An Ethnographic Perspective on Stability and Employment in Kyrgyzstan

Workshop:
'Household Life, Employment & Stability in Kyrgyzstan - Integrating Scientific Insights and Implementation Efforts'

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- Research: '**Social Cohesion through Community-Based Development**'
  - **Aims** of 2016 'Qualitative Tracking Study' (QTS)
  - Methodology: **Narratives on Project Proposals & Social Cohesion**
  - **Fieldwork Locations: 14 Villages** in **Naryn & Osh** *oblasts*
  - **Some Key Findings**
- **Discussion:** Mixed-Methods Approach

- Aims of **2016 fieldwork**:

  - How are **project proposals emerging, handled, imagined** (appropriateness, decision-making, potential consequences)**?**

  - Advance understanding of social cohesion: e.g. expanding **networks & support**, larger **solidarity groups, long-term & collective goals** more priority**?**

- Research instrument: **qualitative interviewing** with open-end questions
  - Opportunity to express viewpoints freely
  - Empirical data: in-depth rather than generalizable

- Approach: **interview guideline** (IG) with key questions
  - Trigger **narratives** on relation between project proposals & social cohesion
  - **Explorative** nature of IG: fieldwork before projects are implemented

Example from interviews:

» 'For example, last year on the **1st of June**, I saw parents being involved. Kids are small and cannot perform on their own… Approximately 10 parents from the bigger group and 10 parents from the smaller group gathered and **created a performance**, like a comedy show. Parents were of different age groups: younger and older ones. So parents came together, did something together. **This is the unity.** If their kids would not be in kindergarten, they would not know each other. Who knows who lives in the upper side [of the village] and who lives here? They know each other because their kids go to kindergarten.'

(female, shop owner; Kara Suu, Naryn oblast)

- 14 villages:
  - 4 in Naryn *oblast*: all mono-ethnic Kyrgyz
  - **10 in Osh** *oblast*: 1 mono-ethnic, 9 multi-ethnic
- 82 interviews:
  - In **Kyrgyz or Uzbek** language; between **20 and 45 minutes**
  - **Sex**: 43 respondents female (52%), 39 male (48%)
  - **Ethnicity**: 54 respondents Kyrgyz (66%), 28 Uzbek (34%)

- **Comparing Naryn & Osh *oblasts*:**

  - **Naryn:** more respondents **knowledgeable & involved**; **Osh: more confusion, mistrust & frustration** due to previously 'unfulfilled promises' (reasons: higher population density, stronger structural neglect)

  - **Osh:** more often **'socio-cultural factors'** play into project rationales (prestige, stigmatization from speaking up, enviousness)

- **Projects focused on social infrastructures** (kindergarten, school etc.); 'safe choice' = **avoiding suspicion** of unjust distribution & favouritism?

- **Decision-making**: key **orientation** for individual behavior & for public legitimization = **imagined, homogenous village community** (*el* = the people); in **practice: individual interests subordinate** to pre-established collective opinion

- **System of alternatingly distributed funds** between villages; 'pragmatic clustering' = **empathy** for others' problems **& self-interest** (next in line, alleviate own challenges) = sign of **trans-village social cohesion?**

Discussion: Mixed-Methods Approach

- **Suggestion: Sequentialising Research Process**

  1. design of qualitative phase (which communities, topics etc.?)

  2. qualitative phase (narratives and participant observation)

  3. design of quantitative phase ('fieldwork-based' questionnaires)

  4. quantitative data-collection

  5. qualitative phase (illustration, e.g. through case-studies)

- **Pros & Cons:**

  - Cons: longer duration; more coordination; compromises

  - Pros: generalization, in-depth illustration, increased validity

THANK YOU!

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