the development of the 2014 Olympics infrastructure in Sochi. However, in demonstrating the politicization of economic activities there, and the direct involvement of the Putin-Medvedev regime in an ostensibly “private” undertaking, he fails to problematize the categories of “state” and “private” themselves. I would instead argue such projects, as we also see exemplified in Kazakhstan, should challenge academics to de-naturalize the division of these two sectors. From this perspective, the division is itself a political *achievement*, which is valorized in broadly “neoliberal/capitalist” contexts, but is not valorized in the same way or for the same reasons elsewhere in the world. As Mitchell (1991, 90) demonstrates in his case study of the Aramco oil company, “producing and maintaining the distinction between state and society is itself a mechanism that generates resources of power. The fact that Aramco can be said to lie outside the formal political system, thereby disguising its role in international politics, is essential to its strength as part of a larger political order.” While it is important to examine the bordering practices, articulating the divide between the political/economic and state/private, we should also bear in mind that these realms are nonetheless inscribed in and articulated by very potent geopolitical imaginaries.

### **III. Security, territory, population: Popular narratives**

#### *A. Geopolitical imaginaries*

Critical geopolitics scholars have emphasized the fact that foreign policy is not just about statecraft, but the formation of nationalist imaginaries (Dodds 2000; Megoran 2004b; Ó Tuathail 1996). A failure to look at imaginaries of the domestic and the foreign dis-embeds the question of identification processes from the very condition of its possibility: the bordering practices that distinguish between domestic and foreign space. Yet, as many scholars have pointed out (and far fewer have *illustrated*), nationalist and geopolitical imaginaries and

practices are quite different among different segments of a country's citizens (Agnew 1987, 40; Brubaker 1996, 65; Gramsci 2008, 182; Painter 2006, 764; Wilson and Donnan 1998, 16). Through survey data on geopolitical orientations in Russia, the collaborative work of O'Loughlin et al. (2004, 2005) and others (Kolossoff and Toal 2007; O'Loughlin and Talbot 2005) demonstrate how geopolitical attitudes and imaginaries differ along certain social and regional fissures. Expanding on this work, Kolossoff and Toal (2007, 203) argue that, "How geopolitical cultures and traditions function in imagining and discursively framing dramas *in specific regions within the state* has not been the subject of systematic critical geopolitical study." By examining the North Caucasus rather than drawing broad, homogenizing conclusions about Russia as a whole, they examine how regional differences within a country reflect on geopolitical orientations and scripts.

While I agree with the need to undertake such a nuanced approach, my study has not automatically assumed such variations – lest the very search materialize the phenomenon. One major obstacle with this approach is that it assumes a certain stationarity of the population – an assumption that is simply untenable in Kazakhstan, where a dramatic number of 4.7 million internal migrants (approximately 1/3 of the population) were registered from 1991-2006 (Tussupbayeva 2007). Instead, I ask the questions: Are there regional and/or location-dependent variations in attitudes? If so, how do they compare to social indicators, such as education, age, or economic status?<sup>29</sup> In the survey research, my primary interest is not in explaining the citizenry's "opinions," which is not just problematic in Kazakhstan, but in so many other places where "opinions" are not technologized as in "liberal" settings (see Chapter 2). My aim is, rather, to understand these individuals' *geopolitical imaginaries*, i.e. their ways of categorizing regions of political/politicized space (cities, sub-state regions, foreign states) and fitting them into a certain moral geography defined by positive and negative feelings.

Three survey questions were designed to explicitly assess perceptions of other countries. The first, Question 19, was modeled on Kolossoff's (2010) survey to evaluate Russian geopolitical perceptions in the post-Soviet era. They were asked: "Please name up to five countries (except for the country of which you are a citizen):

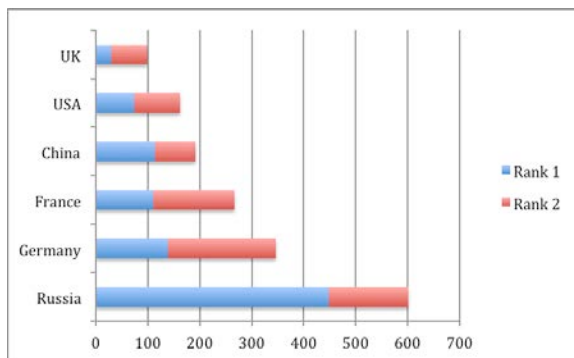
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<sup>29</sup> Feminist scholars have voiced concerns that survey categorization imposes unrealistically rigid divisions that defy the fluidity of identities (Kwan 2004; Mattingly and Falconer-Al-Hindi 1995; Mountz et al. 2003). The act of categorization is undeniably a political act (on the census as a political institution, see Anderson 1983, 165-168). However, the act of identification is also a political act, which draws together the government of the self and others in a series of subject-forming practices, invariably working with an array of material forces that can both discourage and encourage certain identification practices. In the analysis that follows, I do not imply that these categories are unproblematic, but *I seek to understand the broader worldviews, characteristic of people who subjectivize themselves in certain ways* (as reflected in their self-categorization via the survey's background identification questions). As an abstraction, the survey is an imperfect way of grasping this, but also as an abstraction, it offers a the insight of breadth unavailable by any other methodological tools in the social sciences.

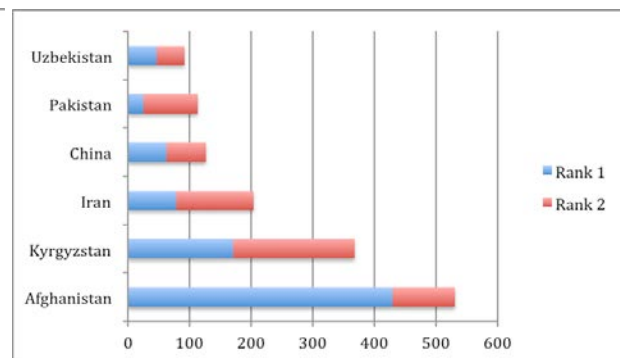
A. ...in which you would like to live in the near future (2-5 years)? B. ...in which you would NOT like to live in the near future (2-5 years)?” For the others, Questions 20 and 21, the participants were given a lengthy list of countries (as well as the option to write in any not on the list), and asked to rank the four countries they *most* and *least* admire. For the purposes of this chapter, I then coded the results, so that I could identify individuals with a stated *positive* attitude toward China (naming it as a place they would like to live and/or ranking it among the most admired countries) and a stated *negative* attitude toward China (naming it as a place they would not like to live and/or ranking it among the least admired countries). No mention was coded as neutral. The same was done for the case of Russia. The simple counts and percentages are found in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1.** Breakdown of perceptions toward China and Russia, including total count and percent of total sample (n = 1233).

	Positive		Neutral		Negative	
China	311	25.2%	688	55.8%	234	19.0%
Russia	843	68.5%	355	28.8%	34	2.8%



**Figure 4.4.** Most admired places (n=1094).



**Figure 4.5.** Least admired places (n = 1003).

In order to contextualize the results in the table, see Figure 4.4 and 4.5, which indicates the highest ranking places for the two questions on most and least admired countries (Questions 20 and 21 above). Regarding these figures, I will not dwell on the findings regarding the other countries here. However, I would underscore that they confirm the fact that Western countries hold a high degree of prestige for Kazakhstanis (with Germany, France, the USA, and the UK ranking in the top 6), and that many Kazakhstanis do not harbor any great resentment toward Russia after the dissolution of the USSR, but quite the contrary. The least admired countries also confirm a deep suspicion of perceived “non-secular” Muslim countries (including Iran, Pakistan, and war-torn Afghanistan), as well as negative attitudes toward poorer southern neighbors, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Regarding Kyrgyzstan, it is

significant to note that this survey took place only a couple of months after the summer 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan. Its high ranking in Figure 4.5 largely reflects the perceptions of what was happening at the time. Regional regimes and the media at their service, especially in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia, have played heavily on fears of instability and violence associated with so-called “color revolution” democratic movements (Bond and Koch 2010). The 2010 crisis in Kyrgyzstan further supported this elite argument – which is essentially about justifying nondemocratic practices of government, but which carries strong currency among ordinary citizens.

Returning to Table 4.1, the simple breakdown suggests a largely positive attitude toward Russia, with 68.5 percent of respondent seeing it favorably, and only 2.8 percent reflecting negative views. China, however, reflects more ambivalence (with 55.8 percent neutral) and a solid 19 percent of respondents expressing negative attitudes. Given what *seems* to be a widespread fear of *kitaiizatsiya*, the solid 25.2 percent of respondents expressing positive views is somewhat surprising. The ambivalence is also visible in Figures 4.4 and 4.5, with China ranking fourth in both the most admired and least admired places. With the aim of better understanding popular narratives, where elite discourses are silent (or at least non-hegemonic), the remainder of this chapter will focus on interrogating this ambivalence toward China – both through a closer look at the survey results, coupled with data from focus groups and interviews.

#### *B. Kitaiizatsiya: Fear-mongering and critique*

One of the most common justifications for the capital change – both in the official account and in popular narratives – is that, for security purposes, a capital should be far from external borders and in the “heart” or center of the country (e.g. Nazarbayev 2006a, 344). When I have asked respondents in interviews to explain the border-related threats, the explanations typically focus on one of two (sometimes both) of Kazakhstan’s neighbors: Russia and China. Yet their narratives seldom say much about the neighboring countries themselves, and instead focus on the perceived presence of things and actors from these countries (i.e. belonging to a “foreign space”) found *in* Kazakhstan (i.e. the “domestic space”). In the case of Russia, the presumed risk is potential separatist activity of ethnic Russians residing in Kazakhstan. Since this is discussed at length in Chapter 5, I will focus on China in this section.

One of the most common observations I have heard is that Almaty’s location in the south is too close to the border with China, and it would be too dangerous to keep the capital there. When I have pressed my interlocutors to

explain why being on the border with China is dangerous, some will claim that there is a real or potential threat of invasion, but the vast majority tend to digress into a critique of Chinese-Kazakhstani economic interactions. In this section, my goal is to interrogate some of the silences in the elite account – for the savvy businessmen in Nazarbayev’s closest circle would not dare to publically cite the China threat as a reason for the capital change. Yet my experience with frequently hearing the threat of Chinese invasion is not reflected in the survey results for the question, “In your opinion, what were the primary reasons for the capital change?” (see Chapter 5). The answer “threat of invasion” was only selected 65 times and these individuals were asked to specify *who* the threat came from. The breakdown is found in Table 4.2. Similarly, when asked if some regions in Kazakhstan are unsafe (Table 4.3), those who answered yes were asked to specify where. Of the 108 respondents who did so, only two cited “Border regions with China.”

**Table 4.2.** Response to question, “Invasion by whom?”

China	52
USA	2
Kyrgyzstan	2
Any invasion	2
Mahmoud Ahmadinejad	1
Russia	1
Don’t know	5

**Table 4.3.** Question 22: Are some places in Kazakhstan unsafe? (n = 1233)

Yes	117 (9.5%)
No	844 (68.5%)
Don’t know	272 (22.0%)

These survey results reflect a disjuncture with my initial ethnographic observations about the pervasiveness of the popular script about the danger of Almaty’s proximity to the Chinese border, and I would like to suggest a number of reasons why only 4.2 percent of respondents cited the invasion threat as a motive for the capital change. First, they may simply see other concerns as being primary, since the question asks them to *rank* the priorities. Second, it could be that people are generally aware that this is not the “correct” answer, i.e. it is not the official version, whereas the danger of Almaty being in an earthquake zone is known to be an official version and a full 53.9 percent of respondents cite this as a reason for the change (the most common response). The survey appears to respondents as a more “formal” or “official” exchange than their conversations with each other and with me as an ethnographer, and as such, their responses likely reflect their engagement with that class of rhetorical practices. Third, as I mentioned above, it could be that when people are pressed to explain the threat coming from China, they generally do not articulate their fears in terms of the kind of territorial invasion suggested in the survey question. Thus, they may not actually choose this option upon reflection.



Fourth, it may be that the popular fear is simply not as pervasive as the rhetorical practice of fear-mongering makes it seem. The idea of Chinese invasion is perhaps reproduced more in *conversations* because it is more sensational and an exciting subject to discuss (in addition to opening the door to critiquing China's role in Kazakhstan). Further, it is possible that this is reproduced more in conversations with *me*, because my interlocutors know that I am a US citizen. There is a widespread perception in Kazakhstan that "the US" is "afraid" of China. As one focus group participant explained to his group members:

FG3P8: Right now many countries are afraid of [*kitaiizatsiya*]. I was in America last summer and they [Americans] are afraid of the Chinese or something.

Moderator: Where in America?

FG3P8: In Florida.

FG3P7: They take us Kazakhs to be Chinese; they do not know what Kazakhstan is (*chto takoe Kazakhstan*).

FG3P8: Well, so I wanted to buy military uniform as a souvenir, but they wouldn't give it to me [since they thought I was Chinese]. They thought I would take with me and use it against them somehow.

This assumption about American fear of China is sometimes extrapolated to me as a potential sympathizer with the anti-China rhetoric – a dynamic that became amply clear to me during an interview in summer 2011 with a particularly sensationally-minded interviewee, Nurzhas. A Kazakh man in his late-20s, he had been through special government job training, apparently promoting a Mackinderian worldview.<sup>30</sup> I asked him about popular attitudes toward China, by saying, "It seems to me that the majority of people see China as a threat, and that the minority say it is not..." Before I could finish, he interjected adamantly: "*No. Everyone* thinks it is a threat." He then went on to detail what he called a "process of slow colonization," explicitly promoted by a government program paying people to emigrate. "And just look, the US has a big problem with Chinese already. There are Chinatowns everywhere!"

I had heard this idea of "slow colonization" previously, during the focus groups in Almaty. The following is from the groups cited above, still discussing *kitaiizatsiya*:

FG3P7: It seems to me that the Chinese have some kind of principle in which they propagate (*razmnozhayutsya*), slowly (*potikhonku*) go to other countries and then, at one point, they will come together (*soberutsya*)!

FG3P5: Then they gather and conquer (*Potom soberutsya i zovoyuyut*).

FG3P7: First, they fill will all the markets with their goods, especially famous brand-name stores. It seems that everything is now from China.

Another group had a similar discussion, when it was again suggested that the Chinese government pays its citizens to emigrate. While there is some financial support from local governments in China supporting out-migrants, as

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<sup>30</sup> This became clear throughout the course of the interview, and at one point he even told me: "Kazakhstan is stuck between the Siberian Bear and the Chinese Dragon."

means to generate income flows, the implication of this narrative in Kazakhstan is more conspiratorial: it is seen as an explicit practice of colonization *with the intent to “conquer” other states*. Performing “China” as a fictional “I,” one participant in this group said: “Hitler wanted to conquer the world, and I will conquer with population” (FG2P9). China’s population size was a consistent theme in these discussions – and frequently compared to Kazakhstan’s population size. It was also consistently underscored that Kazakhstan’s small population size *relative to its large territorial size* increased the severity of the issue:

Moderator: Does China present a threat?

FG2P9: It does. It seems to me, because – in China, how many people are there? Billions! There are a lot of people and a lot of territory there. Kazakhstan is a lot of territory but few people. [...] Russia and China have asked us to lease 1 million hectares in the south for its own production. On one million hectares, 15 million people could work. That is the entire population of Kazakhstan. China will just come and build its own factories and plants.

In these imaginaries, the country is simultaneously conceived of geometrically and socially: a sparsely populated Kazakhstani block of space, adjacent to an over-populated Chinese block of space. The linear border between the two “units” is taken for granted – almost romanticized – homogenizing the two interior spaces. In all these discussions, we see a continual intermingling of population and territory – and the designation of a moral geography, which assigns people their “proper” place in space. Sometimes the physical presence of Chinese people in “Kazakhstani space” is deemed problematic. But the popular concerns about China do not really reflect a “cartographic anxiety” of territorial dismemberment (Krishna 1994), and most often pin Chinese economic activity in “Kazakhstani space” as the source of aggravation – which we saw in the comments above about Kazakhstan’s markets being filled with Chinese goods and the possible development of Chinese factories (for similar accounts, see Follath and Neef 2010, 136; Greene 2011a, 2011b; Wolfel 2002, 495).

Economics is also a consistent theme in this moral geography and one that is often connected to the issue of “sovereignty.” In these imaginaries, economic dependence is equated with political dependence. When I asked Nurzhas, for example, why the Nazarbayev regime was allowing Chinese companies to build pipelines, if cooperation with China was deemed so dangerous. He claimed that the government was forced to because if they did not agree to the cooperation, then China could shut down the border and stop all imports. This would force Kazakhstan to import goods from Europe and Russia, and lead to an economic disaster. While Nurzhas certainly expressed extreme viewpoints, it is still important to consider the imaginary because it is ultimately a commentary about Kazakhstan’s government’s weak position in the perceived geopolitical order of things. From his perspective, Kazakhstan’s lack of *economic* development (measured for him, by the inability to produce any goods domestically)

was a major detriment to its ability to perform its *political* sovereignty. Note here, that I am making this division; he is not. To him, the political and the economic are one. We can see the same in this focus group discussion on the question of whether Kazakhstan should expand trade with China:

FG4P9: It is very dangerous. [...] We are already very connected with Chinese now. This year we have already taken 15 billion [dollars] in debt. Recently in a deal, there was a dispute over a project to build a plant of some sort, and we gave preference to the Chinese, even though Turkish companies have been excellent investors. And everything because we already owe them. If we once refuse, twice refuse, they will remind us how much we owe them, and we are not in the position right now to return everything.

Here again, we see the perception that “owing” China leads to a subordinated position of dependence and ostensibly unwise decisions. It is also important to note how this participant uses the banal diexis of “we” and “them” – which does not just “flag the homeland” as Billig (1995) argues – but subjectivizes the speaker as a citizen of the state, as an active performance and validation of the synecdochic imaginary of elite economic actors standing for “us” (i.e. Kazakhstan, the state, its citizens, and the territory).

As in everyday speech in all spheres of life in Kazakhstan, this banal language was especially pervasive in the focus groups, when discussing China and other foreign relations. See this excerpt for another example:

FG3P7: [China is not a threat] because Nazarbayev has the position that, say there is a threat from China, we side with Russia, and from Russia – then with China.

FG3P4: [Stated before that China *is* a threat.] So it means that Kazakhstan will either go to a Russian *lager'* (camp) or a Chinese one! And we will not exist as an independent government (*otdel'noye gosudarstvo*).

FG3P7: We have generally one nationality, and there won't be an intra-governmental war (*vnutrigosudarstvennoi voiny ne budet*).

The two participants disagree about the political tactic of “siding with” the two neighbors, according to what is politically expedient, but the real political achievement here is that both participants use the word “we” to reference Kazakhstan's government. The commentaries also express concern about the integrity of the state's sovereignty, as well as the threat of domestic political infighting, with the implication that “independence” and “internal unity” are values to be preserved. These rhetorical performances are, in fact, anything but banal flaggings of the homeland, but decidedly political performances constituting the state and its subjects, articulated as one and the same. They normatively define a domestic space, with that empirical object quality, which is supposed to be independent and internally cohesive. The state becomes reified through the script of sovereignty, which we will remember is based on an assumption that “the state is the subject of international politics” (Kuus and Agnew 2008, 97). Insofar as these young Kazakhstanis are diligently reproducing this discourse – even if they disagree on the details – they are (re)producing state power through their words.

Returning to the issue of negative attitudes and fear of China, I must underscore that these feelings are likely much less pervasive than they seem at first brush. In the focus groups just described, there were consistently one or two individuals who voiced loud opinions about the danger of China. Sometimes someone else would share a more tempered view, or argue that the government was taking the correct tack of economic engagement with China, but usually the others would silently refrain from the discussion. This, it seems, is essentially how fear-mongering works – a vocal minority wishes to spread the word about a particular issue, while the others, who may have positive or neutral attitudes, are merely silent. I believe this is also why one hears very little talk about Russia in Kazakhstan: attitudes are overwhelmingly positive (see Table 4.1 above, but recall that 68.5 percent of survey respondents had a positive perception, 28.8 percent neutral, and only 2.8 percent viewed Russia negatively; for corroboration, see Balci 2011). However, as we will see in the following chapter, talk about *Russians*, the ethnic group residing in Kazakhstan, is a completely different issue.

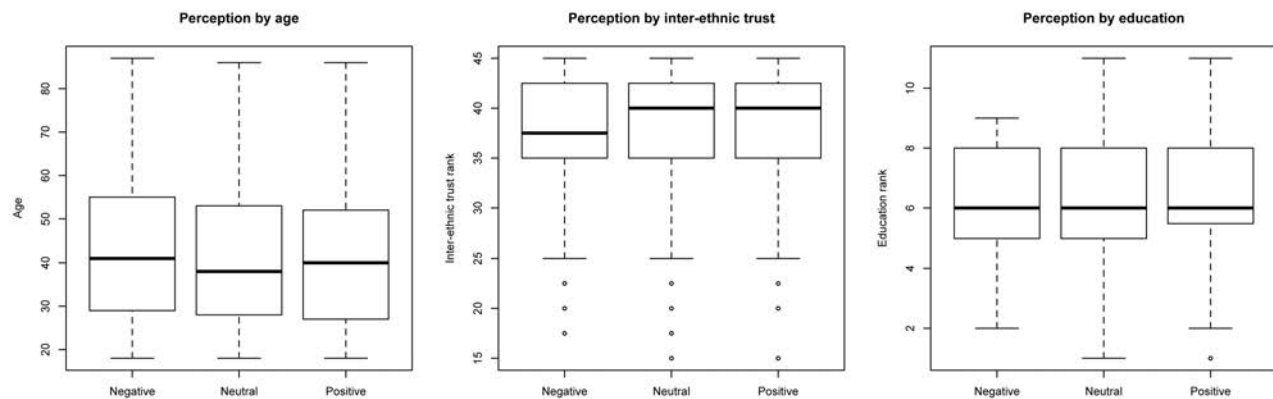
The silence of the *non-fear-mongers* was also evident in my interview with Nurzhas, which was held in the company of a mutual friend, a Kazakh woman in her late-20s. When we started talking about China, she became distracted by her mobile phone, and eventually left the table for some time. When she came back, Nurzhas was still talking about the dangers of engaging with China, and she just silently listened while he spoke, only once interjecting to inquire about his source of information (he cited a television program). Afterwards, when we were alone, she criticized his outlook and news sources, which she saw propagating conspiratorial fringe viewpoints. The scenario is instructive because here we see that her silence as a non-fear-monger could not have been interpreted as agreement. Media coverage of issues related to China follow a similar pattern: the non-sensational tends not to get good publicity. Like the press stories (Western and Kazakhstani alike<sup>31</sup>), Nurzhas' vehemence and outspokenness on the subject was so "loud" that, without pushing the issue through critical analysis, it is easy for some to accept claims, such as his that "*everyone* thinks China is a threat."

My survey results clearly indicate that not everyone views China so negatively. As we saw in Table 4.1, 25.2 percent (311) of respondents viewed it positively, while 55.8 percent (688) were neutral, and only 19 percent (234) had negative attitudes. Looking at these data, I wondered if there were any differences among these three

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<sup>31</sup> Western media tend to contribute to the impression that Kazakhstanis bear a deep and pervasive fear of China, often drawing on the "rising China" discourse in the United States. This is particularly evident in the National Public Radio series on China, which featured a segment on Kazakhstan (Greene 2011a, 2011b); as well as news sources like RFE/RL (e.g. Najibullah 2010) and German media (e.g. Follath and Neef 2010). On Kazakhstan's media, see Tussupova 2010. For a striking fusion of the two, see the commentary by Orozbekova (2011).

groups. I performed a number of tests to look for significant differences in terms of their age, education, region of residence, income level, nationality, marital status, degree of national pride, inter-ethnic trust level (as measured by a score I assigned, based on a series of three questions) – but there were no statistically significant differences for any of these indicators. See Figure 4.6 for an illustration of a handful of the predictors compared across the three groups. Note their striking similarity, with the exception of a predictably lower than average (but only slightly and still very high) degree of inter-ethnic trust in the negative group.



**Figure 4.6.** Perceptions of China, compared across three groups. Source: Author.

I believe the similarities across the groups reflects the fact that everyone’s attitudes, positive, negative, or otherwise are deeply contextual, and the way they express their opinions “about China” may superficially appear counterposed, but the goal is actually quite singular. Take Nurzhas, for example, in comparison with another interview respondent, Leonid. Both are Kazakh men in their late 20s, both hold higher education degrees, both have traveled to China, and both work for the government in Astana: Nurzhas in an anonymous security division, and Leonid in the investment branch of Samryk-Kazyna, the sovereign wealth fund. On the subject of China, the two young men articulated the same concern for what would be best for Kazakhstan: prosperity, development, and real sovereignty in the age of independence. But unlike Nurzhas, Leonid was decidedly supportive of increased cooperation with China. In large part, their difference on the issue is connected to their jobs and the different workplace socialization – the two branches of government depend on two different geopolitical imaginaries about China in order to reproduce themselves and their authority. Both young men are situated in this context of justifying and validating their work, the ultimate goal of which is thoroughly nationalist and statist, but simply draw on different scripts about China to do so.

If there are few differences among individuals with differing attitudes toward China, how are we to understand the capital change discourse about proximity to China? Just as I have sought to employ the capital change as a way to open up broader questions about Kazakhstan's transformed political geography, so too do my informants strategically use the capital change discourse as a way to articulate their personal concerns. As we have just seen, in many ways, the discourse is not just about spatial proximity, but social and economic proximity. The capital change discussion just provides an initial opportunity to open up the "China question." Through the officially-sanctioned discourse about the capital change, ordinary citizens have the opportunity to express certain concerns about Kazakhstan's post-independence economy and politics. So what are these concerns? In the case of the anti-China rhetoric, I argue there are generally two: anxiety about national economic marginalization and anxiety about domestic political corruption.

First, on the issue of the economic situation in Kazakhstan, the preceding discussion has amply illustrated how the discussion about "China" is really a discussion about Chinese actors and goods in "Kazakhstani space" – this referencing the imaginary of being a stand-alone unit delineated from Chinese space, where these things "belong." The moral geography of the state-as-container is seen as preserving this order, to which foreign economic exchanges pose a threat. This moral geography involves a vision of privileging Kazakhstani workers, goods, and industry over the foreign. This vision is built into the script of sovereignty – namely, its fetishized notion of "independence" – but it is the complete opposite of policies pursued by the Nazarbayev regime. Although it often pays lip service to the notion of "diversification," and have even commissioned a report from the World Bank (2005) on how to avoid the "resource curse," the regime has set the country on a firm path of continued (and much expanded) dependence on extractive industries in the years to come.

In the mean time, Kazakhstani oil workers are increasingly disgruntled about low pay, especially by Chinese firms, who pay Chinese employees substantially more (Follath and Neef 2010, 136; Greene 2011a, 2011b). In fact, this frustration has been boiling over since May 2011 (and ongoing at the time of writing). Oil workers have been striking across Western Kazakhstan, including the towns of Zhanaozen, Aktobe, and Kokshetau, demanding wage increases, equal rights with foreign workers, and the lifting of independent labor union restrictions (Nigmatov 2011a, 2011b; Pannier 2011b; Sharip 2011d). In addition to these concerns about the treatment of workers and poor pay *relative to* foreigners in Kazakhstan, I have suggested above that many people critique the perceived Chinese domination of Kazakhstan's market stalls. This is seen as a sign of lost work opportunity, and an ill-planned

development agenda, which does not seek to actively support domestic industry. While development truly is an “anti-politics machine” (Ferguson 1990), development discourse can also be deployed as political critique. As in all developmental regimes, which set an inarguably desirable goal of “progress,” the criticism we see here (as in other political discussions in Kazakhstan) is that the current development path is not adequate for achieving progress. The regime’s authority, the very existence of the state, the entire political system of excluding popular representation – none of these issues are placed in question. The crucial point here is that, rather than hold onto some purist definition of the “political,” we can see how state authority is reproduced as an unnoticed backdrop. Also taken for granted and tied up with this is a territorial notion of the state, as well as a moral geography in which citizens of the state are supposed to have privileged status and access to the benefits of its resources.

This brings us to the second major anxiety I see coming out in discussions about China: elite “corruption.” Linguistically reproduced as corruption (*korruptsiya*), the issue is more generally a critique of unfair elite access to rents from Kazakhstan’s extractive industries, as well as a broad range of other economic dealings (see e.g. Fauve 2011). As we saw in one of the focus group excerpts above, there is a sense that Chinese “influence” leads to dubious economic decisions and many believe that “senior government officials lobby Chinese interests to the detriment of the national economy” (Sharip 2011c). One interlocutor, working in the government sector in Astana, explained to me in 2011: “I am just concerned because, unlike the US where there are Foreign Corrupt Practices laws, there are none in China and the businessmen use very predatory tactics. They will pay any bribe necessary. [...] So my fear is that politicians are easily tempted by this money.” In fact, there have been various accusations against top officials for taking such bribes, including even Timur Kulibayev, Nazarbayev’s billionaire son-in-law.<sup>32</sup> In the same vein, there are constantly rumors circulating in Kazakhstan about the possibility of land sales to China, or secret land leases, such as the one cited above by a focus group participant (see also Blank 2011; Greene 2011a, 2011b). While some in Astana dismiss these as idle rumors (author’s interviews 2011), they nonetheless link up concerns about elite corruption with a profound romanticization of Kazakhstan’s political, economic, and territorial “sovereignty.” In this imaginary, strengthening the state and its borders – the ossification of domestic space – becomes the *solution* to domestic woes.

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<sup>32</sup> Sharip (2011c) explains: “In 2009, Mukhtar Ablyazov, the former head of Kazakhstan’s BTA Bank, publicly accused him of taking a \$165 million bribe from the Chinese CNPC Exploration and Development Company, Ltd., for assisting in the purchase of the state-controlled shares in Aktobemunaigaz, the leading Kazakh oil and gas company at a lower price. In an opaque deal with the Chinese investors, Kulibayev acquired 41 percent shares in Aktobemunaigaz.”

At the outset of this chapter (and indeed throughout this dissertation), my stated goal was explore how the image of coherence of the state – as an actor and as a spatial unit – comes into being. As these popular narratives suggest, this is not just a “top-down” project of the governors imposing their will on the governed. Rather, the rhetorical bordering practices of talking about the domestic “versus” the foreign are performances of a statist geopolitical imaginary, with a profound subject-forming effect. Not only are the geopolitical discourses about China subject to certain “structures and rules that make particular political practices legible and legitimate while making other practices illogical, unfeasible, or illegitimate” (Kuus 2007a, 9–10), but the entire discussion is predicated on a statist understanding of space. This effectively naturalizes *and* reproduces the state as a coherent thing. The “territorial trap” (Agnew 1994) is, after all, a geopolitical imaginary. And as Passi (forthcoming-a) has emphasized, geopolitical discourses are bordering practices that are vital to spatial socialization (see also Paasi 1996). These bordering practices become so fundamental that, regardless of political disagreement on something like economic cooperation with China, the effect is one and the same: complete territorial, economic, and political sovereignty become normative concepts with real salience in the imagination of actors in all walks of life in Kazakhstan.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

On December 16, 2011, Kazakhstan’s 20<sup>th</sup> Independence Day, police forces opened fire on protesting oil workers in the Caspian coastal town of Zhanaozen, killing 16 people and wounding around 100. As mentioned above, oil workers in the western towns of Aktobe, Atyrau, Kokshetau, and Zhanaozen had been staging peaceful protests since May 2011, demanding wage increases, equal rights with foreign workers, and the lifting of independent labor union restrictions (Nigmatov 2011a, 2011b; Pannier 2011b; Sharip 2011d). Seemingly uncertain about how to resolve the situation, government officials mainly employed the silent treatment – closing the region off to journalists and generally acting as if nothing was happening. But part of this silent treatment involved tactics of active silencing, with the local government detaining and exercising low-scale violence against protesters, as well as journalists and activists showing solidarity (Pannier 2011b; RFE/RL 2011a, 2011c, 2011f, 2011g). All this changed in December, when protesters in Zhanaozen began to take out their anger on the displays set up in the town square for the Independence Day celebrations. Police opened fire on the crowds, resulting in dozens of casualties. Authorities initially claimed to have fired into the air and at the ground, and only in self-defense. However, a



number of shocking videos documenting the events later surfaced, revealing police firing on unarmed individuals as they fled the scene (RFE/RL 2012).

Kazakhstan has not seen this scale of protesting since the early 1990s. The Zhanozen event was traumatic for President Nazarbayev, who was quick to reprimand local police officers and to shake up elite power circles (Brauer 2012; RFE/RL 2012). But this is not the typical response of a despot; Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov, by contrast, responded to his own police forces killing upwards of 500 people in Andijon in 2005 by blaming Western democratizers and Islamic terrorists alike for instigating the incident (Koch 2011). Rather, Nazarbayev's response is more characteristic of someone operating under a "self-limiting governmental *ratio*" (Foucault 2008, 16), and more specifically based on a certain developmental *raison d'État*. Nazarbayev's leadership, as I detail in Chapter 6, is best understood as a "developmental regime," i.e. a system in which the avowed role of government is to propel society on a path of "progress." This is precisely what makes the events in Kazakhstan last December so remarkable: progress-oriented regimes typically do not open fire on their citizens. Instead, the violence of developmental states tends to be more structural, more subtle, and in turn, often more totalizing.

This is especially true in *resource-rich* states whose regimes espouse a grand goal of progress, and where "success or failure, rather than legitimacy or illegitimacy" are the criteria of governmental action (Foucault 2008, 16). Still escaping the bonds of deeply-entrenched Soviet legacies, Kazakhstan increasingly has much in common with the Persian Gulf states, such as the United Arab Emirates and Qatar – notably, none of which felt more than the slightest tremor during the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011. A key reason that these states have not seen the kind of resource violence witnessed in, for example, the resource-rich states of Africa, lies in their very *success* in providing a modicum of progress and comfort for their citizenries – *and* in the perception that this is sufficient to justify their complacency about major economic inequalities. Neither condition is sufficient alone, and here development projects are of central importance. In Kazakhstan, like the Gulf states, state authority has been achieved through a close relationship with the exploitation of natural resources, the rents of which are invested in various "dazzling development projects" (Coronil 1997, 5).

Like the spectacular urban development schemes in the Gulf, Astana has become the Nazarbayev regime's favorite site for performing the role of "magnanimous sorcerer" (Coronil 1997, 5), with an endless parade of international conferences, national celebrations and concerts, sporting events, and sensational new architecture. Synecdochic by nature, these urban-based projects are frequently framed as being representative of developments in

the rest of the country, or as “trickling down” to the hinterlands or to non-elites. But synecdoche, like any good metaphor, masks as much as it unmasks (West 2003, 115) – for development projects systematically divert attention from the unequal power relations that make them possible. By presenting themselves “as the state,” ruling elites in the Nazarbayev regime have used their status as “legitimate” arbitrators and extractors of Kazakhstan’s natural resources to achieve extraordinary wealth (Junisbai 2010), while oil workers and other rural residents live in widespread poverty.

But the issue is not so one-sided as the elites exploiting the poor. Instead, as in other developmental states, a non-elite majority is also implicated in reproducing the system’s unique economy of power. Most Kazakhstanis, and especially urbanites who make up at least 60 percent of the population, have experienced dramatic improvements in their quality of life over the past 10 years – just as have their Emirati or Qatari counterparts. For them, the woes of the rural poor, such as the oil workers, are difficult to imagine. For example, when the world-famous singer Sting cancelled his Astana Day performance after receiving an Amnesty International advisory about the protest situation in western Kazakhstan (BBC 2011; Orange 2011; NYT 2011), Astana residents were outraged. This was not because of the injustice exercised toward fellow citizens, but that Sting should cancel his concert over such a “trivial” issue and for people so unworthy as oil workers (the implication being that they are the last ones who should be complaining about their pay, because it is assumed that they have well-paying jobs), when they had paid good money for their concert tickets. These urbanites’ demonization of the protesters points to the effectiveness with which the regime has been able to win over their support through its “positive” and spectacle-based state- and nation-building project. But even for those who are not actively “won over” by the “dazzling development projects,” their relative prosperity (both as compared to their southern neighbors and to their Soviet past) is itself grounds for political apathy. Popular attitudes in Central Asia are characterized by what Anna Matveeva (2009, 1107) has termed, “a certain hierarchy of regional disasters, making people think that ‘here it is still not as bad as elsewhere.’” Among Kazakhstanis, this has more or less ossified into a “don’t rock the boat” ethos since the early 2000s.

Although they may appear to be exceptional, resource-rich regimes, such as Kazakhstan, have broader implications for the sorts of questions we should be asking about technologies of government elsewhere in the world. Most pointedly, they challenge liberal understandings of agency as subversive action (Nealon 2008): regardless of whether citizens of “illiberal” regimes “agree” with the state-initiated development projects, they invariably work opportunistically within, and thus constitute, the resultant networks of political and economic

relations. In their daily behaviors – ranging from driving to working to spectating – they participate in a political economy made possible by natural resource exploitation. Of course, the elite-defined bureaucratic structures and political economy can never be total – there is inherently space for overflow, exemplified by the actions of both protesters and police forces in Zhanaozen. But just as in “liberal” regimes, state power is not something “external” to these people; it is something that they are instrumental in constituting, through their political and economic behaviors, which more often than not looks like the pursuit of a “normal” life and a desire not to “rock the boat.” For this reason, in this dissertation, I have emphasized the fact that complacency and indifference are in fact *agencies*, which are strategically colonized and technologized by certain regimes (and the argument equally applies to liberal democracies as resource-rich developmental states).

President Nazarbayev generally gives four justifications for his decision to move the capital to Astana in 1997: 1) to strengthen Kazakhstan “geopolitically” (the meaning here typically left rather vague); 2) to preserve the country’s security by locating the capital far from external borders; 3) to produce an economic “multiplier effect” through this new development project; and 4) to affirm the government’s stable and “polyethnic” nature by locating it in a multinational region (e.g. Nazarbayev 2006a, 344). In contrast to the vast majority of the extant scholarship on Astana, I am not concerned with assessing the “accuracy” of these stated motives, which can only ever be an exercise in speculation. My focus in this chapter is rather on the capital change *discourse*: I will demonstrate how the very practice of talking about the motives works to constitute state authority, and inscribe specific geopolitical imaginaries in the independence era. Via the Astana case study, I will focus on the urban/rural, center/periphery, and north/south dichotomies that characterize elite and popular thinking about Kazakhstan’s entire territory. First exploring their historic and contemporary construction and political significance, I will illustrate how these nationalist discourses both actively inscribe and operate on the basis of specific spatial imaginaries and geopolitical arrangements.

## **I. Capitalizing the territory**

### *A. Soviet urbanism and internal colonization*

Post-Soviet regional studies on Tashkent have explored the geopolitical role of capital cities (Crews 2003; Stronski 2010), but none to date have given serious consideration to the geopolitics of the Astana project. Although often overlooked in the political geographic literature on territory and state-building, urban development projects are a central way in which state-scale actors inscribe their authority and their territorial visions. In this dissertation, I argue that such has been the case for the Astana project, but it is first necessary to understand a primary condition of its possibility: urban planning practices in the Soviet Union.<sup>33</sup> Soviet urbanism was largely inspired by *The*

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<sup>33</sup> We should note, however, that the distinctly Soviet set of practices and modes of thought that developed around urban planning, has much in common with other industrial countries, “all of which developed forms of social regulation and the welfare state” (Kotkin 1995, 366). An extensive, interdisciplinary literature has long considered the relationship between developmental regimes of all sorts and their favorite urban projects: from places as diverse as Germany (Castillo 2001; Hagen 2008, 2010; Huyssen 2003; Staiger et al 2009; Wise 1998), France (Berman 1989; Gilbert and Driver 2000; Rabinow 1989; Wagenaar 2000); Morocco (Rabinow 1982, 1989); Italy (Agnew

*Communist Manifesto*, in which Marx and Engels “spoke of the city as rescuing the people from the idiocy of rural life” (Alexander and Buchli 2007, 8). As such, with the Bolshevik rise to power, cities were imagined as the “epitome” (Kotkin 1995, 18) or “cradle” of progress and modernity (Alexander and Buchli 2007, 2). In Soviet discourses, the “socialist city” was tasked with producing new urban citizens, who were expected to enact “a specifically Soviet way of life: a new economy, society, politics—in short, a new culture, broadly conceived” (Kotkin 1995, 34). The advances made in the cities were then expected to spread to the rest of the state’s territory, through an “army” of “model cities whose collective activities would increase the Soviet state’s great-power potential” (Kotkin 1995, 18). A revamped Moscow, as the state’s new capital, was declared the prime model (*obrazets*) (Clark 2003, 6). And beginning in the 1930s, Party rhetoric drew extensively on urban development and architectural tropes to articulate the state’s social transformation project (Clark 2003).

In his foundational work on Magnitogorsk, Kotkin (1995, 35) notes the key role that city building played in “the geopolitical processes of internal territorial colonization.” While this certainly applies in the case of Magnitogorsk, it is perhaps most salient in the Central Asian republics. These territories were comparatively recently incorporated into Russian/Soviet control, and state power networks were thus not widely diffused. But this region was also characterized by extremely low levels of urbanization. Except in the region of Ferghana Valley, where people had long been sedentary, most of the republic’s territories were sparsely populated, largely inhabited by nomadic groups. City building in Central Asia therefore assumed an especially potent role in the Soviet discourses about modernizing these “backward” territories. These thoroughly colonial discourses had their roots in the Russian imperial era, but continued in full force during the Soviet times. Tashkent is considered the quintessential example of this relationship in both historical periods, and has accordingly received the most scholarly attention (Bell 1999; Crews 2003; Stronski 2010; Tokhtakhojaeva 2007).

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1998; Notaro 2000); Brazil (Caldeira and Holston 2005; Holston 1989; Scott 1998), China (Bray 2009; Ford 2008; Hoffman 2009; Ren 2008; Smith 2008; Thornton 2010; Zhang 2006); Malaysia (Bunnell 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2004a, 2004b; Olds 2001); Lesotho (Ferguson 1990), Zambia (Ferguson 1999), Abu Dhabi (Barthel 2010; Davidson 2009; Khalaf 2006), Dubai (Acuto 2010; Bagaeen 2007; Barthel 2010; Bassens et al. 2010; Davis 2006; Jackson and della Dora 2009; Kanna 2010; Smith 2010); Russia (Adams 2008; Ford 2008); Singapore (Olds and Yeung 2004); Egypt (Mitchell 1988, 2002), Turkey (Batuman 2003, 2009; Bozdoğan 2001; Çınar 2007; Erdentug and Burçak 1998; Houston 2005; Kacar 2010) and Kazakhstan (Buchli 2007; Koch 2010; Laszczkowski 2009, 2010; 2011a, 2011b; Schatz 2004b). Of more relevance for the case study of Kazakhstan, a historical literature has also focused extensively on urban planning and development during the Russian colonial and Soviet times (Bliznakov 1990; Buck-Morss 2000; Clark 2003; Crews 2003; French 1995; Giese 1979; Kotkin 1995; McCannon 1995; Rylkin 2003; Stronski 2010).

Early Russian descriptions of Tashkent's urban structure as a "labyrinth of tight, crooked streets and narrow lanes" (Crews 2003, 120) long defined an essentialist imagination of Central Asian cities. The city's socio-spatial structuring challenged imperial calculation projects by concealing domestic spaces "from the view of the Russian police officer, census-taker, physician, ethnographer, and statistician," who imagined them to harbor "fanaticism, disease, and rebellion" (Crews 2003, 120). Soviet urban planners also dwelled on the "primitive, unhealthy, and uncomfortable" nature of Central Asian towns, often speaking derogatively about "the disorder of the winding streets of the Old Town sections of Tashkent" (Stronski 2010, 6). Urban intervention projects (framed as "improvement" or "renewal" campaigns) since the early days of Russian imperialism, and extending beyond the city's devastating earthquake in 1966, were uniformly about breaking down "traditional social relations and increasing the state's ability to monitor citizens" (Stronski 2010, 4). These colonial discourses, continuing into the Soviet era, also figured into an identity project in Russia, which was cast as the source of enlightenment for the Soviet Union's "far-fetched" Eastern territories. But the negative discourses about Tashkent's narrow, winding streets exposes a tension in this role, which reflects an important (if overwrought and essentialized) schism Russian national identity narratives: between "Eurasianists" and "Westernizers." Moscow – with its "onion domes and narrow, higgledy-piggledy lanes" – and St. Petersburg – with its rigid grid-like layout – have long symbolized these two competing understandings of Russia's historical and cultural place in the world as either completely separate from, or part of, Western experience (Clark 2003, 6).

The Moscow-St. Petersburg rivalry was central to defining the imagined role of a capital city in the Russian and Soviet space. As elsewhere in the world, the capital city took on a symbolism as a privileged site for the articulation of national identity, to be projected both inward to the imagined national community and outward to the international community. As such, the capital city is inextricably tied to the task of state-building, i.e. the articulation of the state as a sovereign authority acting in "its" territory and as part of a pre-existing system of states. The importance of "capitalizing" the territory was not lost on the Bolsheviks and the subsequent Communist Party officials. The capital city served nationalist aims, and to that end, visions and visualizations of Moscow were instrumental to the state's geopolitical aims. Moscow was meant to be a "propagandistic shopwindow" and the center of the worldwide communist movement (Gritsai and van der Wusten 2000, 39). Especially under Stalin, Moscow was a central site in the articulation of the Soviet Union as a major superpower (French 1995, 59). From his

skyscrapers (Ford 2008; French 1995) to the Moscow metro (Rylkin 2003), Stalin's megaprojects projected this image with the intent to instill pride in the Soviet masses, and fear in the Soviet rivals.

Autonomous republic capitals served a rather different, if secondary, purpose in the Soviet system. These cities did not receive the lavish attention of Moscow, but they were nonetheless adorned according to their status in the urban hierarchy. Again, Tashkent, the capital of the Uzbek SSR, stands apart from the norm. With the excess of negative attention Uzbekistan received as a backward place, came an excess of attention to refashioning its image. Drawing on essentialist (and Orientalist) understandings of the city's location, Khrushchev declared Tashkent to be "the Soviet 'Gate to Asia' and used the city as a departure point for his Asian tour in 1960. For this reason, local planners announced that the city's reconstruction had the highest-level significance for the Soviet state and for Soviet foreign policy" (Stronski 2010, 238). And especially after the 1966 earthquake, the reconstructed Tashkent and its residents "became diplomatic tools that Soviet officials used to help spread socialism throughout the colonial and postcolonial space" (Stronski 2010, 235). It was designated Moscow's "shining star in the East" and depicted as exemplifying the "adaptability of Soviet-style socialism" (Stronski 2010, 7).

Tashkent was indeed "the showpiece of Soviet developmental efficiency in Middle Asia" (Giese 1979, 155), where "socialism could be adapted beyond its original European roots to assist 'less developed' or even 'backward' societies in advancing out of poverty and colonialism" (Stronski 2010, 234). This rhetoric, of course, was implicated in the actual implementation of urban planning and reflected on the actual urban structure: "'Uncapital-like' (*nestolitsnnyi*) buildings, streets, or tramlines were removed from the city center to provide it with a more modern look. Before international visits, buildings were spruced up with paint, particularly those that were on the main tourist routes" (Stronski 2010, 238). In Kazakhstan, as in many cities across the former Soviet Union, these urban beautification projects are still commonplace before major international events, national holidays, or even presidential visits. Indeed, in Astana, "anxieties proliferate over whether or not the new face of the city 'looks right'" (Alexander and Buchli 2007, 24).

But the elite (and popular) concern for the appearance of Kazakhstan's capital is a relatively new development: Kazakhstan's first territorial iteration as the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic came only in August 1920, with Orenburg (in present-day Russia) designated as the capital. In April 1925, the territory was renamed as the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, with Kyzylorda designated as the new capital. The next capital change, in 1929, to Alma-Ata did not come with another territorial designation: that final elevation in

status to a Union-level republic, the “Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic,” was not until 1936. Alma-Ata (“Apple-Father” in Kazakh), renamed in 1921, was founded as a military township in 1854, named Vernyi – Russian for “faithful” (Alexander 2007, 76). In the 1920s, it was still just a small colonial town, and its rapid growth stemmed more from Soviet industrialization and agricultural programs than from its “capital” status (Alexander and Buchli 2007, 9). Historically inhabited predominantly by Russians, this trend continued under the Soviets, as it was especially difficult for non-Russians to obtain an official residence permit there (Alexander 2007, 88). Alma-Ata, renamed Almaty in 1992 as part of the general de-Sovietization of toponyms, underwent dramatic changes in its tenure as capital of Kazakhstan. Under Nazarbayev’s developmental regime, this dramatic transformation continues today, but certainly not at the same level seen in Astana, Kazakhstan’s new capital since 1997.

Astana, as both a geographical imaginary, materiality, and lived experience, has served as the most privileged dimension of the Nazarbayev regime’s nation-building project. The Astana development scheme is one of the most vivid examples in independent Kazakhstan of how nationalist identity narratives simultaneously describe and constitute their own reality. In addition to its physical location near the center of Kazakhstan, the city’s monumental, “Eurasian” architectural style (a label attributed to it by the government) has been a focal point of ubiquitous nationalist propaganda—proclaiming Kazakhstan/Astana as the “geopolitical center” or “heart” of Eurasia (Nazarbayev 2003, 2006b). Analyzing these co-constitutive nationalist and geopolitical narratives, through an array of empirical methods, my goal in this chapter is to provide a careful account of Astana’s role in Kazakhstan’s “domestic” geopolitical landscape.

### *B. The city and the steppe*

One of the most devastating effects of Soviet decision-making in Kazakhstan was the development of a nuclear weapons testing range, called the “Polygon,” near Semipalatinsk (renamed Semey after independence). About 500 nuclear tests took place above and below ground from 1949 to 1989 in this area of approximately 6,950 mi<sup>2</sup> (18,000 km<sup>2</sup>) (Brunn 2011, 1789). Unless they were recruited to participate in the test – to determine the impact of the blasts on human subjects placed at different distances from the test site – the residents in the area were given no advance warning of the tests, and all illnesses and environmental contamination associated with the tests were kept strictly secret. Needless to say, the impact on the immediate vicinity of the Polygon, in addition to areas hundreds of miles away in any direction (depending on prevailing winds), was devastating. Brunn (2011) describes



how some residents sought to rationalize the perverse fate the region was dealt by its selection as the Soviet Union's nuclear testing ground. Some claimed that as the "center of Eurasia," the Polygon is "thus a 'converging' place where spiritual forces are at work" (Brunn 2011, 1793). This narrative is a striking redeployment of President Nazarbayev's favorite discourse about Kazakhstan's great geographic endowment as the "heart of Eurasia," the nexus of Asia and Europe (Nazarbayev 1997, 2005b, 2006a), and the privileged site of a unique European and Asian cultural "fusion." But as this example from the Polygon illustrates, the discourse has been variably interpreted and assimilated in people's geographic imaginaries and practices.

Like various other geographically centrally-located capital city projects (e.g., Ankara: Batuman 2009; Bozdoğan 2001; Çınar 2007; Kacar 2010; Brasília: Holston 1989), the image of Astana in the approximate "center" of Kazakhstan's territory draws much of its strength from the stark and dramatic contrast to the "barren" landscape that surrounds the city. In this chapter, I will argue that the capital change discourse has contributed to the development of unique post-independence "imaginary geopolitics," in which the geographic center is *not* a center of power, "but a multiple network of diverse elements – walls, space, institutions, rules, discourse" (Foucault 1975, 307). Yet it is precisely this *image* of the center of power being at the center of the city (or the capital at the center of the country) that is so potent. I argue that the capital change discourse is used strategically to create this image of the omnipotent central power. But where there is a center, there is a hinterland – a broader spatial unit in which the center is embedded. In the case of Astana, this hinterland is understood as the whole of Kazakhstan, constructing it as a unified territorial entity.

The Astana project is framed by the regime and its planners and architects as an allegory for the Kazakh nation's ability to prevail over the harsh environment, frequently described as a "green oasis" (Nazarbayev 2010, 53) in middle of the steppe. This discourse echoes Soviet discourses about conquering "nature," and serves similar political purposes. Romantic discourses about "Man" conquering "Nature" are arguably a legacy of Enlightenment-era thinking, but they took on intense significance in the Soviet Union's nation-building discourses (Bolotova 2004; Buck-Morss 2000; Josephson 1995; Kotkin 1995; McCannon 1995, 2003; Pohl 1999; Richter 1997; Weinthal 2002). What makes the Soviet case exceptional, with respect to comparable Western technological development discourses, is the extent to which the state was the "prime mover" (Josephson 1995, 520). In the West, these discourses were more generally manifested in the form of high modernist urban planning projects articulated by the figure of the "planner-expert, acting in conformity to science" (Houston 2005, 107), often "visionary" architects, such as

Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier (Fishman 1982). In the Soviet Union, however, the idea of conquering nature became part of state ideology (Bolotova 2004, 105), which was reproduced heavily through socialist realist discourses. These were especially salient in the early years of the Soviet Union, in which the conquest of nature became an allegory for the conquest of the new socialist order over the old one (Bolotova 2004): nature was constructed as wild and hostile, but capable of being transformed into the *rodina* (“homeland”) – and of being tamed by the rationalist planning of Soviet policies.

This “intrinsic link between state policy and the ideology of conquering nature” (Bolotova 2004, 107) was not limited to the Stalinist times, but continued to take shape over the course of the USSR’s nearly 70-year history. One highly visible iteration is found in Soviet discourses about the Arctic: “Uncivilized and unknown, the Arctic was the most distant part of the Soviet Union’s periphery, the very edge of the world. It was the ultimate battleground in the Soviets’ great ‘struggle against the elements’ (*bor’ba so stikhiiei*)” (McCannon 2003, 243). And it was here in the vast polar expanse that the Soviets saw a “perfect blank slate—a discursive *tabula rasa*” on which to “inscribe their visions of the new socialist world they were purporting to build” (McCannon 2003, 251). Like the Arctic, the steppe was also an important discursive *tabula rasa*:

For some a land of last resort, for others one of promise, the steppe was above all a symbol of the seemingly boundless space of the country and a persistent reminder of the impotence of human beings in the face of the power of nature. But for the Bolsheviks, supreme champions of humankind’s ability to bend nature to its will, the steppe was a fortress to be taken. And take it they did. (Kotkin 1995, 29)

Kotkin’s discussion is about Magnitogorsk, a city at the southern end of the Ural Mountains range, where it gives way into the vast steppe of southern Russia and Kazakhstan. In Chapter 3, I noted Kotkin’s (1995, 35) argument that this urban development project was key to the Soviet process of “internal territorial colonization,” and this bears striking resemblance to the function Astana serves in independent Kazakhstan.

The Soviet and independence-era geographic imaginaries that characterize thinking about Kazakhstan’s expansive steppe lands have a long history, rooted in the Russian imperial era. Victor Buchli (2007, 48) argues that many of the tropes about the region, such as “emptiness,” “nakedness” (*golaia*), and “virginity,” can be traced to Ivan Shagin’s first expeditionary reports in 1816. Obviously, the steppe was never quite “barren” or depopulated, as these discourses suggest, for it has been home to the nomadic local populations for thousands of years (Olcott

1995).<sup>34</sup> As Buchli (2007, 48) underscores, this particular geographical imaginary of “‘nothingness’ (despite evident presences)” legitimizes certain material interventions. In Soviet Kazakhstan, three in particular have had a defining role for the republic’s history and contemporary political and cultural geography: 1) nuclear weapons testing in the “Polygon” near Semipalatinsk; 2) mass, forced population transfers from elsewhere in the Soviet Union, including those imprisoned in the gulags and others who were simply dumped in the middle of the steppe; and 3) the Virgin Lands campaign.

All of these state interventions were made possible – or at least conceivable – because of the geographic imaginary about Kazakhstan’s steppe being an empty wasteland. Brunn (2011, 1801-1802) and Werner and Purvis-Roberts (2007, 284-285) note that even today, scientists involved in the nuclear testing at Semipalatinsk, and still residing there, are “rarely apologetic” and consistently refer to the areas near the site as “poorly developed,” “uninhabited,” or “practically barren steppe” suitable for nuclear testing. This geographic imaginary of the “barren wasteland” was also drawn upon to justify why Kazakhstan was treated as a “dumping ground” for “dangerous” peoples. Conceived as completely remote, the steppe was considered a place where they could be removed from other places where they somehow threatened state security, such as with the mass deportation of Koreans (1937), Volga Germans (1941-44), and Chechens (1944) from their peripheral homelands.

The Virgin Lands Campaign is perhaps the most clear manifestation of this geographic imaginary of the steppe as “virgin” and “barren” (Buchli 2007; for a detailed account of the campaign’s social and environmental consequences, see Pohl 1999). Indeed, Astana’s history is closely tied to this project. Started in 1954 at Khrushchev’s initiative, it was to bring enormous swaths of Kazakhstan’s steppe land under cultivation, and encouraged the migration of peasants from Eastern Soviet territories (especially Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus) to do so. Developing cities in Kazakhstan was part of this project – with scholars in the 1950s arguing that “of a series of ways of developing the desert, semi-desert and dry steppe, the opening up of land by the foundation of towns is one of the best. Towns are, as it were, the most organized troops in the attack on nature” (Gladysheva and Nazarevskiy 1950, cited by French 1995, 62). The Virgin Lands Campaign even had a “capital”: Akmolinsk – later renamed Tselinograd in 1961 (*tselina* means virgin soil) (Buchli 2007, 44), then Aqmola in 1991, and finally Astana in 1997.

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<sup>34</sup> Russian imperial authorities considered these population to be “backward,” and privileged urbanism as a sign of their conquest and “the advancement of enlightened rule” (Crews 2003, 118), predicated on a Russian Enlightenment-era “belief in the advancement of scientific progress and universal civilization” (Crews 2003, 120). Given this colonial history and the special civilizing role ascribed to cities in *The Communist Manifesto*, it was a rather seamless transition into the Bolshevik privileging of urban development in Central Asia as a tool in their civilizing mission.

There is a great deal of continuity from the Soviet times with respect to the tropes about the city and the steppe, and urbanism conquering nature more generally. But in independent Kazakhstan, there has been a strategic reworking of these Man-Nature and center-periphery binaries. Now factored into new nationalist rhetoric, they are consistently articulated in the discourses about the capital change. When President Nazarbayev decided to move the capital to Astana, elites complained loudly about the location's inhospitable and harsh weather (marked by an extreme continental climate and tremendous winds). One of the early national symbols chosen to represent independent Kazakhstan was the local snow leopard, the *bars*, who is featured in the Kazakhstan-2030 development strategy as an allegorical analogue of the new Kazakhstani population. In the poetic text of the strategy, we are told of the *bars*: "He will neither be frightened by severe cold of threats nor made soft in intolerable heat of opportunities" (Nazarbayev 1997). And in refuting claims that Astana's weather is bad, Dzhaksybekov (2008, 27) quotes Nazarbayev as saying, "In Kazakhstan there is not a bad climate, it is the climate of our homeland (*Rodina*), our ancestors, and it cannot be bad." Unlike the Soviet discourses, post-independence narratives have sought to reorient the imaginaries and attitudes about Kazakhstan's "harsh" environment to one of national pride – naturally good because of its connection with an ancient past, and its role in strengthening the national character.

This is typical of the strategy of "homeland making," which characterize nation-building projects "to instill not only a sense of spatial identity or emotional attachment to an ancestral homeland among the population being territorialized, but also a sense of exclusiveness" (Kaiser 2002, 231; see also Nogué and Vincente 2004; Yiftachel 2002). One way in which this is normalized and internalized as a banality of nationalism is found in linguistic "deixis" (Billig 1995). The word "*stepnyi*" (adjectival form of "steppe" in Russian) pervades everyday speech as a marker of the national or local variant of whatever it modifies (e.g. "*stepnaya mechta*" (dream), "*stepnaya demokratiya*" (democracy), "*stepnyi chelovek*" (person)). The "steppe" as a word, an idea, and a geographical imaginary is connected to the Kazakhstani state's territory, recurring most frequently in discussions about Astana.<sup>35</sup> These linguistic conventions and tropes are not just passive descriptions, but active elements in the inscription of a geographic imaginary about Astana as a dramatic icon in the middle of a barren, harsh expanse of flat steppe land. Like the Moscow-Arctic relationship of the Soviet days (McCannon 2003), Astana functions as the extreme opposite of the steppe. The city's drama is exaggerated by working together with this image of hostile and extreme geographic conditions. Nazarbayev, for example, often glorifies the Astana project by citing skeptics' criticism "that

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<sup>35</sup> This is not only the case in the official discourse (e.g. Nazarbayev 2006a, 335, 336, 352, 358), but also in nearly every Western press article one can find about Astana.

here, on the steppe, it is practically impossible to build a modern city” (Nazarbayev 2006a, 336). “His” ability to realize the project is thus amplified by the difficulty.

Similarly, much of the language used to describe the city’s architecture and planning – not just in the official discourse, but also in the architectural and construction firms’ texts, as well as press coverage – underscores the challenge presented by building in the steppe environment, which in turn heightens the impressiveness of the feat. The technological fetishism that accompanies Astana’s development is part of broader narratives about development, modernization, and civilization – which all underpin narratives about creating a new social order, and which are espoused in so many developmental states around the world. Yet the inherited Soviet experience makes Kazakhstan somewhat unique in the extremity of these discourses. As Lev Trotsky wrote in 1924: “Under socialism a man will become a Superhuman, changing courses of rivers, heights of mountains and nature according to his needs and, after all, changing his own nature” (Bolotova 2004, 110). Superhuman or not, the individuals involved in the Soviet projects to conquer nature (whether the Arctic, the steppe, or the country’s wild rivers) learned to govern themselves as loyal subjects of the state and active builders of the socialist future. And when scientists in Kazakhstan *even today* justify their involvement in the nuclear testing in Semipalatinsk (which included extensive use of human subjects and caused indescribable human suffering, not to mention lasting environmental damage) by citing the steppe’s “emptiness,” and the importance of testing for national security (Werner and Purvis-Roberts 2007), the effects of the Soviet practices of subjectivity and geographical imaginaries have clear implications for contemporary Kazakhstan.

As we can see, the Astana development project draws on long-standing imaginaries of the steppe’s “emptiness,” which is predicated on a geometric conception of space. Curiously, Nazarbayev refutes such a claim in the following quote from *In the Heart of Eurasia*:

Geopolitics is certainly not geometry and a government’s geographic center is least of all like the geometric center of a circle. The geopolitical center of Kazakhstan is not just linear measurements and dimensions, but in many ways, shall we say, non-linear ideas and perspectives. The question was in fact not so much about moving the capital to the exact center, if there even is a geographical center of Kazakhstan. The question was about moving the capital to a point, which could become the center of Kazakhstan in many ways. Not only geographically, but also the center of gravity of geopolitical, social, economic, political and cultural ties and relationships within and outside the state. Astana – the new capital of Kazakhstan – also being very near the geographical center of the country, has become precisely this “generalizing” and “integrating” center. (Nazarbayev 2005b, 31)

Despite Nazarbayev’s above rejection of the geometric view of space, he often taps into this powerful image of centrality. As such, much of his writing about Kazakhstan’s territory is often underpinned by a vision of “smooth

space” (Massey 2007, 87) through which power (as a thing) unproblematically diffuses. Foucault (2007) traces this “smooth space” vision to *La Métropolitée*, Le Maître’s text discussed above, which connects the effectiveness of sovereignty to the diffusion and circulation of power, ideas, will, orders, and commerce – superimposing “the state of sovereignty, the territorial state, and the commercial state” (Foucault 2007, 14-15).

Many of the criteria that Nazarbayev (2006a, 338-339) outlines as criteria of a proper capital city appear to come straight from this text.<sup>36</sup> In this vision, a capital does not just have a political role, but:

The capital must also have a moral role, and diffuse throughout the territory all that is necessary to command people with regard to their conduct and ways of doing things. The capital must give the example of good morals. The capital must be the place where the holy orators are the best and are best heard, and it must also be the site of academies, since they must give birth to the sciences and truth that is to be disseminated in the rest of the country. Finally, there is an economic role: the capital must be the site of luxury so that it is a point of attraction for products coming from other countries, and at the same time, through trade, it must be the distribution point of manufactured articles and products, etcetera. (Foucault 2007, 14)

Le Maître’s “dream of connecting the political effectiveness of sovereignty to a spatial distribution” was characteristic of the newly developing and “governmentalized” administrative state of his time (Foucault 2007, 14-19), just like Nazarbayev’s vision of reordering Kazakhstan’s political environment through moving its capital. Of particular note is how this dream – of political effectiveness originating in a specific point in space and being diffused over the smooth space of the state’s territory – is articulated through the image of the city. Why does Nazarbayev choose the site of the capital city to enact this vision? Why not conceive of a diffuse spatiality of power decentralized across the territory? What makes the central, “point-based” nature of the capital so powerful?

As I and other scholars have argued (Holston 1989; Koch 2010; Scott 1998), much of its power comes from the advantages offered by *miniaturization* (but see Chapter 6 on the synecdoche). Given the difficulty of “utopian” social transformation projects to either effect change, or effect change on such a broad scale at the pace desired to satisfy contemporary political demands, miniatures are often employed – almost as “retreats” where “where high-modernist aspirations might more nearly be realized” (Scott 1998, 257). As I have already noted, Nazarbayev (2010, 53) views Astana as a miniature of Kazakhstan. In the framework of the city, larger, complex realities of territorial space can be neatly simplified (Scott 1998; Stewart 1984; Varutti 2011).

At a diminished spatial scale, the city allows for the imposition of a utopian closure, which would be prohibitive at the larger scale of Kazakhstan’s entire territory. Although, all along, Nazarbayev has rather candidly

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<sup>36</sup> I have never found an explicit reference to *La Métropolitée* in the writings of Kazakhstan’s President Nazarbayev, but he often claims to have conducted an extensive study of capital city schemes all over the world (Nazarbayev, 2005, 2006, 2010) and it would be surprising if he and his experts had *not* read Le Maître’s text.

acknowledged that “democracy is our goal, not the starting point” (Nazarbayev 2005a). His first campaign slogan in 1992 is telling: “Only ahead!” (“*Tol’ko vpered!*”). For most of the population, it was always clear that there would be no dallying to experiment with “democracy” in a time of traumatic upheaval and social dislocation that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union (for a vivid account of these times in Kazakhstan, see Nazpary 2002). In this supremely depoliticizing slogan, the people are told of a need to move ahead without attending to such “trivial” political matters. In many respects, the political obstacles of a utopian closure were not the challenge, but rather the material feasibility. Again the capital change is the allegory: “The idea about moving and building a new capital came to me (*zarodilas’ u menya*) long ago – as far back as 1992, but I hesitated about it, because then the economics of Kazakhstan did not permit such an idea being practical” (Nazarbayev 2006a, 335). In the comparatively closed space of the city, it is possible to enact the social control and discipline needed to realize the transformation – or at least to give the impression of such.

Obviously, the city as miniature cannot stand in for the state’s territory – but as we see in Nazarbayev’s comments about Astana as a symbol of the country’s many transformations, it is often used as a rhetorical device to do so. I am not interested in revealing the “falseness” of this strategy. Rather, the important question to ask is, what work does it do? Today, urban forms are often privileged sites of representation, so much so that:

When we speak of an institution, somewhere in our thinking there often lurks the picture of a building or street. The building stands for an institution, giving a visible exterior to the invisible ‘inner structure’, and it is remarkably difficult to think of a public institution without thinking of the building or street that it represents. (Mitchell 1988, 59)

This is reinforced by certain linguistic conventions, especially prominent in the news media, such as using “the White House” or “the Kremlin” to stand in for the U.S. or Russian governments respectively. In the same fashion, it is common to use a capital city name to stand in for an entire country or the ruling regime (e.g. “Moscow maintains high prices in energy talks with Beijing”). This image of the capital city standing in for the country and/or its government is an odd journalistic convention, but it is nonetheless an important representational practice that establishes a global normative understanding of the capital as a sign of the entire country. These widespread linguistic norms bolster and lend credibility to claims, such as Nazarbayev (2006a, 351) makes, that it is necessary to develop Astana as the “face of the country (*litso strany*), figuratively speaking, its business card (*visitnaya kartochka*).”

## II. The capital change discourse: State authority and subjectification

### *A. Elite narratives: Astana as Kazakhstan in miniature*

Engaged by academics, politicians, journalists, and citizens alike, the capital change subject has occupied a perennial place in independence-era popular conversations. It now being nearly 14 years since Astana acquired this status, the question should be, why are people still debating the question, “Why was the capital moved?” I believe each individual has a different set of reasons for engaging in the discussion – for some it may be the focus of research or a whimsical news story, for others it might be a passing topic not given much thought, and for yet others it may be determining factor in their entire career (e.g., among bureaucrats). Despite the fact that each individual is responding to a unique set of immediate stimuli, their very engagement with the question has contributed to an overarching effect. This has been two-fold: 1) the inscription of the state as a coherent actor and affirming its hegemonic position in rhetorical and material networks of power; and 2) the inscription and population of certain geopolitical imaginaries about Kazakhstan’s territorial and national character. In this sense, the very practice of discussing the capital change has been an instrumental technology of government in independent Kazakhstan, and a crucial element to subject-forming processes among citizens.

In his article on Ankara, Alev Çınar (2007, 154) describes the establishment of the new capital city in 1927 and the newly independent Turkish state as self-constitutive acts:

the state constitutes itself as an agent of modernity vested with the power and authority to control space, dictate the meaning of urbanity, shape the evolution of the public sphere, and suppress contending ideologies. By constructing a city, the state becomes the agent of the nation, the author that inscribes the nation into space, hence creating the nation-state.

A central argument in this chapter is that the Astana project has also been a crucial way for the “state” (elites) to assert it as an coherent agent, and to authorize a specific vision of the nation and the territory. Expanding on Çınar’s (2007) insights in this section, I extend this discussion of the relationship between Astana and the rest of Kazakhstan’s territory, to how this connects to elite efforts to institutionalize the state and its authority over the newly delineated objects of government – the territory and society.

In his book *Kazakhstan’s Way* (*Kazakhstanskii Put’*), President Nazarbayev gives his account of why the capital was moved to Astana. Here and elsewhere, Nazarbayev tells of how his will prevailed, sometimes tempering his unilateral authority on the question with explanations of the technical studies conducted by a committee of experts (Nazarbayev n.d.; 2006a, 338-339; 2010, 53) and parliamentary debates (Nazarbayev n.d.; 2006a, 341) – even telling of how there was discussion within his own family about the decision (Nazarbayev 2006a, 344). These



other justifications are usually only caveats to his broader narrative about the city as a personal project: “It was a huge risk, and I took it intuitively. I put everything at stake, including my career and my name” (quoted in Antelava 2006a). In the end, he explains, “I had to be the one to make the decision and answer for it” (Nazarbayev 2006a, 348). And so he did.

In accounts of the decision-making process, Nazarbayev invariably describes the political and logistical challenges he faced, with a common theme being the lack of support he received from parliamentary deputies, whom he describes as “*politiki*,” politicians uninterested in the good of the country:

There is a very specific boundary, differentiating politicians (*politiki*) from a responsible politician and statesman (*ot otvetstvennogo politika i gosudarstvennovo deyatelya*). If the first thinks about the next battle, then the second thinks about the good of the people and the future of the country. Those who doubted the capital change did not want to understand the essence of the matter. It is very easy to spark hysterics (*razduvat' isteriyu*) surrounding an unpopular decision and present oneself as the ‘voice of the people.’ We have many such *politiki* in our country. (Nazarbayev 2006a, 342)

In this quote, Nazarbayev demonizes the politicians who doubted his resolution to move the capital from Almaty, where they enjoyed a comfortable life in a pleasant city. He tells of his own love of Almaty, and his reluctance to leave the city. But unlike these *politiki*, he saw a higher calling and knew that “the interests of the country and objective factors” were more important than any personal attachments (Nazarbayev 2006a, 338). It is true, as Ed Schatz (2004b, 125) explains, that “Reducing the size of the apparatus involved a process of selection, and the capital move weeded out the less loyal and rewarded the more loyal cadres.” But the move was perhaps more significant for its lasting didactic effect than the actual one-time result of eliminating these individuals. The capital change was a rehearsal in how to demonstrate loyalty in the new configuration of power relations, and those who failed to support the decision quickly learned the consequences of dissent, and served as examples for others. As one of the few points on which Nazarbayev was challenged in his early years as president, the capital change has defined his presidency since.

But in describing his opponents, Nazarbayev draws on the lofty language of “the good of the people” and the “future of the country” – endowing his role as “Leader of the Nation” (a title he was accorded by Parliament in June 2010) and that of “responsible politicians and statesmen” with an aura of respectability, dignity, and paternal magnanimity. Through such language, he seeks to endow the new entity of the “state” with a similar aura. To temper some of the self-aggrandizing rhetoric that is built into this state-building project, Nazarbayev has often assigned this “majestic” role to Astana (Adams and Rustemova 2009; Koch 2010) – though they frequently slip into each other in his discourse: “In their hearts, our people have truly nurtured sincere love for our capital. Every year,

thousands of people in Kazakhstan seek to come here just to see this majestic symbol of our state” (Nazarbayev 2010, 53; see Figure 5.1). For many in Kazakhstan, this is increasingly true. And



**Figure 5.1.** Billboard found extensively in Astana in the lead-up to Astana Day 2011. It reads, “Beloved capital!” In the fore is an image of the Baiterek tower, and the background is a selective view of the new Left Bank developments. The President’s Residence is most prominently featured, and behind it are various ministries’ buildings. June 2011. Source: Author.

in nurturing a love for the capital, many have nurtured a love for their euergetic leader (Veyne 1990; see Chapter 6). In the capital change discussions, we see his euergetism not just in the city project itself, but in taming the *politiki*, who needed a reorientation of their priorities toward the “good of the people.” Thoroughly naturalized in all these conversations, from the banal to the stately, is the very idea of the state, the need for a strong leader, the subordination of parliamentary deputies, and a passive but supportive citizenry excluded from the decision-making process.

The president’s discussion of the capital change is also one strategy (among many) of situating newly independent Kazakhstan within the imagined “global” community of states, all lined up next to each other as neat territorial containers (Agnew 1994, 2003; Anderson 1983; Billig 1995; Foucault 2008; Mitchell 2002). In response to some very concrete realities – e.g. Russian claims on Caspian territory and Russian nationalists (in Russia) advocating the annexing of Kazakhstan’s northern territories (see Chapter 4) – Nazarbayev has doggedly pursued “equivalence” as a territorially sovereign state in the international community (Schatz 2006, 2008). In the case of the capital change discourse, this is not just visible in that Nazarbayev clearly perceives a national capital to be one of the stamps of statehood, but also in his preoccupation with the historical precedence of capital changes throughout the world. In his book on Astana, Nazarbayev (2005b, 32-38) provides a lengthy exposition on similar capital relocation projects, going as far back as Alexander of Macedonia’s relocation of his capital to Babylon. In Nazarbayev’s account, the development of a capital city gains the credibility and aura of a time-worn tradition and hallmark of historically notable states – and is even more appropriate for Kazakhstan given the state’s “youth” and

his perception of grand capital city projects being associated with young states (e.g. Atatürk's Ankara project in post-Ottoman Turkey).

Beyond the decision itself, Nazarbayev has also narrated the visual image of the city as his own project. Describing the early planning, he tells of drawing sketches for various buildings: “I shared all my thoughts with the architects. The construction and constructional elaboration were done. I inspired the architects and they developed the actual projects” (Nazarbayev 2010, 53). As if to confirm this guiding role, he is frequently pictured presiding over architectural models and traipsing through construction sites (see Figure 5.2). Nazarbayev does not see himself as a naïve observer, but someone legitimately qualified to undertake such a project: “I myself started to research thoroughly the issues of city building. And what really helped me in this area was that I had gone through a very good management experience. In the past, while in diverse leadership positions, I also had to face the issues of city building and architecture” (Nazarbayev 2010, 53). If, as he claims, “The modern Astana is Kazakhstan in miniature” (Nazarbayev 2010, 53), then he is the benevolent and practiced leader who can preside not only over the capital's construction, but also the construction of the new state (see also



**Figure 5.2.** Two in one: miniature models on a construction site in Astana, 2006. The photograph was part of a display in the National Archives lobby in Almaty, October 2010. Source: Author.

Laszczkowski 2011a). The coincidence of these construction metaphors are not chance, but common to many nation-building discourses (as we see from the term itself). As noted above, in the early years of the Soviet Union, Communist Party leaders similarly drew upon architectural tropes in describing the simultaneous construction of Moscow and the new socialist state (Clark 2003, 4).

The construction site as a nation-building metaphor also emphasizes rapid – frequently miraculous, overnight – development. Nazarbayev's rhetoric is no exception: he repeatedly underscores the impressive speed with which the new capital has risen from a (not very) blank slate: “In a record short time, we have built the new

capital city in the very heart of our nation. Every visitor to Astana is amazed by its transformation” (Nazarbayev 2005a; see also Nazarbayev n.d., 1997, 2006a). As if racing to fend off a utopian “moment of disenchantment – of recognizing the dream *as* dream” and prevent a certain “nostalgia for a world that was *supposed* to be” (Buck-Morss 2000, 209) – Nazarbayev is eager to demonstrate that his dream has become a reality. “Of course,” he writes, “to only dream of building a new capital and realizing that dream are two different things” (Nazarbayev 2006a, 336). But, by his own account, he has already prevailed: “It was a dream. Now – it is a true (*chudesnyi*) city, the pride and heart of Kazakhstan” (Nazarbayev 2006a, 350). “Astana is a city-sign, a sign of dreams, incarnated in reality” (Nazarbayev 2006a, 349).

Scholars have pointed out that this is characteristic of young, “developmental” regimes (see Chapter 6), whose fixation with speed is generally a result of the pervasive sense of “being late” or “lagging behind” (see e.g. Acuto 2010 on Dubai; Zhang 2006 on Shanghai). This is then constructed as the “problem” that development seeks to “solve.” Rapid development is then framed as a point of national pride, broadcast inward to its citizens and outward to an assumed watchful international community. In the context of Nazi Germany, Hagen (2010) describes the regime’s use of *Leistung* (meaning performance, achievement, or power) as a key nationalist trope:

Yet, architecture and urban design provided a highly visible and dramatic arena for this discourse of performance that simultaneously entailed bodily enactments and tangible achievements. In addition to symbolizing the regime’s authority once completed, the act of designing and constructing new buildings, streets, neighborhoods, and eventually entire cities was presented as evidence of the regime’s ability to achieve. As Koshar noted of the rapid construction of the new Air Ministry in Berlin and its use in Nazi propaganda, here ‘three shifts worked around the clock, as workers contributed practically as well as symbolically to the imagery of *Leistung*.’ (Hagen 2010, 401)

The construction site itself became a spectacle. In Kazakhstan, it is also a consistent theme in official spectacles (see Figures 5.3-5.4). Nazarbayev is often the heroic overseer of his pet architectural projects (also a favorite role of Hitler’s; Hagen 2010, 405). The Nazi emphasis on achievement appears to be symptomatic of a more general type of government. Foucault (2008, 16) defines this an art of governing that does not follow as self-limiting governmental *ratio*, in which “there will be either success or failure; success or failure, rather than legitimacy or illegitimacy, now become the criteria of governmental action. So, success replaces [legitimacy].” Which returns us to the question of why Nazarbayev has preferred the city as the privileged site for articulating his grand vision, and why he is in such a rush to finish it. By setting this out as a challenge – through his discourse about the difficulty of the capital change,

technically, politically, and otherwise – Nazarbayev identifies a somewhat easily achieved goal. Or, in a liberal framing of the issue, his “success” was to become the crux of his self-legitimizing efforts.



**Figure 5.3.**

Billboard in Pavlodar, which is part of a country-wide series dedicated to Kazakhstan’s 20-year independence anniversary in 2011. Average citizens are here portrayed in construction hats and attire. July 2011. Source: Author.



**Figure 5.4.**

One scene in the Pavlodar Astana Day evening festival on the city’s central square in front of the Akimat. Youth on the stage and in front of the stage were dressed in construction hats and attire. Those on the stage are in colors of independent Kazakhstan, while those in front were waving small Kazakhstan flags. They simply paraded in front of the stage while one person spoke, praising the “our” new capital and thanking “our” President Nazarbayev, who was described as Astana’s “main author and architect” (“glavnyi avtor i arkhitektor”). July 2011. Laszczkowski (2011a) describes a similar display in the 2008 Astana Day celebrations in Astana. Source: Author.

In the elite narratives about the capital change, both about the decision to move the capital and in the material shape it has taken, there is a clear articulation of President Nazarbayev as the ultimate authority. In asserting himself as the supreme “governor” through these discourses, then who and what is being objectivized as his object of government? Who and what constitute the “governed” (Veyne 1997)? In these discussions about Astana, President Nazarbayev is not just overseeing the city’s development. He is also described as managing a number of new entities: a wayward governmental bureaucracy; a sovereign territory with new borders and a complex demographic makeup; and an underdeveloped society. But each of these sites of government are his own constructions of the “governed,” and we need to ask whether they have salience in Kazakhstan today – for though the Astana project may have been initiated by Nazarbayev and implemented largely by elites, these inscriptions are decidedly *not* solely the domain of elites. Average citizens of all backgrounds are also responsible for constituting a variety of geographic visions that have accompanied the capital city project. Citizens, for example, when talking about the capital change, generally talk about “our president” as the sole decision-maker in the process. As we saw above with the word “*stepnyi*,” even a banal word like “our” is part of a subtle “deixis of homeland,” which “invokes the national ‘we’ and places ‘us’ within ‘our’ homeland” (Billig 1995, 107). And if Nazarbayev is “our”

president, the speaker is situating him- or herself as a citizen subject to his authority.<sup>37</sup> In the section, I thus explore how ordinary citizens are complicit in this act of materializing the authority of the “state,” through specific, subject-forming rhetorical practices.

*B. Popular speculation: “Why was the capital moved?”*

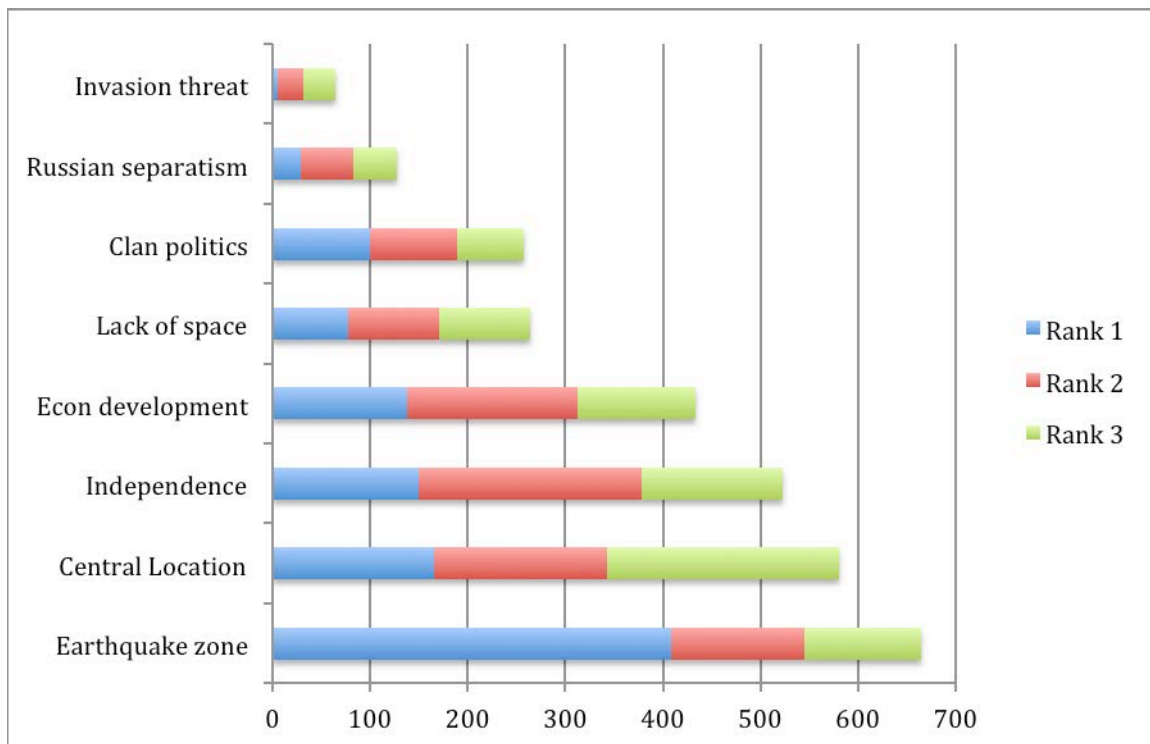
I was at a conference in Astana in July 2011 and before the event started, I introduced myself to my neighbor, who happened to be a history professor. He asked me about my research subject and, as usual, I gave the easiest answer, “*perenos stolitsy*” (“the capital change”). As with many people in Kazakhstan, he was delighted that I was researching (what he deemed to be) such an important issue, and launched into an explanation of why the government moved the capital. But unlike most people, who generally drew me their mental map with words, he, completely unprompted and with great excitement, found a blank piece of paper and drew me an actual map: a squiggly oval with a big dot in the middle. “You know why they moved the capital? Here is Almaty [pointing to a place in the bottom right], and here is Astana [the dot in the middle]. From there [Astana], it is possible to control here [he drew an arrow up], to control here [he drew an arrow to the right], to control here [he drew an arrow down], and to control here [he drew an arrow to the left]!” This older Kazakh man spoke briefly about the demographic constitution of the country, but his narrative about the capital change primarily articulated a depopulated space, bounded by geometric lines, and controlled by some authority emanating from the city node. As we have just seen, this vision of power diffusing out of the center is characteristic of “centrally located” capital city projects. This strategy is not “the same” everywhere, however, because the imaginations of the territorial unit are nowhere the same.

In my country-wide survey, respondents were asked to rank what they considered to be the top three reasons for the capital change from Almaty to Astana and they were given the following options: 1) Almaty was

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<sup>37</sup> Academics are also complicit in the process of demarcating this state-society boundary (Mitchell 1991). For example, when expounding on the speculation that the capital change was part of the regime’s fear of Russian separatism in the North (Anacker 2004; Domjan and Stone 2010; Fauve 2009; Schatz 2004b; Wolfel 2002; Yacher 2011), scholars leave unchallenged the naturalized position of the state as standing above or apart from the territory under its control, as well as the demographic “stuff” which it inherited upon independence. Some of these studies seek to explicate the government’s state-building efforts, but they ultimately do nothing to break down the state-society boundary by leaving intact the one-dimensional notion of power, in which the people and territory are passive recipients of the exercise of an outside authority. In the approach I am advocating, by contrast, “the people” and “the territory” are objectivizations of a specific set of practices of governing, *not* pre-given universals (Foucault 2008, 3; Veyne 1997, 151). The state constitutes itself, gives itself the aura of authority, and builds up real networks of power relations, through materializing these objects.

located in an earthquake-prone region; 2) Almaty lacked sufficient space for government expansion; 3) Clan politics, 4) Russian separatism in the north; 5) Economic development in this region; 6) Newly independent Kazakhstan needed a new capital; 7) A capital should be located in the center of a country; 8) Safer from invasion of foreigners (from whom?); 9) Other. Since I discussed the issues of invasion and Russian separatism in Chapter 4, I will focus on the more common responses in this section, and draw on focus group and interview data to contextualize the distributions indicated in Figure 5.5. My own analysis begins, however, with the assumption that the “real” motives for the capital change are more or less irrelevant. Accordingly, in interrogating these data, I aim to demonstrate how the very act of discussing the capital change is an important technology of government, insofar as citizens simultaneously articulate their subjectivity and a specific spatial imaginary (i.e. of Kazakhstan as a territorial state-unit).



**Figure 5.5.** What do you think were the most important reasons for the capital change? Closed question with the possibility to write in an “other.” October 2010. n = x. Source: Author.

The most common answer to the survey question was that Almaty is located in an earthquake-prone region (with 664 total mentions, of which 408 respondents ranked it first of three top choices). The earthquake answer was also frequently mentioned in interviews and in the focus group discussions about the capital change. The following examples are typical:



Moderator: Why was the capital moved precisely to the center of Kazakhstan, to Astana?

FG4P2: In my opinion, Alma-Ata was in an seismologically unstable zone (*v neseismoustochivoi zone*). [...] It's always like that around mountains. And if the capital is in the middle of the country, then it is in itself (*i po svoemu*) protected in the case of a military situation.

FG2P9: To relieve Alma-Ata. It is overloaded. And it is in a seismological zone.

FG5P5: I don't know if this is the main reason, but Astana is on a swamp and there are no earthquakes. Because of that it is possible to build skyscrapers. And in Alma-Ata, there is seismological instability and skyscrapers could not be developed there.

The earthquake argument reflects an official narrative that is completely depoliticized: the move is constructed as something that had to be done for safety and on the basis of "objective" physical geographic facts. The argument that a capital should be located in the center of a country operates in a similarly depoliticized fashion. This was the second most popular response in the survey (with 580 total mentions, including being ranked first 166 times, second 177 times, and third 237 times), and the third was that Kazakhstan needed a new capital as a newly independent state (523 total mentions, including being ranked first 150 times, second 228 times, and third 145 times).

In the focus groups, some would simply repeat this reasoning, as if Astana's central location were self-evident: "A capital should be located in the center of the government" (FG5P3); while others showed some more critical reflection on the issue:

Moderator: Why is it important that the capital is located in the center of the republic, in the center of the country?

FG1P9: I think that it wasn't necessary when they made the decision; [it is] symbolic. But if you take many countries, like America, [which is] very developed, Washington is not located in the center of America. Moscow is not located in the center of Russia. Delhi is not located in the center of India. Here it was purely symbolic that this specific city was selected – you could say to stand out from other countries.

Various group members: (*expressions of agreement*) Yes, yes.

As we saw in Chapter 4, the proximity to China and Russia are also articulated as important factors in the capital's new, central location. Here, too, participants read the move as having symbolic importance:

Moderator: Why is it important for the capital to be located in the center of the country?

FG3P7: So that it is far from borders, for defense.

FG3P8: Currently many countries are developing themselves militarily. For example, China and Russia – they are investing more money in defense. The capital change – it is an artificial separation from the territory of China and closer to Russia – Russia because of our union, [they are] our friend.

The fourth most common response to the survey was that the capital was moved for the purposes of economic development in this region (with 433 total mentions, including being ranked first 138 times, second 171 times, and third 121 times). The city's provision of economic opportunities for Kazakhstanis is a consistent theme in strategic planning documents (e.g. Kazakhstan-2030) and President Nazarbayev's yearly addresses (most recently,



e.g. Nazarbayev, 2011), and it was repeated consistently in the focus groups. This was especially apparent through the trope of Astana “opening up new opportunities” (*perspektivy*) (e.g. Nazarbayev 2005, 31, 34) and correcting regional disparities within the country. One discussion illustrates this clearly:

FG1P9: Maybe more potential (*perspektiv*) was seen exactly in this city, exactly in the center.

FG1P5: In Kazakhstan, we say the south, the southern part, is very developed in terms of industry and the economy (*interjection from another: yes!*) and in the north we say, it is not developed. Even in the north – I was there myself, in Petropavlovsk, there it is terrible (*uzhasno*). In one word, the city there is terrible. I was in shock. You can’t compare the north and south. [...] Our (*u nas*) south is very developed, compared to the north.

FG1P9: I know that when the new capital was chosen, they [originally] wanted to move it to the west, to the city of Aktyubinsk. And it seemed on the basis that the west is also a very economically-developed region.

Various group members: (*interject*) Yes!

FG1P9: It turns out that the Astana region was chosen precisely because it is necessary to develop this side in particular, so that there was not development here, development there, and here a gap. In order to fill the gap.

Another participant showed a mastery of the official reasoning, as well:

FG4P9: It is also good from the side that Alma-Ata took a hit. And now that the capital was moved, new opportunities (*perspektivy*) have opened up and some people around the country as a whole will start to migrate (*kochevat*) and everywhere, little by little, earn [money] (*zarabatyvat*), [so that] the economy picks up.

Overall, Kazakhstanis tend to accept – or at least produce – the narrative that Astana represents a welcome source of economic opportunity. As one taxi driver told to me in 2011, “I am very happy that they moved the capital to Astana because now I have a job and I am very successful. This is already my sixth car!” This language of development represents a remarkable shift toward the acceptance of Kazakhstan’s newly “capitalist” economy. The market transition was traumatic for nearly the entire population in the 1990s, when elites pursued a “shock therapy” approach to privatization, like most other regimes in the Soviet successor states. Yet in accepting the positive role ascribed to Astana’s capitalist development project, citizens accept a paternalist subjectivity, in which the state maintains a dominant role in all political economic affairs, and citizens are objectified as passive recipients of the state’s benevolence and guidance.

These discourses also strategically obscure the fact that the vast majority of the capital’s construction money is not exactly going into the hands of Kazakhstan’s citizens. Ostensibly due to the lack of locally-produced goods and skilled labor (Dzhaksybekov 2008), Astana, has been predominantly constructed with foreign goods and expertise. These laborers come primarily from poor, neighboring republics of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Although there are some concrete economic effects stemming from Astana’s construction boom, the

distribution of these benefits is incredibly uneven, and dubious ties bind Kazakhstani elites to various shady economic dealings at home and abroad.<sup>38</sup>

There are two points to note about all these focus group commentaries on Astana's central location. The first is the spatial imaginary that they call into action. In it, neither Kazakhstan as a territorial unit is questioned, nor is the geometric understanding of space. Both are thoroughly naturalized. Although several astute participants pointed to the symbolism of the location, they did not dispute the fact that one could even locate a "geographical center" of the country. It is also interesting to note that they never referenced how "centrality" was redefined since the end of the Soviet Union. Given the territorial reconfiguration, what is geographically central for citizens of the new state is very different from how centrality was imagined by Soviet citizens. Although these participants were all raised in the independent state, the way they speak about centrality nonetheless suggests the thorough naturalization of the state's definition of its territory in the spatial imagination of these citizens.

The second important pattern to note is how the participants situate themselves as subjects, clearly outside of the state apparatus of decision-maker; their language suggests a clear *lack* of agency with respect to the capital change. Overall, the Astana project allows elites to inscribe the authority of the "state" in contrast to a passive society of citizens – many of whom are enthusiastically accepting of the whole undertaking and/or complacent with their passive role in political economic affairs. Curiously, although Nazarbayev often assumes responsibility for deciding to move the capital, none of the focus group respondents ever directly referred to him or credited him with the move. In all the discussions, no actor is ever identified: participants routinely used passive, and on a rare occasion someone might refer to "they" (*oni*), presumably the Nazarbayev regime. This sort of passive construction is not at all unique to Kazakhstan. As Jessica Allina-Pisano (2009, 69) explains in her ethnographic research on Ukraine, "The practice of avoiding attribution of responsibility is a Soviet discursive tradition, but it is also characteristic of subordinate populations more generally." She demonstrates through the example of one of her most marginalized informants how, in narrating the traumatic transformations since the collapse of the Soviet Union, "With the exception of one mention of 'the state,' Yevhen does not name the agents of change in his experience" (Allina-Pisano 2009, 69). While the focus group participants are not appropriately classed as a subordinate

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<sup>38</sup> This is especially the case with Turkey, and "Turkish" firms have been crucial to the development of Astana (Dzhakysbekov 2008; *Kazpravda* 2010; Kuriatov 2010). These connections come in many forms, some obscure (e.g. dubious links between Sembol construction company and the Kazakhstan government) and others more clear (e.g. the Turkish firms' lower prices and willingness to accept projects in "risky" environments, which Western companies would not dare to undertake) (author's interviews 2010-2011).

population, they are nonetheless politically disempowered – due simply to the nature of the political system in Kazakhstan. This should not be taken as a normative judgment, as is frequently done in liberal contexts, but as a mere statement of fact about the (active) “state” – (passive) “society” relationship that has evolved since independence. The rhetorical performances of speculating about the capital change simultaneously confirm and constitute the “state” (i.e. elites in control of the bureaucratic decision-making apparatus) as a coherent and external entity, to whose authority the speakers submit themselves as subjects.

### **III. Narrating the homeland**

As a privileged dimension of the Nazarbayev regime’s nation-building project, “Astana,” as both an imaginary and a lived experience, operates on the basis of various dichotomies that pervade popular geopolitical imaginaries: city/steppe, barren/productive, rural/urban, center/periphery, civilized/backward, modern/traditional, north/south. As I demonstrated in Chapter 3, Kazakhstan is characterized by significant regional variation, both demographically and culturally. This suggests that it is important to examine “internal” variation in how geopolitical scripts and imaginaries are constructed and articulated, and how they factor into practices of government. In the regional studies literature, only geographers have begun to address these issues (e.g. Kolossov 2010; Kolossov and Toal 2007; Megoran 2004a, 2004b, 2005; O’Loughlin and Talbot 2005; O’Loughlin et al. 2004, 2005). With a few notable exceptions (e.g. Kolossov and Toal 2007; Ó Tuathail 2010), these works are primarily dedicated to examining geopolitical perceptions of foreign states.<sup>39</sup> The focus of Chapter 4, such analyses raise an important set of issues – but generally also point to important “domestic” imaginaries. As such, in the remainder of chapter, I want to further explore how people have imagined Kazakhstan as a territorial unit, what sort of spatial divisions they see within it, and the role of various identity narratives in this imaginary.

Although no individual imagines the territorial unit the same, it is possible to discern some broad imaginaries and spatial tropes, which are repeated, challenged, and enacted through the words and practices of ordinary citizens and elites alike. In Kazakhstan, there is no better place to open this question than through discussions about the capital change. Narratives about the territory often refer to its internal divisions or regionalisms in terms of the four directions: north, south, east, and west. These divisions, as we saw in the example

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<sup>39</sup> This is due in large part to the common equation in political geography of “geopolitics” with international affairs. Given the subdiscipline’s extensive efforts to challenge “territorial trap” thinking, this unwillingness to apply the “geopolitics” label to other spatial scales ironically reinforces the statist mode of thinking about international politics as the interaction of separate state units lined up next to each other.

of the historian above, are often articulated and called into existence during discussions about the decision to move the capital city. The following draws from my interview data from 2009-2011, in the form of discussions with somewhere near 150 individuals. The uniformity of these narratives allows for the broad generalizations that follow.

#### *A. Four regions and the capital change*

As a brief introduction to Kazakhstan's regionalism, I will summarize here the most common ways of explaining the capital change vis-à-vis the demographic composition of the four "regions" of the country. First, the north is commonly imagined as a "Russian" or "European" region, and many (typically ethnic Kazakhs) have interpreted this demographic fact to be the source of potential separatist movements. In the narratives of Kazakh nationalists, the capital change was needed to counter this Russian dominance and to redistribute the Kazakh population toward the north. Official narratives never state this goal, and the low ranking of this motive in the survey data above suggests that respondents were generally aware that this is not a "correct" answer (see Figure 5.5).<sup>40</sup> Most foreign observers have nonetheless tended to read the capital change as motivated by fears of ethnic Russian separatism, stemming from the "beached diaspora" (Laitin 1998) in the north (e.g. Anacker 2004; Fauve 2009; Schatz 2004b; Wolfel 2002). However, the official version is that the north is an especially diverse region and that "by moving the capital to a multinational region, we are again affirming the course to establishing a stable, polyethnic government, preserving and perpetuating the friendship between nations populating Kazakhstan" (Nazarbayev 2006a, 334). The official rhetoric underscores a need to redistribute an (ethnically) unmarked population (or sometimes migrants, as in Chikanayev's narrative, author's interview 2011).

Second, the south is imagined as the home of "traditional" Kazakhs, who are seen to benefit most from the capital change, as their superior Kazakh-language skills and social networks have plugged them into strategic government posts in the new administrative center. The capital change is often framed as a way to offset the demographic dominance of the southern region, as it has the highest density of inhabitants, especially as compared to the sparsely populated northern steppe area. But as I describe below, a counter-narrative sees the capital change not as a way of offsetting southern influence, but in fact of entrenching it and effectively colonizing the Russified

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<sup>40</sup> One of the most sensitive issues in the independence era pertains to the treatment of ethnic Russians, as well as their own behavior in the independent state. In Kazakhstan, this is popularly known as the "Russian question," and it is also known to be a politically taboo subject – meaning that substantive conversations in public are strictly avoided and replaced with the language of the "friendship of the peoples" (see Chapter 3). See Tussupova (2010) for a consideration of the taboo in Kazakhstan's mass media.

north with their ethnic Kazakh nationalism/traditionalism. Third, the east is often ambiguous in most narratives, but it usually just refers to the Almaty region, home to the previous capital. The capital change discourse is typically silent on the ethnic composition of Almaty, but like the south, its large population size is understood to need a counterbalance. Lastly, the west is seen as home to many oil-rich Kazakh families, who are suspected of wanting a degree of independence from the central administration. In some popular narratives, the capital change was a way to “reign in” their decentralizing (or perhaps potentially separatist) leanings (Schatz 2004a, 104).

For some interlocutors, clan divisions add an additional layer to these narratives. Clan politics is not a focus of this work, but it is necessary to introduce it here because it is sometimes cited as a reason for the capital change, and it also reflects and reproduces the geometric way of thinking about the territorial unit in contemporary Kazakhstan. Kazakhs consider themselves to be divided into the three “umbrella clans” or “*zhuz*” – the “elder” (“*starshii*”) *zhuz* is said to dominate in the south and east, the “middle” (“*srednyi*”) *zhuz* is said to dominate in the central and northern parts of Kazakhstan, and the “younger” (“*mladshii*”) *zhuz* is said to dominate in the west. In a curious mixing of national metaphors, “ethnic Russians were occasionally referred to as a ‘fourth umbrella clan.’ The logic was that [...] to survive, Russians had to become clannish by systematically privileging their own kind through patronage” (Schatz 2004a, 108). In brief, Nazarbayev is a member of the Elder clan, and the capital change is said to be a way to promote his clan and to challenge the Middle Clan Kazakhs (presiding in the central territory, where Astana is located), “who were disproportionately educated and linguistically Russified” and “enjoyed a prominent position in the political elite at the end of Soviet rule” (Schatz 2004a, 101).

Schatz (2004a, 104) links this clan politics to the Nazarbayev regime’s more general fear of regionalisms and separatist movements threatening the young country’s territorial “integrity.” While the issue of clan politics is debatable (but not a discussion here), we still see this fear of regional separatisms in the reiterations of the capital change justification, such as I experienced in my interview with Astana Master Plan head Chikanayev (but see also Nazarbayev 2005, 31). Needing to show himself as a supporter of the regime, he began our interview by launching into an explanation about why the capital was moved, and finally declaring his support for the decision. In this political performance, he told me that the primary reason for the capital change was geopolitical, that there was a need to address the real threat of separatism. The move to the north was necessary, he argued, “to preserve the

wholeness of the territory” (*sokhronit’ tselost’ territorii*)<sup>41</sup>. I asked for clarification on where the threat came from and he explained that, “We [i.e. the regime] couldn’t control the north or the west.”

While elites have been concerned with separatism in the north *and* the west, popular narratives tend to concentrate almost exclusively on the north.<sup>42</sup> In large part, this reflects a popular memory of various acts of “provocation” on the part of some Russian nationalists. The most cited example is when the prominent Russian author Alexander Solzhenitsyn claimed that the northern region of Kazakhstan, which has a predominantly “Russian” demographic character, should be part of Russia and expressed his support for potential separatists (Wolfel 2002, 496). However, a popular narrative among many Kazakhs (and especially those with stronger than usual nationalist leanings) challenges the “naturalness” of this Russian character. Although the colonial critique has been muted in official discourse in Kazakhstan, as compared to other Soviet successor states (e.g. Uzbekistan or Azerbaijan), many Kazakhs consider the Russian and European settlement in the northern steppe as a naked act of Soviet-era colonization.

One of my informants, Gulnora, a Kazakh woman in her mid-50s and university professor in Almaty (and a resolute nationalist), for example, argued that these northern territories were actually always “Kazakh,” but only became Russified under Soviet policy. Having grown up in the northern city of Petropavlovsk, she lamented her minority status at school – she was one of only two Kazakh girls. “Khrushchev’s Virgin Lands campaign was never about cultivating the land, it was about settling more Russians there,” she claimed. And regarding the move of the capital, she exclaimed, “*Pravil’no sdelali!*” (“They were correct to do this!”), with the implication that it was needed to reassert Kazakh control over this area. For most in Kazakhstan, a certain moral geography is articulated through the discussion of the country’s regionalisms. That is, as in Gulnora’s commentaries, the social character of a specific region is judged through a normative lens of being good/bad, healthy/unhealthy, safe/unsafe. Although the north is frequently demonized by southerners and/or Kazakh nationalists, the stigma attached to the south (especially by urbanites and Russified Kazakhs) is perhaps the most extreme example of how this moral geography is rhetorically produced in independent Kazakhstan.

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<sup>41</sup> This could also be translated as keeping the territory “intact” or preserving the “safety” or “integrity” of the territory. The word “*tselost*” translates into English as “safety,” but the word derives from “*tseloye*,” meaning “the whole.” His word choice, as opposed to another Russian term for safety, “*bezopasnost*” (literally, “without danger”) indicates a spatially-based concern for “wholeness,” which is why I have translated it this way.

<sup>42</sup> In my estimation, this is likely because of the elites’ heightened interest in the oil resources found in the west, and the general population’s comparative disregard for this issue.

Over the years of my research in Kazakhstan, I have been told countless times: “*Shymkent – eto nash Texas*” (“Shymkent is our Texas”). Few people in Kazakhstan can explain what the trope is supposed to mean. They are, however, aware of its function: namely to degrade people coming from this southern city, or the South Kazakhstan *oblast’* (region) more generally. Irrespective of this social role, many people have suggested to me that the label comes from the region’s southern location within the state, along the border with Uzbekistan, comparable to Texas’ southern location in the USA, along the border with Mexico. Others suggest that it is because both places are hot or that the landscape is similar, or even that the shape of South Kazakhstan *oblast’* looks a bit like the shape of Texas. While all this may have a degree of truth, the trope primarily operates in the Kazakhstan’s cultural landscape as a means of describing a certain kind of person coming from the south – namely “criminals,” “hooligans,” and various other “cunning” (“*khitrye*”) individuals (author’s interviews and focus groups, 2009-2011).

Like the capital change, the Texas question has enabled me to probe how people talk about and imagine internal divisions within Kazakhstan – both spatial and social. My effort to understand the origin of the Texas metaphor<sup>43</sup>, and the southern stigma more broadly, has shed light on two interlocking binaries in the socio-spatial understanding of Kazakhstan’s territory: between the urban and rural (*aul*)<sup>44</sup>, and between the north and the south. At the broadest brush, urban and north are coded as modern, culturally and linguistically Russified, and civilized; the rural and the south are coded as traditional, uncivilized, and culturally and linguistically “Kazakh.” The divisions are also tied up with class divisions, as urbanites and northerners have historically been in comparably privileged economic and political positions. As in so many places around the world, there is also a racial dimension to these class identities. Not only are the poor in Kazakhstan ascribed to a different (rural or provincial) space, but even when they leave this space, they are marked by their skin color. For example, the Kazakh word “*karabala*” is used to indicate a dark-skinned boy, but it is also used to indicate a boy from provinces (the term’s opposite, *sarabala*, indicates a fair complexion, but does not carry a place attachment). So here we have two conceptual nodes. On the one side, the “northerners”: urban, modern, civilized, wealthy, Russified, light-skinned. On the other, the

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<sup>43</sup> The issue of the trope’s origin is not overly pertinent here, but informants have assured me that it originated in the Soviet times. It has clearly taken on a life of its own over the years, and especially in the “wild” 1990s, a time of complete social disorder and when migrants from south Kazakhstan, previously excluded, flooded the cities (Almaty in particular). Nazpary (2002) offers an extensive discussion of the new social relations this engendered, but in brief, he argues that “the urban population lumped street traders and hooligans together as southern Kazakhs (*Iuzhnye Kazakhi*) or *aul* Kazakhs (*aul’nye Kazakhii*), whom they blamed for crimes” (Nazpary 2002, 166). Perhaps more than in Soviet times, the Texas label has since come to label people from this region as dangerous and potential criminals.

<sup>44</sup> This geographic binary is perhaps more often along the line of the city versus the “village” (the Kazakh “*aul*”).

“southerners”: rural (*aul*), traditional, uncivilized, poor, Kazakh, dark-skinned. This binary vision of society – and how it is mapped onto imagined spatial divisions in Kazakhstan – has firm roots in the Soviet times (Nazpary 2002), and even into the pre-Soviet times (Crews 2006; Khalid 2006). Nonetheless, some new dimensions have been added to this geo-social imaginary since independence.

Specifically, in the narratives of Soviet-era elites (and their children),<sup>45</sup> the “southerners” are characterized as retrogressive “nationalists.” In a conversation with one elite Russian husband and wife, Igor and Yulia, in 2009, for example, I was told that there is a “war” (“*bor’ba*”) between the north and the south. They complained that Kazakhs from the south tend to be nationalists, and now that many of them are coming to power in high posts in the government, they are “redistributing” the country’s money to the south, where they are building schools, hospitals, and “sitting around all day eating *beshparmak*” (a traditional Kazakh meal). Yulia’s anger at her family’s perceived marginalization at the hands of those southerners in the government had only increased in recent years, especially as Igor’s medium-sized business was increasingly being harassed by individuals in the Financial Police – whom she depicted by holding her hands to her eyes and pulling the skin to make them look “oriental.”<sup>46</sup> Yulia and her family all had many close friends who were Kazakh – but *Russified* Kazakhs. This sort of racist commentary was only reserved those “traditional” and uncivilized southerners, rather than the Russified Kazakhs, whom she and her family would consistently praise for being progressive. We should note that in the imagined war between the north and south, her family was depicted as being under assault by southerners. As residents of Almaty, Igor and Yulia were not “northerners” per se, but merely the socially-coded opposite of the southerners – cultured urbanites rather than retrogressive nationalists – and thus metaphorical “northerners” in this new social battle.

With this background to regional spatial imaginaries, I will dedicate the remainder of this chapter to a discussion of how they operate on the basis of various social binaries (Russified/modern/urban versus Kazakh/traditional/village), and how they have been enacted in and through the Astana project. A key idea implicated in all these practices is “modernity.” While it may then be tempting to write off modernity as a colonial construct (Dirks 1990), this would neglect how various actors use it strategically in contemporary moral politics. Its very contextuality and dynamism is what makes it important to consider how the notion is used in various boundary-drawing practices: “modernity persists as an imaginary and continuously shifting site of global/local claims,

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<sup>45</sup> Including both ethnic Russians and Russified Kazakhs – all of whom have been consistently marginalized by the Nazarbayev regime’s Kazakhification policies.

<sup>46</sup> This open discussion of the “*natsional’nyi vopros*” was a rather isolated ethnographic experience for me, and one that the family could have only shared with me, given that we have known each other for many years.



commitments, and knowledge, forged within uneven dialogues about the place of those who move in and out of categories of otherness” (Rofel 1999, 3). Often modernity “is understood in terms not of a cultural inferiority but of a political-economic inequality” (Ferguson 2006, 33). This inequality is mapped onto various spaces and bodies through the language of modernity, forever drawing on a shifting and global set of material things, ideas, and representational practices.

The way this is unfolding in Astana bears striking resemblance to Kemalist Ankara, where a new bourgeois identity was being formed in opposition to rural migrants who found (and continue to find) their way to the capital cities in search of opportunity. Ankara’s early history as capital saw the rapid rise of squatter settlements (Batuman 2009; Erdentug and Burçak 1998) and the systematic exclusion of peasants and local merchants from the new social environment – to the extent that men had to wear a tie if they wanted to walk on Atatürk Boulevard (Batuman 2009, 53). The spaces of the city designed to civilize (or exclude) these migrants and promote this new identity were “always already marked” by an uncivilized otherness (Batuman 2009, 43). The urban bourgeoisie initially wanted to send the newcomers back to the villages, but as it became clear that this would be impossible, “they ‘imprisoned’ the newcomers in the imaginary villages in their minds as ‘peasants in cities’” (Tekeli 2009, 16), spatially relegated to squatter settlements. But with time, the municipality succeeded in eliminating some of the most visual symbols of the rural brought to the “civilized” space of the city, and the early migrants soon became so integral to Ankara’s urban economy “that they increasingly became a part of a public life from which they had previously been excluded” (Batuman 2009, 62). We see these same processes occurring in Astana today, with rural migrants flocking to the city, but systematically excluded from its “modern” spaces (which are privileged in official representations of the city).

### *B. Territorial identities and modernity in the city*

In examining what is coded as modern/not modern in Astana, I am not interested in the “content” of these two categories, but in the actual bordering process – how and by whom some people, things, ideas, etc. are classed and marked as “modern.” By approaching “modernity” as a bounding practice, and examining how it is articulated through material forms, we can trace particular spatial imaginaries in the urban:

The identity of the modern city is created by what it keeps out. Its modernity is something contingent upon the exclusion of its own opposite. In order to determine itself as the place of order, reason, propriety, cleanliness, civilisation and power, it must represent outside itself what is

irrational, disordered, dirty, libidinous, barbarian and cowed. The city requires this ‘outside’ in order to present itself, in order to constitute its singular, uncorrupted identity. (Mitchell 1988, 165)

What – and where – is the “other” that Astana’s architects and residents seek to exclude? In fact, there are many “others” – but most notably Astana is not Soviet and Astana is not the village. In this section, I will consider some of these bordering practices in more detail, tracing how an ever-shifting “modern/backward” binary is spatialized in Astana itself.

The Astana project has been a way for elites to spatially distance themselves from a Soviet past associated with Almaty (Koch 2010). Contrary to a common portrayal, Astana was not built on a *tabula rasa*, but on the site of a very Soviet city, Tselinograd. Various neighborhoods, which were part of the original Tselinograd settlement, have been deemed unworthy of preservation by city planners. Nazarbayev (2010, 53) explains:

But on the eve of our move from Almaty, Astana was a typical provincial town. There were a lot of old, decrepit buildings, which were spoiling the look of the new capital. We had to demolish them. Instead, we have built new ones. For example, the building of the Ministry of Finance replaced old wooden houses. They did not match the look of Kazakhstan’s new capital at all. As to my views on Soviet architecture, I will say that each epoch leaves its creations. Some of them live forever, others do not pass the test of time, quickly become morally outdated and wear out physically. (Nazarbayev 2010, 53)

These outdated structures also include the traditional mud brick (*samannyi*) sedentary architecture associated with Zhataq Kazakhs, i.e. poor Kazakhs who become sedentary because of poverty and lack of livestock (Buchli 2007, 55). Many such homes, as well as other Soviet-era individual homes, have already been destroyed or are slated for demolition soon, in order to make way for high-rise apartment buildings (see Figure 5.6) – all according to the city’s master plan.

Not only have these small-scale structures become physical and morally “outdated,” but so



**Figure 5.6.** Soviet-era home along Kensary Street, set to be demolished. July 2011. Source: Author.

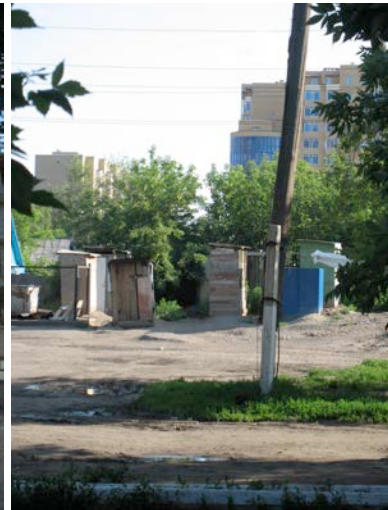
too has the Soviet principle of standardization, which was “the hallmark of Soviet urban development” (French 1995, 47). Nazarbayev has criticized the pervasive 5-story buildings in Astana (“*Khrushchovki*”), which were part of the construction boom in 1960s and 1970s to deal with housing shortages: “They were uncomfortable buildings, all looking the same” (Nazarbayev 2010, 53). In the modern Astana, the official rhetoric has consistently underscored

the need to make the city's urban form unique, to preserve through architecture the “*natsional'nyi kolorit*.” Astana's Left Bank landscape, like Berlin's Hansaviertel, has become something of “a monument to uncontrolled individualism” (Castillo 2001, 201), with the new iconic buildings designed as a potpourri of styles, colors, and shapes. The “*natsional'nyi kolorit*” discourse belongs primarily to Kazakhstan's independence era, but it has its roots in the Soviet times. Urban planners would sometimes use it strategically, citing local climate and cultural concerns, in order to deviate from the standard model imposed by Moscow authorities.

While the issue of style carries great weight with some, much more salient in official and popular justifications of the destruction of these neighborhoods is the issue of sanitation. There are many homes, for example, along eastern Kenesary Street, one of Astana's major northern thoroughfares, which are among those designated for demolition in the master plan in the next two years (see Figure 5.7).



**Figure 5.7** (left). One home in the residential area along eastern Kenesary Street, set to be demolished, already becoming surrounded by high-rise developments. July 2011. Source: Author.



**Figure 5.8** (right). Outdoor toilets, used by residents of the old homes in the Kenesary neighborhood. July 2011. Source: Author.

Official justifications of the demolitions have centered on the poor living conditions, a lack of amenities, such as connections to central sewage, gas and electric systems (see Figure 5.8). “*Kenesary – eto nasha bol'shaya problema*” (“Kenesary is our big problem”), says Chikanayev, the director of the Astana GenPlan, and the regime's primary mouthpiece for issues related to Astana's visual appearance (author's interviews 2011). In his narrative, which is also (re)produced by non-elites, these old housing developments are unsafe and unsanitary. The entire narrative echoes so many colonial discourses, in which the local or previous urban developments are characterized as chaotic, primitive, and unhygienic (Crews 2003; Mitchell 1988, 2002; Rabinow 1982, 1989; Stronski 2010).

Individuals currently residing in the future demolition zones are entitled to compensation and relocation to new apartment buildings, but many have deemed the reparations insufficient and/or do not want to move (Buchli 2007; Neef 2006; author's interviews 2011). These people have generally been demonized for trying to “extort” the

government for unrealistic sums of money. But perhaps more significantly, they are deemed irrational for not wanting to accept the modern ways of Astana's city life, i.e. living in a modern, individual apartment. One informant who condemned these residents, explained to me that Kazakhs once lived communally as nomads, and this habit continued, albeit in an altered form, into the Soviet era. Things have changed in "modern" Kazakhstan, requiring a dramatic adjustment for people to live in individual apartments. *But they really like it*, she underscored (for corroboration based on extensive ethnographic data, see Bissenova 2011). The inhabitants who wish to retain their old style of living, as with the buildings described above by Nazarbayev, are thus rhetorically located in some "morally" and physically "outdated" space-time, in need of demolition to make way for the city/state's new social and political economic order.

When planning tends toward this role of formulating social problems into questions of space, Lefebvre (1996a, 99) argues that it becomes an ideology in which social pathologies (e.g. "backwardness") are plotted as "pathologies of space." Chikanayev, as the planner who identifies Kenesary as a "*bol'shaya problema*" ("big problem") then becomes a sort of "physician of space" who works with "healthy and diseased spaces," and whose task is to impose a harmonious social and spatial order (Lefebvre 1996a, 99). In this imaginary, the act of imposing spatial order becomes the "natural" solution to problems of unhealthy urban space. But notably:

The appearance of order means the disappearance of power. Power is to operate more and more in a manner that is slow, uninterrupted and without external manifestation. As the process of control becomes a question of achieving the continuous appearance of structure or order, there suddenly appears an equally continuous threat: the problem of 'disorder.' Disorder now emerges as a natural and inevitable liability, requiring a constant vigilance. Disorder though, like order, is a notion produced in the distributive practices themselves. (Mitchell 1988, 79-80)

These distributive/ordering practices work to naturalize power relations, or at least make them less visible. However, the destruction of these Soviet neighborhoods (the ordering of Astana's built environment) is a highly political intervention, as is the designation of the disorder they are supposed to represent.

It is insufficient to only consider these poor neighborhoods (e.g. along Kensary) if we are to understand the state's relationship with individual housing developments in Astana. This is because one neighborhood (or "*mikrorayon*") stands out as a notable exception: Chubary (see Figure 5.9). Located just north of the new government center, and to the east of Kabanbai Batyr Street, the neighborhood was constructed by the first new residents of Astana when it became the capital. Nazarbayev and his planners were not pleased with the development of such a large area of small (one- to two-story) homes so close to the new administrative center (author's interviews 2009, 2011); for this area, they had envisioned something supremely monumental (e.g., Dzhaqsybekov 2008, 216).

Like the older Tselinograd-era private homes, Chubary is not connected to basic service networks and, in the winter, many residents burn coal and wood to heat their homes – contributing to increasingly problematic air pollution in the city (author’s interviews 2011).



**Figure 5.9.** Chubary microdistrict, as seen from the Baiterek tower. It is the area of low-rise buildings in front of the row of high-rises in the old Tselinograd-era center. June 2009. Source: Author.

All these factors point to what would seem to be the same outcome as elsewhere: the Chubary neighborhood’s eventual demolition and redevelopment in the form of new high-rises. But this has not yet happened, rumors suggest, because the residents were all very wealthy individuals, with too much sway within the government for the Nazarbayev apparatus to impose its will. Nazarbayev consequently ordered the development of a long row of three-story commercial property along Kabanbai Batyr Street, in order to block the view of these neighborhoods from the city’s primarily north-south artery (author’s interviews 2009, 2011). However, according to my observations at the Astana GenPlan in July 2011, the neighborhood is no longer on the model, replaced by a dense grouping of blue (meaning scheduled) skyscrapers. It is unclear how or when this change would come about given the area’s political obstacles, but perhaps in the intervening years since this struggle, the regime has consolidated its authority to an extent that it could overcome future challenges.

For some residents of Astana – generally the middle and upper classes, largely consisting of Russified Kazakhs – the city is often referred to as a “*bol’shaya derevnya*” (“big village”) (author’s interviews 2009, 2011; see also Alexander and Buchli 2007, 8, 30; Laszczkowski 2011a, 87; 2011b, 95). To them, it is not a “real” city because they see too much of the village (*aul*) there – ranging from village migrants to village mentalities to village spatial forms, and even village language (i.e. Kazakh). As with republican Ankara’s urban bourgeoisie mentioned above, these elites have “‘imprisoned’ the newcomers in the imaginary villages in their minds as ‘peasants in cities’” (Tekeli 2009, 16). In the narrative of one informant, even if a person moves to Astana or Almaty from a village and lives there for two years, this does not change the fact that this person has a “*sel’skii mentalitet*” (“rural mentality”),

which is characterized by a certain crudeness, a lack of culture, and a lack of aspirations beyond moving to the city (author's interview 2011). If the city, according to Marx and Engels was supposed to rescue the people from "the idiocy of rural life" (Alexander and Buchli 2007, 8), then what can Astana accomplish if it is still provincial?

While it may be tempting to read these narratives of Astana as a "*bol'shaya derevnya*" as critiques of the elite project in Astana, they are in fact *supportive* of it. The implication is that the city *should* be a beacon of modernity and progress – and the fact that it is not is considered a problem. Indeed nearly all those who voice such a criticism are among the political and economic elite, who tend to look down upon the "dispossessed" (Nazpary 2002) remainder of the population, and especially recent rural migrants. These elite primarily owe their success to the state sector, either directly or tangentially (e.g. through privatization schemes in the 1990s, or simply patronage networks connected to the state). While a large portion of the country's elite remains in Almaty, many have moved to Astana, and increasing prosperity throughout the country has led to their growth in the capital. Developments in the city's spaces of high-end leisure and consumerism are connected not only to the wealth – or at least the speculation tied to it – brought by the state apparatus' newly centralized control of the country's resources, as well as the accompanying neoliberal market reforms. They are also tied to a more general valorization of consumerism accompanying these reforms, as well as a moral economy that naturalizes the new inequalities brought by the (partial) neoliberal transition since independence.

Not all have been so eager to accept the new values, however. A man from Shymkent told me in 2009: "Democracy in Kazakhstan is simply spat on: all it means is that some people have a lot of money and can buy everything, while everyone else stays poor." This conflation (which is likely familiar to those working anywhere in the post-Soviet sphere) of "capitalism" with "democracy" is quite incisive because exclusivity, as it operates in the neoliberal order, "rather than being recognized as anti-democratic, acquires an aura of scarcity and becomes a form of cultural capital" (Duncan and Duncan 2004, 29). Yet this reading does not prevail in Kazakhstan, and there are both systematic and spontaneous efforts to obscure from view many cues of the inequalities that pervade the city and the country as a whole.

This erasure is not only found in the built landscape (e.g. the ubiquitous metal barricades that hide decrepit old homes from view, or their elite counterpart, the high walls that protect from sight the sumptuous new villas; see Figures 5.10-5.11), but also in the terms of how people comport themselves, dress, and pass their free time.





**Figure 5.10** (left). Metal barricades to hide decrepit homes, along Tauelsyzdyk Street in eastern Astana. July 2011. Source: Author.



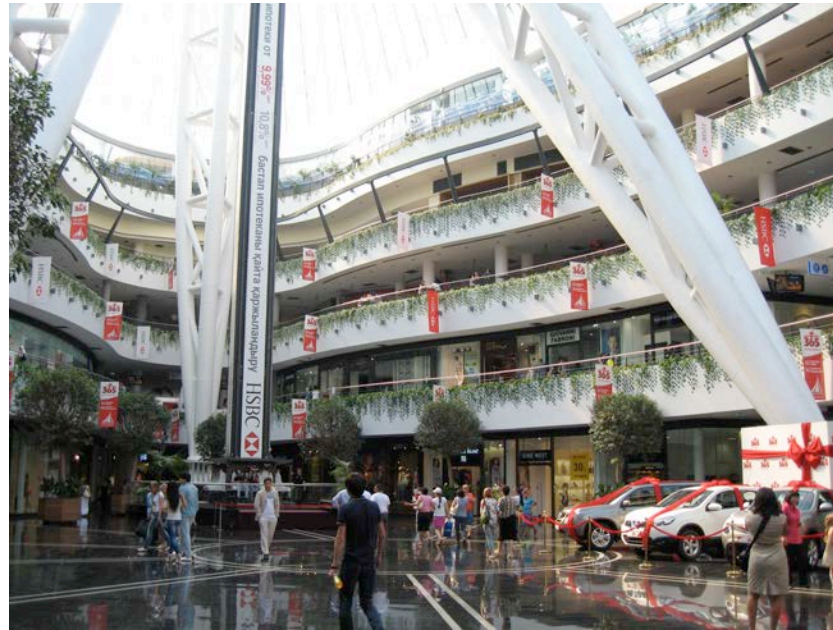
**Figure 5.11** (right). Gated enclosure of a new villa, also along Tauelsyzdyk Street in eastern Astana. July 2011. Source: Author.

Speaking of spaces of “well-regulated liberty,” such as department stores, which emerged out of new proscriptions for governing urban space that emerged in the nineteenth century, Nikolas Rose (1999, 73) writes that within them:

individuals were not only scrutinized by guards and attendants, but were scrutinized by one another, providing the spatial and visual means for self-education. In all these topographical technologies of civilization, persons were to be governed not through imposing duties, but by throwing a web of visibilities, of public codes and private embarrassments over personal conduct: we might term this *government through the calculated administration of shame*. Shame here was to entail an anxiety over the exterior deportment of the self, linked to an injunction to care for oneself in the name of the public manifestation of moral character.

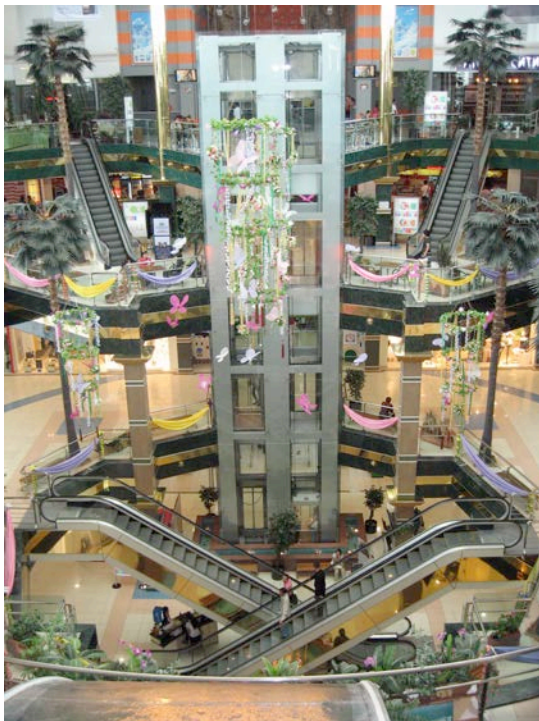
This self-education through a “web of visibilities” is intensely familiar to those who lived under the Soviet Union, but in independent Kazakhstan, these codes of personal conduct and the administration of shame have increasingly been rearranged to match the norms of a neoliberal, consumerist economy. The aura of exclusivity through unofficial dress codes – for example, at restaurants, clubs, cafés, or malls – is such that many low-income individuals feel highly uncomfortable and shameful, and simply avoid being in such a place (author’s interviews 2009-2011). Beyond this, there is a systematic exclusion of the lower classes through high prices. In the newly opened Khan Shatyr (see Figure 5.12), for example, the entry fee for the spectacular indoor beach is nearly US \$40, which is prohibitively expensive for all but the very top strata. And the low attendance confirms its exclusivity (Antelava 2010). Regarding the complex in general, the lower strata of Astana will often superficially remark on its beauty, but uniformly underscore how expensive it is (author’s interviews 2011).

In Astana, we do not see quite the same “archipelago of secured spaces” (Rose 1999, 251) that one might find in Lagos or Pyongyang, but it is more similar to Dubai, where low-income migrants are excluded by “a subtle system of priority entries, fees, and membership cards” (Acuto 2010, 282). But unusually, many of the new upscale consumer and leisure



**Figure 5.12.** Inside view of the Khan Shatyr center. July 2011. Source: Author.

establishments in Astana do not actually work to “eliminate or expel those who have no legitimate – that is to say, consumerized – reason to be there” (Rose 1999, 251). Malls in particular have been popularized in independent



**Figure 5.13.** Inside view of Mega Center Astana. July 2011. Source: Author.

Kazakhstan. For example, the “Mega” is an upscale mall with an extremely clean, modern-looking interior, which houses high-end stores that sell clothing and various luxury goods that are far beyond the means of ordinary citizens (see Figure 5.13). Nonetheless, Mega centers in Astana, Shymkent, Almaty are all popular destinations for young people to hang out with friends. For many people, it is rare for them to actually visit any of the stores, the cinema, the rock-climbing wall, or food court; they simply buy a cheap drink at the Turkish supermarket chain, Ramstor (Migros in Turkey), and sit and socialize in the mall’s clean and “modern” setting (see also Laszczkowski 2011b).

Khan Shatyr was still rather new when I visited in summer 2011 (having opened one year earlier), but it has



not acquired this same public socializing role. Compared to Mega, its uncomfortable spaces seem less conducive to this popular role. The layout pushes visitors through it in a constant stream of motion, and does not encourage lingering to enjoy the space. Unless one pays to sit at a restaurant, the awkward seating arrangements in uncomfortably open spaces are like the intentionally uncomfortable street furniture Rose (1999, 252) describes, which discourage a certain kind of sociality and subtly embed control “in the very structuring of time, space and the environment.” Notable for the case of Astana, Khan Shatyr even lacks the mall’s typical entry square, equipped with jumping castles and other children’s amusements, which are among the most important public places for socializing in Astana. The solemn, mausoleum-like entrance of Khan Shatyr does not provide the same opportunities for communal interaction found in the other malls and squares around the city.

Nonetheless, Khan Shatyr has consistently been framed in the official rhetoric as being “for the people.” Taking this to heart, many rural tourists can be seen making the pilgrimage to Astana’s newest attraction. They do not do much more than walk around and take some pictures – everything in this consumerist paradise is far beyond their means, and so too are the amusements inside (e.g. the beach, games, theater, etc.). As opposed to the poorer Astana locals, who simply do not attend – mostly because of its economy of shame<sup>47</sup> – the village visitors are either not prepared to encounter this “web of visibilities,” or their innocence is such that they are not aware of or care about the disdainful regard of Astana’s middle- and upper-class urbanite shoppers. In either case, the effect of the rural visitors’ presence seems to work in the reverse: it makes the privileged visitors uneasy about their comparative affluence. This discomfort is precisely what drives the exclusionary practices: the desire for what Duncan and Duncan (2004, 9) call “painless privilege,” i.e. the attempt to spatially and visually insulate themselves from the reminders of the social consequences of their privilege (this is also a theme Mitchell (2002) explores in his writing on enclave tourism in Egypt).

Even if the rural visitors are made uncomfortable by the spaces of Khan Shatyr, in which Kazakhstan’s new inequalities come sharply into focus, “modern” (i.e. neoliberal) Astana’s symbolism as a place of the future is such that it inhibits discussions about alternate, perhaps more equal, social and spatial practices. This is one of the effects of the binary geographical imaginaries that we have seen at work throughout the chapter:

If what was seen in the town could not be approved, because it made evident and repellent the decisive traditions in which men actually lived, the remedy was never a visitor’s morality of plain living and high thinking, or a babble of green fields. It was a change of social relationships and of

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<sup>47</sup> Most frequently expressed in the stock formulation, “It’s beautiful, but it is too expensive.”

essential morality. And it was precisely at this point that the ‘town and country’ fiction served: to promote superficial comparisons and to prevent real ones. (Williams 1973, 54)

The narratives of the city’s centrality and progressiveness automatically code the rural visitor as peripheral and old-fashioned. As in Massey’s (2007, 87-88) construction, the autonomous energy in these smooth spatial binaries is at the center, so that the villagers become passive actors in the center’s new moral economy. As Williams suggests, the villager’s feeling of revulsion at the unequal social and spatial order that characterizes the urban/rural relationship is never cast as a result of their higher morality, but one of their peripheral mindset – the *sel’skii mentalitet* – which they are expected to adjust to the norms of the country’s new political economy.

However, in Kazakhstan today, being economically marginalized rarely translates into a critique of “Kazakhstan” (although this is surely the case for some). This is the effect of nationalism. Some of the most declaredly nationalist citizens of Kazakhstan are those most marginalized and excluded from the benefits of market reforms (which is commonly the case around the world). Like those who draw on nationalist scripts to rationalize their success and motivate their labor, nationalism for the marginalized also becomes a “style of reasoning about the self.” At its core, an effective nationalist project simply abstracts various feelings, desires, and motivations to a geographical imaginary of the “state” as an “objective,” “natural” territorial entity, i.e. the “homeland.” This allows people to see their actions as supporting something beyond the elite, who have captured the “state” and its territorial and social body. But this is not just how nationalism works in Kazakhstan; *this is how nationalism works everywhere* (Billig 1995; Gramsci 2008).

#### **IV. Conclusion**

By considering the capital change discourse, I have sought to illustrate how it works to develop a “particular regime of truth” of the state, its territory, and society. These new “transactional realities” are *not* an illusion; nor, for that matter, is Astana. On the basis of the survey and focus group results, the official rationales for the capital change to carry meaning for Kazakhstanis today – or, if not subscribing themselves, they can at least identify this reasoning in the decision-makers. The rhetorical practices of discussing the capital change an important element to how the myths of coherence of the state, territory, and society are strategically woven. As noted regarding the textual analysis of Nazarbayev’s writings, these writings are not authored by this individual, but by a staff of writers, who are instrumental in creating the image of a coherent, benevolent leader – an image which has been key to maintaining Nazarbayev’s political hegemony and inducing sincere feelings of devotion on the part of

many citizens. So too do the nationalist discourses described here about Kazakhstan's steppe environment work to induce feelings of pride, but also a sense of the totality and indivisibility of the homeland. The function of nationalism is, after all, "to construct and maintain the past, present and future images of nation and homeland within a set of mutually understood and accepted parameters over time, so that members of the nation and homeland being made perceive both as 'natural' and 'eternal'" (Kaiser 2002, 232). Accordingly, I explored some of the popular socio-spatial imaginaries about Kazakhstan's territory as a way to decenter the conventional analysis of elite scripts about the capital and the state-building project as a whole.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the Astana project has been at the fore of elite efforts to reconfigure the state-society-territory relationship since 1991. I have been interrogating this through examining various geopolitical practices and discourses, which draw on various material forces and unfold in complex (and often ephemeral) networks of power relations. In this chapter, I conduct a more detailed analysis of new “representational practices” and their implications for state-society relations in contemporary Kazakhstan. I continue the thread of jointly considering the government of the self and others, as a way to understand the paternalist state-society relations that have evolved in independent Kazakhstan. I will first introduce the “developmental regime” as a regime whose leaders understand the role of government to be one of providing “progress” in terms of growth and competitiveness rather than welfare and equality. The Nazarbayev regime has used the Astana project in its efforts to bring “progress” to Kazakhstan as a whole – or at least to create the impression that the advances in Astana can be extrapolated to the territory at large. In a similarly synecdochic imaginary, this narrative of progress is supposed to apply to “society” at large, i.e. all segments of the population across the entire country. This chapter challenges this narrative by interrogating the synecdochic imaginary. Although this takes shape in countless ways, I focus in this chapter on several interconnected strategies of giving the people “bread and circuses,” which all draw on a geopolitical imaginary of synecdoche.

### **I. The developmental regime**

[T]he monarch’s person had a public aspect. He enjoyed the private relationship of a father or of a patron with the plebs of his capital. The events of his family life were occasions for rejoicing or mourning for all his subjects and he accorded, or allowed to be accorded, divine honours from his favourites. He displayed in Rome and at the Circus a degree of pomp which turned the Eternal City into something like a king’s court. (Veyne 1990, 294)

In many ways, Nazarbayev’s relationship with Astana parallels the imperial Roman monarch’s relationship with Rome. It is like his court, where all of Kazakhstan’s notable elites are gathered around him, where his birthday is celebrated with splendor (Astana Day), where the best entertainers and entertainments can be found, where the modern architectural treasures are rapidly being constructed, where international delegations are hosted, and where the citizens receive special treatment. Like the emperor, Nazarbayev is the “sole *euergetēs* and the sole *patronus* of his City” (Veyne 1990, 389), which is imagined to be the pinnacle of the territory’s politico-spatial hierarchy fitting his supreme political position. Astana’s splendor cannot be the product of anyone else’s generosity, just like its

ancient prototype: “For Rome to be the jewel-case wherein the sovereign should shine there alone, and that senators and *euergetai* should not compete with him in munificence” (Veyne 1990, 386). Rome was “*urbs sua*, the city that was wholly devoted to the Emperor, wholly his” (Veyne 1990, 384).

In both cases, the recipients of this munificence are the citizens of the capital, for President Nazarbayev has no courtiers, just as the Roman emperors had none (Veyne 1990, 383). “Bread and circuses” were thus reserved for Rome’s (and Astana’s) citizens alone. While these socially-prescribed acts of giving (“euergetism”) provided a certain “material satisfaction,” these spectacles were largely about allowing the sovereign “to prove to his capital that he shared popular feelings (*popularis esse*)” (Veyne 1990, 398) and “was not contemptuous of the plebs” (Veyne 1990, 403). The primary function of Roman euergetism, like Greek euergetism before it, was *not* redistributive – if it did redistribute wealth, this was typically partial or secondary to elite desires (Veyne 1990, 95). Similarly, Nazarbayev’s spectacular projects in Astana do not serve a redistributive function; vastly different measures would be necessary if such was the aim. Nazarbayev University, an example I will discuss in this chapter, only directly benefits a very small segment of the population. Yet this project, like many of the regime’s other projects, functions as a synecdoche: the euergetic gift gives the *impression* that similar “developments” and generosity are found universally in Kazakhstan, that they are accessible to all. The synecdochic imaginary works, at the bare minimum, to divert attention and/or criticism of the elitism of the country’s reconfigured geo-politics (i.e. the elite-dominated state-building, new elite-controlled economic practices, as well as the entire Astana project itself).

In Imperial Rome, bread and circuses were indeed “for the masses,” but the role of the masses was always that of a passive recipient or spectator. As I demonstrate in this chapter, the paternalist relations that underpin this dynamic are essentially the same in Nazarbayev’s Astana. However, the contemporary context, in which the nation-state myth is hegemonic, accords a unique role to spectacles and spectatorship that is connected to the Enlightenment’s legacy of occularcentrism. Contemporary nationalist displays are often at their height during celebrations of official (“national”) holidays and sporting events. While spectacles are, generally speaking, disciplinary events, they do not involve the daily surveillance usually associated with panoptic power. Spectacles actively interrupt the quotidian and, as rituals, become a “place and time apart” (Kong and Yeoh 1997, 215). In these spectacles, we can discern elements of the “pomp of sovereignty, the necessarily spectacular manifestations of power” (Foucault 1975, 217).

Certain regimes have shown an exceptional affinity for nationalist spectacle and performances, often working together an autocratic leader's personality cult (e.g. North Korea, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, the former USSR). In these cases, we do not see the negation of "sovereign power" by "disciplinary power," as in Foucault's construction.

As a monarch who is at one and the same time a usurper of the ancient throne and the organizer of the new state, he combined into a single symbolic, ultimate figure the whole of the long process by which the pomp of sovereignty, the necessarily spectacular manifestations of power, were extinguished one by one in the daily exercise of surveillance, in a panopticism in which the vigilance of intersecting gazes was soon to render useless both the eagle and the sun. (Foucault 1975, 217)<sup>48</sup>

Instead, in these "spectacular states," ruling elites employ disciplinary techniques of government together with the "pomp of sovereignty." Of course, the balance between the differing approaches shifts within time and space, under any one given regime, but they can productively be generalized as "spectacular states":

A spectacular state is one where, more than in most countries, politics is conducted on a symbolic level, promoting the state's domination over the shared meaning of concepts such as heritage and progress. Typically spectacle is a technique of mobilization, and thus it is used more in totalitarian regimes than in other types of states. (Adams 2010, 5)

Although I find Adams' construction helpful, I believe the "spectacular state" is perhaps better understood as a subset of developmental regimes. This is because spectacles, like development, serve a uniquely depoliticizing and aesthetizing function.

A striking way that this is achieved is by the mere threat of withholding the benefits of "progress." This decidedly disciplinary tactic is what distinguishes modernist development projects from the Greek and Roman euergetism discussed above (Veyne 1990). Euergetism was always a surplus: a means for the rulers to gain the applause of the people as a status symbol or decree of honor (Veyne 1990, 126), rather than an act performed out of an interest for the well-being of the people. Elites in developmental regimes may also see the people's "happiness" as an element of their own prestige, but this paternal relationship – in which the parent is made proud by the "progress" of an infantilized group of thankful citizens – in the era of modernist developmental regimes also serves a punitive function. In the Soviet era, for example, the image of the paternal state or Party leader was instrumental to producing a "relationship of childlike dependence on state power that ensured the leadership could never be legitimately questioned" (Buck-Morss 2000, 196). But it is a slippery slope between "good despotism" used to improve people and simple despotism that either fails to achieve or to articulate a noble goal (Dean 1999, 133). This

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<sup>48</sup> Ironically, the eagle and the sun are the two symbols on the Kazakhstani flag.

theme is directly paralleled in colonial discourses about native populations taken under European tutelage. As with the unstable boundary between benevolent and malignant despotism, the sympathetic giving of colonial powers was equally dangerous, for: “How easily so much could be compressed into that simple formula of unappreciated magnanimity!” (Said 1993, 22). And further, how easy and seemingly humane the punishment constituted by merely withholding benefits of the state’s magnanimity.

This relationship of “magnanimous” dependency is often at work in resource-rich states, whose representatives tend to “appear on the state’s stage as powerful magicians who pull social reality, from public institutions to cosmogonies, out of a hat” (Coronil 1997, 2). In his *longue durée* study of oil-rich Venezuela, Coronil (1997) illustrates the eventual exposure of the magician as a trickster: as the state’s development projects failed, and as people began to see oil wealth squandered, there was an increasing public criticism of the fact that the state’s modernizing projects did not produce progress (Coronil 1997, 385). Caldeira and Holston (2005, 403) also demonstrate a similar transformation in Brazil in the 1980s, when the “mythology of progress” started to collapse. In Kazakhstan, there is no telling whether or how this demythification of progress will come about: oil reserves are enormous, and there is no prospect that they will run out soon (see Chapter 4). However, as the state and (some) citizens reap the wealth the resources offer, the economic growth promises to transform the socio-political conditions within the country, and thus to challenge the inherently-unstable boundaries and dynamics of the state-society relationship. State actors, following certain contemporary norms, have donned the trappings of statehood in pursuit of an aura of permanence to this eternally dynamic relationship.

In developmental regimes, one of the favorite methods of lending the impression of permanence of statehood (and thus the authority of the elites who have captured the “state”) is to materially inscribe it through a broad range of spatial strategies. These include, for example, urban environments – and especially capital cities – which can become privileged sites of an “eternalized parade, a fixing of the symbols of public life, of the state, within a milieu of the abstract authority of the polis” (Stewart 1984, 90). Such material/spatial tactics are an important reminder that subject-forming practices are not just part of some ostensibly “social” realm; human practices necessarily construct, deconstruct, and respond to various material things. Cultural, political, and urban geographers have long concentrated on these material practices, emphasizing the study of built landscapes as “texts” (e.g. Adams 2008; Agnew 1998; Agrícola 2000; Beer 2008; Bell 1999; Bondi 1992; Cosgrove 1998; Danzer 2009; Domosh 1988, 1989; Duncan 1990; Duncan and Duncan 2004, 2010; Foote 1997; Ford 2008; Forest and Johnson

2002, 2011; Forest et al. 2004; Gilbert and Driver 2000; Gritsai and van der Wusten 2000; Hagen 2010; Harvey 1979, 2003; Jackson and della Dora 2009; Johnson 1995; Kaiser and Nikiforova 2006; Kong 1999; McDowell 2008; Nogué and Vicente 2004; Notaro 2000; Pinder 2005; Sidirov 2000; Smith 2008; Till 1999, 2003; van der Wusten 2000; Wagenaar 2000). From iconic architecture to improvident monuments, many of these scholars have posed the question of why elites spend so much time, energy, and money on producing symbolic structures and places (among non-geographers, see also Acuto 2010; Adams 2010; Adams and Rustemova 2009; Bliznakov 1990; Castillo 2001; Crews 2003; Cummings 2009; Denison 2009; Dobrenko and Naiman 2003; Grant 2001; Huyssen 2003; Matveeva 2009; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Ren 2008; Ryklin 2003; Šir 2005; Sklair 2006; Smith 2010; Stronski 2010; Wedeen 1999; Veyne 1990; Zhang 2006; Zukin 1991).

Many of these studies draw on Bourdieu's (1977) notion of "symbolic capital" to explain that they are willing to dedicate what may seem to be an irrational amount of resources when their symbolic capital is "at risk" (especially, e.g., Forest and Johnson 2002). In this argument, the accumulation of "symbolic capital" is seen as an end in itself. In the relational approach that I take in this dissertation, I instead argue that when examining symbolic landscapes, we simply cannot view "symbolic capital" as a thing or an end in itself because "there are no things" (Veyne 1997, 160). There are only practices, of which things are their correlatives, and which refuse the homogenizing impulse of the "illusion of a natural object" (Veyne 1997, 160). The overarching problem, however, is that many studies of built landscapes and public places of memory have a habit of searching for an essential social "reality," which is imagined to lie "beneath" the surface. However, as Mitchell (1988, 18) points out, such an approach is deeply problematic because the very economic and political transformations we are seeking to understand through these analyses are themselves "dependent on the working of this peculiar distinction" between a realm of signs and the "real" thing underneath.

Another problem with the common approach of examining symbolic landscapes in terms of symbolic capital is that it effectively "selects on the dependent variable." By this, I mean that the practice of developing symbolic landscapes is not universal:

On paper, it can be claimed that this mania for apologetics is identical with the defence of material interests, but experience refutes this monism. Self-justification is not universal. The prince may prefer to shut himself up in his own arrogance and treat his people as subhuman; that was how the ancients saw the tyrant. And apologetics is not a rational form of behaviour: very frequently it fails in its effect. (Veyne 1990, 379-380)



Since a practice-based approach suggests the futility of searching for some “real” motives “underneath” certain behaviors, we should not ask why one prince chooses “to shut himself up in his own arrogance” and another to proclaim his generosity through giving the people gladiators. We can only examine the effect of the behavior and how it factors into broader regimes of government. Fixating on the “symbolic landscape” as a thing or “symbolic capital” as a thing would lead us back to a philosophy of the object, rather than a philosophy of relation (Veyne 1997). Thus, I argue that we can only examine symbolic landscapes as correlatives of practices, which are *drawn* into being and *draw* into being highly contextual arts of government.

One way this can be undertaken is by looking to the political economy of these landscapes – and of nationalism itself. In their study of global celebrity athletes and nationalism, Wong and Trumper (2002, 182) note: “Canadian nationalism is still a force in the Canadian political economy.” Indeed, in both sports, spectacles, and the landscapes they help to constitute, the nationalist symbolic repertoire is intimately connected to commercial interests: “The form of the spectacle – commodity rationalisation – comes to envelop the structure of sports performances” (Alt 1983, 98; see also Cardoza 2010; Ren 2008; Wong and Trumper 2002). The commercialized aspect of sports and spectacle performances is not self-perpetuating, but is part of an increasingly global set of norms, reproduced in their widespread repetition. As this chapter illustrates, Astana’s development has been framed as a project of domestic boosterism, nation-building, and international prestige-building (with the goal of injecting Kazakhstan into the mental maps of foreigners), but a political economy of the city takes us to places far outside of these tired scripts.

A political economic approach also has the potential to move beyond a frequent element of nationalism studies: the search for the “true” nationalist sentiments or ideas that motivate a person’s performances (e.g. Fox 2006; Wong and Trumper 2002) – as though there is a “more real” nationalist attachment beyond egoistic or economic motives. My argument against such an approach follows the same reasoning of the previous chapter, in which I argued that it is impossible to determine the “real” motive for a practice, such as moving the capital city. The problem with such a search is that it is predicated on the “very distinction between what we see as a realm of signs or representations, and an outside or an underneath” (Mitchell 1988, 18), leaving uninterrogated the practice of representation itself “rather than examining the novelty of continuously creating the effect of an ‘external reality’ as itself a mechanism of power” (Mitchell 1988, 18-19).

Accordingly, in my case study, I prefer to analyze “representational practices,” rather than “landscapes as texts.” In addition to considering the economic and material implications of various spatial tactics of government, this approach examines the *effects* of symbolic acts, rather than being distracted by a futile search for motives. As I will argue in this chapter, state-scale actors’ efforts to materially inscribe their position of authority are essential to producing the effect of the state as a *thing*, space as a *thing*, national society as a *thing*, etc. In the remainder of this chapter, I will address some of the new representational practices that have arisen in Kazakhstan, demonstrating how they are instrumental to the operation of reconfigured power relations since independence. But these representational practices, like the state itself, are anything but coherent. Modernist and rationalist modes of thought may seek to order them and weave the myth of coherence, or don the “cloak” of “ideology” (Veyne 1997), but as I have sought to illustrate in this chapter, the “real” substance can only ever be a series of concrete practices.

## II. Representing Astana

In *Colonising Egypt*, Timothy Mitchell (1988) describes how prior to being subjected to the Orientalist and European colonial gaze, and eventually the reconfiguration of state power there, the Middle East had not been organized “representationally” (Mitchell 1988, 29). Unlike Europe, which had entered what Mitchell (1988, 13) describes as an “age of world-as-exhibition,” space was not “enframed” in the same way in the Middle East, i.e. it was not seen as something to be divided up and contained through fixed divisions of inside and outside (Mitchell 1988, 44). But a city with no fixed exteriors is a city with no façades (Mitchell 1988, 56). Space in Kazakhstan has long been organized representationally in the manner that Mitchell suggests, at least as early as the Russian imperial era, if not before.<sup>49</sup> But upon gaining independence in 1991, the tactics of representationally organizing space were transformed dramatically. We might even say that the collapse of the Soviet Union was fundamentally a transformation of the representational organization of space – what was once imagined as one territorial state became a set of adjacent territorial states, each with its own new façade.

As discussed in Chapter 3, “Eurasianism” is the central script that has been deployed to narrate Kazakhstan’s “new” identity in the independence era. The script has played a crucial role in the development of Astana’s built landscape, since acquiring the new capital status. Official rhetoric consistently underscores how the city’s architecture reflects a “Eurasian” style:

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<sup>49</sup> A more detailed consideration of this history would be an ambitious and well-needed study, but lies beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Astana has its own architectural style. The core of the aesthetic architecture and unique image of the new Kazakhstani capital is based on the principle of the paralleled and harmonious interlink of the well-recognized shapes and architectural models with current ultramodern style. And it is well reasoned, as Astana is the heart of Eurasia where cultures and customs mix together, where people of various communities coexist in peace and harmony. One can hardly skip noticing numerous domes that decorate many architectural constructions and buildings in Astana, including the Presidential Palace, Presidential Center for Culture, apartments on the bank of the Ishim river and other facilities. The dome is the reflection of the national feature in the architecture. It goes without saying that a shape of a dome resembles the shape of the top of the Kazakh yurt. Thus, while keeping to the traditional we at the same time embrace all that is new and modern. This is the unique feature of this city. (Nazarbayev n.d.)

This quote neatly encapsulates the symbolisms that Nazarbayev's regime envisions for Astana's urban forms. One of the most prominent and consistent themes in the Eurasianist discourse about Astana is that its central location on the continent inherently endows its inhabitants and the city's shape with a unique degree of multiculturalism: "In a nutshell, Astana is an embodiment of tolerance of our people, their embrace of other civilisations. Various styles and epochs are harmoniously combined in the architecture of the city"



**Figure 6.1.** The Presidential Center for Culture, mentioned above, as an example of the city's special "Eurasian" Kazakh dome. July 2009. Source: Author.

(Nazarbayev 2010, 53). The Eurasianist vision of harmony is enacted through the façades of the city's individual buildings, as if this effectively portrays an inner social world, or somehow permeates into a separate social world of harmony. Yet keeping with the Eurasianist habit of preserving ethnic boundaries, we see that the domes are described as a distinctly Kazakh feature, for their supposed inspiration from the top of a Kazakh yurt – a traditional dwelling used by nomadic Kazakhs (see Figure 6.1). The global ubiquity of such domes aside, they are consistently used in the official discourse as distinctly ethnic Kazakh symbols.

Many have pointed out that Astana's development was meant to symbolize and resonate with President Nazarbayev's notion of "Eurasianism," with Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa even being selected to design the city's master plan specifically for his common ideological roots (Alexander and Buchli 2007; Buchli 2007; Schatz 2004b). Trained in Moscow during Khrushchev's building boom, Kurokawa's (1997) "philosophy of symbiosis," like Nazarbayev's Eurasianism, was inspired by Lev Gumilev's take on Soviet internationalism (Buchli 2007, 45). In this imaginary, Kazakhstan's "society" is like the community of states, but instead with self-contained ethnic

groups (and religious confessions) all lined up next to each other. In Astana, Nazarbayev often claims, there is a tradition of cultural exchange: “Different cultures and traditions meet here. East, West, North and South have found their embodiment in glass and concrete here” (Nazarbayev 2010, 53). In this narrative, the diverse social body is one of Kazakhstan’s assets (Nazarbayev 2006a, 2010; see Figure 6.2). But as I discussed in Chapter 3, these internationalist discourses are more about tolerance than about mixing. When Nazarbayev rationalizes the capital change by claiming that moving the capital to a “multinational region” affirms the state’s commitment to preserving “the friendship between nations populating Kazakhstan” (Nazarbayev 2006a, 334), he is also marking out this populated space as a site of state domain, and thus its rightful site of intervention.



**Figure 6.2.** Billboard in Ust'-Kamenogorsk, which reads “Interethnic and interconfessional accord is the basis of stability in Kazakhstan.” The Palace of Peace and Accord, a territorial outline of Kazakhstan, the state flag, and the state’s symbol of the snow leopard are represented here. August 2009. Source: Author.

Eurasianist discourses in Kazakhstan are not a mere continuation of Soviet “friendship of the peoples” discourses (see Chapter 3). They differ in the crucial respect that they target, and in so doing, seek to constitute, a completely different audience. This new audience has primarily been conceived of as consisting of two groups: 1) citizens of the sovereign state, as actors in its new political economy and enhancers of its international image; and 2) foreign governments and individuals, primarily as potential investors and conveyors of international capital (material as well as symbolic). In this section, I will briefly present what generally constitutes the “official” view of Astana, which the regime seeks to present to both foreign and domestic audiences. This is necessarily a haphazard process, contrary to assumptions about “illiberal” settings places where the authoritarian or totalitarian leader can rather unproblematically impose his (or, though rare, her) vision (e.g. Wagenaar 2000). As Hagen (2010, 403) illustrates in his careful study of the Nazi redesign of Königsplatz, what materialized was not the result of some “flash of architectural genius,” but rather “evolved over time and was more contingent, hesitant, and tentative than

commonly portrayed.” In fact, the *image* of the project’s coherence (very much like the state’s) was a political achievement, buttressed by popular media and individuals seeking to flatter the Führer.<sup>50</sup>

In Astana, it is generally true that “construction never gets hung up in a public inquiry” (Gessen 2011, 4), but it would be a gross exaggeration of the capacity and coherence of the state to assume that its actors can easily translate their (comparatively coherent) vision into Astana’s built form. This is why the role of representing the city is so central, though it is important to note that “official views” of the city (Figures 6.3-6.6) are highly selective. This is especially apparent when they are juxtaposed with the “unofficial views” of the city (Figures 6.7-6.10). A particularly interesting example is the systematic exclusion from all official representations of the Left Bank’s “Beijing Palace,” which was a building sponsored by the Chinese and has a stereotypically Chinese “pagoda” exterior style (see Figure 6.10). The building strikes the viewer as somewhat at odds with the rest of the Left Bank’s “hypermodern” architecture, but its exclusion from the official views – despite being a stone’s throw for the centerpiece Baiterek tower – is so pervasive that it hints at the anti-China xenophobia that grips the majority of Kazakhstanis (see Chapter 4). The official views of the city are not just projected inward to Astana and the rest of Kazakhstan, but are also those most commonly found in any foreign press coverage on the new capital.<sup>51</sup>

Nazarbayev’s regime has relentlessly pursued a strategy of putting Kazakhstan “on the map.” This notion is cliché, but it carries weight among many individuals worldwide – and especially for President Nazarbayev. Although previously a concern, this mission intensified when British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen just happened to select Kazakhstan as the “obscure” homeland of his fictional television character, Borat. Eventually making an incredibly successful film based on the character, *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* (2006), Cohen portrayed the country as a backward and intolerant place, setting Kazakhstan’s government into a frenzy (Saunders 2007, 2008; Schatz 2008). Since the Borat scandal, the government has poured

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<sup>50</sup> It is striking to note that the new title (in June 2010) accorded to President Nazarbayev, “Leader of the Nation,” translates into German as “*Führer des Vaterlands*.” Equally ironic is the fact that the Russian phrase, “*Lider Natsii*” is a homophone of Nazi (the Russian word being *natsiya* for nation, the German being a shortening of *Nationalsozialismus*, National Socialism).

<sup>51</sup> A rare exception is seen in an article about Astana in *Der Spiegel* magazine (see Figure 6.8), which is also exceptional in that it explores the “unofficial” side of Astana’s urban landscape and presents the stories of marginalized residents (Neef 2006).



## Official views

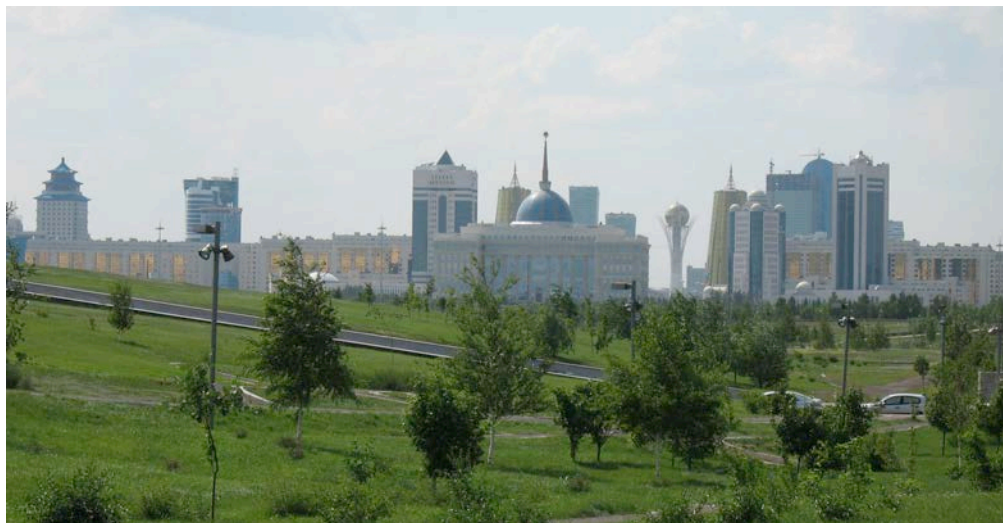


**Figure 6.3** (left). A billboard reading, “My heart – Astana!” with the iconic images of the city seen both behind the child and on his shirt. June 2009. Source: Author.

**Figure 6.4** (right). Quintessential image of Astana with the Baiterek tower in the center. Source: Author.



**Figure 6.5.** Miniaturizing the miniature, the Astana section of the Atameken park. June 2009. Source: Author.



**Figure 6.6.** Nearly surreal image of the Left Bank administrative center, as viewed from the Pyramid. The lavish green space is rarely populated by anyone but poor groundskeepers. June 2011. Source: Author.

## Unofficial views



**Figure 6.7 (left).** Housing developments along Tauelsyzdyk Street, just north of where it intersects with Momyshtuly Street, which is just west of the Left Bank new developments. There was a nearly equal mix of new, villa-style homes and old “decrepit” buildings. The villas were hidden behind their own walls with spiked fences, whereas the older buildings were hidden behind massive metal barricades. Unlike some other parts of the city, these barricades were plastered with brightly colored Astana Day advertisements. June 2011. Source: Author.

**Figure 6.8. (right).** A rare “unofficial” view of the city in the Western press. From an article in *Der Spiegel* magazine, this depicts many of the small individual homes surrounding the city’s new high-rise developments. The domed Presidential Center for Culture is visible in the center, on the extreme left is the iconic, bright yellow-orange “Astana Tower” Source: Neef 2006, photo credit Pavel Kassan.

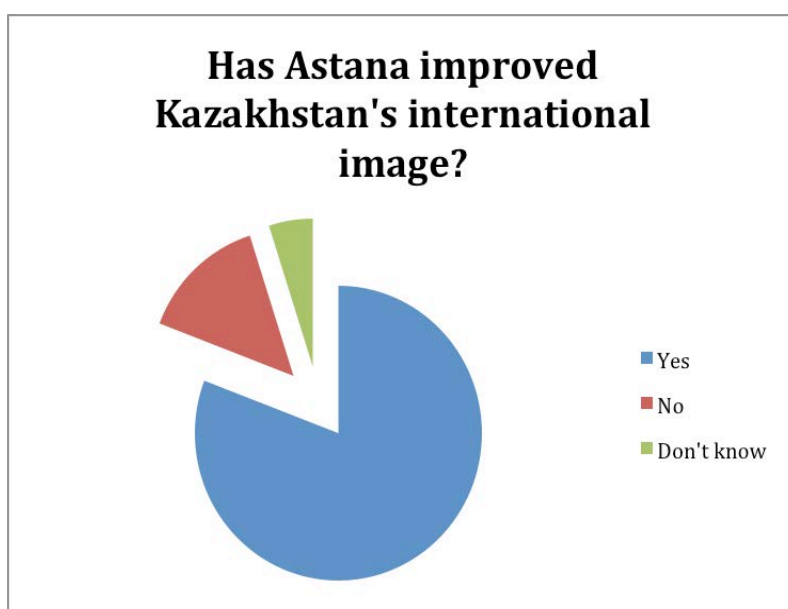


**Figure 6.9 (left).** A view from the individual housing establishments, which run along the north and south sides of Kenesary street, starting approximately from the intersection with Sembinov Street, and running west almost to Pushkin Street. According to the city’s master plan, they are slated for destruction in the next two years (author’s interviews). June 2011. Source: Author.

**Figure 6.10 (right).** The Beijing Palace, a hotel and office complex. It is systematically excluded from the official representations of the Left Bank, despite being only half a block from the Baiterek tower in the new administrative center. This is most likely connected to the anti-China sentiments discussed in Chapter 4. June 2011. Source: Author.



millions upon millions of dollars into a multi-vector media-based public relations (PR) campaign.<sup>52</sup> In addition to this campaign, the government has also spent lavishly on lobbying in the United States and elsewhere (LeVine 2007; Lipton 2011; Silverstein 2008), even hiring US think tanks to produce positive reports about the country (Lipton 2011; Kucera 2009; Schwartz 2008; Silverstein 2008). The Nazarbayev regime's preoccupation with Kazakhstan's international prestige preceded the uproar about Borat, but the shame it brought to the country's citizens only validated the intensified PR project, which slowly gave rise to what is now commonly referred to as the country's "image project" (*imidzh proyekt*).<sup>53</sup> Astana has featured centrally in this project and on the basis of my survey results, Kazakhstan's citizens seem to think it is working (see Figures 6.11-6.12).



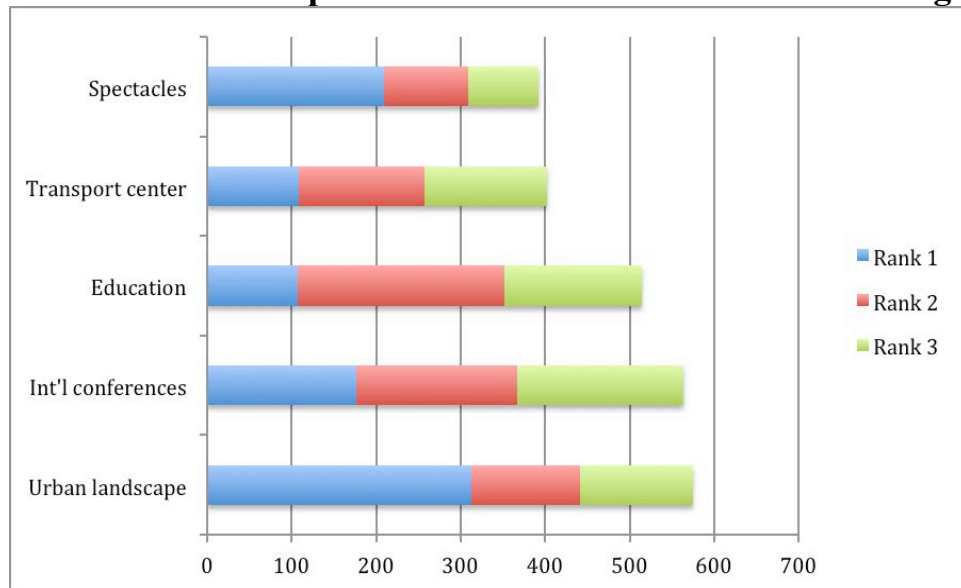
**Figure 6.11.** Astana and Kazakhstan's international image. Total responses: Yes (996), No (176), Don't know (61). Source: Author.

<sup>52</sup> This campaign, which involves producing a number of "glossy" publications (e.g. the monthly *Edge* magazine, a one-time Condé Nast magazine called "*K*") and paid advertising space in several Western newspapers (e.g. Washington Times, International Herald Tribune, Telegraph of London), was not the result of a presidential request or order, but comes at the "independent" initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Relations (author's interviews 2011).

<sup>53</sup> Some speculate that the PR campaign is just an element of Nazarbayev's self-aggrandizement and pursuit of international accolades (author's interviews 2010, 2011). An anonymous informant working for a U.S. PR firm hired by the Ministry of Foreign Relations explains that the firm's charge is to promote Kazakhstan's international image abroad – but admits that this is inseparable from promoting Nazarbayev himself and his quest for a Nobel Peace Prize (author's interviews 2011). Other more academic analyses suggest that the state's "multilateralism in the extreme" (Schatz 2006) is part of the state- and nation-building process, absent any other viable sources of legitimacy (e.g. economic performance, a majority ethnic community) in the early years of independence (Adams and Rustemova 2009; Schatz 2006). Yet others see it as a mere continuation of the "Great Power" mentality inherited from Soviet times. By contrast, I am not interested in discovering the motives, but rather the effects, of this project.



### How has Astana improved Kazakhstan's international image?



**Figure 6.12.** If yes, what specifically has improved the international image? (n=935). Closed question, with the possibility to write in an “other.” In addition to those above, responses included: Astana cycling team (262 mentions), and those written in: Baiterek (4), Big role of Pres. Nazarbayev (2), Cultural development (2), Khan Shatyr (2), Good natural environment (2), Chairmanship of OSCE (2), Astana became the center of all Kazakhstan (1), Closer to Russia (1), Interest of foreigners (1), Aquapark (1), Leisure (1). Source: Author.

Unlike Soviet discourses about capital cities serving as geopolitical “shop-windows” (and nothing more), Nazarbayev frames Astana as an important site for attracting international business (e.g. Nazarbayev 2006b). The regime has carefully crafted an image of market-oriented Kazakhstan, as part of the effort to advertise (perform) this new identity to the rest of the world. For Nazarbayev, the image of Astana is central to projecting the political and economic transformations “underneath” – i.e. the state of affairs in the entire country: “Shifting the status of the capital city from Almaty to the new city that is open to the wind of changes has given a powerful impetus to the overall development of the country. The new capital should become the symbol of changes” (Nazarbayev n.d.). Promoting neoliberal individualism and consumerism is a recurring theme in the state discourses and efforts to shape Astana’s built form. However, it is important to bear in mind that, as I argued in Chapter 2, this cannot be understood as a promoting “democratic” subjectivity. Rather, it is a paternalist subjectivity, in which the state maintains a dominant role in all political economic affairs, and citizens are objectified as passive recipients of the state’s benevolence and guidance. Yet they are also active constituents of its “forces” (Foucault 2007), its ability to achieve *konkurentnosposobnost*’ (competitiveness) in the global economy. By articulating himself as the father of

the decision to develop the capital, Nazarbayev (and sometimes more generally, the state) is cast as the deliverer of this opportunity to a passive set of recipients, the social body. The “benevolent” provision of economic opportunity through the capital city’s construction boom has historical precedence under similarly developmental regimes, such as in Brazil (Holston 1989, 25), China (Zhang 2006, 468), or Turkey (Kacar 2010, 55). All of these project operate on the basis of one basic metaphor: the synecdoche.

### **III. Spectacle, sport, and synecdoche**

This section will focus on large-scale spectacles and sporting events, while the remainder of the chapter will focus on the new Nazarbayev University. All these projects work together to enact and inscribe the contemporary paternalist state-society relations, in which the state is to be understood as benevolent and euergetic, and the citizens passive and thankful. I stress the role of the synecdochic imaginary because the more symbolic the architectural icon or the elite educational program, the more one needs to stretch one’s imagination to see the benefits being extended to the rest of the country. The official narrative of achieved “progress” in Kazakhstan consistently points to these large-scale, image-building projects, as though their benefits are accessible to all in the country, and as though progress in Astana reflects progress in the entire country. This is nothing more than a representational practice, but it is an important one that serves a variety of elite purposes, and one that is easy because it relies on a spatial imaginary that people are accustomed to performing frequently – the synecdochic scale-jump.

#### *A. Seeing national unity*

Before turning to the political economy of the city’s symbolic landscape, I want to underscore the connection between flagship architectural projects and the role of events, for we are reminded: “The appearance of the gigantic in the context of the city must be linked as well to the creation of public *spectacle*” (Stewart 1984, 84). Both spectacle (e.g. a football game) and the symbolic landscape (e.g. a football stadium) are tied together in a political economy of nationalism. Like nationalism in general, the synecdochic geopolitical imaginary at work: the very notions of the “node” (e.g. Astana) or “event” (e.g. Astana Day) or “thing” (e.g. Astana Arena) are all powerful imaginaries because, through one centralized image, they obscure all the practices that go into making them possible. These imaginaries are necessary because encounters with “things” or “events” – which are really just a set

of practices brought together in time-space – are necessarily ephemeral. The mind trick of the synecdoche offers a way to get beyond this trouble, but it is only a representational practice – albeit one that is essential to establishing certain cognitive frames that guide daily experiences and imaginaries.

Spectacles and events provide a unique opportunity to visualize the “masses” as a totality. Both as spectators or participants in mass exercises, individual participants are reduced to “small molecules within an organism whose brain is elsewhere” (Scott 1998, 254). Today’s nationalist events may glorify the “brain” (i.e. the “state” or the paternal ruler), but are arguably more about allowing the “masses” to see *themselves* – as one united community. Scholars writing on nationalism in sporting events and other non-banal nationalist displays frequently note how the sense of patriotic fervor and “unity” that is achieved during them tends to be very short-lived (e.g. Fox 2006; Hagen 2008; Houlihan 1997; Kong and Yeoh 1997; Ley and Olds 1998). It seems to me that the question, as that these works imply, is not why this “unity” was short-lived, but rather, whether there was “unity” at all: for this “unity” can ultimately only ever be a *visual effect*. Whether as spectator or participant, these events make the “imagined community” seem more tangible (Cardoza 2010, 354; Moser 2010, 54; Wedeen 1999, 21) – one can *see* and hear and interact with this community for a short time. But the event must inevitably come to an end and people return to their daily routines. An event is synecdochic, however, in that what is experienced as an impression of “unity” is to be extrapolated to the daily existence, contributing to a sense that one is perpetually embedded in a “unified” national community.

Elite sport is an example *par excellence* of this effect. A large body of literature has examined nationalism in sports performances and spectatorship (Agnew 2003; Alt 1983; Billig 1995; Caldwell 1982; Cardoza 2010; Danforth 2001; Fox 2006; Houlihan 1997; Jutel 2002; Keys 2003; Lee and Bairner 2009; Modrey 2008; Moser 2010; Paasi 1996; Ren 2008; Riordan 1991, 1999; Shapiro 1989; Tervo 2001; van Hilvoorde et al. 2010; Wong and Trumper 2002). All these studies implicitly touch on the strategy of synecdoche, but none describe it as such. In brief, the rhetorical and material practices that revolve around sports are deeply connected to pride: being proud of “your” team translates into being proud of yourself. In the case of national teams, this is then linked to national pride, as if the team itself represents the entire national body. Sports victories at the international level are seen to project an image of the athletes’ home country to the world – and when they are successful, to indicate their significance on the global stage. This image of worthiness is then projected back onto the state itself (in the system of states) and onto the “masses,” i.e. the territorially-defined citizenry.

Synecdoche here “stresses a relationship or connectedness between two sides of an equation, a connectedness that, like a road, extends in either direction” (Burke 1941, 428), but we should note the passive role of the national body in this equation. Like nationalism, citizen-spectators do not actually have to do anything to make the national team “theirs.” They are merely born into the community (or freely choose to be supporters, in the case of non-national teams). It makes no difference that the spectator undergoes none of the physical exertion of those athlete-representatives; their mere spectating validates them as supporters and members of the community. This passive role of spectating in elite sport is comfortable and easy – just as a nondemocratic regime like Nazarbayev’s is experienced by many as comfortable and easy. As long as people have dignity and can be made to feel proud, sitting on the sidelines is much easier (as many of my informants have stressed to me over the years). Of course, some may desire the activity, and they will seek out this role (either as an athlete or a nationalist politician). The synecdochic imaginary then also allows the actions of these few to be extrapolated to the remainder of the passive masses.

Non-banal displays of nationalism, just as with banal displays of nationalism, depend on channeling the daily practices and emotions of various actors – projecting them onto some ostensibly “higher” realm of nationalist sentiment. Yet this is merely an act of colonization – a spatial imaginary that cognitively directs people to understand their behaviors and emotions in a certain fashion. Thus, one of the major paradoxes of nationalism is its emotional power versus its philosophical poverty (Anderson 1983), for as any casual observer of nationalist displays can see, they are usually short on logic and heavy on emotion. This is why Hagen’s (2008) critique that Nazi parades were incoherent and “confusing” – and therefore ineffective – is problematic: nationalism is inherently “irrational” as it draws its strength from powerfully emotive, and often ephemeral (as in the case of the parade) symbols.<sup>54</sup> The very fact that these emotions of pride and gratitude are so clearly outside the rationalist framework is what makes them so powerful. There may be a general awareness that advertisements, politics, and argumentation of all sorts play on emotions, but the modernist fetish for “rational thought” consistently excludes the possibility of emotional manipulation – as if it “does not happen.” The liberal subject is definitively rational.

Like emotions outside the rational framework, the proliferation of nationalist symbols in sports and spectacles derive much strength from the very ambiguity that lies outside the boundaries of reason. Sport and

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<sup>54</sup> This sort of reading – in which “the irrationality of nationalism is projected on to ‘others’” (Billig 1995, 38) – is precisely why Billig (1995) has warned of “sociological forgetting” (i.e. of “our” own nationalism), or what John Agnew (1994) has called “methodological nationalism.”

spectacle share the same “symbolic repertoire” with nationalist politics (Billig 1995; Fox 2006), and this use may appear more widespread or less banal, but they are just as ambiguous as in any other realm: “If national flags were unambiguously national, then it might seem that those waving them were unambiguously nationalist. But not all fans wielding national symbols at football matches wield them in other domains of their lives” (Fox 2006, 228). In his study of student spectators of sporting events in Cluj, Fox (2006) argues that the use of national symbols, such as the Romanian flag, does not necessarily make these spectators “nationalists” or translate into a sense of “belonging” to the Romanian state (Fox 2006, 228). In fact, he finds that the students were “largely indifferent to the concerns and claims of nationalist politics: they do not mobilize around nationalist issues, support nationalist politicians, or even talk about nationalist politics in the course of their everyday lives” (Fox 2006, 228).

While I agree with the sentiment of his arguments here, I disagree with the division this argument is predicated upon: that nationalist performances at sporting events stand in contrast to some “more real” form of nationalism, i.e. nationalist politics. Rather, in the practice-based framework I am seeking to apply, we can only interrogate “texts and people *at the level of what they are saying*,” without even suspecting “that there could be any other level” (Veyne 1997, 177). From this perspective, waving a flag at a Romanian football match is *not* qualitatively different from waving a flag at a Romanian nationalist rally. Both are practices of subjectification, that inscribe the flag-waver as a citizen in of a unitary state, which the flag is supposed to represent. It does not matter if the flag-waver is doing it because it is “cool” and everyone else is doing it, or because he or she believes it to be a true expression of their love of the “homeland.” Nationalism as a force is only meaningful insofar as it is reproduced through these practices, regardless of the supposed motives “behind” them (this of course being a problematic construction in that it separates practice from consciousness). As in the previous chapters, my goal here is to examine how these subject-forming practices fit into the webs of power relations and arts of government, which make possible the unique state-society relations of contemporary Kazakhstan.

#### *B. “Beautiful sports facilities”: The economics of euergetism*

In January 2011, Kazakhstan hosted the 7th Winter Asian Games jointly in Astana and Almaty. Twenty days prior to the start of the Games, a “Torch Relay” (of a torch lit from the “fire of the Asian Games” in Kuwait City) traveled through 16 cities in Kazakhstan and was finally paraded in Astana prior to the event’s opening. One of the torchbearers in this final segment was Timur Kulibayev, President Nazarbayev’s billionaire son-in-law,

presidential hopeful, and then-president of Kazakhstan's Boxing Federation (among other honorable positions). He told reporters that hosting the Asian Games provided a "great" opportunity to show the world Kazakhstan's achievements (AOW 2011). He also noted: "Thanks to the Asian Games we have new beautiful sports facilities in Astana and Almaty" (AOW 2011). Early reports suggested that the Government of Kazakhstan allocated US\$726 million for the construction and renovation of facilities (Sports City 2009), but this figure is likely a gross underestimation – although this is a hard figure to calculate, not only because the numbers are elusive, but also because it is not always clear whose money was spent. A broad range of large-scale facilities now populate Astana's urban landscape, such as those found in the city's new stadium complex (see Table 6.1 and Figures 6.13-6.15), located south of the city center along the main road to the airport and near the new Nazarbayev University. All these buildings – the stadiums and the university – have involved investment on the scale of billions of dollars and are much more symbolic than functional (insofar as their use is extremely limited; see below).

Advocates of urban development agendas frequently cite the ability of mega-events to "remake" local economies, both through extensive sports complex construction and tourist dollars associated with the event (Broudehoux 2007; Eisinger 2000; King 2004; Ley and Olds 1988; McNeill and Tewdwr-Jones 2003; Modrey 2008; Müller 2011; Ren 2008; Sklair 2005; Smith 2008). Sometimes dubbed the "Bilbao effect," large-scale architectural projects are also framed as a way to revamp a local economy overnight (Acuto 2010; Bunnell 2002b; King 1996, 2004; McNeill 2000; McNeill and Tewdwr-Jones 2003; Harvey 1989a; Ley and Olds 1988; Ren 2008; Rybczynski 2002; Sklair 2005, 2006). Advocates see Frank Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim Museum as evidence that the strategy can work, citing the fact that within three years of opening in 1997, the museum generated about \$500 million in economic activity and about \$100 million in new taxes (Rybczynski 2002, 138). More often, however, "the economic impact of flagship architectural projects is largely uneven and difficult to evaluate" (Ren 2008, 177; see also Eisinger 2000; Rybczynski 2002; Sklair 2005, 2006), generally showing up "on the negative side of the balance sheet, and in the few cases when they do not, their effects are highly localized" (Eisinger 2000, 318; see also Harvey 1989a). Notwithstanding, as we will see, the mental trick of synecdoche is drawn upon in political justifications such projects – giving the impression that these local effects can jump scales and benefit the entire country or population.

**Table 6.1.** Three new stadiums in Astana’s new stadium cluster. July 2011. Photo source: Author.



<i>Building name</i>	Republican Velodrome
<i>Completed</i>	December 2010
<i>Engineering</i>	BIRO 71 (Ljubljana)
<i>Construction</i>	Mabetex Group
<i>Architecture</i>	-
<i>Est. Cost</i>	US \$820 million (?)
<i>Funding source</i>	Admin. of the President
<i>Size / capacity</i>	46,800 m <sup>2</sup> , 9,200 seats
<i>Purpose</i>	Cycling track and other athletics facilities

**Figure 6.13.** Republican Velodrome.



<i>Building name</i>	Astana Arena
<i>Completed</i>	July 2009
<i>Engineering</i>	Buro Happold
<i>Construction</i>	Sembol Construction
<i>Architecture</i>	Tabanlıoğlu Architects, PopulousHOK Sport (roof)
<i>Est. Cost</i>	US \$185 million
<i>Funding source</i>	Kazakhstan Government
<i>Size / capacity</i>	41,710 m <sup>2</sup> , 30,000 seats
<i>Purpose</i>	Football stadium

**Figure 6.14.** Astana Arena.



<i>Building name</i>	Astana Ice-Skate Center
<i>Completed</i>	2010
<i>Engineering</i>	-
<i>Construction</i>	Sembol Construction
<i>Architecture</i>	Altındal Mimarlık, Arketipo
<i>Est. Cost</i>	US \$130 million
<i>Funding source</i>	Kazakhstan Government
<i>Size / capacity</i>	42,670 m <sup>2</sup> , 8900 seats
<i>Purpose</i>	Ice sports complex

**Figure 6.15.** Astana Ice-Skate Center.

In Kazakhstan, as elsewhere around the world (but especially in the post-Soviet space), these mega projects are also connected with a set of “extra-legal” economic patronage practices. Although most of Astana’s new developments have been officially sponsored by the government, it is commonly referred to as “normal” business

practice in Kazakhstan for private companies to develop local infrastructure, or “for a Central Asian government to ask a businessman to build a soccer stadium—a bit like an American company sponsoring Little League teams to enhance its public image” (LeVine 2007, 261). Conway’s (2011) report on Glencore’s management of Kazzinc in Ust’-Kamenogorsk provides an excellent illustration of how this works. In brief, the company spent millions of dollars on building or refurbishing schools, kindergartens, a tennis center, and a hockey rink. The call for these projects “may come from the national or regional government, but Kazzinc agrees to finance those projects that will bring the company’s profit line just below the excess profits tax threshold – Kazzinc avoids a tax penalty and the government gets its sports center” (Conway 2011).

Another example is the oil-rich region of Aktobe, where the Chinese government and its state-owned energy companies have already invested over US\$14 billion into the regional economy, currently making up between 30 to 50 percent of the entire regional budget (Greene 2011a). Marat Balmukhanov, the director for industry and entrepreneurship in Aktobe’s regional government explains: “They are maintaining our roads and doing the repairs. They built a nursing home for war veterans. They bought computers for our schools. Every year, they buy 10 or 20 ambulances” (Greene 2011b). This sort of political economic investment pattern has indeed been “normal” in the years since Kazakhstan’s independence, but we should bear in mind that the very scripting of these practices as “just the way that business is done here” not only legitimates this kind of behavior, but helps (re)produce the very system of these economic practices.<sup>55</sup>

Even Astana’s earliest phase of construction was funded through these sorts of “contributions” that were solicited from various other oil companies, which were viewed as “deal-sweeteners” to win favorable terms in a new contract (LeVine 2007, 322; Schatz 2004b, 126). In one of his books, President Nazarbayev (2006b, 355-356) thanks the governments of friendly countries and CEOs of foreign and domestic companies for contributing grants (at his personal request) to the fund for the new capital – through which he claims to have raised 400 million USD. He explicitly names as contributors: Agip (Italy), the Saudi government, the Kuwait fund, the Abu Dhabi fund, the Oman government, TengizChevrOil, KazMunaiGas, Eurasian Group, and several other Kazakhstani firms. Today, the mechanisms of channeling funds are perhaps more “sophisticated” in how they work in and around legal and financial regulatory frameworks, but we can only speculate about how this might operate. Not only is this an unsafe

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<sup>55</sup> Müller (2011) describes a similar dynamic in the case of Russia, where various private firms have been involved in the construction of facilities for the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games – seeing it as a future political investment, rather than an economic one. Indeed, this is likely a globally pervasive phenomenon, though perhaps more acute in places where elites are less concerned with preserving the neoliberal image of separating “state” and “private” enterprises.



question – for actors and observers alike – but is not essential to understanding state-society power relations in independent Kazakhstan. The question then becomes, what do these economic practices (e.g. money laundering, “deal-sweeteners,” or contributions) do? What sort of broad state-society power relations do they enable, entrench, and operationalize?

These questions are grand, but we can at least note that the projects can be located on a spectrum. On one side, some are more obviously “for the public good” (e.g. a nursing home or education facilities), whereas others can only be cast as such through an excessively stretched trickle-down metaphor (e.g. Astana Arena, or Nazarbayev University; see below). Though both types of projects could be considered euergetic gifts to the people, they also do not serve the same political economic function. Nonetheless, we can discern two interconnected dynamics at work. First, when the government solicits (or perhaps simply receives) donations to a government-controlled fund, such as a regional budget or the Astana Development Fund, it allows the government to cultivate and channel the credit for providing the new infrastructure and services. The end effect is to confirm the primacy of the “state” and the role of the regime as the benevolent paternal authority. This centralization of “investment” also allows the regime to attract large amounts of capital outside of the vagaries of the global capitalist “market” mechanisms – to a large extent, insulating the government from the capital flight and instability associated with “*dikii capitalism*” (“wild capitalism”).<sup>56</sup> The practices of accepting private funds for infrastructural development allows those in power to confirm a particular image of their authority and their benevolence (regardless of what relations actually sustain this image).

Second, it is common knowledge that large scale construction projects are a key way to launder resource and other rents (LeVine 2007, 322; Schatz 2004b, 126). The government of Kazakhstan funds essentially all the major projects in Astana and elsewhere in the country, and those most important ones are invariably constructed by one of two firms, Sembol Construction or Mabetex.<sup>57</sup> Most buildings photograph well at a distance, but upon closer examination, they uniformly reveal serious flaws in design, engineering, workmanship, and materials (author’s field notes and interviews, 2009-2011). The use of cheap foreign labor is also a key part of this scheme. The vast majority

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<sup>56</sup> This is part of a collective narrative about the conditions of the 1990s, in which widespread disorder was associated with the “shock therapy”-style transition to the market economy.

<sup>57</sup> The overarching trend is that the most firms involved in the construction and design phases of these projects are not from Kazakhstan, but are primarily based in Turkey and the West. The fact that these multi-million dollar projects are uniformly awarded to “foreign” companies suggest that the purported economic “multiplier effect” (Nazarbayev 2006a, 344) of Astana’s development is somewhat dubious (but that is where the synecdochic imaginary assuages some of the most overt signs of this).

of these (underpaid) construction laborers come from the poorer Central Asian states of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. These laborers are highly vulnerable because they almost uniformly lack the legal documents to work in Kazakhstan: estimates put the number at about 95 percent because there is no legal avenue for receiving migrant labor permission (Dave 2011). Kazakhstani citizens are well aware that few Kazakhs were involved in actually physically building the city – which is evident in the popular response to the question, who built Astana? “The Kyrgyz and Tajiks.” This is said jokingly, but it is actually intended to disparage these poor and marginalized migrants from the neighboring republics. These migrants are also negatively racialized through another narrative, in which it is said that Kazakhs do not do “*chernaya rabota*” (“black labor,” i.e. construction) – because they “do not know how” (author’s interviews 2011; see also Dave 2011). Regardless of the popular awareness about the source of labor in these large construction projects, the recognition is logically absent the government’s description of the entire urban development project. Both the popular and the official narrative here work to obscure these workers from sight (their labor being a condition of possibility for the laundering schemes) and consistently exclude them from any rightful place in the country’s socio-political order.

Nor are the facilities actually used to any extent that would justify, let alone recoup, the expense. Astana Arena, for example, was supposed to allow “individual citizens” to “now, more than ever, participate in the success of their heroes and the fortunes of their national team” (Tabanlıoğlu Architects 2010), but Astana Lokomotiv team manager Loriya, in an interview with a German newspaper lamented the fact that the stands of the new arena consistently remain empty: “We are trying everything in Astana, and in spite of free entrance usually not more than 1500 spectators come to the new arena. When I sit above in our box, it makes me very sad” (Fischer 2010). The image of 1500 people in a stadium for 30,000 is striking, but as the following section will detail, I am not convinced that even if it were full, that this would reflect a fundamentally different state-society power relationship.

Since President Nazarbayev harbors ambitions to host the Olympic Games (Akorda 2008) and has accorded Astana an international “*zadacha*” (“task”) of “working for” Kazakhstan to improve the state’s international prestige (author’s interview with Chikanayev, July 2011; the so-called “*imidzh proyekt*”, “image project”), it is easy to frame these construction endeavors as supporting the leader’s grand visions. Surely the actors conceiving of the newest stadium project are at least minimally interested in how it looks, but just like any other ideological script, the rhetoric is a way to idealize practices, “while appearing to describe them,” becoming an “ample cloak that dissimulates the crooked and dissimilar contours of real practices that succeed one another in history” (Veyne 1997,

156). Nonetheless, the “cloak” of ideology only provides certain opportunities, and the projects that are designed in the name of the “*imidzh proyekt*” must draw on certain tropes and objectives of those with discursive hegemony, i.e. the movers and shakers of the Nazarbayev regime.

Importantly, the rhetorical fixation with promoting international prestige shapes the kinds of projects that are prioritized: those that are large, sensational, and symbolic. According to the logic in Kazakhstan (as with so many other places prioritizing iconic architecture), the better it photographs, the better it travels, and therefore the more important it is. By drawing on the reputation of world-renown architects, elite actors often frame iconic architectural projects as an opportunity to put their country or city “on the map” (McNeill 2005, 2009; Rybczynski 2002), often starting with high-profile competitions, “open only to a restricted group of already famous architects who are invited to submit entries, and are often paid to do so” (Sklair 2005, 492). The architecture is then deployed as a symbol “to project a positive image of the city to other places elsewhere” (King 1996, 104), becoming the key referent in the synecdochic scale-jump.

Mega-events like the Olympics or World’s Fairs have similar expectations of putting a place “on the map.” Embedded in the international context in which this strategic role of iconic architecture is “commonsense,” elites in Kazakhstan have thus prioritized large-scale sports facilities and various other entertainment complexes.. Mega-events and the monumental buildings developed for hosting them operate with the same synecdochic imaginary I have been tracing throughout this discussion: the stadium is framed as Kazakhstan in miniature, just as “Astana is Kazakhstan in miniature”



**Figure 6.16.** On the very left is the new velodrome. This is a poor migrant neighborhood immediately adjacent to it. July 2011. Source: Author.

(Nazarbayev 2010). This selective view of the country, in its hypermodern stadiums, and through the highly-trained bodies of its talented Olympians, is carefully guided and strategically overlooks the poor neighborhoods next to the stadiums (see Figure 6.16) or the deformed bodies of those babies still being born in the Semipalatinsk region, near the still-contaminated Soviet-era nuclear testing site (Brunn 2011; Najibullah and Bestayeva 2011).

The synecdochic imaginary is not neutral. Not only does it strategically erase various tragedies that mar post-independent Kazakhstan, it also allows us to fixate on the thing rather than the social and economic relations that produce the thing. Astana Arena or Nazarbayev University take on the appearance of a singular entity, planted in the city's landscape, objective and detached from the entire relational network of power, desires, and egos that channeled various material resources into creating its material existence. These relations, which I explore in the section below on Nazarbayev University, are crucial to understanding how power operates in this country. First, I will address some of the issues surrounding public participation – or lack thereof – in these large-scale projects, where we will yet again see the synecdoche at work.

*C. "It's for the people": Complex practices of participation*

*"Eto dlya naroda,"* a taxi driver from southeast Kazakhstan once told me during the Astana Day celebrations in the capital city: "it's for the people." Astana Day is a yearly holiday to commemorate the moving of the capital in 1997. The city gained the status in December 1997, but it was not officially "presented" until summer 1998, due to various construction delays. Nonetheless, Astana Day was to become a holiday in December. However, in 2008, for the capital's "tenth" anniversary, officials decided that Astana Day celebrations should thenceforth take place on 6 July – President Nazarbayev's birthday. Every year millions of dollars are poured into an extravagant, multi-day program of concerts, exhibitions, festivals, etc. to be held in Astana. Other cities have some celebrations, but they are generally only held on Astana Day itself (as opposed to many days leading up to it, as in Astana), and are extremely limited in comparison (author's field notes, Pavlodar, July 2011). Many of the festivities that take place in Astana on the holiday are the same as those of other state celebrations, such as Independence Day or Navruz (a Central Asian new year celebration), but the extent of funding is not matched by any other events. Like the 1500 people attending Astana Lokomotiv games in the new Astana Arena, the attendance at the Astana Day events is often quite sparse. If the festivities are "for the people," then where are all the people? How can we characterize the subjectivity of those passive masses *not* in attendance?<sup>58</sup>

In the previous section, I sought to challenge conventional approaches to the question of why elites spend so much time, energy, and money on producing symbolic sites. I pointed to how they factor into a material economy

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<sup>58</sup> This was a stumbling block for Foucault, who sought a way to characterize the spectrum of outright complicity and some form of resistance to hegemonic power regimes – but one that would not reify "dissenters" as somehow "outside" the system of power regimes, from which they can never be extracted (Foucault 2007, 195-201).

of power, money, and influence – rather than one that is primarily “symbolic.” My reading of the issue of participation will draw a parallel challenge to the conventional approaches in this same literature, which frequently looks for “alternative” readings of texts or public spaces, or unconventional forms of engaging with these sites as a form of “veiled” protest. Kong and Yeoh’s (1997) study of Singapore’s National Day parades is typical of this approach. They suggest that many parade attendees ascribe them “alternative meanings,” which “are not confrontational, but nevertheless reveal the tactical ways in which people appropriate National Day parades for personal gain/fulfillment” (Kong and Yeoh 1997, 235). They suggest that attending the parades as a way to entertain children or for teenagers to hang out with friends are forms of enjoying the parades “for entirely different reasons from those intended by the state” (Kong and Yeoh 1997, 234).

The first problem with this reading is that it is predicated on a one-dimensional, top-down understanding of power (see Chapter 2), and reinscribes the imagined primary authorship of the spectacle’s meaning to the “state.” The effect is that the authors attribute the “state” with a degree of coherence that it does not deserve – not least because spectacles the world over are typically planned by cultural elites who tend to have their own (opportunistic) motivations for participating in the events (on Central Asia, see especially Adams 2004, 2010; Fauve 2011). The second problem with this approach is that it assumes that the “state” (they mean the spectacle’s organizers) does not benefit from these “tactical ways” of “appropriating” the parades. I argue, on the contrary, that these forms of participation or non-participation are practices *essential* to supporting the entire system. Since cultural elites’ involvement in spectacles were not a focus of this dissertation, this section will only elaborate on the second issue with respect to spectacles and sporting events in Astana (but for such a study, albeit in the context of Uzbekistan, see Adams 2010).

Astana Day is an experience that cannot be avoided by the citizens of the capital, but the event itself is rarely the subject of much discussion. Many people are vaguely aware that the government spends extravagant sums of money on the festivities, but few vocally raise objections.<sup>59</sup> An occasional opposition voice can, of course, be found in a news source like Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.<sup>60</sup> Saidazimova (2008), for example, quotes Amirzhan Qosanov, a deputy chairman of the opposition Social Democratic Party in 2008, as saying that the Astana Day

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<sup>59</sup> Adams (2010, 76) notes a similar dynamic in Uzbekistan with the state’s massive Navo’z spectacles – in which non-cultural elites quietly but consistently critiqued them for being a waste of money.

<sup>60</sup> The news agency’s stated mission is “to promote democratic values and institutions by reporting the news in countries where a free press is banned by the government or not fully established. Our journalists provide what many people cannot get locally: uncensored news, responsible discussion, and open debate.” (RFE/RL 2011e).

celebrations “are nothing but gross adulation of Nazarbaev.” She also cites an independent journalist, Sergei Duvanov, who criticized the celebrations as “an attempt by some politicians to curry favor with Nazarbaev” (Saidazimova 2008). This sort of open criticism of politics is rare and most people who disapprove of the arrangement simply say nothing at all, and/or do not attend the events (especially the most blatantly ideological ones). The main exception to the generally low attendance at Astana Day events is the musical concerts by big-name Western, Russian, and Kazakh stars<sup>61</sup>, as well as the circus (see Figure 6.17). For the purposes of this discussion, I will refer here to the other, more “ideological,” events, such as the flag ceremony (Koch 2010).

Yet, the non-attendees also include those who have *not* consciously considered themselves to “disapprove” of the Astana Day extravaganza. The most common response to the question of why they do not go is simply that they find the



**Figure 6.17.** The Astana Day version of the circus. July 2011.  
Source: Author.

events boring or uninteresting. Having personally attended Astana Day events in Astana in 2009 and 2011, and in Pavlodar in 2011, I can see the rationale. In Pavlodar, for example, the celebration of Astana Day primarily consisted of a series of live performances on the city’s main square. The vast majority of them were people of all ages singing about Kazakhstan and its new capital city. After a few hours of hearing one song after another with the same refrain, “*menim Astanam*” (“my Astana”), the repetition became tiresome (not just for me, but for the rapidly thinning crowd of spectators).

Aside from listening to the repetitive songs, there was not much to do in Pavlodar besides walk up and down the main street and socialize with friends and family. The same can be said of many of the events in Astana. In both cities, the primary attendees were teenagers and other young people, as well as young families with small children. The youth were invariably dressed up (most in their Sunday- or disco-best) and on full display for each other. As with Ley and Olds’ (1998) study of the World’s Fair Expo, the event was clearly a social activity that was experienced more in terms of personal rather than political issues (Ley and Olds 1998, 209). While many attendees

<sup>61</sup> Again, Adams (2010, 76) makes the same observation about Uzbekistan’s spectacles, nothing that most people could recall little more than the pop star performances, when they claimed to have watched them on television.

of the Astana Day events might consciously or subconsciously tune out the political and ideological messages of the Astana Day events, and even if they are going (more often than not) simply because they are bored, their very attendance in many ways legitimates the practice. This also opens the possibility that, with the “patina of time” (Krishna 2003), the celebrations will gain the aura of being “real” traditions, rather than recognized an artificially new event.<sup>62</sup>

This issue of boredom needs more interrogating, so let us return to the example of Pavlodar’s evening celebration and the repetitious songs. Writing on similarly repetitive spectacles in Uzbekistan, Adams (2010, 186) argues: “The production of kitsch allows the cultural elite to free themselves of the need to engage in a critical creative process; it provides them an easy and automatic route to a cultural product that will satisfy the only truly important audience: the political elite.” I would add that this Soviet-style repetitiveness largely results from an awareness of the dangers of diverging too much from the sanctioned official scripts: the kitsch is simply safer. But when spectators say that it is simply “boring,” they are not necessarily (or at least directly) engaging these political issues. For them, it really is experienced as boredom, and we would be led astray to assume that there is some hidden under-layer of “true” political feelings that this narrative of boredom is strategically covering.

If asked to interrogate the sentiment, some people might be willing to characterize the events as a “sham” (author’s interview, 2011), but the experience of boredom cannot be read as a “code” or “veiled” criticism. Not only does this perpetuate one-dimensional understandings of power, it also assumes the deeply problematic division between mental and material realms (Mitchell 1990). I have been challenging this division throughout this dissertation, but it is not merely an academic exercise. If we keep it intact, it allows us to imagine that Kazakhstan’s citizens are – at least mentally – located somewhere outside the realm of unequal power relations that prevail in the country. Such a division implies their lack of complicity. I argue, on the contrary, that even these passive, non-participating citizens are complicit in these power arrangements. Their absence and their silence is what supports the regime, insofar as the regime colonizes this passivity, just as much as the activity of the attendees. The participants and the abstainers choose a different relationship to themselves, but their self-government factors into the broader regime of government in the same fashion: they are “objectivized as a flock-people” (Veyne 1997, 154), who spectate from the sidelines.

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<sup>62</sup> As in the case of New Year’s celebrations in Kazakhstan, which one informant told me were “real” celebrations (unlike the artificiality of Astana Day). This way of celebrating New Year’s Eve was invented by the Soviets and, only with time, caught on as a popular and “organic” tradition.

This metaphor of spectating from the sidelines returns us to the issue of sport. As I have already pointed out, sport has been an important metaphor in the nation-building rhetoric. Despite this rhetoric and despite Nazarbayev's hyperbolic claim that, "We do much in order to create possibilities for every Kazakhstani citizen to practice sport exercises" (Akorda 2008), there is no real investment in promoting mass participation in sport in Kazakhstan today. Like the regimes in the Soviet Union and the GDR (Grix 2008; Keys 2003), there is a large disjuncture between popular and elite sport. Focusing on Olympic-level athletics is not surprising, given the Nazarbayev regime's fixation with increasing "international prestige," and his stated view that, "Their victories improve the reputation of our state" (Akorda 2008). Yet unlike the USSR and the GDR, there is an absence of funding for popular sport (this is my ethnographic observation, but see also Loriya's comments on the lack of resources for football trainers in Fischer 2010).

Instead, the national team turns out to be not much more than "a valuable metaphor for the nation" (Houlihan 1997, 122), and notably one that reinforces the passive spectatorship of the rest of the nation. This dynamic has largely been made possible by the particular economic situation in Kazakhstan, whereby immense sums of money are concentrated in very few hands, and, in spite of a growing middle class, the remainder of the population has so little money that participating in sports is prohibitively expensive. So rather than investing in the "public good," Kazakhstan's sovereign wealth fund, Samruk-Kazyna, invests tens of millions of dollars in the Astana Cycling team, and has paid enormous salaries to non-Kazakhstanis like Lance Armstrong and Alberto Contador, ostensibly as part of the *"imidzh proyekt"* designed to increase national pride (Fotherington 2010). In this arrangement, those in powerful positions can "buy" good athletes and build high-tech new stadiums to host them.

But if ordinary citizens are accorded the role of spectators, and "given" all these lavish spectacles, why do they refuse to spectate? When asked if they planned to attend the Asian Winter Games in January 2011, my focus group participants overwhelmingly suggested they would like to but that the tickets were far too expensive.<sup>63</sup> As with the Astana Lokomotiv football games, tickets were eventually given away for free, but people still did not go. However, the event did lead to an unusual proliferation of miniature Kazakhstan flags mounted on the dashboard of people's vehicle. Displaying a flag might be a less obtrusive and resource-intensive way of performing one's subjectivity vis-à-vis the "state." Yet even this banal performance confirms the citizen as a passive spectator of the

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<sup>63</sup> This is a similar justification for those not attending the Astana Day events. As the following section on Nazarbayev University illustrates, this is certainly a statement of fact, but it is also one that reflects a more general subject position.



“national team,” and ultimately a subject of the naturalized and detached “state.” We can never uncover the “real” reasons that Kazakhstanis refuse to spectate, but their general lack of attendance has at least one discernable effect: the profligacy of the Nazarbayev regime goes widely uncriticized, and ordinary citizens confirm their passive role in the state-society relations.

For many people, this passive role is simply more comfortable; they have no desire to engage with “political” (i.e. dangerous) issues. An informant once asked me for my view on Kazakhstan’s lack of democracy. I responded by saying that it seemed that many people were indifferent to the issue because they have economic opportunities and life in Kazakhstan is rapidly improving. “Yes, exactly!” she exclaimed, “I don’t care what they do there [gesturing to the administrative center], because I have a good job and can live normally (*normal’no*).” When I gave the example of my travels to the Aral Sea region<sup>64</sup> and suggested that perhaps not everyone in the country has access to such opportunity, she responded, “Yes, I have heard that people in Semipalatinsk have similar problems, that they are not happy” (author’s interview 2011). For this woman, as with many others, life is acceptable enough that one need not rock the boat. Though there is generally an awareness that it might not be acceptable for others, people will not criticize the inequalities themselves. It is always second hand or “hearsay” about others’ concerns.

I have had this same conversation dozens of times. Typically, the speaker references Semipalatinsk, often providing a secondary citation of the region’s residents, such as one young man from Ust’-Kamenogorsk, who told me that they many people there are unhappy (“*nedovol’ny*”) and *they* say: “Why do we need a new capital when we have to live as poorly as we do?” (author’s interview 2010). Or in another informant’s narrative:

Well, some people see that the government is spending millions of dollars on these celebrations, and that it is not right. But people don’t like to talk about this because, what can they change? That is the way it is, and there is no point to speaking up. Some people may want to raise a criticism, but they don’t speak. (author’s interview 2011).

In all these examples, the speaker never raises the criticism him- or herself; it is always someone else. The willingness to accept the words of criticism as one’s own may be a function of how well these respondents know me, a foreign researcher, but the uniformity of this narrative suggests that it might be more of a cultural trope that can be repeated without thinking, “substituting cliché for thought” (Allina-Pisano 2009, 68-69). In either case, the effect is the same: the speaker refuses the subject position of being an “oppositional” speaker, a near opposite of Foucault’s (2001) *parrhesiastes*. This relationship with the self is effectively one of self-preservation (even if it is

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<sup>64</sup> The region suffers from serious ecological and health problems as a consequence of Soviet- and independence-era mismanagement of water resources, leading to the desiccation of the sea.

rarely, or at least consciously, experienced as such), but it is still a way of critiquing the regime, albeit a passive one.<sup>65</sup>

The refusal to participate in various spectacles is a technology of the self and it is used instrumentally (if not with heightened awareness) by the elites, as they navigate the political and economic field, “things being what they are” (Veyne 1997, 164). The quiescence of the population enables them to enact various policies, waste large sums of money on projects that benefit only a handful of people, and effectively rob the riches of the country’s natural resources – all under the pretense of promoting the international prestige of Kazakhstan. The people’s oft-declared “indifference” to these politics and enigmatic economic policies, as well as their passive ways of critiquing how government money is spent, are all instrumental to supporting the system. These relations *are* the system. Kazakhstani citizens’ indifference, or mere wish not to rock the boat, only makes the elite’s self-interested tactics easier to enact. So to return to the literature on symbolic landscapes and popular “reception” of them, we are often enjoined to ask, where do the people fit in the puzzle? How do they navigate the symbolic architecture? I have argued here instead they are not “navigating” the new architecture because they *are* the architecture.

#### **IV. Educating Kazakhstan’s future**

In this section, I will provide a more nuanced example of how to understand the complicity I have just described, through examining a set of practices and discourses revolving around two educational institutions in the capital: the Nazarbayev University and the Bolashak scholarship program. I continue to explore the synecdochic imaginary and stress how various spatial imaginaries both enable and naturalize practices of (self-)government, as well as the uneven relations of power that they support. Many nationalism scholars have traced the contours of nationalism built into various education systems (Billig 1995; Cole and Kandiyoti 2002; Ersanlı 2002; Herb 2004; Hobsbawm 1994; Kaiser 2002; Paasi 1996), but my aim is quite different from this work. My goal here is rather to trace the practices and power relations that are “colonized” by certain “nationalist” projects, creating the effect of coherence (i.e. of the university, state, or other institution as a *thing* rather than a set of material forces and practices). Furthermore, like the spectacles and sporting events described above, this analysis of education policies

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<sup>65</sup> Again, this is *not* a “veiled” or “coded” critique, for this suggests a consciousness or a level other than what people are saying. It is merely a passive, or indirect, way of making the same point: just as a passive sentence construction says the same thing as an active construction, but in a different form.

in Astana demonstrates how Kazakhstan's elites have worked to create the image of the "euergetic" regime, with President Nazarbayev as the paternal and benevolent figurehead.

Education is a country-wide issue, but it has a privileged place in Astana. In one of his yearly speeches, Nazarbayev (2006b) introduced a new dimension to his plans to develop "Astana as a city of modern international standards and one of the largest centers of international interaction in Eurasia." This was to be the establishment of a "prestigious international university to create a unique academic environment" in the capital (Nazarbayev 2006b). Four years later, this university, was opened in Astana, with one of its "strategic goals" named as "contributing to Astana as an international hub of innovation and knowledge" (NU 2011d). Elites in Astana are increasingly working to shape the city as the academic capital of not just Kazakhstan, but all Central Asia (Abazov 2011; Myers 2006; author's interviews 2011), as if taking seriously Le Maître's vision of an ideal capital city, which is to be "the site of academies, since they must give birth to the sciences and truth that is to be disseminated in the rest of the country" (Foucault 2007, 14). The official descriptions of the new project typically highlight the university's conformity to "international" standards (NU 2011b, 2011c), which is intended to mean those of elite Western universities. Foreign Ministry spokesman Yerzhan N. Ashykbayev, for example, described the new university's intent to become "an Oxford or Harvard of Central Asia" (Myers 2006).

In the official rhetoric, this educational leadership is often joined with a goal of turning Astana into a "high-tech city" (Neef 2006, 150), and the government has even developed a program to repatriate emigrant scientists to that end (RFE/RL 2010a). When asked in 2011 what problems Astana faces today, Astana Master Plan director, Chikanayev, pointed to one issue:

We need to develop scientific and technical abilities in the city. We should project to the world an image that Astana is not just nice buildings and good service, but that it is a city where new technological innovations and advances are made. Kazakhstan should not just make macaroni for internal consumption, but brand names known all over the world. The reason this has not yet happened is because it takes a lot of money and technical skills, which we still need to develop. This is why we need to prepare cadres, for example through international study and at the new Nazarbayev University. (Chikanayev, author's interview 2011).

Neither of these development projects – the idea of the high-tech city and the "global university" – are in any way new or unique. Both strategies can be found in places as diverse as Kuala Lumpur (Bunnell 2002b, 2004a) and Abu Dhabi (Abazov 2011) respectively. What makes these projects nonetheless instructive is that we can see how people in Kazakhstan have worked opportunistically with them, and how in doing so, they subjectivize and govern themselves in unique and contextual ways.

Like the spectacles discussed above, state education policies and programs have worked to create the image of an euergetic regime, to objectivize the citizens as grateful recipients eager to support the country's development, and to build up the idea of a homeland worthy of international prestige (as amply advertised in official billboards, see Figure 6.18). While it may seem at first glance that the state-society relationship is a mere a continuation of Soviet paternalism, this intersection is founded on a uniquely *independence-era* practice of governing “through freedom,” i.e. through teaching people how to independently achieve their “interests” (and those of “Kazakhstan” in the synecdochic imaginary) in the framework of the market economy.

It is tempting to ask why the Nazarbayev regime elected to open this new university, but like the capital change discourse (Chapter 5), this would be a rather fruitless task of speculation. Nationalism, elite economic interests, egos, and essentialism were surely all in the mix, but the important questions are about how people relate to an idea and work with it, once it has “arrived.” Their opportunism – whether merely to secure a well-paying job or, more perniciously, to launder resource rents – is what makes the project a real force, injecting it into a field of power relations. This section will illustrate, therefore, how this idea of the “global university” has been enacted in Astana, what sort of subjectivities it has set in motion, and what, so far, has been the “outcome” with respect to rearranging state-society-territory relations in the era of independence.

#### *A. Nazarbayev University*<sup>66</sup>

Elite careers in Astana are short-lived<sup>67</sup> and when Nazarbayev calls for action, many people are quick to satisfy and, of course, to get a slice of the rewards. The “New University” of Astana – so-called until the regime



**Figure 6.18.** Billboard (in Kazakh and Russian) reading, “The word ‘Kazakhstan’ should sound on the world arena, embodying the new youth of our ancient country, the confident step of our people in a new history. N. Nazarbayev.” Oskemen, August 2009. Source: Author.

<sup>66</sup> Much of the data for this section comes from extensive interviews conducted in July 2011, which I have chosen to make anonymous out of consideration for the well-being of those who shared information. What they discussed with me may not have seemed to them to be politically sensitive, but based on further research, I have concluded that it is – especially when put together with other data I have collected. For brevity, I will refrain from consistently citing these interviews in the text that follows.

deemed it sufficiently successful, at which point it was renamed Nursultan Nazarbayev University (NU) – opened its doors to its first class of 486 undergraduate students in Fall 2010. That the library had no books on its shelves, that there were no complete science labs, and that the newly-erected walls were already cracking – was no matter.<sup>68</sup> The university was opened to great fanfare and with a delightfully blunt injunction to prospective students from Nazarbayev: “Young people should try to enroll in this university. I have agreed to give my name to it, so you should not fail me” (RFE/RL 2010b).

Given Nazarbayev’s obvious paternal outlook toward the university, it should come as no surprise that among the university’s seven “guiding principles” identified on its website is “Love of Country.” This is defined as serving “the good of Kazakhstani society in order to build a modern prospering state” (NU 2011f) – something of an anachronism from the stated goal of making the university a “regional” education magnet to attract foreign students and staff. From the beginning, the institution was envisioned as a technical university. It has planned to have degree programs in engineering, natural sciences, and medicine, and is supposed to eventually accommodate 20,000 students and teachers (RFE/RL 2010b). The specialties offered are said to be “determined by the priorities of the Kazakh economy,” so as to “prepare the best technical and engineering specialists for the industries already developed in Kazakhstan.” (NU 2011a).<sup>69</sup>

The rhetoric about “priorities” of the state’s economy is just as nebulous as Nazarbayev’s vision of the entire project as having a “global systematic effect on development of our country [that] will benefit all the citizens of our country” (quoted in NU 2011a). Although this ambiguous synecdoche may or may not merely reflect a lack of critical vision, it is important because it opens the door for wildly differing interpretations. Indeed, from the beginning, NU has been something of a battleground for two competing camps or schools of thought within the government apparatus. While there is increasingly an impetus toward government “through freedom,” there are still

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<sup>67</sup> This is largely because of concerns about corruption: it is assumed that the longer a person stays in a specific post, they more likely they are to entrench themselves in a network of patron-client relations. High-ranking officials are thus rotated through a variety of positions, typically with an extremely rapid turn-over rate.

<sup>68</sup> This was still the case in July 2011, when I visited.

<sup>69</sup> When I asked how and by whom these industries and priorities are identified, an NU staff member could only respond, “You know the politics here” (i.e. in Kazakhstan). This statement could be read two ways: it could either imply that everything is meaningless rhetoric to satisfy the *apparatchiki*, or it could imply that elite priorities lie in developing the state’s capacity to extract and export its natural resources as quickly as possible. In either case, the rhetoric of scientific fetishism in Kazakhstan is used foremost as a way of referring to the oil and gas sector, but also infrastructure development. However, the decision to exclude social sciences or humanities has been reversed, and in practice, the university is said to be “student-driven.” Accordingly, after seeing a demand for majors in these fields, NU staff have already set about developing the desired programs. After the first year, the breakdown of students by program was 16 percent in Biology and Chemistry, 20 percent in the Social Sciences, and 64 percent in Mathematics and Physics.

many in the bureaucracy who come from the Soviet system and want to govern through command.<sup>70</sup> These elite seem to see the university as a mechanism of control – as a way to inculcate the youth in (ethnic) nationalist ways at the expense of a truly critical education – but they do not seem to realize that as a “global university,” and one of “international standards” to be implemented by hiring foreigners from the West, the project it is already something far beyond their control.

It is already clear that NU is missing the same degree of overt nationalism found in universities elsewhere in the country. Aside from the massive Kazakhstan flag in the atrium space (Figure 6.19), generally absent are the visual displays that are the norm in other universities.<sup>71</sup> In many ways, these overt displays are becoming increasingly unnecessary; the “state” is popular in Kazakhstan today because it provides economic opportunity – which is generally scripted as the result of Nazarbayev’s benevolence and foresight. The university is an example *par excellence* of the euergetism ascribed



**Figure 6.19.** NU atrium, with Kazakhstan’s flag painted on the far wall. July 2011. Source: Author.

to him. The project has indeed resulted in a sense of gratitude (on the part of employed faculty, students, construction companies and their laborers, and even certain machinating elite “behind the scenes”), and these emotions are definitely *real*, even “natural.” This impression of “naturalness” or spontaneity is precisely the function of euergetism, as we see in the euergetic subject, who spontaneously confuses the sentiments she chooses to have and those she is induced: “everyone ‘loves his father’” (Veyne 1990, 306). Not all have welcomed the new university project in Astana, however. This was increasingly the case as it became clear that its development was to

<sup>70</sup> I personally see the project’s materialization as the effect of a compromise between the Soviet holdovers and the reformers. The former, who want to use it as a means of controlling the people, have benefited from the regulatory loopholes as a way to launder funds, as well as secure lucrative construction projects. The latter, the reforms, want to use the project to educate a generation of free-thinkers, and they have benefited from regulatory loopholes as a way of escaping the suffocating state control of higher education in the rest of the country.

<sup>71</sup> I have visited about 10 different universities in various cities in Kazakhstan, and nearly all have ubiquitous photographs and lengthy quotes of Nazarbayev, the “state symbols” (including the state emblem and flag), etc. all adorning walls and rooms. It is also common to have a sort of museum or museum-like display case of Nazarbayev’s visits – as he often does (he even has his own dedicated office at the East Kazakhstan State Technical University).

come at the expense of another, highly popular government education program: the Bolashak scholarship program. Before I describe this joint development, it is necessary to provide some additional background about the program.

When Bolashak (which means “future” in Kazakh) started in 1994, it was to become a highly prestigious program to send only the country’s best and brightest to study at foreign universities. About 15-20 students a year were selected in a highly competitive process, including a Kazakh language exam,<sup>72</sup> and they were all required to return to Kazakhstan to work for at least 5 years. According to a high-ranking, anonymous informant at the Center for International Programs (CIP), the motivation for establishing the program had no altruistic dimension, but came from the recognition of Kazakhstan’s leadership in the early 1990s that the country simply did not have the knowhow and language skills to do business internationally.<sup>73</sup> As LeVine (2007) carefully details, elites were acutely aware of their naiveté in the early days of opening the country’s economy to deals with international companies. Bolashak was seen as a way to remedy this and to acquire the human capital needed for the country’s ambitious development plans. In 2004, the program was expanded dramatically, so that 3000 students would be studying abroad every year. In total, about 15,000 students were sent abroad between 1994 and 2010 (Abazov 2011). However, shortly after the opening of Nazarbayev University in Fall 2010, major cuts to Bolashak were announced.

President Nazarbayev’s decision came suddenly. Though there had been discussion of Bolashak’s looming “downsizing” in 2010, the extent of this was broadly unanticipated. On 17 April 2011, the CIP president announced the complete elimination of the Bachelor’s degree scholarship funding. An employee explained: “He just came to a meeting and said it would be cut. And that was it. There was no discussion.” The decision was only made public in early May. In early summer 2011, Nazarbayev also announced plans to cut the Master’s program, and the Bolashak staff are expecting the official decision to come soon. Rumors in the CIP network suggest that someone “on the inside” (i.e. in Nazarbayev’s closest circle) made the decisions about the cuts and went straight to the president – as all the usual legal avenues for such a decision were bypassed. Staff are sad to see the program eliminated, but like

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<sup>72</sup> Russian Kazakhstanis generally recognize this to be discrimination against them. Statistics covering the period 1994-2008, which are no longer publically available, reported that 96.6 percent of successful candidates were Kazakh nationality, 3 percent Russian, 0.9 percent Korean, and 0.5 percent Tatar. This stands in stark contrast the to country’s demographic composition (see Chapter 3), but is also suspect because ethnic Russians are over-represented in the country’s best schools.

<sup>73</sup> However, he believed that the most important virtue of the program’s reality was its ability to inspire and motivate the underprivileged. Through its rural quota and focus on merit in the selection process, this official praised its ability to give hope to young people from poor and/or unconnected families, who could see role-models succeed through the fruits of their labor, rather than through connections and bribes.

most people I spoke with around the country, they said they could understand the logic of the decision. The following section will explore some of their reasoning.

*B. Interpreting the NU project: Inscribing the state and the homeland*<sup>74</sup>

Popular discussion throughout Kazakhstan has been full of speculation and rationalizations about the coincidence of Bolashak being cut and the opening of NU. Like the capital change discourse, these conversations are most instructive as a set of subject-forming narratives, rather than an avenue to finding the “true” reasons for the change. Among the supporters, a common rationale is that the government had invested a great deal of money in the NU project, and it needs all the support it can get. Because it is still new, and lacks the prestige of foreign universities, the broad expectation is that Kazakhstan’s most promising students would invariably choose to study abroad if they had a choice between Bolashak and NU. In this narrative, there is a clear articulation of a geopolitical imaginary, in which Kazakhstan’s educational system is inferior to those found abroad, and especially in the West – but this is seen as something the “state” is positioned to remedy through the NU project. Simultaneously, there is a critique of the fact that Kazakhstan’s government has paid millions of dollars to *foreign* institutions to educate the Bolashak students, whereas this money would be better invested “at home.”

Another rationalization of the program changes underscores the poor quality of the Bolashak students themselves. In my focus groups, for example, students studying at al-Farabi Kazakh National University consistently highlighted how ungrateful many of the Bolashak students are: they simply take the government’s money and do not want to come back to Kazakhstan afterward. With a marked touch of Schadenfreude, these discussions invariably turned to the fact that the scholarship recipients *must* come back, or else their families will lose their apartments, be forced to reimburse the government for all the costs, or face other serious repercussions. There was no small degree of jealousy evident in these narratives. After loudly insulting the Bolashak students, when participants were asked if *they* would like to study abroad with the program, the unanimous sentiment was “Yes!” In any case, the narrative suggests that those who go abroad lose the patriotic sentiments and gratitude to the state, which they are expected to have for receiving so much at the government’s expense.

By contrast, in the words of one focus group participant, was expected to “educate (*vospityvat*) patriots”<sup>75</sup> (FG4P9). Regardless of whether it stems from jealousy, this narrative works to valorize loving the homeland and

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<sup>74</sup> Data for this section come from countless interviews and informal discussions, as well as from focus groups in Almaty in October 2010.



articulates a norm, in which citizens are expected to have gratitude for the state's generous giving. Envious or not, the focus group participants have nonetheless adopted this paternalist and nationalist script in their own "styles of reasoning about the self." Although the elite political infighting behind the NU and Bolashak projects is important (but not detailed here), equally relevant are these ordinary citizens' incorporation of paternalist state-society rhetoric and relations into rationalizations of their own positionality (which are understood to be their own "opinions"). Government of others and government of the self, we are forcefully reminded here, are intimately connected.

Another common rationale among supporters of Bolashak's downsizing is that the program does students a disservice for failing to take into account the unique timing of a Kazakhstani youth's life events (see also Kucera 2011). In Kazakhstan, there is tremendous social pressure for people marry young and start families as soon as possible. Since all Bolashak students are expected to return to Kazakhstan for at least 5 years after their studies, this means that the Bachelor's-degree students return precisely at the time in life when they are expected to marry, have children, and buy a car and apartment. This is supposed to make it too challenging for them to continue to a Master's program, if they so desire. This is then explained to contrast with NU, which would allow students to "stay home" and develop families during their undergraduate years, and prepare for graduate study afterward.

I have indeed seen several close friends suffer on account of this timing issue (which actually originates in family and social pressure than time per se), but the narrative itself is instrumental to reinscribing these social norms. As with the first narrative, this one is full of linguistic bounding practices. It defines the "home" and its unique social norms as standing in contrast to the "outside" world of foreign study, where students are not able to enact their social obligations. They must "come home" to realize themselves in the familial sense, but they are also imagined as only being able to realize themselves academically "abroad." The NU project is striking because it engages and acts on this imaginary, by seeking to bring together the "inside" and the "outside." What can be found abroad (the prestigious, quality education) is to be brought "home." This goal is paralleled in Nazarbayev's justification of various costly projects in Astana, such as the Duman entertainment complex described here by Astana's first mayor:

The President answered precisely and convincingly, arguing that these objects are needed for our children and grandchildren – they are the most serious because young Kazakhstanis are going to be proud that they have in the homeland (*rodina*) such wonderful things, and so that they can look at them and see that they don't have to travel to the end of the world to see them. He also argued

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<sup>75</sup> This word is much more active than "educate" suggests, and is more literally translated as "to raise." The implication of the statement is that the university will actively *inculcate* these students with patriotism.

that precisely such objects are used in judging the real civilization of the government (Dzhaksybekov 2008, 247-248)

In this vision, foreign luxuries are to be domesticated. The performance – and thus the constitution – of this imaginary is also apparent in the rhetoric of “national development” and “international standards” discussed in the establishment of NU.

Additionally, the act of talking about NU as a “domestic” project simultaneously situates the speaker in a place (“inside” the national territory) and as a subject in relation to both a state (which defines “society’s” priorities) and a broader international community (which defines “global” standards). In practice, these standards are those of the West, and the project has been explicitly modeled on the US higher educational system (author’s interviews 2011). Furthermore, it has been realized through an “international partnership strategy,” outlined in the NU development strategy. In this approach, partner universities have been enlisted to assist with developing academic programs and curricula; providing teaching materials for student training; selecting and appointing deans of schools and recruiting foreign faculty; developing the evaluation and quality assurance systems; designing and equipping class-rooms and research laboratories; training and re-training of local human resources (faculty and administrative staff); and developing double-degree programs. In effect, practically the entire undertaking is the product of foreign design and implementation. NU students also have the opportunity to study abroad at the partner universities – for *up to 2 years* in some programs (NU 2011c). Beyond this, the university has also been set outside the state Law on Education (a fact that most people in Kazakhstan were not aware of).

Nevertheless, the image of NU being physically located in Kazakhstan gives the impression of first-rate education being “domesticated.” This is exemplified in the words of the focus group participant quoted above, who believed NU would “educate” patriots. Even though most were aware that the faculty is to be comprised of professors from “the best” foreign universities, this did not detract from the overall sense that it was a “domestic” project, positioned to develop the country and the citizens’ love of Kazakhstan. Cultivating the aura of prestige of attached to a foreign, and especially Western, education<sup>76</sup> has actually been treated as a strategy to increase domestic pride, as well as the prestige of the NU project itself. For example, an anonymous NU informant involved in the admission process explained the need to highlight the Western control of admissions and to use foreign exams as the sole entrance assessments (British Council English Proficiency Test or the TOEFL and University College London’s Subject Entrance Test). His justification was that “everyone assumes that if foreigners are in control, it’s ‘clean,’ but

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<sup>76</sup> This is my own ethnographic observation, but see also Nazpary 2002, 141.

as soon as Kazakhs are involved, people's suspicions are raised.” By using international admissions teams and entrance exams, the university could gain the image of objectivity, and convince the people that it was somehow “outside” the rampant corruption that has long plagued the university system in Kazakhstan.<sup>77</sup>

Some have expressed muted critiques that the government has spent so much money on this high-profile project, while the broken education system in Kazakhstan goes untouched (Abazov 2011; more below). However, the dominant script is that NU is part of the government's development and international prestige-building agenda. This narrative is encapsulated neatly in the following focus group discussion:

*Moderator:* So why do you think our president allowed his name to be conferred on the university? This university is still called the university of the future.

*FG3P9:* Because the goal was to give a reminder that we are not a third world country.

*FG3P5:* The country is not [part of] the third world.

*FG3P9:* We are developing. As far as I have heard, there are some of the best professors, in order to attract the attention of other countries, and so that foreigners come [here].

We again see that the “foreigners” are understood to bring prestige and respect *for Kazakhstan* (rather like Lance Armstrong's stint on the Astana Cycling team). Divisions between the domestic and the foreign are simultaneously destroyed and constituted in these imaginaries. It is important to return to the question of, what work do they do? As I have sought to illustrate throughout this dissertation, they work to support the paternalist state-society relations, the image of coherent “state” power external to passive citizen-subjects, and the demarcation of a territorial-unit-as-social-container, situated alongside other such state containers in the international system of states. But the state's colonization of these geopolitical narratives and imaginaries is not seamless; they invariably allow space for critique and “unplanned” readings. In a place where critiques of the official line are actively silenced (governing others through control, e.g. widespread persecution of journalists), and more passively silenced through social norms (governing the self, e.g. of “not being interested in politics”), seemingly banal conversations about these education projects are an instructive place to look for these challenges to the official narratives – as are their silences.

As I mentioned above, one of the major critiques of NU is that the money would be better spent reforming the existing university system. Critical outlooks of the project's largesse were most evident in 1) people's reactions to the yearly cost of studying at NU, and 2) the university's extravagant interior atrium. Both are illustrated in the following focus group excerpt, when participants were shown a picture of the atrium:

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<sup>77</sup> On corruption and patronage in higher education in Kazakhstan at the end of the Soviet times and the early years of independence, see Nazpary 2002. Today this takes many forms beyond bribery, but it most significantly includes bribes paid for university admission and for desired grades.

*Moderator:* What do you think this image is of?  
*FG3P7:* [Laughing] It seems to me that it's a metro.  
*Moderator:* A metro? With fountains?  
*FG3P4:* Shopping center.  
*Moderator:* Do you want me to tell you what it is? It is the new university.  
*FG3P7:* Get out of here! (*Ni figa sebe!*)<sup>78</sup> [*Other group members express shock*]  
*Moderator:* So, what do you know about the new university?  
*FG3P6:* That it is very expensive. 20 thousand [USD] a year.  
*Moderator:* No, not 20.  
*All:* How much?  
*Moderator:* 18 thousand.  
*[All laugh (because they do not consider this to be a difference; the number is seen as outrageous, regardless of whether it is 18 or 20).]*

The stunning view of the university's central atrium is an image that can be found online, but it has not circulated widely, as became evident from widespread confusion about the its origin in the focus groups (most seemed to think it was a mall). Immediately when they were told, many people were awed and seemed to fill with pride. These discussions followed a consistent pattern, in which people first expressed their pride, but then mentioned the staggering and prohibitive expense. This language of the caveat, the "language of reservations, of however, and of paradoxes" is simultaneously revealing and *unrevealing* (Massey 2007, 54). It is revealing in its identification of an object of desire, and unrevealing in its identification of the speaker's own exclusion from the elitism.

The same people who praise the NU project, and detail how much better it is than the Bolashak alternative (as it now appears as the university's counterpart in an either/or imaginary), tend to simultaneously view it as an elitist and exclusionary project. As I described above, NU staff have consciously promoted the university's Western "objectivity" to show how it is "clean" and free from the corruption and manipulation of the well-connected (a founder's myth, I would say). But this has not stopped people from assuming what one focus group participant summarizes nicely: "It seems that simple people (*prostyye lyudi*) won't study at this university, that only big-shots (*krutyye*) will study there"<sup>79</sup> (FG3P6). Other participants in the group contested this, citing the merit-based entrance criteria. But a widespread "rumor" or "fact" (I personally have no idea which) suggests that the merit criteria only applies to those who are accepted on scholarship<sup>80</sup> – and that anyone could enroll if they paid the full price tag of US \$18 thousand.

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<sup>78</sup> This phrase is more crude than this translation suggests, however.

<sup>79</sup> These two idioms, simple people (*prostyye lyudi*) and big-shots (*krutyye lyudi*), are difficult to translate adequately into English, but they are used frequently in Russian. "*Krutoi*" literally means "steep" or "stern," but since it operates here as the opposite of "*prostoi*" ("simple," "direct"), it could be understood as "crooked." *Krutyye* are not just people with a lot of money, but those with a condescending or "snobbish" demeanor. (Mateusz Laszczkowski and Irat Feaskhanov assisted with this clarification.)

<sup>80</sup> I was told that 100 percent of the first NU class was, but it is impossible to know for sure.

Perhaps more instructive than the language of caveats is the absolute silence on some issues, for “in a very basic way, in a culture of fear, meaning itself is made possible by what is missing” (Mitchell 2002, 153). Although NU does not require knowledge of Kazakh, Kucera (2010) notes that when the university posted a list of admitted students on its website, they consisted almost exclusively of ethnic Kazakhs. He quotes Kadisha Dairova, vice president of NU, as saying: “It is hard to say now why the majority of applicants are Kazakhs and I hope that when we analyze all aspects of the admission process, we will be able to find out why most of the accepted students and applicants were Kazakhs” (Kucera 2010). While there could be a more nefarious explanation, I believe this is more likely an issue of self-selection, given the nationalist framing of the project. It could also reflect on the changed economic-demographic character of Kazakhstan’s remaining Russian population. Though Russians are still well-represented among Kazakhstan’s elite, many of the most affluent and well-educated families have emigrated in the 20 years since independence. Those who have remained are disproportionately poor and “dispossessed,” often elderly and/or lacking family in Russia or elsewhere (Nazpary 2002). But here we enter the terrain of the forbidden “*natsional’nyi vopros*” (“nationality question”), which is perhaps the most politically sensitive topic in independent Kazakhstan – about which there is a very loud and uncomfortable silence pervading much more than these education programs.

Another reason we might be seeing self-selection pertains to an additional silence: NU’s relationship with KIMEP, Kazakhstan’s first English-language instruction university. Considered one of the best “independent” universities in Kazakhstan, upper and middle class Russians who have remained in Kazakhstan would much rather send their children there (or abroad, if they have the means). For some years before, but especially since NU opened, KIMEP has come under pressure by government officials, and is constantly threatened with being closed down (for anything ranging from administrative sex scandal to cafeteria health compliance). This might be the result of certain elites seeing the university as a threat to the NU project, but it involves yet another series of confused relations, egos, and power politics that I cannot explore here. It is interesting to note that the focus group participant quoted above, immediately before affirming his sense that NU would educate patriots, noted: “Well, we all know that KIMEP students are far from patriots” (FG4P9). Indeed, the group did seem well aware. Again, the issue of jealousy among these KazNu students (who tend to be much poorer and studying on government scholarships) cannot be ignored. Nonetheless, it is crucial to notice the *practice* of using this nationalist discourse as a “style of reasoning

about the self,” one’s emotions, and one’s desires. These discussions about NU and Bolashak, as well as their silences and instrumental use of nationalist scripts, are fundamentally subject-forming narratives.

As I have sought to illustrate through this case study, these narratives are *co-constituted* with certain material forces. They do not stand apart in some separate realm of the imagined or linguistic. The Bolashak and NU projects are fundamentally a set of disjointed movements and decisions of various people, who are working with and limited by material conditions, and who are often just responding to the immediate. During my meeting with an NU informant, who recounted the endless logistical problems and challenges the university’s planners faced, and explained how “everything becomes a crisis”: “Because of that, we haven’t really been ‘strategic,’ but ‘tactical.’” This lack of strategy was paralleled in the CIP’s administration of the Bolashak program, and in both cases, egos and desires all come into collision “underneath” the official “surface” of the institution. But this very image of the surface and the coherent institution, as somehow detached from or standing apart from the “back-room dealings” is a representational myth. It is a performance – rooted in rhetorical and material practices – that is instrumental to obscuring how power relations are institutionalized, and how people rationalize their material desires in their narratives and ways of governing the self.

The myth of coherence is also important because its performance sets in motion a variety of other forces. As we saw in this chapter, programs of intervention can “help some people and harm others, both outcomes routinely exceeding the plan” (Li 2008, 118), as “people mobilize to devour development plans” (Ferguson 1990, 225), pushing and pulling programs into helpful yet unapproved forms (Li 2008, 111). This has certainly been the case for the Bolashak scholarship program – as it has become a truly positive force in the life of many students in Kazakhstan, who have been able to use it to achieve great things that would have otherwise been impossible. As it develops, the NU project will likely provide similar opportunities for ordinary citizens. And yet, these students’ resulting pleasure and feelings of gratitude cannot be so easily detached from the elite power plays and shady economic dealings that make the projects possible.

## **V. Conclusion**

The synecdoche is a mental trick that lies at the root of the practice of imagining the “imagined community” (Anderson 1983). This is basically the crux of Anderson’s argument: an individual has to *imagine* his or her singular experiences as part of a coherent whole, i.e. a national community. Just as nationalism functions to

transfer attachments to an “objective” territory, allowing citizens to see themselves as supporting something other than the elites who have captured the state-society-territory unit, so too does the “university” (as a coherent “thing”) allow participants to see themselves as supporting something detached from the unequal field of power relations, of which the idea, its material forces, and they themselves are all a part. In this sense, NU is a synecdoche – but doubly so, for the project to bring first-rate (“Western-quality”) education to Kazakhstan is extrapolated to discussions about the transformation of Kazakhstan’s educational system as a whole. This metaphor (for it is more rhetoric than materiality) is part and parcel of the elite vision that Astana is Kazakhstan in miniature; but it is an imaginary that opens doors of opportunity for various actors to pursue their own interests.

But if all the synecdochic projects I have explored here are mere chaotic webs of material forces and agencies, what makes them worthy of study? I argue that they are instructive is that we can see how people have worked with them, and how in doing so, how they subjectivize and govern themselves in unique and contextual ways. We can also see how ostensibly “global” ideas are differently incorporated into broader regimes of government. While it may seem that some idea-bundles “travel” across the world (Tsing 2005), the interesting question is how people “carry” an idea, and how they relate to the idea, use it, rearrange it, and subsequently rearrange their “style of reasoning about the self,” their interests, their actions – as well as their relationship with the state. We should not just consider “the changing ways in which people relate to themselves” (Rose 1999, 84), but the precise intersection between these ideas of the self and the ideas about the “state.” As this chapter has illustrated, this intersection can be usefully interrogated through examining Kazakhstani elite practices of providing “bread and circuses” and popular (non)reception of these “gifts.” The economy of power relations that underpins the Nazarbayev regime’s developmental paternalism has much in common with developmental regimes elsewhere around the world. And like those regimes, the future trajectory and effects of this political order are nowhere near clear, for the very impulse for “progress” is one that brings change, and is thus bound to challenge the inherently unstable boundary between “state” and “society.”

In this chapter, I have thus sought to demonstrate the importance of considering the unique relationship between historically contextual iterations of the state, society, and territory – and the need to examine how these representational practices shift with time. Under Nazarbayev’s guiding hand, Astana’s built landscape not only reflects new conceptions and functions of representation in the independent state, but the city’s image has also crucially constituted this new order as a reality for many people. I have thus explored some of the material and

political economic decisions made by individuals, many of whom are opportunistically working with a set of representational practices. But rather than being relegated to some abstract higher realm apart from the material, these practices are precisely what constitutes the city, the state, and their subjectivity as a material and lived reality. Although the Soviet legacies of paternal state-society relations are central to understanding the evolution of these subjectivities, the capital change is a forceful reminder of how new materialities and new practices of government (of the self and others) are increasingly drawn into being in independent Kazakhstan.



In this chapter, I will briefly review some of the theoretical contributions of this dissertation in the frame of two overarching themes: 1) transactional realities, and 2) practices, power, and technologies of government.

### **I. Transactional realities: State, society, territory**

Our mistake is not that we believe in the State, whereas only states exist: our mistake is that we believe in the State or in states, and we fail to study the practices that project the objectivizations we mistake for the State or its varieties. [...] The problem disappears when we stop mistaking the extrinsic determinations for modalities of the State; it vanishes when we stop believing in the existence of a target, that is, natural objects. (Veyne 1997, 162)

In this dissertation, I have taken Paul Veyne's commentary as a basic starting point: rather than analyze the state as a natural object, I have sought to understand the "state" in Kazakhstan as the correlative of various practices of government. Like Gibson-Graham's (1993) goal of "smashing capitalism," this approach smashes the coherence of the state. But rather than linger at this intellectual moment, I have instead sought to trace the many practices and spatial imaginaries that constitute the material needed to weave the myth of coherence of the state, as well as a distinct Kazakhstani society and territory.

Accordingly, the primary research question I posed in Chapter 1 was: *Since 1991, what forces and power relations, spatial imaginaries, practices of government and representation, and which actors are involved in creating and sustaining the transactional realities of Kazakhstan as a coherent "state," governing a demarcated "society" and "territory"?* In focusing on "transactional realities" – or what others have called "reifications" (e.g. Berger and Pullman 1965), "objectifications" (e.g. Bourdieu 1977), or "fabrications" (Mitchell 2007) – I began with a Foucauldian denial of universals. Throughout this dissertation, I have instead sought to illustrate how the state-society-territory relationship is comprised of a set of bordering practices that stabilize the meaning of each conceptual node, which are reproduced by ordinary citizens and elites alike. Implicated in this triad are a number of other "border wars" (Haraway 1991) between state/society, the real/imaginary, the domestic/foreign, the center/periphery, the urban/rural, the modern/traditional. How these binaries arise and are reproduced are highly political processes, but ones that are frequently taken for granted and naturalized as pre-political, or "truth regimes" (Foucault 1965, 1972, 1975, 1980).

In the case of Astana, the builders, the users, the planners, the observers all participate in this “economy of representation,” submitting themselves as citizens of this “exhibitional world” (Mitchell 1988, 162). Astana’s economy of representation, which I explored in Chapters 5-6, is primarily about constructing an image of modernity and progress. Although Western press and academics consistently describe Astana as a “Potemkin village” (masking an ostensible lack of modernity underneath), I have argued that there cannot be some more “real” modernity “underneath” the representations. Instead, I have scrutinized the various political economic relations and technologies of government enacted in and through the Astana development project.

One particularly important effect of these performances is the way that they can confirm and constitute certain arrangements of power, as well as the spatial imaginaries on which they depend. The main difficulty with narratives about “false modernity” (or “utopia” or “Potemkin villages”), especially as applied to urban landscapes, is that they assume that the urban form’s “exterior” actually reflects some “interior” social reality. By contrast, I argue that this “exterior” – for example, the Astana Stadium or Nazarbayev University – is not just an abstraction, but a concrete reality interacting with political, economic, and quotidian practices. President Nazarbayev may describe the new capital as a symbol, the Western media may read and write it as a different symbol, and citizens may see it as yet another symbol. But the fact is that, despite all this, real people labored to build its new structures, hundreds of millions of dollars changed hands, and hundreds of thousands of people now call it home. By focusing on the quotidian realities and discourses of ordinary citizens in Chapters 4-6, I have endeavored to give a more critical account of the material implications of such representational practices, as well as the agency and complicity of both the bystanders and the elite planners.

Throughout this dissertation, I have sought to demonstrate how these actors constitute themselves as subjects and agents of the state through their practices. The act of discussing the capital change, and the expression of geopolitical imaginaries that are built into these performances, has a subject-forming effect. Kazakhstan’s citizens not only participate in weaving the state’s myth of coherence (as well as the unity of Nazarbayev’s persona), but also identify themselves as its subjects and locate themselves within its geometrically-conceived confines. In this imaginary, they are separate from (“outside of”) the state: they become the stuff that the state governs. So too are they “inside” the state, i.e. in the territorial conception – a fact that is understood to give them privileged access to the Nazarbayev regime’s benevolent provision of economic opportunity and stability. But Nazarbayev’s success is

this respect is intimately tied to Kazakhstan's budding resource economy, and the regime's ability to frame themselves as the "state," i.e. the legitimate arbiter, on behalf of the "people," of the land's natural resources.

As imaginary and practice, the unity of the state-society-territory is the crux of how Kazakhstan's independence-era economic and bureaucratic elites have legitimated their control of the vast natural resource wealthy lying in the state's domain. In this project, they depend on a coherent image of that "state" – because in the form of national energy companies, such as KazMunaiGaz or Kazatomprom, it is to extract the natural resources laying in its territory. These elites claiming to be the state are thus positioned to distribute the income how they wish. This money has gone to a number of dubious people, projects, and causes over the years – many of which revolve already the country's new central node, Astana. As corporate apologetics, an obfuscatory strategy, or outright thievery, the synecdochic imaginary of the Astana development project has been the regime's favored strategy of promoting the image of benevolence. Like the city's many fantastic, and fantastically expensive, new structures, the city itself is said to be "for the people." While some Kazakhstani citizens are skeptical, the overall sentiment appears to be one of approval and enthusiasm for the project. But again, the most important theoretical point from my analysis of the Astana project is that both discussions about it and its physical construction have the effect of producing the transactional realities of the state and a separate citizenry, as well as a geographically-conceived territory.

## **II. Practices, power, and technologies of government**

The analytical tools developed in studies of governmentality are flexible and open-ended. They are compatible with many other methods. They are not hard-wired to any political perspective. What is worth retaining above all from this approach is its creativity. We should not seek to extract a method from the multiple studies of governing, but rather to identify a certain ethos of investigation, a way of asking questions, a focus not upon why certain things happened, but how they happened and the difference that that made in relation to what had gone before. Above all, the aim of such studies is critical, but not critique—to identify and describe differences and hence to help make criticism possible. (Rose et al. 2006, 101)

In my analysis of the three transactional realities of the state, society, and territory, I have employed a Foucauldian practice-based method, with a focus on technologies of government, akin to what Lemke (2007) terms an "analytics of governmentality." But how can we describe the various regimes and arts of government, when we cannot illustrate that certain actors are consciously using the techniques of discipline, security, and/or biopolitics? How are we to understand broader political arrangements, when it seems that most people are not actually aware of the larger significance of shopping in the newest mega-mall, building walls around their villas, studying at NU, or

stepping into their new car? A careful reading of Foucault's work, however, would identify this as a false dilemma. As I argued in Chapter 2, the methodological imperative of Foucault's positivism is "to speak about practice *precisely*" (Veyne 1997, 156), without looking for some "under-layer" of "belief."

From this perspective, power relations and practices of (self-)government are shaped into "regimes" of government *not* through intentions, but outcomes: "through the intense saturation of certain modes or practices" (Nealon 2008, 100). Furthermore, a Foucauldian approach to the "conduct of conduct" would suggest that we look to the nonhuman structures, such as the spatial practices of exclusion I discussed in Chapter 5, which facilitate certain power relationships and naturalize relations of domination. This analytic, which I have understood to be an analysis of "technologies of government," bypasses the academic fixation with "belief" or "consent" – looking instead to the more or less totalizing "structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions" that can make things easier or more difficult (Foucault 1982, 789). Unlike the Marxist work on the state (by the likes of Gramsci, Poulantzas, Jessop, and arguably Giddens), this approach eschews the constant emphasis on uncovering domination and, in turn, also the role of the scholar as an expert unveiler of social reality.

From a Foucauldian perspective, not only are the technologies of government ever-shifting as they are incorporated or excluded from the operation of various power relations, but so too are categories of "the governor," "the governed," and "the self" thoroughly indeterminate. In this relational view, there can be no "static" categories to which an individual pertains, for categories themselves are objectivized and constituted by power relations. In this dissertation, by concentrating on these technologies of government, my goal was to understand what sort of governors, governed, and selves have arisen in independence-era Kazakhstan. As I have argued in the preceding chapters, the overall arrangement of power relations in contemporary Kazakhstan is not as one-sided as Western observers are quick to assume. Commentators often look at a nondemocratic country like Kazakhstan and assume that "society" is "oppressed" by an external state, and that people innately want "freedom" (but either through the means of persuasion or coercion, they acquiesce to authoritarian rule).

In Chapter 2, I began by problematizing the coercion/persuasion binary, and argued that the notion of "freedom" is itself a technology of government – an artifact of liberal arts of government. Like the state and all the other transactional realities I have interrogated here, calling freedom an artifact does not make it "fake." As a transactional reality and a technology of government, freedom is operationalized differently by different regimes of government. Rather than try to characterize these infinitely mutable regimes of government, and arrive at some label

for the arrangement of power in independent Kazakhstan (e.g. “non-liberal” or “authoritarian”), I have sought to trace the technologies of government that constitute the state’s new architecture of power relations. It is tempting to ask, how do the citizens navigate this architecture? But as I argue in Chapter 6, Kazakhstan’s citizens are not “navigating” the new architecture because they *are* the architecture. On this point, it is useful to return to Rose’s definition, quoted in Chapter 2:

A technology of government, then, is an assemblage of forms of practical knowledge, with modes of perception, practices of calculation, vocabularies, types of authority, forms of judgement, architectural forms, human capacities, non-human objects and devices, inscription techniques and so forth, traversed and transected by aspirations to achieve certain outcomes in terms of the conduct of the governed (which also requires certain forms of the conduct on the part of those who would govern). These assemblages are heterogeneous, made up of a diversity of objects and relations linked up through connections and relays of different types. They have no essence. (Rose 1999, 52)

So while I have analyzed these technologies, rather than analyzing a type of governmentality, I pointed to the “developmental” nature of the Nazarbayev regime in Chapter 6. I believe this abstraction is helpful for the case study because developmental regimes often have a unique classification of the “political” – such that “the Emperor is not politics” (Veyne 1990, 296) and such that it becomes technical enterprise of how to achieve the pre-political consensus: an uncontestable goal of progress (March 2003, 309).

Developmental regimes also tend to use a broad array of “liberal” and “illiberal” tactics – such as the way that regimes and selves technologize the self-enterprising individual to support a “nationalist,” but unfree, political system (Hoffman 2006). In Chapter 5, I examined the new practices of exclusion in Astana to understand how this is set in motion, both by ordinary citizens and elites. By exploring these practices as a part of the discussion about the *spatial* imaginaries about *social* divisions within Kazakhstan (and how the two get mapped on to each other), I sought to illustrate a broader point that geopolitical scripts, such as nationalism, do not exist in some more “real” realm outside material and economic practices. I have illustrated throughout the dissertation how individual economic desires and egoistic impulses are colonized by various actors – but noting that these colonization processes fundamentally rely on certain ways of imagining space, the social body, and the interconnection between the two. Such a reading is only possible by breaking down the academic concern with explaining “belief” in nationalist projects or studies of “coercive” regimes.

With respect to nationalism, the problem with delineating between the internalized discourse (“belief”) and the instrumentally-deployed discourse (“performance”), is that it implies a certain valorization of the “spontaneous” and “natural” *emotions* of nationalism, as a more “real” expression of attachment than “artificial” performances and

material relics (e.g. the ubiquitous nationalist billboards in Kazakhstan). This division (of the surface versus an emotional “under-layer”) is essential to a distinctly political bordering practice, in which non-banal expressions of nationalism are coded as “propaganda,” and thus as “unnatural.” By fixating on the “unnatural” or nationalist “propaganda,” many Western scholars of the (former) Soviet Union (with the notable exceptions of Buck-Morss 2000; Kotkin 1995) have the habit of overlooking the fact that the Soviet Union did instill a deep emotional attachment to the “state.” This is still largely the case in today’s Kazakhstan, where the Nazarbayev regime employs the paternalist/developmental tactic of providing of economic opportunity (if meager), stability, and its ability to stimulate their emotions of pride (e.g. through sports, beautiful cities, spectacles – in short, the *imidzh proyekt*). Pride and economic security are not, strictly defined, the function of nationalism. But nationalism works by drawing on the emotions, spatial imaginaries, and materialities of other forces, and is channeled into what appears as a coherent “meta” force, i.e. the coherent state and a “unified” national body.

From this point of view, nationalism is essentially a “mode of being” within a world of nations (Billig 1995). As this dissertation demonstrates, nationalist discourse can be instrumental to subject-formation, forming a certain validating script or “style of reasoning” (Rose 1996) about the self. Foucault’s Greek truth-teller, the *parrhesiastes*, for example, “chooses a specific relationship to himself: he prefers himself as a truth-teller rather than as a living being who is false to himself” (Foucault 2001, 17, emphasis added). And the ultra-nationalist, who might be blind to the “ideological” dimension of her words, is still choosing a relationship with herself – she would prefer herself to be a noble patriot than an ungrateful dissident. Nationalism from this point of view is also fundamentally a bordering practice, in which “us” is delineated from “them” in countless linguistic and material ways (Paasi 2009, forthcoming-a; Said 1994, 2000). This “mode of being” takes shape through daily performances, unfolding in specific socio-historical contexts, or what Paasi (1996) terms “spatial socialization” (see also Bourdieu 1999; Lemke 2007; Painter 2006). As a set of practices, I have argued, nationalist performances are thus best understood as a genre or assemblage of mechanisms that have been variably colonized, utilized, and transformed by state-scale actors – sometimes with a great degree of intentionality and sometimes not.

But the materialities, practices, and spatial imaginaries that constitute and are constituted by transactional realities like the state do not arise out of thin air. Here, elite discursive hegemony comes into sharper focus: elites are in the position to select certain narratives or scripts over others. In this selection process, they then define the field within which other actors must work – both restricting and facilitating opportunities to make a living, build a

stadium, drive a car, live in a high-rise apartment block, or get a good education. In independent Kazakhstan, the script of *konkurentnosposobnost'* ("competitiveness") is a crucial element to articulating the progress-oriented (but not quite free market) political economic agenda. So while the state's actors may espouse nationalist discourses which valorize education, technological advances, and the need to improve Kazakhstan's *konkurentnosposobnost'*, and while many people may internalize and articulate this as their own "opinion," there is a certain material reality that these narratives all support. And equally, the material reality supports these narratives. The car ride across Astana really is so much more comfortable than walking through the snow. Indoor plumbing really is more clean and comfortable than unserviced, outside toilets. And Nazarbayev University really does have more resources than other universities in Kazakhstan.<sup>81</sup> While these material comforts and benefits truly are objects of popular desire, they are ones that people are taught to desire through that impossible web of social interactions and opportunism (i.e. on the part of the entire consumerist apparatus of advertisers, small- and large-scale producers, construction companies, elites seeking to launder resource rents, etc.).

This impossible web is part of the reason that a Foucauldian approach to power is so trying to many practitioners and critics of studies in governmentality. Despite what I believe to be the deeply empirical methodological imperative of an "analytics of governmentality," scholarly work under this banner frequently resorts to highly abstract language, becoming dehumanized and detached from concrete situations.<sup>82</sup> So if we accept Foucault's approach to power as something diffuse and constituted in specific and ephemeral relations, how can we avoid the danger in abstracting it too much and falling into loose and passive constructions? The answer, I have sought to illustrate in the course of this dissertation, is by taking a critical, empirical, practice-based approach that consistently returns to the question: who is doing what? This is a very simple question, but one that is often difficult to answer. It nonetheless demands interrogation in any critical academic enterprise, if we are to combat some of the theoretical laziness (i.e. being content with broad-brush abstractions) that often characterizes a Foucauldian approach. For this reason, I have sought to trace some of the most minute details of various practices in Kazakhstan's reconfigured political geographic environment – as a way to illustrate the various practices of (self-)government and spatial imaginaries that flow together to produce the effect of a coherent whole, but which

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<sup>81</sup> To be fair, these statements are minimally subjective, but they capture a general sense among ordinary citizens that cannot be ignored. No amount of survey data or interviews can "prove" this, but the ethnographic methods I have used over the course of many years in Kazakhstan suggest that there would be little disagreement over these statements.

<sup>82</sup> I think this is largely symptomatic of the fact that the approach is still quite new, and has not yet been taken "to the field" until very recently. Some notable exceptions include Hoffman 2006; Li 2007.

simultaneously erases the effect of individual agency. The actors I have described here are always and, necessarily, *only* responding to the immediate (Nealon 2008, 111).

One of the primary benefits of such a practice-centered approach, I have argued, is that it gets beyond the problematic question of whether or not citizens of “authoritarian” regimes truly “believe” in the “propaganda” espoused by the regimes and the propagators of the personality cults. Practitioners of this approach no longer assume the role of the expert scientist seeking to “unveil” the hidden internal world of the citizen’s mind. Rather, as Mitchell (1991) has argued, the operation of these forms of power depends precisely on the naturalization of this division between the internal, mental realm, and the external, physical realm. The division between state and society operates on the basis of this same dichotomy. It is not just the state’s actors (i.e. elites who have captured the symbolic resources of the script of sovereignty in today’s “system of states”), who are interested in creating the image of its coherence, and as an entity delineated from “society.” Even those individuals who subjectivize themselves as members of “society” (i.e. Kazakhstani “citizens”), and who are in relatively disempowered positions of power vis-à-vis elites, draw on this geopolitical imaginary of the state-society division. As I have discussed in each of the chapters, this division largely is naturalized through rhetorical practices, such as talking about the capital change or relations with China, which are filled with the place- and identity-markers of “here” and “we” and “our.”

Even those who do not identify themselves so readily with the “state” (again, understood as the Nazarbayev regime), they do not challenge the notion of the state as a territorial entity. We saw this especially vividly in Chapter 4, when certain people used discourses about China and national development in order to articulate fears and criticisms about the nature of Kazakhstan’s independence-era political economy. For them, Kazakhstan is still their homeland, and they still support the idea of progress and national greatness. We saw a similar dynamic in Chapter 6, with those individuals who choose not to attend the Astana Day celebrations, or the Astana Lokomotiv games in the new arena. For them, their abstinence could be either self-consciously a political statement or simply pure disinterest. In any case, they confirm themselves as passive actors, outside of the political performances of the regime. Conscious or not, these individuals’ ability to see themselves as part of an external “society” detached from the “state” allows them to see themselves as outside the entire political system (especially in a place where “politics” is primarily understood as elite-level statecraft).

There is nothing “natural” about this state-society division: it is fundamentally a political bordering practice. And when examining practices, the question we should constantly be asking ourselves is, what are their



effects? What political projects and relations of power do they underlie, constitute, and naturalize? As I have argued, in the case of Kazakhstan, the people's desire to either not engage in "politics" – just as much as their active support of the public performances fetishizing the state (e.g. Astana Day) – is precisely what reproduces the paternalist system of power relations. So while the rhetoric of nationalism might allow some people to see their actions as supporting a broader entity ("Kazakhstan") outside of those who have captured it (the Nazarbayev regime), the very articulation of nationalist language is an intrinsically geopolitical and subject-forming act, situating/imagining the speaker in a territorially-conceived political place and as a citizen-resident of it.

Many people in Kazakhstan, however, experience and perform their political subjectivity as one of real love, appreciation, and respect for the homeland and its benevolent leader, President Nazarbayev. The project in Astana, which has become synonymous with his cult of personality, has been an important element to creating this image of benevolence. Moreover, the synecdochic imaginary, on which it depends, makes sense to many people in Kazakhstan (just as the "trickle-down" myth makes sense to many Americans). By focusing on the Astana project, this dissertation has sought to illustrate the "prize-giving" functions of state power, which Gramsci (2008, 247) considers are inseparable from the repressive aspect of law, or what Foucault (1975, 154) frames as a "positive economy" of power. As both great thinkers highlight in these works, the positive and negative economies work in tandem.

Yet, I am not just arguing that the passive and negative economies of power are reflected in the government of *others*, but also in how people choose to govern *themselves*. Here too the active and the passive work together. Individuals in Kazakhstan have infinitely unstable styles of reasoning about the self, which arise and subside in response to an infinite number of interactions and stimuli, but the active supporters of the regime and its passive opponents (who might even be the same person at different moments), are ultimately all part of the same system of power. This system, we must note, is *not* as self-contained as the statist modes of thought would suggest. The persistence of the Nazarbayev regime's hegemonic position in Kazakhstan's web of power relations is made possible not just by these "domestic" arrangements – of the developmental and paternalist state objectivizing a "flock-people" (Veyne 1997, 155) – but also by contemporary "international" arrangements of a world still stuck in the "territorial trap."

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**1. GENDER.**

1. Female
2. Male

**2. YEAR OF BIRTH:** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. WHAT IS YOUR FAMILY STATUS? *(Select one answer)***

1. Single, not married
2. Married
3. Engaged
4. Divorced
5. Widow, widower
6. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

**4. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF YOUR EDUCATION? *(Select one answer)***

1. Elementary or lower
2. Middle school (7-9 class in school)
3. Vocational school, factory trade school (7-9-year education)
4. High school (10-11 class in school)
5. Vocational school, factory trade school (10-11-year education)
6. Middle specialty (technical secondary school)
7. Some college (3-4 years)
8. College diploma
9. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

**5. WHAT IS THE FIELD YOUR OCCUPATION? *(Select one answer)***

1. Farm or forestry
2. Industrial production
3. Construction and/or transport
4. Government sector
5. Culture, science, education, health care
6. Finance, insurance, law, business, marketing
7. Services, goods, food and beverage, communal farming
8. Military, law enforcement
9. Pensioner
10. House-wife
11. Currently unemployed, jobless
12. Student
13. Other
14. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

**6. HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE THE INCOME OF YOUR FAMILY? *(Select one answer)***

1. We can buy everything that we need
2. We have enough money for food and clothes, but the purchase of durable goods is a problem
3. We only have enough money for food
4. We don't even have enough money for food
5. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

**7. IN YOUR OPINION, HOW DO THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU LIVE? *(Select one answer)***

1. No one lives poorly, everyone can live decently
2. It is difficult to live, but it can be tolerated



3. It is not possible to tolerate the difficult living conditions
4. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

## 8. NATIONALITY

1. Yours *(Write out)* \_\_\_\_\_
2. Of your mother *(Write out)* \_\_\_\_\_
3. Of your father *(Write out)* \_\_\_\_\_
4. *(Don't read)* Refuse to answer

## 9. WHAT LANGUAGE DO YOU USUALLY SPEAK AT HOME? *(Write out)*

1. Kazakh predominantly/only
2. Russian predominantly/only
3. Kazakh and Russian equally
4. Chinese (and sometimes Russian)
5. German (and sometimes Russian)
6. Korean (and sometimes Russian)
7. Kyrgyz (and sometimes Russian)
8. Polish (and sometimes Russian)
9. Tatar (and sometimes Russian)
10. Turkish (and sometimes Russian)
11. Ukrainian (and sometimes Russian)
12. Uzbek (and sometimes Russian)
13. Uyghur (and sometimes Russian)
14. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
15. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

## 10. WHICH PLACE DO YOU FOREMOST CONSIDER YOUR HOME? *(Select one answer)*

16. Village (city), where I was born and grew up
17. Place where my children live
18. The native land of my people
19. Land where the graves of my ancestors are located
20. Where I can live best
21. Kazakhstan
22. USSR
23. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
24. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

## 11. ARE YOU PROUD OF BELONGING TO YOUR PEOPLE? *(Select one answer)*

1. Yes, I am very proud
2. Yes, I feel some pride
3. My feelings about this are neutral
4. I am not very proud
5. No, I am not at all proud
6. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

## 12. WHICH ARE THE TOP THREE SOURCES YOU HAVE FOR GETTING NEWS?

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Newspaper	1	1	1

Friends and family	2	2	2
Magazines	3	3	3
Television – local	4	4	4
Television – national	5	5	5
Radio – local	6	6	6
Radio – national	7	7	7
Internet sites (from KZ)	8	8	8
Internet sites (foreign)	9	9	9
Foreign publications	10	10	10
Other:	11	11	11
Difficult to say	12	12	12

**13. HAVE YOU BEEN TO ASTANA?**

1. Yes, as a tourist or on business
2. Yes, I live there / once lived there
3. No

**14.1 DO YOU AGREE WITH THE DECISION TO MOVE THE CAPITAL?**

- 1-2. Yes I agree
- 3-4. No I do not agree
5. Difficult to say

**14.2 DO YOU AGREE WITH THE HOW IT HAS BEEN FUNDED?**

- 2/4. Agree
- 1/3. Disagree
5. Difficult to say

**15. WHAT DO YOU THINK WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR THE CAPITAL CHANGE? THE SECOND? THE THIRD?**

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Taxes	1	1	1
Private donations	2	2	2
President's personal wealth	3	3	3
Domestic oil/gas/construction companies	4	4	4
Foreign oil/gas/construction companies	5	5	5
Other:	6	6	6
Difficult to say	7	7	7

**16. WHAT DO YOU THINK WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR THE CAPITAL CHANGE? THE SECOND? THE THIRD?**

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Almaty was located in an earthquake-prone region	1	1	1
Almaty lacked sufficient space for government expansion	2	2	2
Clan politics	3	3	3
Russian separatism in the north	4	4	4
Economic development in this region	5	5	5
Newly independent Kazakhstan needed a new capital	6	6	6
A capital should be located in the center of a country	7	7	7
Safer from invasion of foreigners	8	8	8
<i>**From whom?</i>			
Other:	9	9	9
Difficult to say	10	10	10

**17. SOME PEOPLE THINK THAT THE NEW CAPITAL HAS IMPROVED THE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE OF KAZAKHSTAN. DO YOU AGREE?** *(Select one answer.)*

1. No -----> *Go to question 19.*
2. Yes -----> *Go to question 18B.*
3. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

**17B. WHAT IN PARTICULAR HAS CONTRIBUTED?** *(rank top 5)*

	1-я	2-я	3-я	4-я	5-я
Astana Day and other major celebrations	1	1	1	1	1
Cycling team "Astana"	2	2	2	2	2
Role as transportation center (e.g. airport, train station)	3	3	3	3	3
International conferences	4	4	4	4	4
Universities and prestigious education opportunities	5	5	5	5	5
Physical appearance of Astana (e.g. new buildings, hotels, shopping centers, etc.)	6	6	6	6	6
Other:	7	7	7	7	7
Other:	8	8	8	8	8
Other:	9	9	9	9	9
<i>(Don't read)</i> Difficult to say	10	10	10	10	10

**18. PLEASE NAME UP TO FIVE CITIES IN KAZAKHSTAN (EXCEPT FOR THE CITY IN WHICH YOU CURRENTLY LIVE)...**

A. ...in which you would like to live in the near future (2-5 years)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**B.** ...in which you would **NOT** like to live in the near future (2-5 years)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**99.** (*Don't read*) Difficult to say

**19. PLEASE NAME UP TO FIVE COUNTRIES (EXCEPT FOR THE COUNTRY OF WHICH YOU ARE A CITIZEN)...**

**A.** ...in which you would like to live in the near future (2-5 years)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**B.** ...in which you would **NOT** like to live in the near future (2-5 years)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**99.** (*Don't read*) Difficult to say

**20. PLEASE RANK THE FOUR COUNTRIES WHICH YOU MOST ADMIRE:**

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Afghanistan	1	1	1	1
Azerbaijan	2	2	2	2
China	3	3	3	3
Czech Republic	4	4	4	4
Egypt	5	5	5	5
France	6	6	6	6
Germany	7	7	7	7
Iran	8	8	8	8
Israel	9	9	9	9
Kyrgyzstan	10	10	10	10
Pakistan	11	11	11	11
Poland	12	12	12	12
Russia	13	13	13	13
Saudi Arabia	14	14	14	14
Spain	15	15	15	15
Tajikistan	16	16	16	16
Turkmenistan	17	17	17	17
UK	18	18	18	18
Ukraine	19	19	19	19
USA	20	20	20	20
Uzbekistan	21	21	21	21
Difficult to say	22	22	22	22

**21. PLEASE RANK THE FOUR COUNTRIES WHICH YOU LEAST ADMIRE:**

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Afghanistan	1	1	1	1
Azerbaijan	2	2	2	2
China	3	3	3	3
Czech Republic	4	4	4	4
Egypt	5	5	5	5
France	6	6	6	6
Germany	7	7	7	7
Iran	8	8	8	8
Israel	9	9	9	9
Kyrgyzstan	10	10	10	10
Pakistan	11	11	11	11
Poland	12	12	12	12
Russia	13	13	13	13
Saudi Arabia	14	14	14	14
Spain	15	15	15	15
Tajikistan	16	16	16	16
Turkmenistan	17	17	17	17
UK	18	18	18	18
Ukraine	19	19	19	19
USA	20	20	20	20
Uzbekistan	21	21	21	21
Difficult to say	22	22	22	22

**22. DO YOU FEEL THAT IT IS DANGEROUS FOR YOU TO TRAVEL TO SOME PARTS OF KAZAKHSTAN?** *(Select one answer)*

1. No
2. Yes. Where? *List up to 5 regions/cities*
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. \_\_\_\_\_
  - E. \_\_\_\_\_

3. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

**23. IN WHICH REGION OF KAZAKHSTAN WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO LIVE?** *(top 3, can include region of current residence)*

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Almatinskaya	1	1	1
East Kazakhstan	2	2	2
Karagandinskaya	3	3	3
Zhambulskaya	4	4	4
South Kazakhstan	5	5	5
Kzyl-Ordinskaya	6	6	6
Aktyubinskaya	7	7	7
Kostanayskaya	8	8	8
North Kazakhstan	9	9	9
Akmolinskaya	10	10	10
Pavlodarskaya	11	11	11
West Kazakhstan	12	12	12
Atyrauskaya	13	13	13
Mangyshlakskaya	14	14	14
Astana	15	15	15

Almaty	16	16	16
dts	17	17	17

**24. IN WHICH REGION OF KAZAKHSTAN WOULD YOU LEAST LIKE TO LIVE?** (lowest 3, can include region of current residence)

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Almatinskaya	1	1	1
East Kazakhstan	2	2	2
Karagandinskaya	3	3	3
Zhambulskaya	4	4	4
South Kazakhstan	5	5	5
Kzyl-Ordinskaya	6	6	6
Aktyubinskaya	7	7	7
Kostanayskaya	8	8	8
North Kazakhstan	9	9	9
Akmolinskaya	10	10	10
Pavlodarskaya	11	11	11
West Kazakhstan	12	12	12
Atyrauskaya	13	13	13
Mangyshlakskaya	14	14	14
Astana	15	15	15
Almaty	16	16	16
dts	17	17	17

**25. WHAT MAKES A REGION DESIRABLE TO LIVE IN?** (rank top 3)

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Economic / work opportunities	1	1	1
Family / ancestor roots there	2	2	2
Entertainment / cultural opportunities	3	3	3
Central location	4	4	4
Good natural environment	5	5	5
Other:	6	6	6
Difficult to say	7	7	7

**26. ARE THERE ECONOMIC REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN KAZAKHSTAN (I.E. ARE SOME REGIONS POORER THAN OTHERS)? DO YOU CONSIDER THIS A PROBLEM, A GOOD THING, OR NEUTRAL?** (Select one answer)

1. Yes → Go to question 26a.
2. No → Go to question 27.

**26A. IF YES, DO YOU HAVE A POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, OR INDIFFERENT ATTITUDE ABOUT THIS?**

1. Positive
2. Somewhat positive
3. Neutral
4. Somewhat negative
5. Negative
6. (Don't read) Difficult to say

**27. SOME PEOPLE THINK THAT THE TOTAL POPULATION OF KAZAKHS LIVING IN KAZAKHSTAN IS TOO LOW. THEY THINK THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SUPPORT POPULATION GROWTH, ESPECIALLY OF KAZAKHS.** (Select one answer)

**A. DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS POSITION?**

1. Yes -----> *Go to question 27B.*
2. No -----> *Go to question 27C.*
3. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

**B. IF YOU AGREE, WHY DO YOU FEEL THIS WAY?**

1. A bigger population is necessary for the security of the country's borders/territory
2. Kazakhs are the titular nationality and should therefore be a majority
3. Kazakhstan's population is too small
4. I feel patriotic / national pride
5. All of the above
6. None of the above
7. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

**C. WHY DO YOU THINK PEOPLE WHO HAVE THIS POSITION FEEL THIS WAY?**

1. They think a bigger population is necessary for the security of the country's borders/territory
2. They think Kazakhs are the titular nationality and should therefore be a majority
3. They think Kazakhstan's population is too small
4. They are patriotic / have national pride
5. All of the above
6. None of the above
7. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

**28. IT'S POSSIBLE TO TRUST ONLY PEOPLE OF MY NATIONALITY.**

7. Strongly agree
8. Mostly agree
9. Neutral
10. Mostly disagree
11. Strongly disagree
12. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

**29. IN THE SCHOOLS IT IS IMPORTANT THAT CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN THE HISTORY AND CULTURE OF ALL NATIONALITIES IN KAZAKHSTAN**

1. Strongly agree
2. Mostly agree
3. Neutral
4. Mostly disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

**30. ETHNIC RELATIONS IN MY LOCALITY WILL IMPROVE WHEN NATIONALITIES ARE SEPARATED INTO TERRITORIES THAT BELONG ONLY TO THEM.**

1. No
2. Yes
3. *(Don't read)* Difficult to say

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT!**

	Hour	Minute
Time at the end of the interview		

*(The following questions are to be completed by the interviewer)*

**31. LEVEL OF INTEREST/MOOD OF THE RESPONDENT IN PARTICIPATION**

1. Angry, aggressive mood
2. Not very inclined to respond
3. Neutral mood
4. Moderately inclined
5. Completely inclined and benevolent

**32. KIND OF SETTLEMENT**

1. Rural location
2. Provincial/small town
3. Big city
4. Suburb of big city

**33. KIND OF HOME**

1. Apartment or condo
2. Individual (private) home
3. Other(*Write out*) \_\_\_\_\_



010000, Астана, ул. Абая, 30-1

тел. (7172) 32-78-52

Проект КУ-сэс/09-10

Область \_\_\_\_\_

Город \_\_\_\_\_ Село \_\_\_\_\_

Тип населенного пункта \_\_\_\_\_

Добрый день, меня зовут \_\_\_\_\_, я интервьюер «ЦЕССИ-Казахстан». Мы проводим опрос, посвященный различным проблемам нашей страны. Мы приглашаем Вас принять участие в этом исследовании. Вы можете быть уверены в том, что содержание Ваших ответов останется строго между нами. Мы предпримем все усилия для сохранения Вашей анонимности. При анализе ответы будут использованы только в обобщенном виде, вместе с ответами других людей. Вы имеете право отозвать свое согласие на участие или прервать свое участие в любой момент, не теряя денежного вознаграждения. Вы имеете право отказаться давать ответ на поставленный вопрос по любой причине. Отказ от участия не лишает респондента положенной ему компенсации.

**ЗАРАНИЕ БЛАГОДАРИМ ЗА СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО!**

\*\*\*\*\*

Дата проведения интервью число \_\_\_\_ месяц \_\_\_\_ Время начала интервью часов \_\_\_\_ минут \_\_\_\_

**1. Пол (интервьюер, не зачитывайте)**

1. Мужской 2. Женский

**2. Год Вашего рождения? \_\_\_\_\_ год****3. Ваше семейное положение? (интервьюер, запишите со слов респондента, только один ответ)**

1. Холост или не замужем
2. Женат или замужем
3. Состою в гражданском браке
4. Разведен(а)
5. Вдовец или вдова
6. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить

**4. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 4/ Какое у Вас образование?**(возможен только **ОДИН** ответ)

1. Нет формального образования
2. Неоконченное начальное (меньше, чем 3 класса)
3. Начальное (окончили начальную школу 3/4 класса)
4. Неполное среднее (окончили 8/9 классов)
5. Среднее общее (10/11 классов)
6. Среднее специальное/профессиональное (2-3 года обучения)
7. Незаконченное высшее (менее 5 лет обучения в ВУЗе)
8. Высшее (5 лет и более университета или института, бакалавр, магистр)
9. Ученая степень (аспирантура, магистратура, докторантура)
10. Не знаю
11. Отказ от ответа

**5. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 5/ Каков основной род Ваших занятий? (возможен только **ОДИН** ответ)**

1. Работа в сельском или лесном хозяйстве
2. Работа в сфере промышленного производства
3. Работа в строительстве, на транспорте, в связи
4. Работа в органах государственного управления
5. Работа в области культуры, науки, образования, здравоохранения,

6. Работа в области финансов, страхования, юридических услуг, услуг для бизнеса, средствах массовой информации
7. Работа в сфере услуг для населения, торговле, общественном питании, коммунальном хозяйстве
8. Военнослужащий, работник правоохранительных органов
9. Пенсионер(-ка)
10. Домохозяйка
11. Временно не работающий(-ая), безработный(-ая)
12. Учащийся, студент(-ка)
13. Другое (напишите) \_\_\_\_\_
14. *(НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ)* Затрудняюсь ответить

---

**6. ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 6/ Скажите, как Вы можете охарактеризовать общий доход всех членов Вашей семьи? (возможен только **ОДИН** ответ)**

1. Можем купить все, что нам необходимо
2. У нас хватает денег на еду и одежду, но покупка предметов длительного пользования представляет для нас проблему
3. У нас хватает денег только на еду
4. Нам не хватает денег даже на еду
5. *(НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ)* Затрудняюсь ответить

---

**7. Какое из следующих высказываний, на Ваш взгляд, более всего подходит к тому, как живут окружающие вас люди? (**ОДИН** ответ)**

1. Все не так уж плохо, и жить можно
2. Жить трудно, но можно терпеть
3. Терпеть наше бедственное положение уже невозможно
4. *(НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ)* Затрудняюсь ответить

---

**8. Национальность:**

1. Ваша (запишите) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Вашей матери (уточните и запишите) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Вашего отца (уточните и запишите) \_\_\_\_\_
4. *(НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ)* Отказ от ответа

---

**9. На каком языке Вы обычно говорите дома? (интервьюер, запишите со слов респондента и если нужно уточните, возможен **ОДИН** вариант ответа)**

1. Казахский преимущественно / только
2. Русский преимущественно / только
3. Казахский и русский поровну
4. Китайский (и иногда русский/другой)
5. Немецкий (и иногда русский/другой)
6. Корейский (и иногда русский/другой)
7. Киргизский (и иногда русский/другой)
8. Польский (и иногда русский/другой)
9. Татарский (и иногда русский/другой)
10. Турецкий (и иногда русский/другой)
11. Украинский (и иногда русский/другой)
12. Узбекский (и иногда русский/другой)
13. Уйгурский (и иногда русский/другой)
14. Другой: \_\_\_\_\_
15. *(НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ)* Затрудняюсь ответить

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**10. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 10/ Какое место Вы считаете в первую очередь своей родиной? (ОДИН ответ)**

1. Деревня (город), где я родился или вырос
2. Место, где живут мои дети
3. Родная земля моего народа
4. Земля, где находятся могилы моих предков
5. Там, где лучше жить
6. Казахстан
7. СССР
8. Другое (ЗАПИШИТЕ) \_\_\_\_\_
9. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить

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**11. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 11/ Гордитесь ли Вы принадлежностью к своему народу? (ОДИН ответ)**

1. Да, я очень этим горжусь
2. Да, у меня есть чувство некоторой гордости
3. Я отношусь к этому спокойно (нейтрально)
4. Не слишком горжусь
5. Нет, я не горжусь этим
6. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить

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**12. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 12/ Что из перечисленного является Вашим самым важным источником новостей? вторым самым важным источником? третьим самым важным источником? (интервьюер, отмечает только самые важные ТРИ)**

	1-я	2-я	3-я
1. Газета	1	1	1
2. Друзья и семья	2	2	2
3. Журналы	3	3	3
4. Местное телевидение	4	4	4
5. Национальное телевидение	5	5	5
6. Радио – местное	6	6	6
7. Радио – национальное	7	7	7
8. Интернет сайты (из Казахстана)	8	8	8
9. Интернет сайты (иностраные)	9	9	9
10. Другие иностранные издания	10	10	10
11. Другой:	11	11	11
12. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить	12	12	12

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**13. Были Вы когда-нибудь в Астане? (один ответ)**

1. Да, как турист или в командировке /по работе был(а)
2. Да, я там тут живу / когда то жил/а
3. Нет

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**14. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 14/ Согласны ли Вы с решением перенести столицу в Астану, и как это решение было финансировано? (только ОДИН ответ)**

1. Да, я согласен(а) с перенесением столицы, но я не согласен(а) с тем, как решение было финансировано.
2. Да, я согласен(а) с перенесением столицы, и я согласен(а) с тем, как решение было финансировано.
3. Нет, я не согласен(а) с перенесением столицы, и я не согласен(а) с тем, как решение было финансировано.

4. Нет, я не согласен(а) с перенесением столицы, но я согласен(а) с тем, как решение было финансировано.
5. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить.

**15. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 15/ Из следующих пунктов, какой Вы считаете самый важный источник финансовой поддержки переноса столицы? второй самый важный? третий? (интервьюер, отмечает только самые важные ТРИ названные респондентом)**

	1-я	2-я	3-я
1. Налоги	1	1	1
2. Частные пожертвования	2	2	2
3. Личный капитал президента	3	3	3
4. Внутренние компании нефти/газа/строительства	4	4	4
5. Международные компании нефти/газа/строительства	5	5	5
6. Другой: _____	6	6	6
7. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить	7	7	7

**16. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 16/ Как Вы считаете, что представляет наиболее важную причину переноса столицы? вторую самую важную? третью?**

	1-я	2-я	3-я
1. Угроза землетрясений в Алматы	1	1	1
2. Недостаток места для государственных органов в Алматы	2	2	2
3. Политика кланов	3	3	3
4. Русский сепаратизм на севере	4	4	4
5. Экономическое развитие в этом регионе	5	5	5
6. Независимому Казахстану нужна новая столица	6	6	6
7. Столица должна находиться в центре страны	7	7	7
8. Защита от иностранного вторжения	8	8	8
8а. **От кого? Уточните _____			
9. Другой: _____	9	9	9
10. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить	10	10	10

**17. Некоторые люди считают, что новая столица улучшила международный имидж Казахстана. Согласны ли Вы? (только ОДИН ответ)**

1. Нет → ПЕРЕХОДИТЕ К ВОПРОСУ 18
2. Да → ПЕРЕХОДИТЕ К ВОПРОСУ 17Б
3. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить

**17Б. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 17Б/ Что именно сыграло в этом роль? (можно ответить только ПЯТЬ)**

	1-я	2-я	3-я	4-я	5-я
1. День Астаны и разные большие праздники	1	1	1	1	1
2. Велоспортивная команда «Астана»	2	2	2	2	2
3. Роль Астаны как транспортного центра (аэропорт, вокзал)	3	3	3	3	3
4. Международные конференции	4	4	4	4	4
5. Университеты и престижные академические институты	5	5	5	5	5
6. Внешний вид Астаны (например: новые здания, гостиницы, торговые центры, и т.д.)	6	6	6	6	6
7. Другой: _____	7	7	7	7	7
8. Другой: _____	8	8	8	8	8
9. Другой: _____	9	9	9	9	9
10. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить	10	10	10	10	10

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**18. Назовите, пожалуйста, до пяти городов в Казахстане (кроме города, в котором вы сейчас живете)**

...

**А.** ...в которых Вы хотели бы жить в ближайшем будущем (2-5 лет)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Б.** ...в которых Вы НЕ хотели бы жить в ближайшем будущем (2-5 лет)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

99. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить

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**19. Назовите, пожалуйста, до пяти стран (кроме страны, гражданином или гражданкой которой Вы являетесь) ...**

**А.** в которых Вы хотели бы жить в ближайшем будущем (2-5 лет)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Б.** в которых Вы НЕ хотели бы жить в ближайшем будущем (2-5 лет)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

99. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить

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**20. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 20/ Как Вы считаете, какие из следующих стран вызывают Ваше НАИБОЛЬШЕЕ уважение? (первый 4)**

	1-я	2-я	3-я	4-я
1. Афганистан	1	1	1	1
2. Азербайджан	2	2	2	2
3. Китай	3	3	3	3
4. Чехия	4	4	4	4
5. Египет	5	5	5	5
6. Франция	6	6	6	6
7. Германия	7	7	7	7
8. Иран	8	8	8	8
9. Израиль	9	9	9	9
10. Кыргызстан	10	10	10	10
11. Пакистан	11	11	11	11
12. Польша	12	12	12	12
13. Россия	13	13	13	13
14. Саудовская Аравия	14	14	14	14
15. Испания	15	15	15	15
16. Таджикистан	16	16	16	16

17. Туркменистан	17	17	17	17
18. Великобритания	18	18	18	18
19. Украина	19	19	19	19
20. США	20	20	20	20
21. Узбекистан	21	21	21	21
22. Затрудняюсь ответить	22	22	22	22

**21. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 21/ Как Вы считаете, какие из следующих стран вызывают Ваше НАИМЕНЬШЕЕ уважение? (первый 4)**

	1-я	2-я	3-я	4-я
1. Афганистан	1	1	1	1
2. Азербайджан	2	2	2	2
3. Китай	3	3	3	3
4. Чехия	4	4	4	4
5. Египет	5	5	5	5
6. Франция	6	6	6	6
7. Германия	7	7	7	7
8. Иран	8	8	8	8
9. Израиль	9	9	9	9
10. Кыргызстан	10	10	10	10
11. Пакистан	11	11	11	11
12. Польша	12	12	12	12
13. Россия	13	13	13	13
14. Саудовская Аравия	14	14	14	14
15. Испания	15	15	15	15
16. Таджикистан	16	16	16	16
17. Туркменистан	17	17	17	17
18. Великобритания	18	18	18	18
19. Украина	19	19	19	19
20. США	20	20	20	20
21. Узбекистан	21	21	21	21
22. Затрудняюсь ответить	22	22	22	22

**22. Скажите, есть ли такие регионы в Казахстане, где Вам может угрожать какая-нибудь опасность? (ОДИН ответ)**

1. Нет      2. Да. Где? Пишите до 5-и областей/городов      3. Затрудняюсь ответить

А. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Б. \_\_\_\_\_  
 В. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Г. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Д. \_\_\_\_\_

**23. В какой области/областях Казахстана хотели бы Вы большее жить? (только ТРИ варианта)**

	1-я	2-я	3-я
1. Алматинская область	1	1	1
2. Восточно-Казахстанская область	2	2	2
3. Карагандинская область	3	3	3
4. Жамбылская область	4	4	4
5. Южно-Казахстанская область	5	5	5
6. Кызылординская область	6	6	6
7. Актюбинская область	7	7	7
8. Костанайская область	8	8	8

9. Северо-Казахстанская область	9	9	9
10. Акмолинская область	10	10	10
11. Павлодарская область	11	11	11
12. Западно-Казахстанская область	12	12	12
13. Атырауская область	13	13	13
14. Мангистауская область	14	14	14
15. Астана	15	15	15
16. Алматы	16	16	16
17. Затрудняюсь ответить	17	17	17

ПОСЛЕ ЭТОГО ВОПРОСА ПЕРЕХОДИМ К ВОПРОСУ 25

**24. В какой области/областях Казахстана хотели бы Вы меньше жить? (ТРИ неименные привлекательные области, можно включать область проживания)**

	1-я	2-я	3-я
1. Алматинская область	1	1	1
2. Восточно-Казахстанская область	2	2	2
3. Карагандинская область	3	3	3
4. Жамбылская область	4	4	4
5. Южно-Казахстанская область	5	5	5
6. Кызылординская область	6	6	6
7. Актюбинская область	7	7	7
8. Костанайская область	8	8	8
9. Северо-Казахстанская область	9	9	9
10. Акмолинская область	10	10	10
11. Павлодарская область	11	11	11
12. Западно-Казахстанская область	12	12	12
13. Атырауская область	13	13	13
14. Мангистауская область	14	14	14
15. Астана	15	15	15
16. Алматы	16	16	16
17. Затрудняюсь ответить	17	17	17

**25. Что делает эту область наиболее привлекательной для жизни? (возможно только ТРИ варианта)**

	1-я	2-я	3-я
1. Там есть работа / хорошие экономические возможности	1	1	1
2. Там живёт семья и находятся корни предков	2	2	2
3. Развлечения / культура	3	3	3
4. Центральное место	4	4	4
5. Хорошая природа	5	5	5
6. Другой:	6	6	6
7. Затрудняюсь ответить	7	7	7

**26. Как Вы считаете, есть ли экономическое неравенство в Казахстане (то есть, есть ли какие-то регионы, которые беднее чем другие)?**

1. Да → ПЕРЕХОД К ВОПРОСУ 26а.
2. Нет → ПЕРЕХОД К ВОПРОСУ 27

**26а. Если да, относитесь ли Вы к этому положительно, отрицательно, или вам все равно? (один ответ)**

1. Отношусь положительно
2. Скорее положительно
3. Отношусь безразлично
4. Скорее отрицательно
5. Совершенно отрицательно

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**27. Некоторые люди считают что общая численность казахов живущих в Казахстане слишком мало. Они считают, что правительство должно поддерживать рост населения, особенно казахов? (ОДИН ответ)**

**А. Согласны ли Вы с этим утверждением?**

1. Да → *ПЕРЕХОДИТЕ К ВОПРОСУ 27Б*
2. Нет → *ПЕРЕХОДИТЕ К ВОПРОСУ 27В*
3. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить → *ПЕРЕХОДИТЕ К ВОПРОСУ 28*

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**Б. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 27Б/ Если согласны, почему Вы так считаете?**

1. Большее население необходимо для безопасности границ и территории страны
2. Казахи титульная национальность и должны быть большинством
3. Население Казахстана слишком маленькое
4. У меня есть чувство патриотизма / национальной гордости
5. Все пункты приведённые выше
6. Ничего из вышеперечисленного
7. Другое (напишите) \_\_\_\_\_
8. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить

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**В. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 27В/ Как Вы считаете, почему такие люди так считают?**

1. Они считают, что большее население необходимо для безопасности границ и территории страны
2. Они считают, что Казахи титульная национальность и должны быть большинством
3. Они считают, что население Казахстана слишком маленькое
4. Они патриоты / имеют национальную гордость
5. Все пункты приведённые выше
6. Ничего из вышеперечисленного
7. Другое (напишите) \_\_\_\_\_
8. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить

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**28. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 28/ Доверять можно только людям своей национальности.**

1. Совершенно согласен
2. Скорее согласен
3. Не могу сказать ни да, ни нет
4. Скорее не согласен
5. Совершенно не согласен
6. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить

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**29. /ИНТЕРВЬЮЕР ПОПРОСИТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТА ОТКРЫТЬ КАРТОЧКУ 29/ Дети должны изучать в школе историю и культуру всех народов, живущих в Казахстане.**

1. Совершенно согласен
2. Скорее согласен
3. Не могу сказать ни да, ни нет
4. Скорее не согласен
5. Совершенно не согласен
6. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить

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**30. Отношения между народами улучшатся, когда национальности будут разделены по территориям, которые принадлежат только им.**

1. Нет
2. Да



3. (НЕ ЗАЧИТЫВАЙТЕ) Затрудняюсь ответить

---

**БЛАГОДАРИМ ЗА УЧАСТИЕ В ИССЛЕДОВАНИИ!**

Время окончания интервью Часов \_\_\_\_ Минут \_\_\_\_

*СЛЕДУЮЩИЕ ВОПРОСЫ ЗАПОЛНЯЮТСЯ ИНТЕРВЬЮЕРОМ*

**31. Мера заинтересованности/расположенности респондента отвечать на вопросы исследования**

1. Раздражён, настроен агрессивно
2. Скорее не расположен
3. Настроен нейтрально
4. Скорее расположен
5. Вполне расположен и благожелателен

---

**32. Тип поселения**

1. В сельской местности
2. В поселке городского типа или небольшом городе
3. В крупном городе
4. В пригороде крупного города

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**33. Тип жилья**

1. Квартира в многоквартирном доме
2. Индивидуальный дом (часть дома) /частный дом
3. Другое (ЗАПИШИТЕ) \_\_\_\_\_

*ЗАЧИТАЙТЕ РЕСПОНДЕНТУ:*

**Это все вопросы, которые мы хотели Вам задать. Благодарим за помощь в работе!**

**ПО ВСЕМ ВОПРОСАМ ВЫ МОЖЕТЕ ОБРАТИТЬСЯ К НАМ. НАШ ТЕЛЕФОН В АСТАНЕ: +7 /7172/ 32-78-52**

*ДЛЯ КОНТРОЛЯ РАБОТЫ ИНТЕРВЬЮЕРА ПОСЛЕ ЗАПОЛНЕНИЯ АНКЕТЫ К ВАМ МОГУТ ПОЗВОНИТЬ В ЦЕЛЯХ ПОДТВЕРЖДЕНИЯ ПРОВЕДЕНИЯ ОПРОСА. ДЛЯ ЭТОГО ПРОСИМ ВАС СООБЩИТЬ НОМЕР ВАШЕГО ТЕЛЕФОНА*

**РУЧАТЕЛЬСТВО ИНТЕРВЬЮЕРА:**

Я удостоверяю, что опрос проведен мною в соответствии с Инструкцией методом личного интервью с отобранным по Инструкции респондентом. ФИ ИНТЕРВЬЮЕРА \_\_\_\_\_

Номер интервьюера ! \_\_\_\_\_ ! Подпись ! \_\_\_\_\_ !

Дата проведения интервью: \_\_\_\_\_ число \_\_\_\_\_ месяца 2010 года

КОД \_\_\_\_\_ ВВОД \_\_\_\_\_

*Contents of this appendix:*

- 1) Instructions for moderator*
- 2) Trigger images. Some or all of these images were used, but it varied in each group.*
- 3) Moderator script in Russian and English*
- 4) Pre-survey administered to participants*

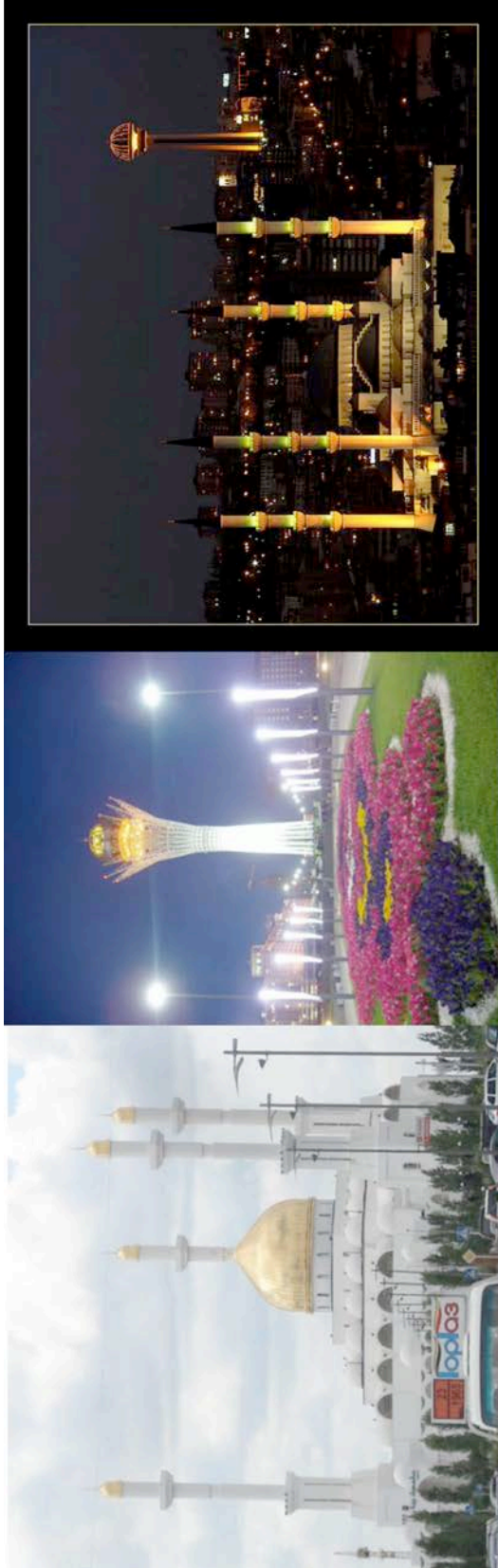
## FOCUS GROUP INSTRUCTIONS

### Instructions for the moderator:

1. The most important thing to remember is that the moderator is NOT A PARTICIPANT.
2. The moderator's job is to *ask questions*. Please use the script as a guide. It is NOT necessary to ask *all* the questions.
3. The goal of a "focus group" is to examine discussions between participants. You are asked to facilitate this discussion, but not participate directly in it.
4. Thank you for your help!

### Instructions for the participants:

1. Please read and sign the consent form.
2. The discussion will be recorded. If this is not ok with you, you may leave.
3. Please complete the short survey. Do NOT write your name, but the NUMBER you are given.
4. All responses are anonymous.
5. You do not have to answer a question if you don't want to.
6. You may leave at any time.
7. One person should speak at a time. Please be respectful of others.
8. We will discuss one image at a time. Please do not look ahead.
9. Please contact Natalie afterwards if you have any questions or concerns.
10. Thank you for your help!

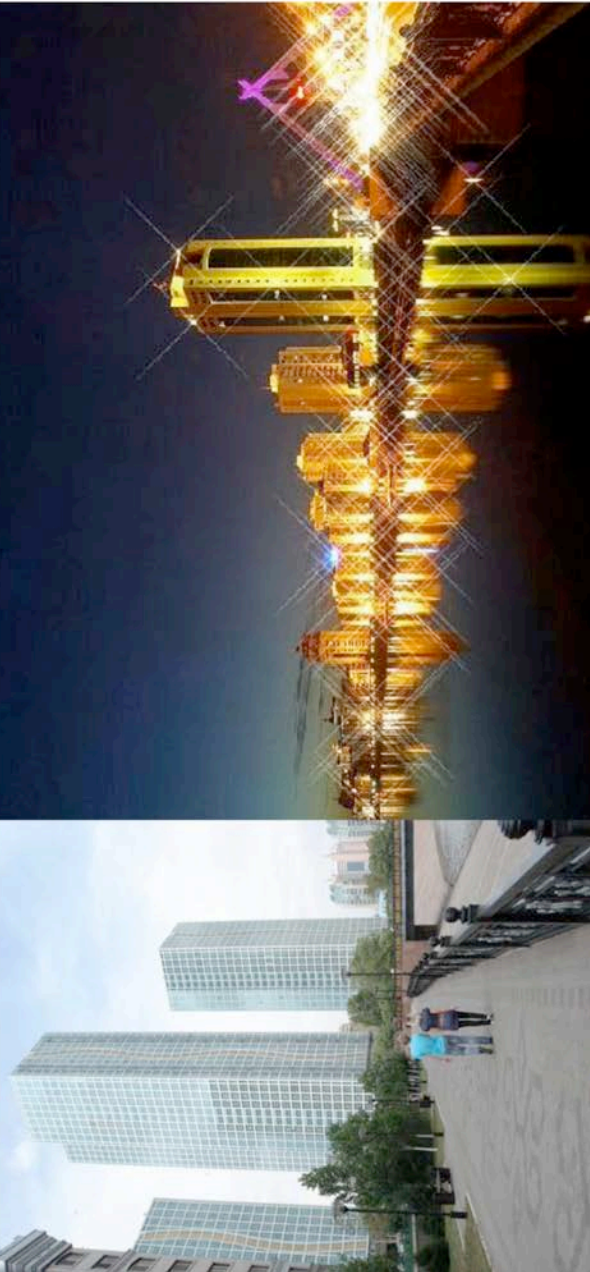


**Trigger image 1:**

Top row: Astana mosque on Left Bank; Baiterek tower;  
Atakule tower and mosque in Ankara  
Bottom row: Building in Astana; Armada building in  
Ankara

**Reason for selection/ discussions it aims to trigger:** I would like participants to interpret the meaning of Astana's new cityscape for themselves personally, and for their sense of how it factors into Kazakhstan's geopolitical "place" in the world. I also want to juxtapose this to the cityscape of Ankara, which has remarkable similarities, and see if participants can even identify the two images on the right as being in Turkey (or at least not in Astana). If they can, I would like this to stimulate discussion about the role of Turkish construction firms in Astana's development.



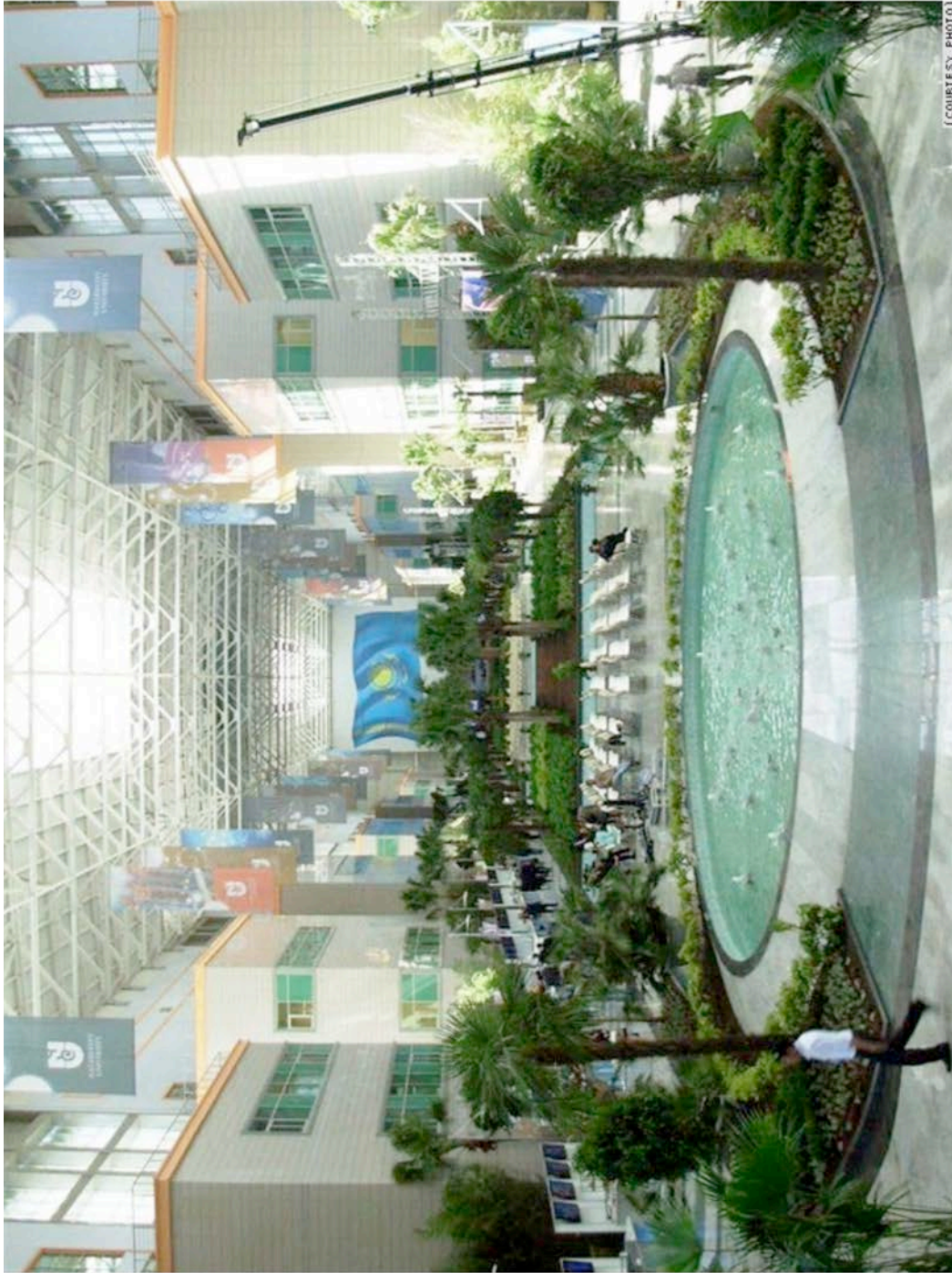


#### Trigger image 2:

Top row: Dubai cityscape, Dubai marina apartments  
Bottom row: Buildings on Astana's Left Bank and along the Irtysh

**Reason for selection/ discussions it aims to trigger:** Similar to the first trigger, I would like to see if participants can identify the images from Dubai. In particular I would like this to bring about discussion of the role of large skyscrapers in promoting a certain image of the city internationally. Do they think this kind of development is worthy, or a waste of money? Who lives and/or works in these places, and do they have a sense of who is responsible for bringing them about (e.g. government/private investors)? How are they funded (e.g. oil revenue)? Should Kazakhstan aspire to what Dubai has achieved?





**Trigger image 3:** Nazarbayev University in Astana, opened in summer 2010

**Reason for selection/ discussions it aims to trigger:** I would like participants to discuss the role of the higher education system/institutes in Astana, which tend to be presidential pet projects.



**Trigger image 4:** Billboard on premises of the Eurasian University in Astana , with quotation from President Nazarbayev, image of the presidential palace and the Eurasian University in the background, globe/map of Astana in the center of Eurasia in the place of the orb of the Baierbek tower in the foreground (June 2009)

*It reads:*

Время показало жизнеспособность и востребованность идеи евразийского союза. Она не осталась лишь теоретическим постулатом, и находит реальное воплощение на практике.

Time has shown the vitality and relevance of the idea of the Eurasian Union. It did not remain merely a theoretical postulate, and finds concrete manifestation in practice.

**Reason for selection/ discussions it aims to trigger:** I would like

participants to consider the various symbols present here – the various buildings, the idea of the university, the tower, the map with Astana located in the “heart” of Eurasia, the text – all of which factor into a particular vision of “nationhood” and Kazakhstan’s place in the world.





**Trigger image 5:** “Patriotic” Kazakhstan underwear

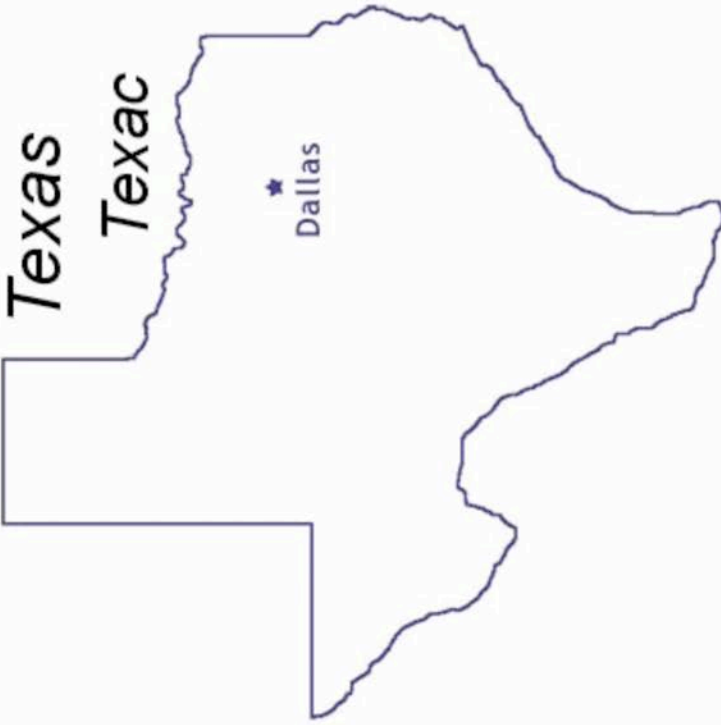
**Reason for selection/ discussions it aims to trigger:** These underwear caused a minor controversy because they are “patriotic” and very popular, but they were made in and imported from China. I hope this will stimulate discussion on the role of patriotism in Kazakhstan, but also the role of Chinese goods and other investment in Kazakhstan’s economy.



**Trigger image 6:** Alexander Vinokourov in Astana cycling team uniform

**Reason for selection/ discussions it aims to trigger:** I would like participants to reflect on high-profile state efforts to “sell” the Astana (Kazakhstan) “brand”. I would also like to hear general thoughts on athletics and athletes in Kazakhstan, which I expect to shed light on issues of geopolitics, nationalism, and gender in particular. Aware the Vinokourov is something of a national hero, I am hoping this might also trigger a discussion about the place of Russians in Kazakhstan.





**Trigger image 7:** Map of South Kazakhstan *Oblast* ' and map of Texas

**Reason for selection/ discussions it aims to trigger:** I would like participants to discuss the commonplace cliché that Shymkent/South Kazakhstan *Oblast* ' "is" Texas – and I expect conversations to differ drastically between the focus groups conducted in Shymkent and those elsewhere. I am interested in what sort of parallels people draw between the two places, and how they reflect certain imaginaries of place and regional identity within Kazakhstan, and how these are caught up with broader geopolitical issues, such as relations with Kazakhstan's southern neighbors, borders, and the minority Uzbek population concentrated in this area.

## FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR SCRIPT

### I. Introduction

Aim: To understand your views on Kazakhstan's new capital and Kazakhstan's place in the world

Rules: Be respectful of all fellow participants; there are no wrong answers

Disclaimers: You can leave at any time; all responses are completely anonymous and secure

Compensation: You can leave at any time and still collect the proportion of tenge

Contact: If you have additional questions, comments, or concerns, please contact us

Main Research Questions: See the first page of the "Participant Kit" to understand the aim of the meeting

### II. Survey

Please take the first 15 minutes to complete the survey (which includes questions on socio-demographics, prevailing identities, group relations, geopolitical imaginations, and the capital change)

### III. Topics - ONLY TURN ONE PAGE AT A TIME!

#### Trigger 1

- Where do these images come from?
  - *If participants don't know, tell them that the left-hand images are from Astana, the right-hand images are from Ankara*
- Compare and contrast Astana and Ankara
- Many buildings in Astana are built by Turkish companies. Why do you think that they use the same style in Astana as in Ankara?
- Please think about the role of religious structures such as these mosques in the capital cities. What does it say about the identity of Kazakhstan and/or Turkey?

#### Trigger 2

- Where do these images come from?
  - *If participants don't know, tell them that the upper-row images are from Dubai, and the bottom images are from Astana*
- Compare and contrast Astana and Dubai
- What role do you think oil plays in both of these cities?
- The new construction in Astana includes many skyscrapers like those in Dubai and other major cities. What do you think about the style of this development?
- How do you think the construction of these cities is funded? Who do you think designs and/or plans it?
- Who do you think lives and works in these places? Are these beautiful new buildings reserved for use by everyone or only some segments of the population?
- Should Astana aspire to what Dubai has achieved?

#### Trigger 3

- Please share your thoughts on the Mega shopping centers
- What is appealing? What is not appealing?
- Do you like to spend time there? Why or why not?
  - *If there is no Mega in your city – do you think you would go there if your city had one?*
- How do you think Mega compares to other malls and shopping centers in Europe and/or America?
- Many Mega centers have a Ramstor in them. What do you think of Ramstor?

#### Trigger 4

- Where does this image come from?
  - *If participants don't know, tell them it is the new Nazarbayev University in Astana, opened in summer 2010*
- Please share your thoughts on the importance of higher education institutions in Kazakhstan
- President Nazarbayev has many projects to develop education in Kazakhstan (e.g. Bolashaker program, Eurasian University, Nazarbayev University, etc.). Why do you think this is his priority? Do you agree with this being a priority?

#### Trigger 5

- Please identify the important symbols and images that you see in this billboard
- President Nazarbayev has a dream to create a “Eurasian Union.”
  - Do you think this is a *good* idea? Why or why not?
  - Do you think it is a *realistic* idea? Why or why not?
- Where do you think “Eurasia” is?
- What does the term “Eurasian” mean to you? Is it just government rhetoric or does it have concrete meaning?
- Do you think the term “Eurasian” can be applied to Kazakhstan?
  - If so, what makes Kazakhstan “Eurasian”?
  - If not, why not?
- Astana and Kazakhstan are often called the “geopolitical heart of Eurasia.” What does that mean? Why is that significant?
- Astana is located closer to the center of Kazakhstan. Do you think this was a reason that the government moved the capital there from Almaty? Why or why not? What is significant about the capital being located in the center of the country?

#### Trigger 6

- What do you know about the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)?
- Kazakhstan was the chair of the OSCE this year. What do you think about this?
- What is Kazakhstan’s relationship with Europe?
  - Is it part of Europe?
  - Are there major differences between life in Kazakhstan and in Europe?
- Kazakhstan has joined many international organizations like the OSCE and the United Nations, since it gained independence.
  - Do you think this is important? Why or why not?
  - What does it mean when a country is part of an international organization? Does this help increase international prestige? Does it change anything about Kazakhstan’s domestic politics?

#### Trigger 7

- Have you seen these underwear before? Do you know anything about them?
  - *If participants don’t know, explain that these underwear were made in China and some people were very upset that “patriotic” clothing was being sold here, but was not made in Kazakhstan.*
- Do you like this sort of patriotic clothing? Do you like when fellow citizens wear patriotic clothing?
- Do you have another understanding of what patriotic clothing is, e.g. “traditional” Kazakh clothing?
- How does it make you feel that these underwear were made in China? Why?
- What do you think about the fact that many consumer goods in Kazakhstan come from China?
- Do you think increased trade and cooperation with China is a good thing? Why or why not?
- Does China pose any threats to Kazakhstan? If so, what are they?

#### Trigger 8

- Who is this?
  - *If participants don’t know, tell them it is Alexander Vinokourov, a cyclist from Kazakhstan (Petropavl), who has participated in the Tour de France and who once won the Vuelta a España.*
- What do you think of Vinokourov? Do you like him more or less because he is a Russian (who is very proud of being from Kazakhstan)? Are there many Russians like him in Kazakhstan?
- What do you think of the Astana cycling team?
  - *If participants don’t know, tell them that Alberto Contador, the winner of the 2009 and 2010 Tour de France, was riding for Astana. Lance Armstrong was a member of Astana in 2009.*
- Does the success of Astana make you proud?
- Does it matter to you that many Astana cycling team members are foreigners?
- Should Astana team members consist of more Kazakhs?
- What do you think of the state of athletics in Kazakhstan?

- Do you think there are many athletes from Kazakhstan who are internationally famous?
  - If so, who are they?
  - If not, why do you think there are so few?
- Do you think it should be a government priority to increase the success of Kazakhstan's athletes? Do you think the government should spend more or less money on athletics?
- Do you think it is important for Kazakhstan to host major sports events, like the Asian Winter Games in 2011? Why or why not?

#### Trigger 9

- Where do you think these images come from?
  - Image on left: Petropavlovsk
  - Image on right: Ust'-Kamenogorsk
- Do you think there is a reason that these particular images are found in these particular places?
- Do you think the government has to make an extra effort to make the northern parts of feel part of a "unified" Kazakhstan?
- Was there ever a threat that the northern parts of Kazakhstan would try to secede? If they had, would that have been a good or bad thing?
- Why do you think the people in the north have never made any serious efforts to secede? Or have they?
- Do you notice signs and billboards like this in Kazakhstan? Do you think they serve a purpose, i.e. are they effective in making people think a certain way about diversity in Kazakhstan?

#### Trigger 10

- Many people in Kazakhstan say that Shymkent/South Kazakhstan oblast' is Texas. Why do they say this?
- Compare and contrast these two places
- Both South Kazakhstan oblast' and Texas are on the southern border of their countries. Do you think this makes them have something in common?
  - E.g. Are they faced with threats that come from their southern neighbors?
  - E.g. Are there minority populations in these areas that change the cultural environment of the places?
- Are there benefits to being close to the border with Kazakhstan's southern neighbors?
- Many people in Kazakhstan say that South Kazakhstan oblast' is more "traditional" than the rest of Kazakhstan. Why do they say this? What does "traditional" mean? Is this a positive or negative characteristic?
- Many people in Kazakhstan say that South Kazakhstan oblast' is a dangerous place. Why do you think people say this? Do you agree? Why or why not?

## СЦЕНАРИЙ ДЛЯ МОДЕРАТОРА ФОКУС-ГРУППЫ

### I. Вступление

Цель: Понять ваши взгляды на новую столицу Казахстана и место Казахстана в мире

Правила: Проявляйте уважение ко всем участникам; нет неправильных ответов. Вы можете в любое время уйти; все ответы полностью анонимны и защищены.

Компенсация: Вы можете уйти в любое время и всё равно забрать часть денег.

Контакт: Если у вас дополнительные вопросы, комментарии, или опасения, пожалуйста свяжитесь с нами.

### II. Анкета

Пожалуйста использовать первые пятнадцать минут чтобы заполнить анкету.

### III. Темы - ПЕРЕВОРАЧИВАЙТЕ ПО ОДНОЙ СТРАНИЦЕ!

#### Стимул 1

- От куда эти изображения?
  - Если участники не знают, скажите им что изображения с левой стороны из Астаны, с правой из Анкары
- Сравните Астану и Анкару
- Много зданий в Астане построены Турецкими компаниями. Как вы думаете, почему они используют тоже стиль в Астане и в Анкаре?
- Пожалуйста подумайте о роли религиозных структур, как мечети в столицах. Что это говорит о лице Казахстана и/или Турции?

#### Стимул 2

- От куда эти изображения?
  - Если участники не знают, скажите им что верхние изображения из Дубая, нижние из Астаны
- Сравните Астану и Дубай
- Какую роль вы думаете нефть играет в этих городах?
- Новое строительство в Астане включает много небоскрёбов как в Дубае и в других больших городах. Что вы думаете о стиле этого строительства?
- Как вы думаете строительство в этих городах финансировано? По вашему мнению, кто планирует это строительство?
- По вашему мнению, кто живет и работает в этих местах? Все ли в обществе имеют право использовать эти красивые новые здания, или только определённые прослойки общества?
- Должна ли Астана стремиться к тому что достиг Дубай?

#### Стимул 3

- Пожалуйста поделитесь своими мыслями о торговом центре “Мега”
- В чём состоит его привлекательность? И чем не привлекателен?
- Нравится ли вам проводить там время? Почему или почему нет?
  - Если в вашем городе нет Мега – как вы думаете, вы ходили бы туда если бы в вашем городе он был?
- Как вы думаете Мега сравнивается с другими моллами и торговыми центрами в Европе и/или в Америке?
- В многих Мега центрах есть Рамстор. Какое ваше мнение о Рамсторе?

#### Стимул 4

- От куда эти изображения?
  - Если участники не знают, скажите им что это изображение Назарбаевского Университета в Астане, который открылся летом двухтысячи десятого года.
- Пожалуйста поделитесь своими мыслями о важности высших учебных заведений в Казахстане
- Президент Назарбаев имеет много проектов чтобы развивать образование в Казахстане (например, Болашакер программа, Евроазиатский Университет, Назарбаевский Университет, и так далее). По вашему мнению, почему это его приоритет? Вы согласны с таким приоритетом?

#### Стимул 5

- Пожалуйста определите важные символы и изображения которые вы видите на рекламном щите.
- Президент Назарбаев мечтает создать “Евразийский Союз.”
  - По вашему мнению, это хорошая идея? Почему или почему нет?
  - По вашему мнению, это реалистичная идея? Почему или почему нет?
- Где вы думаете “Евразия” находится?
- Что слово “Евразийский” вам говорит? Это просто государственный лозунг или оно имеет конкретное значение?
- Может ли слово “Евразийский” применяться по отношению к Казахстану?
  - Если да, что делает Казахстан “евразийским”?
  - Если нет, почему нет?
- Астана и Казахстан часто называются “геополитическое сердце Евразии.” Что это означает? Почему это важно?
- Астана располагается ближе к центру Казахстана. По вашему мнению, было ли это причиной по которой государство перенесло туда столицу из Алматы? Почему или почему нет? Почему важно столице находиться в центре страны?

#### Стимул 6

- Что вы знаете об ОБСЕ (Организация по безопасности и сотрудничеству в Европе)?
- Казахстан был председателем ОБСЕ в этом году. Что вы об этом думаете? Какие отношения у Казахстана с Европой?
  - Является ли Казахстан частью Европы?
  - Есть ли большая разница между жизнью в Казахстане и жизнью в Европе?
- Казахстан стал членом многих международных организаций, как ОБСЕ и Организация Объединённых Наций, с тех пор как он стал независимым.
  - По вашему мнению, это важно? Почему или почему нет?
- Что это обозначает когда страна является членом международной организации? Помогает ли это повышать международный престиж? Меняет ли это что-то во внутренней политике Казахстана?

#### Стимул 7

- Вы когда-то видели эти трусы? Вы что-то про них знаете?
  - *Если участники не знают, объясните им что эти трусы были сделаны в Китае и некоторые люди очень расстроены что “патриотическая” одежда продаётся в Казахстане но не производится в Казахстане.*
- Нравится ли вам такая патриотическая одежда? Нравится ли вам когда ваши сограждане носят патриотическую одежду?
- Есть ли у вас другое понимание о том что такое патриотическая одежда, например, “традиционная” Казахская одежда?
- Как вы реагируете на факт что трусы были сделаны в Китае? Почему?
- Какое у вас мнение о том что многие товары в Казахстане из Китая?
- Как вы думаете, хорошо ли расширение торговли и сотрудничества с Китаем? Почему или почему нет?
- Представляет ли Китай какую нибудь угрозу для Казахстана? Если да, какую?

#### Стимул 8

- Кто это?
  - *Если участники не знают, скажите им что это Александр Винокуров, велосипедист из Казахстана (Петропавла), который участвовал в Тур де Франс и кто один раз победил в Вуелта а Испания.*
- Какое ваше мнение о Винокурове? Он вам нравится больше или меньше потому что он русский (который очень гордится тем что он из Казахстана)? Есть ли много таких русских как он в Казахстане?
- Какое ваше мнение о велосипедной команде “Астана”?

- Если участники не знают, скажите им что Алберто Контадор, победитель двухтысячидеятого и двухтысячидесятого Тур де Франс, катался за Астану. Ланс Армстронг был членом команды “Астана” в двухтысячидеятом году.
- Гордитесь ли вы успехами команды “Астана”?
- Важно ли вам что многие велосипедисты из команды “Астана” иностранцы?
- Должно ли быть больше Казахов в команде “Астана”?
- Какое ваше мнение о состоянии спорта в Казахстане?
- По вашему мнению, есть ли много спортсменов из Казахстана которые всемирно известны?
  - Если да, то кто они?
  - Если нет, почему вы думаете их так мало?
- Думаете ли вы что государство должно было бы сделать приоритетом повышение успеха спортсменов Казахстана? По вашему мнению, государство должно было бы тратить больше или меньше денег на спорт?
- Важно ли Казахстану проводить большие спортивные соревнования, как Азиатские Зимние Игры в двухтысячиодиннадцатом году? Почему или почему нет?

#### Стимул 9

- От куда вы думаете эти изображения?
  - Слева: Петропавловск
  - Справа: Усть-Каменогорск
- Есть ли определённая причина почему эти изображения найдены в этих определённых местах?
- Должно ли государство прикладывать дополнительные усилия чтобы северная часть страны почувствовала себя как часть объединённого Казахстана?
- Была ли когда то угроза что северные части страны попытаются отделиться? Если они бы так сделали, было бы это хорошо или плохо?
- Почему вы думаете что люди на севере никогда не сделали серьёзную попытку отделиться? Или они такую попытку сделали?
- Замечаете ли вы такие плакаты и рекламные щиты в Казахстане? Думаете ли вы что они имеют цель, например, эффективны ли они в убеждении людей думать определённым образом о национальном разнообразии в Казахстане?

#### Стимул 10

- Многие люди говорят что Шумкент/Южная Казахстанская область это Техас. Почему они так говорят?
- Сравните эти два места
- Южная Казахстанская область и Техас обо на южной границе их стран. Думаете ли вы что из-за этого у них есть общие черты?
  - На пример, сражаются ли они с теми же угрозами от южных соседей?
  - На пример, есть ли меньшинства в этих районах которые меняют культурную среду в этих местах?
- Есть ли определённые выгоды от близости к южным соседям Казахстана?
- Многие люди в Казахстане говорят что Южная Казахстанская область более “традиционная” чем другие части Казахстана. Почему так говорят? Что “традиционная” обозначает? Это позитивная или негативная черта?
- Многие люди в Казахстане говорят что Южная Казахстанская область опасное место. Почему люди так говорят? Вы согласны? Почему или почему нет?

**БЛАГОДАРИМ ЗА УЧАСТИЕ В ИССЛЕДОВАНИИ!**

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Город Алматы Университет КазНУ Аль-Фараби

Фокус-Группа № \_\_\_\_\_

**ЗАРАНИЕ БЛАГОДАРИМ ЗА СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО!**

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**1. Пол**

1. Мужской    2. Женский
- 

**2. Год Вашего рождения?** \_\_\_\_\_ год

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**3. Где выросли вы?** \_\_\_\_\_ (напишите город)

**В какой области?** \_\_\_\_\_ (напишите область)

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**4. Ваше семейное положение?** (возможен только **один** ответ)

1. Холост или не замужем
  2. Женат или замужем
  3. Состою в гражданском браке
  4. Разведен(а)
  5. Вдовец или вдова
  6. Затрудняюсь ответить
- 

**5. Какое у Вас образование?** (возможен только **ОДИН** ответ)

1. Незаконченное высшее (менее 1 лет обучения в ВУЗе)
  2. Незаконченное высшее (менее 2 лет обучения в ВУЗе)
  3. Незаконченное высшее (менее 3 лет обучения в ВУЗе)
  4. Незаконченное высшее (менее 4 лет обучения в ВУЗе)
  5. Незаконченное высшее (менее 5 лет обучения в ВУЗе)
  6. Высшее (5 лет и более университета или института, бакалавр, магистр)
  7. Ученая степень (аспирантура, магистратура, докторантура)
  8. Не знаю
  9. Отказ от ответа
- 

**6. На каком факультете Вы учитесь?** (напишите) \_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Скажите, как Вы можете охарактеризовать общий доход всех членов Вашей семьи?** (возможен только **ОДИН** ответ)

1. Можем купить все, что нам необходимо
2. У нас хватает денег на еду и одежду, но покупка предметов длительного пользования представляет для нас проблему
3. У нас хватает денег только на еду
4. Нам не хватает денег даже на еду



5. Затрудняюсь ответить

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**7. Национальность:**

1. Ваша (запишите) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Вашей матери (уточните и запишите) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Вашего отца (уточните и запишите) \_\_\_\_\_
4. Отказ от ответа

---

**8. На каком языке Вы обычно говорите дома? (возможен *ОДИН* вариант ответа)**

1. Казахский преимущественно / только
2. Русский преимущественно / только
3. Казахский и русский поровну
4. Китайский (и иногда русский/другой)
5. Немецкий (и иногда русский/другой)
6. Корейский (и иногда русский/другой)
7. Киргизский (и иногда русский/другой)
8. Польский (и иногда русский/другой)
9. Татарский (и иногда русский/другой)
10. Турецкий (и иногда русский/другой)
11. Украинский (и иногда русский/другой)
12. Узбекский (и иногда русский/другой)
13. Уйгурский (и иногда русский/другой)
14. Другой: \_\_\_\_\_
15. Затрудняюсь ответить

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**9. Какое место Вы считаете в первую очередь своей родиной? (*ОДИН* ответ)**

1. Деревня (город), где я родился или вырос
2. Место, где живут мои дети
3. Родная земля моего народа
4. Земля, где находятся могилы моих предков
5. Там, где лучше жить
6. Казахстан
7. СССР
8. Другое (ЗАПИШИТЕ) \_\_\_\_\_
9. Затрудняюсь ответить

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**10. Гордитесь ли Вы принадлежностью к своему народу? (ОДИН ответ)**

1. Да, я очень этим горжусь
2. Да, у меня есть чувство некоторой гордости
3. Я отношусь к этому спокойно (нейтрально)
4. Не слишком горжусь
5. Нет, я не горжусь этим
6. Затрудняюсь ответить

---

**11. Дети должны изучать в школе историю и культуру всех народов, живущих в Казахстане. (ОДИН ответ)**

1. Совершенно согласен
2. Скорее согласен
3. Не могу сказать ни да, ни нет
4. Скорее не согласен
5. Совершенно не согласен
6. Затрудняюсь ответить

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**12. Отношения между народами улучшатся, когда национальности будут разделены по территориям, которые принадлежат только им. (ОДИН ответ)**

1. Нет
  2. Да
  3. Затрудняюсь ответить
- 

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