PRODUCTION OF SPACE AND CLASS RELATIONS: AN EXTENDED CASE STUDY OF THE TASHKENT TEXTILE FACTORY

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submitted by **BATUHAN YILDIZ** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Sadettin KİRAZCI
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences _____

Prof. Dr. Ayşe GÜNDÜZ HOŞGÖR
Head of Department
Department of Sociology _____

Prof. Dr. Helga RITTERSBERGER TILIÇ
Supervisor
Department of Sociology _____

Examining Committee Members:

Prof. Dr. Hayriye ERBAŞ (Head of the Examining Committee)
Ankara University
Department of Sociology _____

Prof. Dr. Helga RITTERSBERGER TILIÇ (Supervisor)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Sociology _____

Prof. Dr. Mustafa ŞEN
Middle East Technical University
Department of Sociology _____

Prof. Dr. Işık KUŞÇU BONNENFANT
Middle East Technical University
Department of International Relations _____

Prof. Dr. Ayşe Çolpan KAVUNCU YALDIZ
Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University
Department of Political Science and Public Administration _____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name: Batuhan YILDIZ

Signature:

ABSTRACT

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YILDIZ, Batuhan
Ph.D., The Department of Sociology
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Helga RITTERSBERGER-TILIÇ

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This research analyzes the changing class relations in a post-Soviet Uzbek village that is undergoing privatization via the establishment of a multinational textile factory through the application of the extended case method coined by Michael Burawoy. Semi-structured interviews and participant observations conducted between June 2022 and August 2022 with twelve people from three different classes and nationalities, which include blue and white-collar workers of the factory and peasantry as well as fourteen local gray collar people of the researched village, are also supported by archival documents and a plethora of systematically collected field notes and photos taken by the author. The obtained findings are equally analyzed in tandem with the theories of Henri Lefebvre on the production of capitalist space and the perceived dimension of the spatial triad. While discussing these changes, the overall perspectives of Edward Palmer Thompson and his ideas regarding the (re)making of the modern working class in the capitalist era and their applicability to the Uzbek context are also provided. Correspondingly, the following research question could be asked: What kind of consequences does the implementation of a multinational textile factory have on the class structure of a once socialist village?

While trying to address the research question, this research found that the formation of a new type of Uzbek working class and the disappearance of the former gave birth to the making of a newly emerging indigenous social group named gray collared through the production of conformist spaces.

Keywords: Production of Space, (Re)making of the Uzbek Working Class, Conformist Spaces, Gray Collar People, Textile Factory in Post-Soviet Tashkent

ÖZ

MEKÂNIN ÜRETİMİ VE SINIF İLİŞKİLERİ: TAŞKENT TEKSTİL FABRİKASI ÜZERİNE GENİŞLETİLMİŞ BİR DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

YILDIZ, Batuhan
Doktora, Sosyoloji Bölümü
Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Helga RITTERSBERGER-TILIÇ

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Bu araştırma, çok uluslu bir tekstil fabrikasının kurulması aracılığıyla özelleştirme sürecine giren bir post-Sovyet köyündeki sınıf ilişkilerinin dönüşümünü Michael Burawoy'un genişletilmiş durum çalışması metodu yoluyla analiz etmektedir. Haziran 2022-Ağustos 2022 tarihleri arasında fabrikadaki mavi ve beyaz yakalı işçiler ile fabrika dışındaki köylü sınıfından olan on iki kişiyle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve köyde yaşayan on dört yerel gri yakalı birey ile gerçekleştirilen katılımcı gözlemler, arşiv belgeleri ve yazar tarafından sistematik olarak toplanan saha notları ve fotoğraflarla desteklenmiştir. Bulgular, Henri Lefebvre'in mekânın üretimi ve üretilen kapitalist mekânlar hakkındaki teorileri ve kendisinin mekânsal üçlemesinde değindiği algılanan mekân çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir. Edward Palmer Thompson'un kapitalist dönemde modern işçi sınıfının yeniden oluşumuna ilişkin düşünceleri de bu analizlerin bir diğer parçası olarak tartışılmaktadır. Tüm bunlara bağlı olarak araştırmanın temel sorusu şu şekildedir: Çok uluslu bir tekstil fabrikasının kurulması, bir zamanlar sosyalist olan bir köyün sınıf yapısını nasıl etkilemektedir? Bu araştırma sorusuna yanıt aranırken yeni tip bir Özbek işçi sınıfının ortaya çıkışı ve eski tip proleter sınıfların yok olmasıyla, gri

yakalı olarak adlandırılan yeni bir yerel sosyal grubun uymacı (konformist) mekânlar üretimi yoluyla oluşmakta olduğu bulgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mekânın Üretimi, Özbek İşçi Sınıfının Yeniden Oluşumu, Konformist Mekân, Gri Yakalı İnsanlar, Post-Sovyet Taşkent'te Bir Tekstil Fabrikası

To my grandmother Leyla Nuran Özgürcan

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIA	: Central Intelligence Agency
COVID-19	: Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPHG	: Communist Party Historians Group
CPSU	: Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSMP	: Communist State Mode of Production
FD	: Finance Department
GC	: Gray Collar Worker
GOSSTRAKH	: Gosudarstvennoe Strakhovanie SSSR
GUM	: Glavnyy Universalnyy Magazin
HR	: Human Resources
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
ILO	: International Labour Organization
IT	: Information Technology
KGB	: Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti
LCS	: London Corresponding Society
NE	: Number English
NEP	: New Economic Policy
NM	: New Metric
UBC	: Uzbek Blue Collar Worker
UK	: United Kingdom
ULP	: Uzbek Local Peasant
US	: United States of America
USSR	: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UWC	: Uzbek White Collar Worker
UZS	: Uzbek Sum
UZSMP	: Uzbek State Mode of Production
PF	: Popular Front

PP : Production Planning

R&D : Research and Development

RWC : Russian White Collar Worker

RSMP : Republican State Mode of Production

SMP : State Mode of Production

SUFF : Soviet Uzbekistan: Facts and Figures Booklet

TPM : Total Productive Maintenance

TsUM : Tsentralnyy Universalnyy Magazin

TTF : Tashkent Textile Factory

TTFR : Tashkent Textile Factory Report

WASP : White Anglo-Saxon Protestants

WWII : World War II

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The fundamental aim of this research is to analyze the production of a capitalist space (i.e., The Tashkent Textile Factory) and its transformative impact on extant class relations in a post-Soviet Uzbek village named Paxtayurt, located on a plain terrain.[1] While investigating the Tashkent Textile Factory's (hereafter abbreviated as TTF) spatial dynamics and how its workers and local villagers viewed its presence, I incorporated the "perceived" (i.e., how selected individuals grasp or perceive their surrounding environment and the TTF as a symbol of capitalism) dimension of the Lefebvrian spatial-triad.[2] As for the investigation of changes in class relations in a Central Asian village[3], Edward Palmer Thompson's work entitled *The Making of the English Working Class* (2013) [1963] also served as a complementary reference point for understanding lengthy processes behind the rise and fall of Soviet-type proletariat and making of a new type of working class in Uzbekistan in the age of privatization. Similarly, while examining the ingestion of capitalism into a Uzbek

[1] Paxtayurt and Tashkent Textile Factory are pseudonyms to conceal the names of the researched areas and protect the participants' anonymity.

[2] In the Production of Space (1991) [1974] text, Henri Lefebvre advocated that the social space should be investigated by three dimensions which could be formulated as "the physical: perceived the physical environment, which represented the overall spatial arrangement of the built space also interlinked with the mode of production and sociological implications (for our case capitalist mode of production, perception of TTF within the gaze of Paxtayurters and capitalist social relations under the aegis of TTF)" , "the mental: conceived space designated by planners and spatial experts (e.g., architectural designation of TTF)" and "the social: lived or the anthropological dimensions of space correlated with the experiences of its dwellers or the human experience in the social space (e.g., experiences of workers TTF, molded by symbols and images)" (ibid: 4-5). By inventing "the spatial triad;" Lefebvre in the words of Stuart Elden (2004), endeavored to provide a theoretical guideline for social researchers interested in post-Marxist theories while conducting their research.

[3] Where most of the dwellers who once worked on collective farms as the members of proletariat class or peasantry.

village, Behice Boran's *magnum opus* named "*Toplumsal Yapı Araştırmaları: İki Köy Çeşidinin Mukayeseli Tetkiki*" (1992) [1945] (Studies on Social Structures: A Comparative Analysis of Two Village Types), which blends both quantitative and qualitative elements in the field of rural sociology, provided a valuable perspective on the effects of capitalist progress and the dissolution of traditional social structure in Turkic rural communities, as well as the emergence of endemic social issues and class conflicts in plain villages associated with this process.

Still, considering the historical, geographical, structural, and spatial disparities between Uzbekistan and Turkey and the limited applicability of her field research and methodology outside the Turkish context, I opted not to include Boran's work in the present study.[4] Instead, the amalgamation of Lefebvre's and Thompson's theories into my case study[5] and their analyses under the umbrella of an all-inclusive methodology (within the research setting) were obtained through Michael Burawoy's "*extended case method*".[6] By applying this method and following his directives for conducting meaningful field research, which stresses immersing oneself (or researchers themselves) in the daily routines of the researched communities via extended participant observation, semi-structured interviews and their comprehensive analysis in line with the *selected theoreticians'*[7] main ideas (for our

[4] Yet, her work functioned primarily as a thought-inducing locomotive for initiating my research in a plain village that is experiencing industrial capitalism for the first time in its history.

[5] For the production of space section, I selected Lefebvre's theory that expounds upon the idea that space is merely a social product, with each mode of production generating its own particular space (Lefebvre, (1991) [1974]). As a researcher, I found this extremely beneficial to comprehend the inner dynamics of the rise and fall of collective spaces (*kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes*) and the emergence of capitalist spaces like TTF in the creation of new social classes in Uzbekistan. On the other hand, in deciphering the emergence of the Uzbek working class and variable class relations in Uzbek SSR and post-Soviet Uzbekistan, E.P. Thompson's theory (2013) [1963] depicts the working class as active agents in their concerted environments with the potential to transform historical trajectory (in our case, the switch from capitalist to socialist relations) proved instrumental.

[6] Michael Burawoy's extended case method involves a thorough examination of social processes and micro-actions in industrial spaces in a reflexive manner. This is achieved through the application of semi-structured interviews with key factory workers and in-depth participant observation. Burawoy's advocacy of this approach also led him to spend extended periods engaged in manual labor in different factory settings, akin to the present study. More information about this method is available in the methodology section.

[7] According to Burawoy, a selected theoretician refers to thinker(s) whose ideas are used as a reference point for analyzing interview findings and participant observations. Furthermore, they could also be considered as social scientists whose theories are chosen to establish the groundwork of the theoretical framework of the research.

case Lefebvre's perceived dimension of space and their Thompsonesque implications), I was then able to engage in the lifeworlds of the Paxtayurt community, understand their perception of capitalism as well as the process of the *making* and the *remaking* of Uzbek type proletariat in a critical-Marxist manner. Although I did not involve in labor-intensive blue-collar tasks in a Burawoyesque sense (as he shouldered more physically challenging factory duties in his field-works), I followed his advice by spending a tremendous amount of time in the researched space; i.e., I invested significant time in the factory environment and spent the summer months of 2022 in Paxtayurt as a part-time white-collar factory worker in the TTF Human Resources (HR) Department. This, in turn, has allowed me to conduct in-depth participant observations in the factory space as well as the areas surrounding Paxtayurt, and it paved the ground for orchestrating semi-structured interviews with key workers and villagers who witnessed Soviet rule back in the day.

1.2. The Content of the Study

Given the above, this research aims to offer a range of Lefebvrian-inspired discussions regarding the establishment of TTF and analyzes changes in class relations in the post-Soviet village of Paxtayurt from a Thompsonesque point of view. However, before delving further into the socio-spatial history of the village under study, the following section (Methodology / Chapter 2) tries to discuss not only the research problem but also elucidates the main ideas and methodological contributions of Michael Burawoy, with a particular focus on his aforementioned *extensive case method* which was chosen as the primary methodological tool for the present research.

It also provides information about the 12 interviewees who come from different social classes and whose responses form the backbone of the findings and analysis section. Afterwards, Chapter 2 then attempts to present the theoretical framework of this study by covering necessary information about the theoretical and methodological contributions of Edward Palmer Thompson and Henri Lefebvre in the field of social sciences and their applicability to the Paxtayurt context together with the TTF.

Once these specifics were provided and before passing the findings and analysis section, Chapter 3, entitled "The Socio-Spatial History of Paxtayurt Village," immediately delves into the historical and geographical features of Paxtayurt Village and its strategic importance for Uzbekistan as well as the owners of the TTF to establish a multinational factory in there. Along the same vein, Chapter 4 (the Findings and Analysis Section) additionally attempts to explain how the creation of TTF has transformed the existing social structure, class relations and sociology of everyday life as well as the perceptions of the local populace about post-Soviet life. Based on the interview findings with the selected interviewees, Chapter 4 lastly expounds upon the socio-economic transformations and the current condition of the Uzbek working class and introduces the aptly coined concept of *conformist spaces* (particularly characterized by roadside stalls operated by full-time factory and part-time agri-workers), which is derived from Lefebvre's *counter space* concept. As argued in there, the emergence of these spaces has a contributory impact on the remaking of the Uzbek proletariat. In light of these happenings, this dissertation finally concludes that the Uzbek way of capitalism in the 2020s has become more amorphous, marked by the flexible nature of capitalism and the precarious position of the workers, exacerbating social grievances and increasing the fragility of capitalist hegemony by giving potential birth to mass rural revolts in the country's breadbasket locations.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Problem and Research Questions

In 1991, the emergence of the Uzbek Republic (under the name *Mustaqil* or sovereign Uzbekistan) gave rise to significant economic and political changes in the country, particularly in the rural Tashkent region (Adams, 2010). One of the most significant changes was the adoption of market-oriented policies, which included the privatization of Soviet enterprises, the dissolution of collective lands, and the creation of privately owned factories (Ilkhamov, 1998). At first glance, these policies aimed to convey more rights to individuals, promote economic growth, and reduce the state's role (Levitlin, 2001). Yet, despite their idealistic intentions, these policies did not yield the expected outcomes. As Tommaso Trevisani (2007) argued, the process was mainly shaped by political elites and state-created bourgeoisie, who used their positions of power to acquire state-owned enterprises at bargain basement prices.

Similar to dictatorial regimes in the Middle East, the lack of competitive bidding under a crony system and regulatory oversight further exacerbated economic inequalities and public grievances (Ilkhamov, 2013). Consequently, a significant portion of the assets that underwent privatization ended up being controlled by a select few oligarchs or foreign companies (Spechler, 2008). Privatization also led to job losses in rural areas and reduced access to public services. Nevertheless, factory organization and incentive structures that emerged for both the bourgeoisie and proletariat (for our case TTF) diverted significantly from the occidental and the Middle-Eastern capitalist prototypes. Case in point, the majority of industrial workers in places like Paxtayurt now earn a major portion of their livelihoods cultivating small plots of land in their villages, thus simultaneously engaging in both

agricultural and industrial labor. This phenomenon was encountered less frequently in the Western sections of former USSR countries (Hann & Parry, 2018). For this reason, while making class distinctions based on their authentic traits as they were during the Communist era, it becomes harder in today's context for modern 21st century social scientists, to draw strict class-based distinctions in Uzbekistan amongst variable class relations in the age of privatization in the manner of the Western ones.

To iron out ambiguities, this research aims to present an accurate definition of the existing social classes and class relations in Paxtayurt (as this research depicts it as a microcosm of the modern-day Post-Soviet Uzbek Villages) and to explore how these individuals (who were once members of Soviet proletariat or peasantry) from different classes comply, cope, and struggle with a system they were completely unfamiliar with. In the avenue of these debates, the research question of this thesis is provided as follows: *What kind of consequences does the implementation of a multinational textile factory have on the class structure of a once socialist village?*

While answering the research question and trying to portray the introduction of capitalism and the perception of capitalism by the Uzbek working class (blue-collar and peasantry) as well as the white-collar class, the changes in class relations, and the transformations in their worldviews, I have distributed a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) to the selected participants. In the questionnaire, I also asked these people from different classes the following sub-questions regarding their perceptions about TTF and first-hand experiences amidst the great capitalist transformation of Paxtayurt.

THE QUESTION SET FOR THE FACTORY WORKERS: *The Perception of Capitalism by the White-Collar and the Blue-Collar Class*

1. What are your feelings about privatization in Uzbekistan and its social implications for Rural Tashkent? Has it changed your daily life?

2. If so, what are your opinions and perceptions about the changes in the Paxtayurt before and after the liberalization initiatives like the creation of the Tashkent Textile Factory?

THE QUESTION SET FOR THE LOCAL PEASANTS OF PAXTAYURT: ***The Perception of Capitalism by the Peasantry***

1. What are the pros and cons of the privatization experience? Please do not hesitate to make comparisons between the everyday life in Uzbek SSR, Mustaqillik and Post-Mustaqillik eras.
2. What does the establishment of the Tashkent Textile Factory mean to you? In other words, how do you perceive it?

As also presented below, the first interviewed class category is the white-collar factory administrators, divided into two groups:

UWC (Uzbek White Collar)[8] and *RWC* (Russian White Collar).[9] Comprised of blue-collar factory workers, the entire second-class category is Uzbek. They are coded as *UBC* (Uzbek Blue Collar)[10]. Comprised of the Peasantry who are trying to make ends meet in the village, the third category is also entirely Uzbek, coded as *ULP* (Uzbek Local Peasant).[11] Overall, a total of 12 individuals were interviewed. From each class category who were mostly males (it was easier for me to reach out to them and conduct more flexible interviews), I selected three people who fell within the age range of 54 to 74. The reason for choosing this age cohort for interviews was simple: These people (who were born between 1950-1970) were first-hand witnesses of the USSR and worked either in collective farms or *zavods* (i.e., Soviet-type factories), who also observed their country's rapid transformation from *Mustaqillik* Uzbekistan (Karimov's partially authoritarian Republican Uzbekistan) to *Yangi* Uzbekistan (neo-liberal Uzbekistan following Mirziyoyev's liberalization initiatives). As far as this research has deduced, this experience also stands in stark contrast to those people who were born after the year of 1970.[12] Finally, to make my arguments more

[8] As there are three participants for the Uzbek White Collar class, they are coded as UWC1, UWC2 and UWC3 respectively.

[9] As there are three participants for the Russian White-Collar class, they are coded as RWC1, RWC2 and RWC3 respectively.

[10] As there are three participants for the Uzbek Blue-Collar class, they are coded as UBC1, UBC2 and UBC3 respectively.

[11] As there are three participants for Peasantry class, they are coded as ULP1, ULP2 and ULP3 respectively.

[12] Within the scope of this research, it was observed those who born after 1970 generally lack sufficient knowledge about the working-class culture before and after USSR and have no idea about

comprehensible, all interview responses of the selected participants were analyzed in the "Findings and Analysis" section as follows: Primarily, as I am seeking anti-capitalist opposition by the Uzbek working-class against the creation of capitalist spaces like TTF, the answers given to the aforementioned question set for the white-collar people were analyzed under the title "*The Glorification of Capitalism*," while the answers given to the questions for the blue-collar class were analyzed under the heading "*Criticizing Capitalism*." Furthermore, the final interviews conducted with three local peasants, together with my intensive participant observations about the village, and systematically taken field notes, photos and personally collected archival documents regarding the social history of Paxtayurt and its indigenous dynamics, such as the emergence of new types of social groups, was scrutinized under the title "*The Condition of In-Betweenness and the Remaking of the Uzbek Working Class*." All in all, thanks to the availability of these materials and the detailed analysis of interview findings under the aegis of Michael Burawoy's *The Extended Case Method*, equally allowed me to present the changes in class relations in a former socialist domain in a novel way.

2.2. The Extended Case Method

As argued above and elucidated in the introduction part of this research, Michael Burawoy has conducted extensive fieldwork over the past four decades in four countries: Zambia, the United States, Hungary and Russia. Correspondingly, his mentioned extended case method involves in-depth examination (via the application of semi-structured interviews and participant observation) of social processes and micro-actions in a reflexive manner (Wadham & Warren, 2014). As stated by him, this approach has allowed him to gain a thorough understanding of different settings and cultures (Burawoy, 2009). Unlike conventional social sciences methods, this approach does not prioritize discovering consistent patterns in macrostructures under investigation.

In his own words, the focus is on understanding individual strategies and choices, which play a key role in unfurling the intricacies of everyday life within their

the complexities involved in the dismantling of the USSR. These factors are taken into account and led to their exclusion from the interview pool.

indigenous habitats, which are unavailable in academic textbooks. His advocacy of the extended case method approach also led him to spend extended periods engaged in manual labor and employing participant observation akin to the present study. As highlighted by Jacklyn Cock (2010), this included working as a furnaceman in the Lenin Steel Works in communist Hungary for two years, almost a year as a machine operator in a Chicago Engineering factory, a passage of time in a personnel office in Kitwe, Zambia, toiling on a Hungarian state farm that produced champagne, as well as a machine operator in the same country and working in a furniture factory in northern Russia. Parallel to the scenario depicted in my case study, the result of his sweat and toil is an immersive exploration of the four great transitions in modern world history: decolonization, the Soviet Way to socialism, the tumultuous shift from socialism to capitalism, and the transition to organized capitalism in post-communist settings. In light of the aforementioned vantage point, this study similarly aligns itself with this type of performative-ethnographic tradition and employs "*the extended case method*" in the manner of Michael Burawoy. According to Burawoy and as stated in the introduction part, this interactive method involves applying prominent ingrained theories (in this case, drawing upon Henri Lefebvre's "Production of Space" and E.P. Thompson's "The Making of Working Class") to a specific ethnographic case—here, the shifting class relations in Paxtayurt and the unfolding developments after the founding of TTF.

Through the application of the chosen research methodology, it becomes possible to conduct a full-scale investigation of multi-layered, macro-level questions and their everyday life implications in micro-level social settings. For instance, implementing methodological tools such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews (essential elements of *the extensive case method*) serves as a crucial tool for recognizing discrepancies between theoretical scaffolding and the practical realities in the actual context. These variations are thereafter utilized to *reconstruct* the theory and its sociological implications around post-Soviet spaces like Paxtayurt. While the aspirations and ontological foundations of the method have been discussed elsewhere (see Burawoy et al., 1991 and Burawoy, 1998), there exists a dearth of practical guidance to conduct ethnographic studies. The aim of this research is to fill this gap by concentrating on the core elements of this assertive and hitherto rather neglected

method. Particularly, it takes a focused approach by narrowing down the cumbersome process into three stages. Below, Table 1 shows the *Three Stages of the Extended Case Method*" in a detailed fashion.

Table 1. Three Stages of the Extended Case Method

Stage 1: *Choosing a Viable Theory, Method and Case*
Stage 2: *Identification of a Deviation or Anomaly from The Relevant Theory within the Observed Context.*
Stage 3: *Proceeding to the Reconstruction of the Theory/ies by Means of Referring to Wider forces at Work*

Adapted from Burawoy (1998), Burawoy et al. (1991, 2000), and Wadham & Warren (2014)

Stage 1: Choosing a Viable Theory, Method and Case

According to Michael Burawoy's (1998) framework, *the extended case method* includes the integration of 'indigenous narratives' and academic theory. The latter plays a crucial role in each of the three stages, extending the scope of the case study. In the words of Burawoy, "It guides interventions, constitutes situated knowledge into social processes, and locates those social processes in their wider context of determination." (1998: 21). The primary directive for researchers is choosing a viable theory that espouses novel sociological perspectives to the field. Many sociologists have shown interest in modernity, globalization, and the nature of productive capitalist relations. They often prefer transcendental higher-order theories, also called grand narratives, put forward by thinkers like Karl Marx and Max Weber.

However, these theories need to be tailored to fit the Uzbek setting, where communism was once the dominant ideology, and capitalism is encountered for the first time. In the aforementioned perspective of choosing a viable theory, I selected two contemporary Marxist thinkers who have blended classical theories with new ideas. For the production of space part (as the title of this research is Production of Space and Class Relations), I selected Lefebvre's *perceived dimension of social*

space theory, which expounds upon the thought that space is merely a social product and each mode of production creates a unique space that influences people's perception of it. As a social researcher, applying Lefebvrian analysis to my findings was extremely beneficial to comprehend the inner dynamics of the rise and fall of collective spaces, i.e., *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes*, and the emergence of capitalist spaces like TTF in the creation of new classes and social groups in Uzbekistan.

On the other hand, in terms of deciphering the emergence of the Uzbek working class and variable class relations in Uzbek SSR and post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Thompson's *The Making of Working-Class* theory (i.e., *The Active Agency of Ordinary People in the Process of Making and Remaking of the Working Class*), which depicts the working class as active agents in their concerted environments with the potential to transform historical trajectory, proved to be instrumental. E.P. Thompson's call to move beyond deterministic and empiricist theories, adopting a bottom-up approach akin to Burawoy that values the diverse experiences of ordinary people, equally influenced my understanding of the essence of class relations and their spatial implications in the community under scrutiny (i.e., the inhabitants of Paxtayurt and the TTF workers).

Moreover, when it comes to discussing the methodology of the dissertation, this research is based on an ethnographically inspired study focusing on three locations within the confines of Paxtayurt Village: the TTF, *dehqon* bazaar (also known as the peasant bazaar), and the surroundings of the village (village houses, chaykhana or the village teahouse and road-side stalls of local vendors) (visited between June – August 2022).

For the data collection part of this research, I opted for *participant observation* and *semi-structured interviews* as primary methodology mediums in which I immersed myself in both the factory environment as well as the Paxtayurt Village. While conducting field research in a semi-authoritarian nation where the freedom of expression of ordinary people is limited, my part-time employment in the factory's Human Resources (HR) department provided the opportunity to interact with people from various social backgrounds by asking them questions that would normally raise eyebrows.

Although I did not spend as much time toiling in the labor-intensive departments as Burawoy did in his targeted communities, just being present in Paxtayurt for considerable lengths of time during 2015 (as a marketing consultant) and 2022 (as a social researcher and a part-time HR worker) to conduct my participant observation, interviews and establishing numerous contacts helped me immensely to understand the inner dynamics of the daily lives of the villagers and workers.[13] Meanwhile, I also tried to maintain participant confidentiality, security, and privacy. Thus, in complying with the ethical consent guidelines set by Middle Eastern Technical University (METU) and protecting the identities of those involved in the semi-structured interviews[14] while recording their responses, I decided to rely on field notes instead of voice recordings for data collection. Again, under METU guidelines, I distributed ethical consent forms and received participant permission, then assigned each participant a code (which was mentioned above). I kept all pertinent data in a secure and personal field notebook. In addition to the interview process, field photos taken during the course of my ethnographic work were included to illustrate and demonstrate the sociology of everyday life in TTF and Paxtayurt.

Stage 2: Finding the Anomaly from the Relevant Theory

Consequently, a need for a reassessment emerges that redirects the focus "from self-equilibration and cohesion to domination and resistance." (Burawoy et al., 1991: 278) When theory and practice do not dovetail, theory should be adjusted to fit practice. For instance, in stark contrast to the intricate class stratifications observed in England and juxtaposed against the relatively homogeneous class structure during the era of the USSR, Uzbekistan's social structure has undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving into an exceptionally heterogeneous composition.

[13] All the details about my initial encounter with the TTF in 2015 and the information regarding my connections or liaisons in tow that made this research possible are provided in the findings and analysis section.

[14] As mentioned in *Appendix 1*, during the data collection process, the interviews involved gathering further information about the respondents, such as gender, occupation and parental occupation. This research then explored the respondents' perspectives on capitalism by asking questions about the impact of privatization on daily life in rural Tashkent in general and Paxtayurt in particular. Questions were also posed about said respondent's perspectives on changes brought about by liberalization initiatives, such as the creation of TTF. Moreover, I asked the respondents whether they engaged in part-time work in addition to their main jobs during our off-the record conversations. The main goal of the inquiry was to ascertain class distinctions while categorizing them.

Spanning both the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, the intricate tapestry weaving the fabric of the Uzbek working class unveils diverse distinctions that set it apart from its British and non-Uzbek post-Soviet counterparts. Therefore, in discussing what makes the Uzbek working class atypical, a reinterpretation of Thompson and Lefebvre's theories is needed, as they were mostly applicable in the Western framework. Over the course of this research, the need equally arises for a tailored interpretation that includes indigenous socio-spatial nuances characterizing the formation of the Uzbek working class. Moreover, in the context of spatial production, venues like roadside stalls of the Paxtayurters may be considered *conformist* spaces[15]which oppose Lefebvre's counter-space (i.e, former living and working spaces produced by Soviets like collective farms that defies the hegemonic capitalist norms that used to be in effect in up-until 1991) concept.

Stage 3: Reconstructing the Theory by Means of Referring to Wider Forces at Work

As dwelled upon earlier, the theory constitutes the lynchpin of each procedural facet within *the extended case method*. It is in this final stage of a theoretically constructed ethnography that a detailed micro-level examination sheds light on macro-level dynamics. During this stage, the selected theory undergoes a reconstruction to incorporate anomalies diagnosed within the case. It is also here, in this concluding phase, that *the extended case method* harmoniously blends with understanding and explanation, actively releasing ethnography from its confines as an obsolete method within the realm of social sciences (Burawoy et al, 1991). After conducting participant observation and semi-structured interviews with the factory workers and peasants, I thereby evaluated and reconstructed the theories of Lefebvre i.e., on the production of space and Thompson i.e., working classes as active agents in shaping the history of class relations, in accordance with the current state in Paxtayurt's sociological landscape. Upon obtaining the pertinent data, I characterized the disappearance of the conventional Uzbek proletariat as *the Remaking of the Uzbek Working Class* through the 'creation of conformist spaces.' As stated before, all of these terms were derived and modified from the existing *counter-space theory* of

[15] *Konformist meqon*, will be discussed and proposed in the findings and analysis section,

Lefebvre and *the Making of the Working-Class* theory of Thompson. The inferences are also discussed in the final part of the findings and analysis section in a detailed fashion.

2.2.1. Limitations of the Extended Case Method

As highlighted at various points of this research, *the extended case method* is built upon a conversational exchange with participants; hence, it has a complementary value in voicing the silenced perspectives of the subaltern, who could also be defined as people in less privileged positions within the capitalist framework (Marcus, 1995). Nevertheless, whether a social researcher sticks to the Marxist principles or not, the inescapable effects of power significantly shape the trajectory of all social research as people (the respondents) do not avail themselves to voice their concerns fully (Burawoy, 1998). In the same vein, by participating in factory areas and the everyday lives of their research communities, researchers also find themselves unwittingly immersed in a setting filled with hierarchies and rivalries over resources, therefore becoming entangled in circuits of power. Still, I tried my utmost to overcome these obstacles and tried to ask relevant questions to my respondents in a comprehensible manner, noting down their activities and transcribing their responses neatly. Due to, we social scientists have a duty towards humanity; i.e., ultimately, social research should serve human welfare. Secondly, while talking with the white-collar workers who generally support neoliberal doctrines, I was as impartial and objective as possible while listening to their discourse without making any comments. Being as neutral as possible during the research process also enabled me to diagnose the root causes behind capitalism-induced problems and causes rather than its symptoms. To summarize, I treated the subject by making a distinction between scientific ideals for social research and their practical usage in order to obliterate the research limitations or conducting scientific research in a Burawoyesque sense.[16] Based on my observations and in-depth interviews with people from all walks of life in Paxtayurt, I attempted to provide an all-

[16] Theoretically speaking, social research is conducted under the rules of scientific methods with the intention of improving the quality of human life. In that perspective, the ethical responsibility of a social scientist is to serve human ideals first and foremost and be vigilant in regards to the political implications of her/his study.

encompassing view of class relations. To iron out any obscurities as to who belongs to which class, I have also classified these people into different categories (i.e., white-, blue-, peasantry-) and measured their class belonging by applying some calculations. All of these processes (which are inspired by Burawoy) are provided below in a systematic manner.

2.3. Conceptualization

Given the above, in order to ensure transparency and clarity in my research, I have equally defined and explained the essential concepts used throughout this study, namely, class, class belonging, and class relations. This will help the readers to understand the meaning behind specific concepts and terminology used in this study. The mentioned terminologies that I have used are provided as follows:

-***Class*** refers to one's social standing based on power, wealth, and prestige in a particular society (in our case, it applies to Uzbek society and in the context of the Paxtayurt community which this research considers as a microcosm of post-Soviet rural Uzbekistan).

-***Class relations*** refer to the interactions between different social classes in a given context, which are shaped by the mode of production and spatial setting. During the USSR times, there existed three non-antagonistic classes, namely the intelligentsia, the proletariat (or the workers), and the peasantry. After the country gained independence, new classes emerged, such as white-collar and blue-collar, while the peasantry remained intact.

-***White-Collar Class*** (in the context of Paxtayurt), refers to individuals who hold full-time administrative or managerial positions within TTF, a produced capitalist space. This class is often associated with higher salaries, they officially work between 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Their salaries range from the lowest rung of $1500 to the highest rung of $5000 per month.[17]

[17] 1$ = 12700 Uzbek Som (UZS)

-***Blue-Collar Class*** (in the context of Paxtayurt) refers to full-time workers who perform technical tasks within TTF (as a produced capitalist space) who do not partake extra work in their free time, as opposed to other manual laborers who may engage in part-time agricultural activities during their leisure time. Their official working hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and their income levels are typically lower than those of white-collar workers, as they earn between $150 and $750 per month, depending on their standing.

-***Peasantry*** (in the context of Paxtayurt) refers to former *kolkhoz* (collective homestead or small collective farms) workers who have since become contracted or independent farmers. They cultivate crops for sustenance or to sell. The lowest-ranked individuals in this group (ordinary *dehqon* peasants) mostly earn $100 while cluster workers and fermers (as contracted farmers) can earn up to $500. Additionally, those who prefer extra agricultural work such as selling produce in the *dehqon* bazaar can earn an additional $120-25.

-***Service Sector Workers*** (in the context of Paxtayurt) include small business owners, such as mini-market and auto-repair shop operators, bazaar vendors, government officials, teachers, doctors, and pharmacy workers. Their salary ranges from $150 - $1000 depending on their tenure.

-***Production of Space:*** A term coined by Lefebvre that views space as a living entity produced by humans and which serves as a tool for shaping social relations as well as class relations according to the existing mode of production.

-***Counter Space:*** A space that defies dominant socio-economic norms, such as a collective farm that operates outside capitalist structures. Such spaces foster alternative forms of social organization and act as hubs of resistance against mainstream practices of the status quo.

-***Conformist Space:*** A space that is adaptable to prevalent conditions which lack revolutionary ontology, characterized by the roadside stalls of Paxtayurters, from where they sell cash crops to earn extra income.

-The Remaking of the Uzbek Working Class: Drawing from E.P. Thompson's theory in *The Making of the English Working Class*, this term describes the ongoing process by which the Uzbek working class (i.e., Paxtayurters) continually evolves its identity, practices, and conscious state in response to shifting social, economic, political and cultural landscape.

2.4. Contributions to the Academic Literature on Space and Class Relations

Within the perspective above, this study modestly aims to contribute to the existing literature on the production of space and class relations. Historically speaking, the first wave of prominent modern Marxist structuralist theorists who could also be described as predecessors of Michael Burawoy, including Maurice Dobb, Rodney Hilton, Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm and Nicos Poulantzas, believed that macro structures (like the emergence of the capitalist factory spaces and sweatshops as the hotbeds of massive exploitation) and class conflicts played a crucial role in driving historical changes towards the long-awaited socialist revolution (Schwarz, 1981). However, they overlooked the Lefebvrian perspective of class relations and space (Erbaş, 2017). The founding fathers of American sociology, like Talcott Parsons and Robert King Merton, on the other hand, had a different approach compared to the aforementioned Marxist theorists (Coser, 1977 [1971]). They believed that social realities should be understood within the context of social action theories or through the lens of Weberian interpretivist and interactionist methods (Vidich, 1988).

This means that the importance of class relations and class-based struggles was disregarded, and instead, the focus was on the interpretation of individual actions (micro-interactions) and their socio-spatial implications (Swingewood, 2000 [1984]). Nevertheless, this stance encountered dissent from prominent Marxists like E.P. Thompson and Henri Lefebvre. In a direct rejoinder to rectify the flaws and biasedness within American sociology, both Thompson and especially Lefebvre endeavored to amalgamate Marxism and Weberian principles (who endorse the investigation of researched communities' micro aspects in a versatile manner) under a brand-new unifying framework, embracing an all-encompassing synthesis between class and space. According to them, space and class are not merely philosophical

constructs but socially produced entities that are intricately tied to everyday interactions, symbolic representations, and power dynamics within a particular mode of production (Erbaş, 2017). As the mode of production influences the spatial practices, the class relations also change accordingly. Concurrently, thanks to the translation of Lefebvre's seminal text (1991) [1974] into English and a revival edition of E.P. Thompson's *The Making of English Working Class* (2013) [1963] in Britain, the entire works of both thinkers resurfaced in the Anglophonic world. Consequently, after gaining numerous insights from their seminal works, Paxtayurt Village, which has been experiencing a salient transformation in its mode of production, then appeared to me as a social laboratory to orchestrate my field research. As a result, I have directly incorporated the main ideas of these thinkers into the theoretical framework of my research.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

2.5.1. Theoretical Contributions of Edward Palmer Thompson

Primarily, as a prominent figure and an avid left-wing activist E.P. Thompson crafted an authentic body of work while engaging in fervent political struggles with orthodox Marxists and liberal thinkers (Winslow, 2014). His influence mostly extended beyond the confines of the academic world and made a long-lasting impact on the field of social sciences (during the mid-20th century). As argued by François Jarrige (2016), this gargantuan thinker tried to reshuffle the classical structuralist examination of social classes and mass protests against the capitalist system by placing emphasis on individuals and their everyday experiences at the epicenter of his sociological imagination.

Despite facing criticism during his lifetime, particularly for his intentional neglect of the making of the Soviet-type working class (proletariat) in and around the USSR, he is still regarded as a canonical figure in the field of sociology (Yildirim, 2022). As argued by Ellen Meiksins Wood (1982), Thompson was among a privileged group of British social scientists who had personally witnessed the great transformation of English society after the Great War. The timeframe extending from the creation of

the *Popular Front* (PF), to liberation against fascist forces equally proved instrumental in molding his *weltanschauung* (worldview). He labeled this era of turmoil and monumental victories as the "Decade of Heroes" (Thompson, 1979: 264). In 1942, at the height of World War II, while a student at Cambridge, he decided to become a member of the British Communist Party. Subsequently, he enlisted in the Royal Army and actively participated in military campaigns in North Africa and Italy (Jarrige, 2016).

Having belligerently embraced communist ideology in response to the horrors of the Spanish Civil War and Adolf Hitler's mass massacres, his elder brother named Frank passed away in 1944 during his liaison duties between the British Army, Bulgarian communists, and anti-fascist partisans. His death had a profound impact on Thompson (Palmer, 1994). Upon returning to the UK, E.P. Thompson experienced the collective joy of victory and actively engaged in the celebration of mass protests, strikes, and other social movements. In the immediate post-war period, he also took part in the building of the Young Railroad in socialist Yugoslavia (which was then ruled by Josip Broz Tito), working shoulder-to-shoulder with local peasants, ordinary workers, and students. This experience gave him a greater understanding and empathy towards the self-activity of regular people (Abelove, 1976). Subsequently, Thompson made his home in the North of England (south of the Penines), within an area that underwent industrialization during the 19th century. Immersed in a setting steeped with the legacy of the labor movement, he actively participated in the popular education movement (Jarrige, 2016). Thompson also assumed the role of educator, the sole available job position for a young leftist at the time. Meanwhile, the inception of the Cold War and the lingering shadow of his belligerent resistance to Nazism safeguarded Thompson's adherence to the Communist Party. In staunchly opposing the Korean War, he chaired the *Halifax Peace Committee,* and he served as Secretary of the *Yorkshire Federation of Peace Organization* while editing its local journal (Jarrige, 2016). He developed a strong interest in literature within this timeframe.

For instance, he attempted to revive the works of William Morris, whom he considered a once-prominent thinker of European communism who needed to be

reintroduced in the Anglophonic world (Thompson, 1955). Undoubtedly, his fascination with the anti-industrialist, romantic socialist stance of Morris equipped him with the necessary theoretical tools to distance himself from the communist orthodoxies of that era.

2.5.1.1. Crafting the Making of the English Working Class

During the 1950s, while Soviet Socialism was at its peak, Thompson was an esteemed member of the Communist Party Historians Group (CPHG) and eventually ascended to the figurehead rank (Jarrige, 2016). His preliminary works were crafted with intellectual fervor thanks to the establishment of a journal named *Past and Present* in 1952 (created by left-wing historians such as Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm, Rodney Hilton, and George Rudé). According to the creators of this periodical journal, their collective aim was to challenge the prevailing conservatism within the British academic world at the time (Kaye, 1992). Apart from these events, another positive incident occurred as Thompson became an integral part of the editorial board of the CPHG in the late 1960s. The journal in his colleagues' words, served as an open platform for debate that was notably accessible and receptive to historians outside the pro-Soviet framework (Hill, Hilton & Hobsbawm, 1983).

At the same time, while the activities of non-English socialist comrades, such as Henri Lefebvre in France, were tightly controlled by the Soviet Union's CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) and the French Communist Party, British left-wing intellectuals were more loosely affiliated to Russia and often opposed the Bolshevik Movement's official stance (Dworkin, 1997). Characterized by Nikita Khrushchev's report on Joseph Stalin's crimes and heavy-handed suppression of the Hungarian upheaval, 1956 equally marked a significant threshold. Afterwards, Thompson broke away from the British Communist Party's leadership and continuously stigmatized the Soviet regime.[18]

[18] Considerable literature (which was mentioned above) has been dedicated to the examination of this generation of Marxist historians. For instance, Harvey J. Kaye's "E. P. Thompson, the British Marxist Historical Tradition and the Contemporary Crisis" in "The Education of Desire: Marxists and the Writing of History" (London, Routledge, 1992, pp. 98-115) and Donald Dworkin's "Cultural Marxism in Post-War Britain: History, the New Left and the Origins of Cultural Studies" (Duke UP, Durham, 1997) delve into the subject.

In collaboration with his Marxist compatriot John Saville (the subsequent year after forsaking the Party leadership), Thompson established another academic journal named the *New Reasoner* in 1957, paying homage to a radical periodical (i.e., *Reasoner*) of the 19th century (Jarrige, 2016). The aim behind this act was clear: to actively contribute to the evolution of socialism for its own good. Similar to the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* experiment in France led by Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis, the goal of the journal was to restore the moral integrity of the communist project. This was to be achieved by exposing "Stalinist dogma", deviations, atrocities and inconsistencies (Jarrige, 2016). Commencing with its inaugural issue, Thompson championed a "humanist socialism." This perspective emphasized the essential autonomy of individuals in contrast to the "dehumanizing" tendencies of both capitalism and Stalinism, which he argued downsized individuals to commodities or degraded them into *appendages* of machines (Thompson, 1957). In 1960, he dexterously contributed to the founding of the *New Left Review*, which emerged as the intellectual hub for the *New Left Movement* (Jarrige, 2016). Its central mission was to reevaluate Marxism in accordance with the necessities of the 20th century. Yet, in 1962, Thompson resigned from the editorial board following a divergence with the novel direction led by Perry Anderson, whose sociological imagination he perceived as excessively abstract, overly theoretical, and detached from the realities of the international labor movement. In brief, *The Making of the English Working Class* was crafted in this tumultuous time, while Thompson was experiencing political isolation. However, thanks to the publication of this seminal text in 1963, Thompson received widespread acclaim and was instantly guaranteed a place in the pantheon of modern social sciences along with the canonical scholars of the *Annales School* such as Fernand Braudel, Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre. The book was even described by Eric Hobsbawm as an "erupting historical volcano" (2002: 14). From the aforementioned standpoint, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) stands out as a remarkable text, wielding significant influence over historians, sociologists, economists, and political scientists. It also played an equally transformative role in reshaping the historical lens through which many approached to study the past.[19]

[19] Sociologically speaking, Thompson's *The Making of English Working* Class coins the concept "history from below," which could be considered as a narrative which recognized people's autonomy

In the work, Thompson advocates the emergence of the working class in England and other parts of the world was not simply a byproduct of the Industrial Revolution, but rather had its roots embedded in the customs, traditions, and collective consciousness the average worker had been actively developing way before the Industrial Revolution (Efstathiou, 2015). While portraying working-class people as active agents in modern history, Thompson utilizes various social scientific tools such as literary texts, archival documents, and other resources commonly used by versatile historians, as well as benefitting from data graphs typically favored by various social scientists (Chambers, 1966). In his Preface, the author begins by explaining the nature of class,[20] class consciousness, class relations[21] and ontology of the working class,[22] asserting that class is not something that exists *per se*, but rather is molded by the productive relations into which ordinary people are born, by their own choice or unwillingly. In other words, it is a historical relationship manifested in real people (as active agents) in real contexts. Thompson's main endeavor could also be described as a call to rescue oppressed individuals from fading into oblivion.

Throughout the book's sixteen chapters, the author meticulously explores the early traditions that preceded the emergence of the working class during the first half of the 19th century. He also analyzes the mass movements that arose around the time of the French Revolution in England, such as *Conites*, *Levellers*, and *Dissenters*. Additionally, he highlights the responses to the French Revolution by commoners

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in thought and action over imposed structures (Thompson, 1966). Across 16 intricately detailed chapters, each shedding light on a specific facet of England's 'industrial revolution,' such as the popular traditions of the 18th century, Methodism, and the social struggles commencing from the Luddite Movement to the early trade unions, Thompson resurrected the "*heroic culture*" of those dedicated to preserving the spirit of the everlasting "*liberty tree*."

[20] According to Thompson, class is forged by ordinary men within the framework of their personal experiences. It is an alignment of shared interests. In other words, 'class' is not merely a 'structure' or a 'category,' but rather, is "something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships." Hence, a social class (e.g, belonging to the Soviet proletariat) represents the social and political manifestation of an antagonistic process rooted in the conflictual experiences of men and women viewed as historical actors.

[21] For him, class consciousness and class relations could be characterized as the sum of experiences enshrined in ideas, institutions and traditions. These experiences undergo transformations in different epochs, as class consciousness is not a static thing that can be boxed in.

[22] Similar to class consciousness and relations, the notion of working class is not stationary. For instance, a member of the working class in the Soviet Union might differ from a modern-day Uzbek worker. Hence, there is a need to unravel the differing connotations and different dimensions of the working class throughout history.

and their interactions, much like a detective. Meanwhile, the author equally notes people were more mobilized during that time compared to the fragmented left-wing movements of today. Furthermore, Thompson's analysis not only covers the contemporary debates but also delves into the waxing and waning of early democratic organizations such as the *London Corresponding Society* (LCS).[23]

He simultaneously sheds light on the ideas of prominent left-wing figures such as Thomas Hardy, John Thelwall and Thomas Paine who played a significant role in shaping class consciousness and later worker movements in the United Kingdom. In contrast, the author also highlights the use of ideological apparatuses of the state, such as religion, on the way to suppressing the dissenting voices of the commoners.[24] In this process, Thompson equally traces the mechanisms (tactics and strategies) and linguistic devices used by the bourgeoisie to exploit the lower classes which in turn helped them to increase their overall prosperity. Still, thanks to the outbreak of mass rebellions such as the *Luddite Movement*, which notably unfolded in cities like Nottingham, he argues, the English working class achieved a degree of autonomy over their so-called superiors. What is also made clear here is that the Luddites were not expressing an impulsive objection or an outburst of rage against machines replacing their work. Rather, they were skilled workers who took pride in their work and were paid a fair wage when they were employed by prudent employers.

Problems arose when some bosses began to denigrate their craftsmanship. As argued by Thompson, some "rapacious" patrons in the East Midlands region commenced to slash worker salaries and market machine-made commodities of inferior quality at prices higher than those handmade goods. Resentful of their "avaricious" superiors, the workers then began sabotaging the newly introduced machinery in their workspaces. Those employers who treated their workers fairly, however, were spared from the destruction of their machines. For a brief period, they gained the upper hand

[23] This structure is an example of a large, amicable society. It was an early democratic organization that advocated for reform, order and progress akin to the French and American revolutionaries.

[24] Much like the rulers of the Czarist regime, the ruling class in British society utilized religion as a tool to present individual with an alternative world, promising them a place in Heaven. This effectively concealed their corrupt institutions (like the atrocities of *comprador* local mobs working for the church and king, who also terrorized British Jacobins) and legitimized their unjust actions, while obscuring the corrupt aspects of the actual world.

over the bourgeoisie. However, due to other malignant developments in the factory production lines, which were powered by steam-driven machinery, their inevitable decline occurred. Many artisans, including handloom weavers, fell into poverty, were marginalized, and isolated from the political realm. In the years following the Luddite Movement, a notable shift also occurred with a burgeoning sense of shared interests amongst the working class. This unity prompted them to stand in opposition to their rulers and the bourgeoisie. Consequently, even though the country had been labeled as the hotbed of capitalist civilization by Soviet revolutionaries, a robust working-class culture and set of ethics (called *the Old Dissent*) emerged, leaving a lasting impact on British society.

2.5.1.2. Adapting the Making of the English Working Class into the Uzbek Context

In light of the aforementioned considerations and within the framework of Edward Palmer Thompson's sociological imagination, the process of the making of the working class and changes in class relations in countries like England and Uzbekistan is a dynamic process shaped by external conditions and the active agency of those individuals who constantly struggle with one another. Akin to how the English working class drew inspiration from figures like Thomas Paine and the French Revolutionaries, the Uzbeks proletariat ardently followed the teachings of Bolshevik leaders such as Vladimir Lenin, along with the doctrines of Marx and Engels (Khalid, 2021). This shared enthusiasm was directed towards the ambitious aspiration of "planting the liberty tree" in the Uzbek soil in the first years of the Bolshevik Revolution.[25] At first glance, everything seemed fine, with all citizens receiving equal rights, proper education, free healthcare, and insurance (Sharma, 1987).

Thanks to Stalin's collectivization efforts, the *kulaks*, a former land-owning class (akin to the British mobs described by Thompson) who had abused their power

[25] In the words of E.P. Thompson this act of "planting" might be interpreted as a metaphor, symbolizing the collective efforts of commoners in cultivating the principles of freedom and social justice. Moreover, each age has its variation of the *Liberty Tree* which may differ from one context to another.

holding role for centuries, were successfully overthrown (Khalid, 2006). Besides these happenings, those who were raised in Uzbek villages became skilled workers and began to climb the social hierarchy due to their well-received Soviet education (Khalid, 2015). In a nearby village to Paxtayurt, a local resident named Vladimir Aleksandrovich even achieved the remarkable feat of becoming a cosmonaut. He married an Uzbek woman, a descendant of the *Dzhani Bek* from the Golden Horde Khanate, adopting her surname, Dzhanibekov, to honor her heritage. Later on, he discovered the *Dzhanibekov Effect* in space, a unique maneuver for astronauts named in his honor. This real-life story mirrors the Soviet's respect for cultural values, scientific innovation, and gender equality. In line with these debates, women in Uzbekistan were also granted equal rights with their male counterparts, not only legally but in real life as well (Kamp, 2006). As per the *Soviet Uzbekistan: Facts & Figures* (SUFF) booklet (1983), every third engineer and scientific worker in the republic was a woman; three out of every four doctors were women; 45% of the teachers were women. Thanks to the existence of far-reaching transportation networks like railroads, mothers with small children had the opportunity to either work fewer hours or take their work home.

As a direct consequence of this situation, in every major capital and strategic rural region (like the rural-Tashkent Region and areas in the vicinity of Paxtayurt), passersby back then could hear the whistle blast of the morning trains and see these vehicles carrying the labor force, and witness railway lines splayed out in all directions into the Uzbek hinterland and industrial areas (Vitkovitch, 1954). In those times, villages like Paxtayurt were also linked to each other and even amalgamated with neighboring ones to establish collective farms (Jean, 1936). These farms provided everything necessary for their residents, from new houses equipped with electricity to pharmacies and public buildings. Popular gathering spots such as tea houses (*chaykhanas*) were also found in these communities. It was perhaps no surprise to see that radio had become an integral part of the *chaykhana* culture, listening to it every day while sipping their tea.

Probably driven by a comparable motive, "Red Chaykhanas" were established all over the Uzbek SSR after the successful collectivization attempts (Khalid, 2021).

Critical meetings were convened, lectures and talks were delivered, and artists showcased their talents in these Red Chaykhanas. As was exemplified by Thompson in early British society, the person responsible for running such a *chaykhana* assumed the role of the manager of a local members-only club. Much like teahouses or pubs in the UK, the Uzbek proletariat used to gather in said venues to discuss their progress in fulfilling production quotas that were imposed by the state. They also shared success stories with each other of fellow Soviet workers in outperforming villages both within and beyond the Uzbek SSR. At this point, the success story of a Soviet coal miner and the resulting Stakhanovite Movement (in the making of the Uzbek Working Class) takes center stage. One summer night, a young Ukrainian miner named Alexei Stakhanov pulled off an impressive feat by mining 102 tons of coal in a single work shift.

This accomplishment was truly remarkable, especially considering that, according to Soviet planning, the official average for a single shift was only seven tons (Davies, 1989). Stakhanov broke this standard by an incredible 1,400%. The local people were captivated by Stakhanov's achievement, and the story quickly spread like wildfire (Siegelbaum, 1988). Recognizing the potential of Stakhanov's work, the Politburo soon realized the growing popularity of Stakhanovism and presented him to the public as a national hero on Soviet radio. By the mid-20th century, exceptional workers like Stakhanov were emerging in every sector of industrial production, from machine building and steelworks to textile *zavods* and collective farms (producing edible goods) (Akkaya, 2002).

While these record-breaking individuals were granted the prestigious "Stakhanovite" status, Uzbek workers were no exception. Such workers began to reap certain privileges, ranging from elevated wages to upgraded housing and educational prospects for both themselves and their offspring. Those who did not perform as much as their Stakhanovite counterparts were also encouraged to work harder and receive similar perks. It was a win-win situation for both parties as production levels soared and a new work ethic emerged. Thus, in his own words, Stakhanov ceased to be a person and became the form of a new mode of thinking and feelings about work (Stakhanov, 1939).

In a manner reminiscent of the *General Ludd* case, where a fictional character acted as a glue in binding the British working class in solidarity, the Stakhonov phenomenon likewise set off a *bandwagon effect*. Consequently, every Uzbek citizen (belonging to the proletariat or peasantry class) followed a particular set of work ethics to become an ideal Soviet laborer (akin to Stakhanov) by planting their own version of *liberty tree*. This collective imitative action led to the formation of the Uzbek working class (Rashidov, 1982). In response to their hard work, the Union promptly provided fairer wages and bestowed more recreational activities such as circuses and amusement parks in villages such as Paxtayurt to uplift the motivated spirit of this newly-made working class (SUFF, 1983). Meanwhile, the establishment of labor unions also enabled collective bargaining with the state, shaping the Uzbek SSR into a worker's paradise where the well-being and development of the workforce were prioritized.

However, events took a dramatic downturn, much like an instant violent storm wreaking havoc (Plokhy, 2014). The space race with America and the war in Afghanistan in the 1980's depleted the Union's resources and human capital, ultimately leading to its economic collapse and eventual downfall (Ro'i, 2022). As the Soviet Union dissolved, capitalist spaces like TTF emerged, leaving workers stripped of their former rights. Workers were now expected to heed the directives of the bourgeoisie class, comprised primarily of foreigners or former comrades who, like them, were once collective farmers (Trevisani, 2007). Those who have attempted to challenge the system by forming old-fashioned labor unions faced severe consequences, with their voices systematically suppressed. Consequently, the only viable option for individuals, i.e., Paxtayurters in our case, is to shift themselves into roles as blue-collar workers within capitalist entities like TTF, embrace positions within the service sector, or collaborate with the capitalist system by pursuing white-collar professions (an achievement restricted only to those who have the right connections).

Others seeking additional income eventually transformed themselves into the roadside sellers or else remained peasants. This flexible nature of the Uzbek Way capitalism has also altered the meaning of "work," deeming it a challenge to

incorporate terms like "Uzbek working class" (as everything correlated with the sociology of everyday life became precarious) (Sancak, 2012). Thompson would describe this situation as the "dissolution" or "the remaking of the Uzbek working class." All in all, in order to effectively monitor the evolution of the Uzbek working class and changes in class relations, this thesis employs a framework inspired by Thompson. This approach involves asking pinpoint questions about individuals' daily experiences during the times of the USSR and their active agency in the development of the Uzbek Working Class identity, as well as their role in its remaking after the Union's collapse. To circumvent the limitations of empiricism, I equally refrained from relying on statistically furnished documents published by capitalist institutions. Consequently, the subsequent chapter generally expounds upon the formative process of the Uzbek working class, prioritizing qualitative insights over quantitative data. My research also delves into the overlooked aspects of Thompson's work, as he deliberately omitted the voices of female workers. To counter this, I ensured a substantial representation of females in the last section of the findings part. This approach granted me a complete grasp of the true dynamics at play surrounding the making and remaking of the Uzbek working class.

2.5.1.3. Methodological Contributions of Thompson

In pursuant to previous statements, E.P. Thompson's methodological approach to conducting social research is also based on the usage of qualitative methodology. As argued by Alan Bryman, it "emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection of analysis of data," has an inductive approach and it views reality "as a constantly shifting emergent property of individual creation" (Bryman, 2012: 36). Unlike the quantitative data, integrating qualitative methods allowed Thompson to acquire a more holistic, in-depth understanding of the topic in question, as the qualitative method provides a nuanced and interpretive understanding while quantitative method supplies a more mechanical, data-driven analysis.[26]

[26] All in all, if we take into account the relationship between theory and research, we notice that quantitative research is generally deductive and tests a theory or a hypothesis, whereby qualitative research (as adapted by Thompson) is inductive and generates a theory. In terms of epistemological orientation, quantitative research is positivist, whereas qualitative research proves to be interpretative.

Another strength of Thompson's methodology is his emphasis on contextual factors. He recognized that the trajectory of a social issue (i.e., the metamorphosis of class relations vis-a-vis capitalism) is highly influenced by historical, geographical, cultural, spatial and political-economic factors, thus stressing primary importance in molding the daily life experiences of the communities in question (Yildirim, 2022). This renders Thompson's methodology extremely meticulous, thorough, and accurate. Yet, one of the main criticisms of this research about Thompsonesque methodology is that it can be overly complex, making it difficult for others to understand and emulate his research in other parts of the world where class relations are heterogeneous. Another weakness of his methodology is the limited generalization because the results of his research may not be easily taken for granted in other populations or contexts. Finally, if you do not have access to necessary resources, his methodology can be prohibitively time-consuming and expensive. However, despite these limitations, Thompson's methodology remains a useful tool for those interested in conducting rigorous and comprehensive research in the field of rural sociology especially tracking the process of making and remaking of the Soviet-style proletariat in post-Soviet spaces. To obliterate the challenges and as argued before, I utilized ethnography, *in situ* photos, semi-structured interviews (which could be considered as the first-hand accounts of ordinary people), participant observation together with the usage of other visual data from sources from archives which were mostly available in the Tashkent Textile Factory's database.

2.5.2. Theoretical Contributions of Henri Lefebvre

In light of the aforementioned statements, the second figure this research focuses on is Henri Lefebvre. Born and raised in the rural community of Hagetmau, Lefebvre's background and former residency in southwestern France allowed him to observe significant changes and social turbulence the agrarian class experienced during industrialization (Elden & Morton, 2022).[27] To remedy industrialization era-induced societal problems, he then undertook a sociological analysis of the great

[27] From a Marxian perspective, the adverse effects of the mechanization of labor in factory spaces and the over-bureaucratization of everyday life were arguably even more detrimental than the struggles faced by the ill-fated characters in Victor Hugo's novels.

transformation of French society from a critical eye. Witnessing the poverty in the Paris suburbs during the 1920s, his growing interest in Marxism eventually led him to join the French Communist Party (*Parti Communiste Français*).

Subsequently, when Lefebvre became an active member of the resistance movement during WWII (1940-44), the Nazi Party ally government, the Vichy Regime, halted his academic activities. After the war, in the mid-1950s, he settled in the Alsace Region (Strasbourg), where he took a university job. During his time in Strasbourg, he began his Ph.D. dissertation on the social changes that were occurring in rural France. It was also here that he became acquainted with the members of the Situationist International Movement. Similar to E.P. Thompson, Lefebvre opposed Stalinism and state-directed capitalism and infused a humanist approach into his writings, which resulted in expulsion from the French Communist Party. In the 1960s, he returned to the French capital to pursue his academic career at the University of Nanterre. This experience was instrumental in Lefebvre's formulation of the "spatial triad". While coining this phrase, his intention was to adapt the classical dialectical materialism of space for use in the 20th century (Lefebvre, (2003) [1953]: 117).

To accomplish this objective, Lefebvre dexterously blended the *Cartesian* thinking of Descartes, Hegelian dialectics, Marxist structuralism and Sartresque existentialism without over-entanglement (Shields, 1999). Regarding his structuralist influences, Lefebvre also believed in the superiority of social structures in shaping reality (Stanek, 2008). Not unlike Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical assumption that the limits of one's language determine one's thinking (Wittgenstein, (2003) [1922]), Lefebvre argues that the production of space is a symbolic form of social expression shaped by a plethora of complex structures and systems. In turn, these could easily be formulated under the aegis of sociological and political-economic elements, collectively constituting the very fabric of social landscapes and our daily existence (Lefebvre, (1991) [1974]).

Taking these statements into account, Lefebvre equally stresses that our daily interactions are generated through three distinct spatial moments, namely,

"perceived" (the spatial practice), "conceived" (representations of space), and "lived" (representational space) (Merrifield, 1993). Representing the hegemony of the ruling elite in order to bolster their dominance, as argued by Stanek (2011), "conceived" space refers to the way space is represented in maps, plans, and other forms of representation. Characterized through the mode of production and reproduction of this mode of production, "perceived" (the spatial practice) refers to the way individuals experience space through perceptions and physical experiences.

Finally, "lived" space refers to the way space is experienced through daily life practices and routines. It corresponds primarily with images, symbols, and artworks that shape the human experience in the social space (Pipitone & Raghavan, 2017). In order to illustrate and demonstrate these aspects more lucidly, an illustrative re-interpretation of the Lefebvrian spatial triad is provided below.

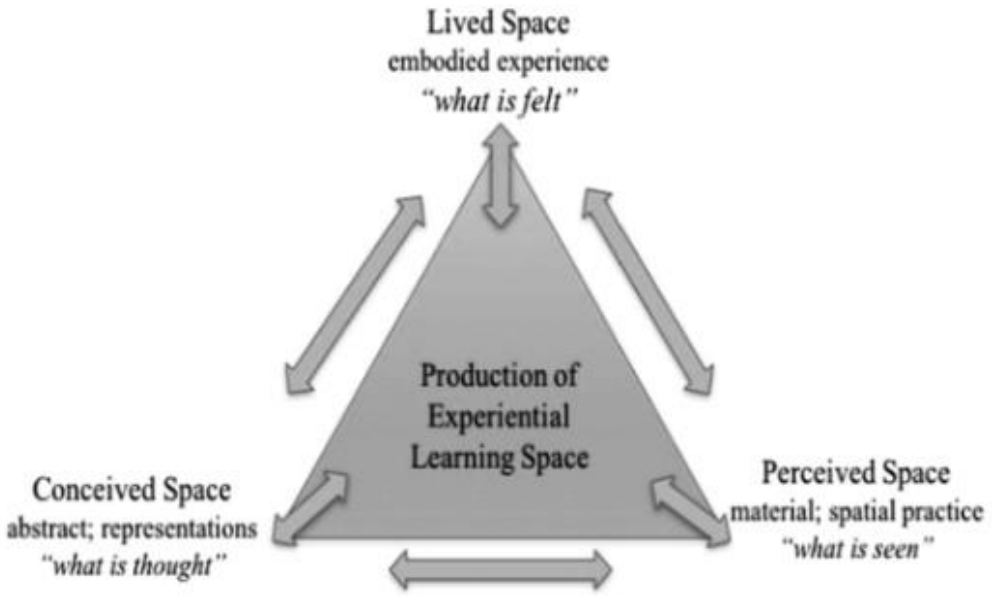

Figure 1. An Illustration of the Lefebvrian Spatial Triad

Source: *'Socio-Spatial Analysis of Study Abroad Student's Experiences in/of Place in Morocco,' Pipitone and Raghavan, (2017): 270*

2.5.2.1. Lefebvre's Perception of Class and Class Relations

With respect to this graph and considering the emergence of produced spaces like TTF, and the dissolution of collective spaces in former socialist domains like

Paxtayurt, *The Production of Space* text should also be viewed as a study of the history of spatial transformation and class relations (Elden, 2006). Imagine that, we are observing a bird's eye view photo of a multinational textile factory (like TTF) on a day like New Year's Day when the workers are absent. What would we typically see? Most likely, we would see production units separated into sections designated for blue-collar workers.

Nevertheless, we may also observe workspaces resembling offices, such as administrative buildings exclusively available to white-collar employees. The spatial separation is notable enough for us to assume there may be some sort of class conflict between individuals from different social strata (i.e., the white-collar decision-makers and blue-collar executors), even if there are no people visible in the picture. This is correlated with the perceived dimension of the spatial triad, which may be obtained from personal experiences or movies about totalitarian spaces, i.e., schools, factories, military bases, and prisons. In parallel with these arguments, Lefebvre (1991) [1974] defines social class as a group of people that share similar characteristics in a particular spatial context or a bunch of individuals trying to enhance their standing in the social hierarchy.

In today's capitalist Paxtayurt, he would argue that there exist three distinctive classes, namely the proletariat, peasants, and bourgeoisie. He would also advocate that these three groups are destined to collide until one group emerges victorious and dominates the other within the social space they inhabit, akin to their ancestors who lived in the same space for centuries. This is what Lefebvre means when he defines class conflicts. By utilizing the spatial triad, Lefebvre also demonstrated how the spatial arrangement of urban and rural settlements changed under different modes of production, particularly in terms of class relations. He suggested that cities and former Soviet places like Paxtayurt should be perceived as social arenas where the concrete manifestation of relations of production amongst members of different classes took place:

> As concrete abstractions, social relations have no real existence except in and through space. *Their underpinning is spatial*. In each particular case, the

> connection between this underpinning and the relations it supports calls for analysis. (Lefebvre (1991) [1974]: 404)

Within the scope of this argument, Paxtayurt and TTF emerge as key sites where contradictions between the bourgeoisie and working class were produced and cyclically reproduced. This contradictory relationship is a symbiotic one, as both parties depend upon each other's existence (Shields, 1999: 152). Along the same vein, the second scientific novelty Lefebvre inserted into rural sociology is his ideas regarding everyday life. As argued by Stuart Elden (2004), everyday life refers to routine and repetitive actions, behaviors, and practices that constitute our mundane existence.

When combined with the aforementioned arguments and fused with both E.P. Thompson's and Michael Burawoy's sociological imagination, everyday life becomes a site of struggle as people seek to create meaning and make sense of their experiences in the world. In the case of the events surrounding the Bolshevik Revolution, the founding of the USSR, and social unrest against the Czarist forces, the eventual establishment of Soviet Uzbekistan (as a form of class movement) emerged from the daily struggles of people who felt marginalized, oppressed, or excluded from the dominant social order (Kotkin, 2015). From a Lefebvrian perspective, the Soviet order in Paxtayurt originated from both the active participation of ordinary people as well as a state-driven communist party with a self-determined goal to create a better world (Lefebvre, 1971 [1968]). The main rationale was to transform the society, propelling it forward on the trajectory of progress towards a classless state. The Soviet Union emerged outstandingly as the "first developmental proletarian state" on the global stage.

In considering itself as a protagonist shaping the trajectory of historical events, the central ambition of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was to become the guardian of Marxist-Leninist principles. At the heart of this system, there were elected councils in a pyramidal structure, starting from villages like Paxtayurt to districts like Tashkent and other parts of the Union (Kenez, 1999). Additionally, people could engage in politics via trade unions, labor cooperatives, women's clubs, youth leagues and other political organizations (Vitkovitch, 1954). In the *ancienne*

regime (Czarist order where people were kept out of politics), everything mentioned above would have been unimaginable. The USSR was thus a part of a new breed of a mobilizational state. In these states, the government aimed to mold society by employing modern methods of socio-spatial alterations across various areas.

It was not solely about adopting novel organizational structures, as people also had to be educated to perceive the world through a "Bolshevik Lens." Thanks to the state's intervention in people's everyday lives and the aforementioned spatial designations (red *chaykhanas*, collective farmlands, implementation of Lenin statues with communist mantras, and red *yurts*), Soviet Union citizens began to view inequality as exploitation (Sancak, 2012). They recognized that class consciousness was a fundamental instrument to emancipate themselves from centuries-old intergenerational slavery. With the help of flawless propaganda, successful division of labor in collective spaces, and annual mass demonstrations (celebrations like the May Day parades), a new type of society was formed (Service, (2020) [1997]).

However, subsequent to the fall of the Soviet Union, the revolutionary fervor of the working class disappeared as the focus shifted from collective work and societal well-being to individualism. Similar to their European counterparts, ordinary people experienced a loss of meaning and an increase in repetition in their daily lives (Shields, 1999: 65). While work defined daily routines and occupied a considerable part of the social clock, Lefebvre highlighted that in today's capitalist societies (for our case *Yangi Uzbekistan*), alienation is omnipresent as it exists in leisure as well (Lefebvre, 1988: 78). In other words, it infiltrates various aspects of everyday life. For the Paxtayurt case, which shall be explained in detail in the analysis section, the prevalence of mini-markets under the influence of global brands (like Pepsi Cola) has ushered in a vicious cycle where individuals find themselves hemmed in by predetermined choices (designated by technocrats) from their dietary selections to lifestyle preferences.

Akin to what has occurred in France, the UK and the US, in their pursuit of satisfying artificial desires, these individuals eventually become the servants of the commodities they consume. The process involves individuals exchanging their labor

to acquire afore-mentioned commodities, ostensibly to fulfill their bourgeoise imposed desires. However, in a paradoxical turn of events, possessions acquired through this exchange eventually gain influence over ordinary people, subtly transforming them into the possessed rather than possessors (Lefebvre, 1987: 9). Meanwhile, this lack of awareness extends beyond mere consumer choices; it reflects a broader societal shift in which individuals find themselves devoid of the agency they once had during pivotal movements like the Bolshevik Revolution. Nevertheless, recent uprisings in Kazakhstan and the Karakalpakstan region of Uzbekistan, protests in India, and ongoing agricultural-based movements in Germany, France and Belgium in 2024 all demonstrate a trend of working-class people demanding community rights via the planting of the aforementioned *liberty trees,* all examples of which are indigenous to their particular living spaces.[28]

To put it differently, individuals from the lower socioeconomic strata took action to disrupt the existing system and create a new way of life that aligns with their interests which Lefebvre labels as de-alienation and creation of the total person (*übermensch* in a Nietzscheian sense).[29] As *übermensch* (or overman in English) formulated by Nietzsche, is a person who is keen to take risks, willing to make personal sacrifices for the welfare of others. This personal trait also contrasts with Francis Fukuyama's (1992) *last man* typology, whose one and only ambition is to protect his own interests at the expense of others' well-being (Erbaş, 2017). To a certain extent, these are correlated with Mikhail Bakhtin's carnivalesque as well, which could be categorized under four different categories: (1) *the familiar,* (2) *eccentric*, (3) *carnivalistic mesalliances* (unification of people from different social

[28] Since the implementation of neo-liberal policies in rural areas, the main objective of capitalist actors has been to reduce farm subsidies and accumulate more capital, even at the cost of others' miseries. To achieve these goals, countries like India, Uzbekistan, France, Germany, and Belgium have reversed their long-standing peasant-friendly agrarian policies by cutting subsidies and other public supports. This has resulted in a widening income gap between the middle class and those belonging to the lower tier of social strata. The ongoing peasant protests in the aforementioned countries since the 2020s are, thus, being considered by experts as the most influential farmer's struggle of the 21st century as they grew systematically, like a chain reaction. From a Lefebvrian standpoint, years of maltreatment have finally forced peasants worldwide to unite against the status quo and demand more freedoms and rights through fierce negotiations (Lefebvre (1991) [1974]).

[29] In 1939, Lefebvre presented a French interpretation of Nietzsche's work that rejected the philosopher's use by the fascists (Nazi Party allies). According to Lefebvre, the "*übermensch*" is an individual who is self-aware and willing to transform the world for the common good, and the prosperity of the planet in a skillful manner.

classes), (4) *profonation* (Lachmann, 1988).[30] The combination of these above-mentioned elements has the power to remove all social restrictions of power-holders by allowing regular individuals to govern what persona they would like to adopt in a given time and space. In accordance with these statements, all of these protests and their (i.e., Indian, German, Uzbek, and Kazakh farmer's grievances) acts of the right to the village are about reclaiming justice in everyday life as much as revindicating centrality.[31]

2.5.2.2. Critiques of Lefebvre

During the 1970's, Lefebvre was the only Marxist scholar who ventured into the discussion of urban / rural life from a critical perspective (Katznelson, 1992: 93). However, despite his structural evaluation of space, Lefebvre's works have only recently gained attention, even amongst fellow Marxists. This is primarily attributed to his peripheral role in the French intelligentsia during the 1970s[32] (Elden, 2004).

Another factor is the negative reception by Manuel Castells. As a prominent scholar who worked as Lefebvre's assistant at Nanterre, Castells remarked that Lefebvre lacked knowledge about the workings of economy and technology.[33] Then again, he praised Lefebvre's genius in perceiving the remaining occurrences and happenings (Merrifield, 2006: xxii). Within the scope of this research, it is true that Lefebvre's philosophical and explosive writing style can sometimes pose challenges for readers.

[30] Under the aegis of Lefebvrian literature, Bakhtinian carnivals could also be perceived as symbolic instruments for human progression which is used as a method of consolation to compensate societal imperfections in a grotesque manner. In other words, carnivals unveil themselves as a symbolic manifestation which directly represent the way we look at the world and an opportunity for commoners to show their discontent with society in general. Lastly, anything could be classified as carnivalesque if it possesses the following features: (1) reversal of hierarchies, (2) abandoning taken for granted beliefs with eccentric behavior, (3) non-linear patterns or grotesque realism.

[31] Speaking in Lefebvrian terms, only a break off (like aforementioned kind of mass movements) with everyday life can bestow optimistic shifts in the reproduction of social relations (Lefebvre, 1968).

[32] During the 1970's, the French Communist Party (PCF) maintained a strong influence within French intelligentsia, whereas adherence to the party line was often expected by the academic world. Lefebvre however, challenged the PCF's dogmatic approach and followed a Trotskyist path. Lefebvre's dissident stance, combined with his criticism of fossilized Marxist positions rendered it difficult for him to gain widespread recognition and acceptance.

[33] Castells (1977) [1972] describes Lefebvrian dialectical materialism is extremely deterministic and reductionist. He also labelled Lefebvre's political stance as romantically utopian.

However despite these flaws, Lefebvre was an out of ordinary figure who incessantly emphasized the importance of the economy, means of production and numerical data which was strikingly observable in his statistically furnished ethnographic-works. For example, during his doctoral thesis in Campen, he carried out participant observations in the community in question while conducting detailed archival research at the town hall (Merrifield, 2006: 4). While working at the University of Nanterre in the 1960s, Lefebvre strongly encouraged his doctoral students to engage in empirical research (which mostly revolved around the details of economic life) for community groups or unions (Shields, 1999: 90). Lefebvre also conducted various fieldwork in various locations, including South America, Canada, North Africa, New York, and Japan. Therefore, overlooking Lefebvre's emphasis on the mode of production and economy in his work would be considered a biased blunder.[34]

2.5.2.3. Methodological Contributions of Lefebvre

As previously highlighted, Henri Lefebvre was a versatile scholar, proficient in both philosophy and geography. Over the course of his academic journey, he employed a plethora of methodologies, including participant observation and interviews. Within the scope of his sociological imagination, the objects of natural sciences and social entities are of different natures; therefore, social entities cannot be grasped objectively, and they require a subjective explanation. For instance, according to his epistemological view, ethnographic research using participant observation cannot be the ultimate objective because data is interpreted and humans construct meaningful/explanations according to the social setting they find themselves in.

This entails that reality (especially those about social issues) is not taken for granted and that social entities rely heavily on sociocultural conventions that humans construct (Lefebvre, (1969) [1968]). As a result, relativity prevails, and meanings assigned to social issues are imagined realities. As a direct response to his opposition to the positivist school, Lefebvre coined the *regressive-progressive* method to

[34] As stated before, Lefebvre's sociological imagination is characterized by a deep commitment to structural Marxism evident in his early empirical ethnographic works (influenced by Annales School) which seek to expose and challenge power relations that underpin social inequality through the use of statistical data.

examine space by reinvigorating Marx's dialectical materialism into the 20th century (Stanek, 2008). This method is comprised of the following three moments:

> *Descriptive*: Observation, but with an eye informed by experience and a general theory. In the foreground: participant observation of the field. Careful use of survey techniques (interviews, questionnaires, statistics). *Analytico-regressive*: Analysis of reality as described. Attempt to give it a precise date (so as not to be limited to an account turning on undated 'archaisms' that are not compared with one another). *Historico-genetic*: Studies of changes in this or that previously dated structure, by further (internal or external) development and by its subordination to overall structures. Attempt to reach a genetic classification of formations and structures, in the framework of the overall structure. Thus, an attempt to return to the contemporary as previously described, in order to rediscover the present, but elucidated, understood: *explained*. (Lefebvre, (2003) [1953]: 117)

Within the aforementioned perspective, he asserted that, the regressive-progressive method is always here to guide fieldworkers to conduct their research in a flawless manner. Central to this method are intricate spatial dimensions, encompassing both horizontal and vertical aspects. Primarily, he interpreted *horizontal complexity* as the emergence of specific modes of production and social structures occurring within the same historical timeframe, especially those influenced by significant contemporary social and political phenomena. Using the example of sharecropping, he suggested that a sociological investigation should commence by selecting a village community as the central focus. The communal aspects of the residents' lives could be examined using diverse data collection approaches such as interviews and observations (referred to as the "descriptive moment"). Lefebvre specifically emphasized that relying solely on a questionnaire survey falls short in portraying the urban and rural habitat. Instead, he suggested incorporating additional details like "houses, possessions, clothing, facial expressions, and behavior" (Lefebvre, (2003) [1966] :128). In addition to rural regions such as the Pyrenees, Lefebvre also employed the regressive-progressive technique to explore social settings, including Paxtayurt-like Mourenx, an emerging industrial township in southern France.

In his 1960 article published in *La Revue Française de Sociologie*, Lefebvre provided an account of the day-to-day lives of the residents of Mourenx, drawing from data gathered through interviews and participant observation (Stanek, 2008).

The objective behind conducting this sociological investigation was to grasp the comprehensive "conditions" of the entire community, such as social structure, agricultural/industrial productivity and population mobility (Lefebvre, (2003) [1966]: 128). In addition to the *horizontal complexity* which aided researchers in grasping a community's present-day "conditions", Lefebvre also underscored the significance of the temporal aspect of space, often referred to as *vertical complexity*. As discussed earlier, he argued that new space arises from existing space. This implies the coexistence of "sociological fossils", which, while varying in age and origin, persist together (Lefebvre, (2003) [1966]: 113). Although the exact definition of "sociological fossils" was not explicitly provided by him, subsequent remarks illustrate how this concept could be understood in the context of Navarenx—a historical town adjacent to Lefebvre's hometown, Hagetmau (Lefebvre, (1995) [1962]).

> In Navarrenx, where 'I know every stone'. In these stones I can read the centuries, rather as botanists can tell the age of a tree by the number of rings in its truck ... History and civilization in a seashell, this town embodies the forms and actions of a thousand-year-old community which was itself part of a wider society and culture, ever more distant from us as the years pass by. This community has shaped its shell, building and rebuilding it, modifying it again and again according to its needs. Look closely, and within every house you will see the slow, mucous trace of this animal which transforms the chalk in the soil around it into something delicate and structured: a family. (Lefebvre, (1995) [1962]:116)

By examining "sociological fossils", researchers therefore, become able to analyze how past modes of production still influence urban and rural experience (Stanek, 2008). What is more, he has also underscored that:

> ... in order to elucidate modern industrial society, the analysis must go back to older societies. These it determines in their relation to the concrete totality as given today, inasmuch as they are original totalities that have been transcended, that is in the only historical reality that we can conceive of or determine. In the past, this analysis finds, under specific forms, certain relations (such as that between Master and Slave for example, which Marx called 'the exploitation of man by man') or else typical modes of thought or social existence, such as Fetishism. Dialectical materialism's field cannot therefore be restricted to the present day; it extends over the whole of sociology. (Lefebvre, (2009) [1940]: 94)

Following the stages of description, observation, and analysis, the concluding phase of the regressive-progressive method, was termed by him as the "historic-genetic". To illustrate, Lefebvre put forth the idea that a village's history is intertwined with the evolution of various modes of production. This transformation spans the epochs, from slave and feudal modes of production, progressing through the agricultural revolution and capitalism, culminating in the industrialization of agriculture. By structuring the historical narrative of space according to these modes of production, researchers gain a more comprehensive historical context to aid them in unraveling the economic framework and day-to-day existence of the present (Lefebvre, (2003) [1970]). Given that the core objective of employing the regressive-progressive method is to decipher the dialectical progression of changing modes of production, Lefebvre decided to steer clear of "abstracted empiricism," and embrace diverse data collection techniques instead. "Sociological fossils," for example, are compiled from a range of origins, including folklore, mythology, or literary works (Elden, 2004).

By intertwining *vertical* and *horizontal complexity* and fostering interaction with relevant fields and disciplines, such as demographics, political economy and statistics, the regressive-progressive method creates a comprehensive framework for rural sociology (Lefebvre, (2003) [1953]). Through conducting field research in a nation undergoing privatization, this dissertation also holds the potential to offer a novel contribution to the realm of social sciences. Under the aegis of these statements, I have utilized Thompsonesque, Lefebvrian, and Burawoyesque ethnographic techniques[35], as well as the mentioned interviews[36] and participant

[35] These ethnographic techniques and face-to-face interactions mostly helped me to uncover the co-dependent relationship between supply and demand under the rule of the modern market economy. To put it differently, it was within the factory, the village square, the hidden corners of alleys, road-side stalls, *chaykhana* and the bustling bazaar; I uncovered the interplay between economics, social dynamics, and cultural heritage that shaped the fabric of Paxtayurt's existence.

[36] Throughout these interviews, I learned about inhabitants' perspectives on *Yangi* (New) Uzbekistan, which are lacking in most academic texts. Some of those Uzbek workers who were fluent in the Turkish language even offered liaison services throughout my village fieldwork. I seized the opportunity and responded affirmatively. Thanks to their valuable assistance, language barriers were lifted, and trust was established with the locals, whereby I was able to carry on with my research without disruptions. These observations, together with the interviews with workers, also helped me to fully comprehend the underlying dynamics behind the fluctuating shifts in the social fabric of Paxtayurt, where TTF serves metaphorically as a bridge linking people of various backgrounds. While conducting the initial part of this research, I also observed the administration and daily practices of the factory's white-collar employees.

observation, in order to conduct a multi-layared field research. The socio-spatial history of the researched village (i.e., Paxtayurt) also steps into the stage at this point.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOCIO-SPATIAL HISTORY OF PAXTAYURT VILLAGE

As an imagined reality, space is essential in shaping class relations and the sociology of everyday life (Soja, 2011). Thanks to the emergence of industrial capitalism, spatial designations are now being practiced by post-materialist nations for the sustenance of their mercantile interests (i.e., to accumulate more capital) (Yeung, 1998). Within the scope of Lefebvre's aforementioned regressive-progressive methodology (i.e., vertical and horizontal complexity of space), the perplexing logic behind produced spaces (e.g., villages, plantations, schools and factories) could equally be formulated as the "bounded combination of social relations, structures, practices, social systems and institutions" (Fuchs, 2019: 143). Within the framework of these statements, Chapter 3 now attempts to provide the geographical setting (the village environment and haves and have-nots of the village) and socio-spatial history of Paxtayurt (from antediluvian times to the present and the changing class relations in rural Uzbekistan) in a systematical fashion.

3.1. The Geographical Setting

To begin with, the village of Paxtayurt (as a plain village) is situated approximately 120 km outside the Uzbek capital in a district named Bostonliq[37] of the Tashkent Region.[38] Similar to the villages of Italy's Toscana province (where Lefebvre

[37] Covering an area of 4.930 km^2, Bostanliq is home to more than 171.000 inhabitants. The district comprises a single city (i.e., Gazalkent, the administrative center of Bostanliq District) along with 17 urban-type settlements and 18 villages like Paxtayurt.

[38] Tashkent Region, known as *Toshkent Viloyati* in Uzbek, situated in the north-eastern part of the nation, positioned between the Syr Darya River and the Tien Shan Mountains, encompasses an area of 15.250 km2, with an estimated population of 2,975,900. It shares borders with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, the Sirdaryo Region, and the Namangan Region. Additionally, it surrounds the city of Tashkent and cities like Nurafshon, Angren, Olmaliq, Ohangaron, Bekabad, Chirchiq, Gazalkent, Keles, Parkent, Yangiabad and Yangi Yol.

conducted his initial ethnographic fieldwork), Paxtayurt holds significant importance for Uzbekistan due to its historical heritage, arable lands, agricultural production, well-developed infrastructural facilities and contributions to the Uzbek economy (TTF, 2015).[39] However, some notable differences also exist between these two breadbasket locations.

Climatically speaking, while the villages of Toscana are subject to a reasonably mild climate, Paxtayurt experiences a more continental climate, with scorching summers (with temperatures of +40°) and relatively cold and wet winters, hindering the cultivation of sensitive products, such as olives (TTFR, 2020). The surrounding region of Paxtayurt also features a mixed bag of geographical components, including fertile plains, tree groves (i.e., plum, willow, and poplar trees), rolling hills, rivers (i.e., Chirchiq River), dams (i.e., Charvak Dam) and the Tian Shan Mountain Range (Vitkovich, 1954). These ecological assets render livestock rearing and the cultivation of cash crops like wheat easier for Uzbek peasants.

However, due to the region's unsuitable terrain, the villagers of Paxtayurt do not actively engage in cotton farming. The nearest cotton-grown fields, such as *Yangi Yol* and *Zangiata* are located about 100-150 kilometers away. Despite these factors, the decision by the owners of TTF to establish a multinational textile factory in Paxtayurt hinged upon a multitude of reasons. As highlighted by the factory manager, the first two reasons were its close proximity to the Uzbek capital and the availability of sophisticated transportation networks such as well-paved roads and railroads.

This renders it convenient for the owners and key white-collar employees who live in downtown Tashkent to commute back and forth to work in a short period of time. The other reasons were its pleasant climate and flat terrain, which makes this plain village more accessible and habitable compared to the other unaccommodating mountainous villages of Bostanliq District. Thanks to these aspects, the establishment of a multinational company (around 2007) in Paxtayurt has

[39] Tashkent Textile Factory Report

transformed the area, which was formerly devoid of cotton, into a cotton hub, allowing TTF to access and purchase tons of finest quality *oq oltin*[40] (white gold) from cotton-rich regions of Uzbekistan such as *Surxondaryo*, *Qashqadaryo*, *Khwarazm* and *Karakalpakstan*. Once purchased, these cotton supplies can be processed and distributed through 18-wheeler international trucks to all over the world. In a country where only 10% of the hinterland is available for agrarian production, the diversity and availability of water resources are other significant advantages that make this space a center of attraction for locals and outsiders alike (TTFR, 2022). Apart from its trading nexus function in the region, the village of Paxtayurt also possesses a variety of infrastructural facilities and amenities.

These include a local pharmacy (*dorixana*), a mosque, a primary school (*maktab*), a marketplace (*dehqon bozori*, also known as peasant bazaar), a rural health clinic (*Qislaq Shifokorliq Punkti)*, a teahouse (*chaykhana*), numerous small irrigation canals (or *ariqs* that provide water for households for cleaning and cooking), two bus stops, three machine repair shops (one for automobiles and the others for tractors), one rural administrative council (*Qishloq fuqarolar yigini*), a small police station and three mini-markets that are operated under global brand-names, such as "Mini-Market Pepsi" to meet the everyday requirements of its residents.

However, the village lacks essential facilities such as a hospital (*shifoxona*) and a high school. As a result, people who want to pursue their higher education, seek advanced medical treatments, access broader employment opportunities, or just aspire to engage in recreational activities like dining out with friends or watching a movie, are advised to visit central areas like Gazalkent or Tashkent.[41]

[40] In their daily conversations, the Uzbek people prefer to use the term "white gold" instead of cotton to underscore the economic importance of this cash crop in their country. Yet, this is not a new word. The origins of this nomenclature dates back to the Soviet era when cotton cultivation became a strategic focus. During this time, extensive irrigation projects transformed arid lands into lucrative cotton fields, transforming the country into a major cotton-producing member within the Soviet Union. What is more, after the collapse of the Union, Uzbekistan still remains one of the top cotton exporters worldwide.

[41] As stated in a recent TTF report published in 2023, these urban spaces provide an extensive array of services, including facilities like the *Qishloq Vrachlik Punkti* (rural medical center), *Tugruqxona* (maternity ward), high schools, universities and Shifoxonas (hospitals)

3.1.1. Demographic Composition

Defined as a large-sized village with around 620 households, Paxtayurt is also home to more than 3,000 people from different ethnic backgrounds, including Uzbek, Tajik, Russian Tatar, Karakalpak and Kazakh (TTFR, 2021).[42] Out of this population, approximately 1200 individuals are employed by TTF, with another 1480 engaging in agricultural pursuits such as vegetable cultivation, animal husbandry, poultry farming, and beekeeping. On the other hand, only 120 individuals are engaged in trade or in service sector work. Similar to their peasant peers they occasionally sell their merchandise in *dehqon bazaars*, mini markets, or involve in machine repairing if they are qualified for technical work.[43] The remaining those who were unable to find jobs at TTF and who do not participate in trade or agricultural activities have decided to migrate to places like Tashkent city, Turkey, Germany or US as these places are considered to offer more job prospects and opportunities than Paxtayurt. Moreover, 8 medical personnel from Gazalkent are assigned by government to work at the aforementioned *Paxtayurt Qislaq Shifokorliq Punkti* (village hospital). They return home after their shift ends (except those who are on night duty). The pharmacy (*dorixona*) staff, on the other hand, is comprised of three Soviet-educated elder individuals who were born and raised in Paxtayurt, educated in Tashkent, but preferred to return to their place of birth to serve their local community. The age composition in Paxtayurt is pyramidal in shape, with a larger base of younger age groups. According to a 2022 report by TTFR (i.e., Tashkent Textile Factory Report), the village has a significant population of children and adolescents who make up around 25% of the total population. This category includes newborns to teenagers within the 0-14 age interval.

The data also indicates a substantial working-age population, comprising of individuals aged 15-65 years, and collectively contributing to over 70% of the total

[42] Remarkably, 99% of the population identifies themselves as Uzbek, which helps them to find a sense of belonging within a multi-ethnic community.

[43] Additionally, as explained in the last part of the findings section more than two-thirds of the ordinary workers of TTF are also involved in part-time agri-business like selling their self-cultivated produce (which was grown in their private plots) on roadsides after their shift ends, making the class structure of Paxtayurt amorphous compared to other Occidental post-Soviet villages.

population. Within this range, the most significant segment is individuals aged 31-45 years, representing 50% of the working population, followed closely by those aged 15-30 years (around 40%), and followed by 10% by those aged 45-65. The population of people aged 65 and above, particularly those in their 70s, 80s, and 90s, constitutes only 5% of the total population. In addition to these statements, the village has a total population of 1552 females and 1448 males, indicating a slight predominance of females with a ratio of approximately 51.5% female to 48.5% male. During the vegetable cultivation season, however, the existing gender balance changes significantly due to the arrival of over 700 seasonal workers from mountainous-arid regions who are predominantly males.

These workers usually engage in agricultural activities for an average three to four months (late-spring to early-autumn), aiding in the planting, irrigation, and harvesting crops (fruits and vegetables) before returning to their original places of residence. As mentioned by the factory manager, most of the seasonal workers employed fall within the age group of 25 to 40 years old. This age group is likely selected for their physical capabilities and experience in the field. The remaining workers are from younger age groups who mostly come to this village with the aim of acquiring knowledge in agriculture and aspiring to become as experienced as their senior counterparts (TTFR, 2023). Apart from these, there are currently 10 Russian expats, all of whom are middle-aged, working for TTF in the factory's managerial or IT (information technology) departments.

These white-collar individuals (similar to their fellow Russians who have computer-based jobs in Central Tashkent) decided to leave Russia temporarily (to work in a prestigious company) after the Russo-Ukranian conflict erupted in 2022 and partial mobilization to the military became mandatory. Beyond their professional aspirations, they are also drawn to Paxtayurt for its charm and affordability. In comparison to the central areas in the Tashkent District, which could be considered expensive, the presence of relatively cheap housing with modern amenities such as electricity, internet, private gardens and captivating views makes Paxtayurt a choice. With plans to bring their families in the near future, establishing a new life in this village (if the Russo-Ukrainian conflict does not come to a peaceful solution)

promises numerous opportunities for these people to sustain both career endeavors and family contentment.

3.1.2. Housing Structure

Given the above, the presence of well-equipped houses with gardens makes Paxtayurt an ideal place to live. The scattered array of mud-brick homes with flat or occasional A-shaped corrugated metal roofs and few windows equally gives the village a humbler appearance. The use of adobe-type housing with few windows is because these materials are affordable and easily available, whereas the lack of numerous glass windows also provides adequate insulation against adverse weather conditions[44] (TTFR, 2021). Most of the houses possess courtyards as well. Like dwellings in Turkish villages found in Anatolia, they function as spaces for conducting daily chores such as cooking, washing clothes, socializing, as well as a source of ventilation (Stirling, 1965). Moreover, the roof functions as a place to dry crops and store foodstuff. Occasionally, they are utilized as supplementary rest spaces where individuals replenish their energy. In addition, there are the traditional thatched roofed wooden houses on stilts. The size of these structures is generally smaller than adobe houses and are used as summer cottages (i.e., *dachas*) by families who actually live in metropolitan areas such as Tashkent and Samarkand during the rest of the year. Regarding personal privacy, no males are allowed to enter a household or private courtyard without permission unless he is a very close relative.

The majority of individuals residing in Paxtayurt also exhibit an inherent inclination to avoid anything that may potentially expose their interior residential lifestyle. Therefore, rather than embellishing their exteriors, interior courtyards with high walls are the centripetal focus for decoration and gardening. These interior spaces function as an alternate universe separate from the outside world. As is the case in many Turkish villages, this phenomenon may also be interpreted as an underlying manifestation of patriarchal societal norms, which revolve around safeguarding

[44] It is also important to state that, the construction of Uzbek village housing is based in accordance with the region's climatic and topographic features (Zanca, 2011). Therefore, the housing structures may differ from one another. In mountainous villages, people mostly build their houses with double wooden frame, whereas in plain villages, people prefer to construct their houses with a single wooden frame.

familial honor, both on an individual and collective level (Boran (1992) [1945]). However, there exists a more balanced division of labor between differing genders when it comes to agrarian tasks and agricultural work. Like villages in Italy (as observed by Lefebvre in his field research in Tuscany), individuals, irrespective of gender, exhibit equal levels of involvement in agrarian chores such as the cultivation of tomatoes, grapes, and cabbages within their personal garden plots (Elden & Morton 2022).

In addition to these, growing staple cash-crops like wheat are also cultivated under strict state-imposed quotas and regulations (TTFR, 2012). During planting and harvesting, rural inhabitants participate in collective efforts by pooling their resources, expertise, and labor to execute a profitable campaign effectively. Apart from these statements, engaging in animal husbandry, such as raising cows, goats, and sheep, represents another vital means of generating additional income, "as these animals can be readily traded in local markets, and neighboring villages or utilized for sustenance by community members" (Sancak, 2012). To conduct easier commercial transactions for local residents and outsiders, Paxtayurt additionally accommodates the aforementioned marketplace known as *dehqon bozori*. This marketplace operates continuously from early morning to late night throughout the week, with the exception of Mondays when it is closed for sanitation.

As stated by Russell Zanca (2011), these marketplaces (of rural-Uzbekistan) serve as a convenient venue for local villagers to exchange goods, cultivated produce and handicrafts. In this regard, it could be summed up as the heart and soul of Paxtayurt's economic life. Resembling Ottoman bazaars, *dehqon bozori* also showcase a wide array of commodities, such as herbal teas, spices and selectively harvested fruits (Şahinalp & Günal: 2016). However, even though these free-market spaces are the top choice for Paxtayurters to engage in their commercial activities, most of the locals also prefer alternative trading approaches, which are considered part and parcel of the informal economy.

For instance, throughout the sidewalks of the *dehqon bozori* (hereafter will be called as dehqon bazaar), there equally exist randomly placed stalls piled high with

almonds, pistachios, milk balls and raisins, which constitute the authentic flavors of rural-Uzbekistan. These stall vendors typically exhibit theatrical antics in order to attract customers and encourage them to buy their goods. All in all, in the words of TTF reports, these bazaars could be considered as a microcosm of the sociology of daily life in post-Soviet rural spaces. Within the aforementioned perspective, the economic life in Paxtayurt is also inter-threaded with the village's cultural traditions and religious practices.

During times of weddings, *Nevruz* festivals and religious holidays like *Qurban hayiti*[45], which are considered as *de rigueur* religious events to boost social capital, most individuals gather together to prepare traditional dishes like *shashlik, sumalak* and *samsa*[46] (Eraslan, 2015). Some exchange gifts with each other to bolster their social boundaries, while others enrich the festive environment by offering jamborees and entertainment (Sahadeo & Zanca, 2007). In the words of Meltem Sancak (2012), these events are not only moments of joy but also opportunities to promote their abilities and services to the local community. However, ensuing in these rather pricey undertakings in a post-Soviet village can also lead to difficulties, especially for those who are not landowners and do not have access to essential resources (Thurman et al., 2001). Despite these drawbacks, individuals from economically impoverished backgrounds can still partake in these activities with the help of more affluent community members (Çay, 2012). In other words, rural dwellers in each sphere of existence often rely on solidarity to deal with the daily challenges they face.

When talking about the village's other facilities, aforementioned *dorixona* (hereafter will be called as pharmacy) concocts basic medicinal supplies to address the community's health issues. Similar to other Uzbek villages, a growing number of mini-markets which were also elucidated above (as quasi-supermarkets under capitalist brands) provide a wide range of products, including fruit preserves and

[45] *Qurban Hayiti* which signifies the conclusion of the Hajj pilgrimage, could be considered as one of the most significant religious holidays within the Islamic societies (Hourani, (2013) [1991]).

[46] *Somsa* is a traditional Central Asian pastry filled with savory ingredients such as minced meat and vegetables, while shashlik refers to skewered and grilled chunks of marinated meat.

uniquely designed tablework, fulfilling the needs and preferences of the local population.

In addition to these capitalistic spaces, the multifaceted trade network of Paxtayurt also features portable-kiosks offering non-perishables, including American tobacco products, imported shampoos, magazines, and handcrafted items such as spoons, plates, vases, and wooden chessboards. Like myself, those visiting this village can purchase these peculiar materials like *tubeteika* (Uzbek traditional cap), each of which is a manifestation of the long-standing cultural fabric of the area and the craftsmanship of Paxtayurters. After providing a general scrutiny of the topographical setting, commercial activities and demographic characteristics of Paxtayurt, my research will now proceed to encompass the village's historical development from around the creation of Silk Road up until to the establishment of the TTF.

3.2. Paxtayurt Through the Ages: A Socio-Spatial Odyssey

As was previously argued, Paxtayurt is located in the Central Asian hinterland known as the Tashkent Region. The numerous surrounding geographical landmarks, such as the Chirchiq River, Pamir, and Tien-Shan Mountain ranges, enable Paxtayurters to cultivate lucrative harvesting seasons. Due to the availability of fertile lands and mountain steppe, nomadic clans from different geographies migrated to graze their animals and interact with neighboring communities (Khazanov, 1985). Following the great exodus of Indo-Europeans (circa 2250 BC) and the spread of Andronovo culture, Paxtayurt's once unsettled inhabitants were able to transform themselves into a sedentary community (ADB, 2010: 15). The introduction of new agricultural methods was also primarily responsible for this social transformation (Seaman & Marks, 1991). Moreover, thanks to the domestication of pack animals like camels and the creation of transportation networks (i.e., dirt roads), social interactions amongst locals and foreign sedentary groups become exacerbated (Tor & Inaba, 2022). This authentic blend of social exchange (e.g., fruits, vegetables, commodities like metals and other manufactured

goods) in return facilitated a sophisticated division of labor between the two parties. As Rafis Abazov stated (2008) the first group (as archaic classes) could be compiled:

> By settlers who cultivated fertile soil in numerous oases on and around the Zeravshan, Murgab and Amu Darya (Oxus in ancient Greek chronicles) rivers and their tributaries...The other group was represented by the nomadic and semi-nomadic population of the vast steppe to the north of the Syr Darya River (Abazov, 2008: 34)

Yet, it is still puzzling for social scientists to systematically chronicle the complex history of Paxtayurt Village. That said, this research will attempt to provide the reader with an encapsulating outlook. *Prima facie*, the foundations of the proto-states were primarily laid between the 8th - 6th centuries B.C.E. Some provincial capitals like Samarkand, Bukhara and Tashkent established were highly developed in terms of producing handicrafts and military implements while others remained regional powers (Khalid, 2021). As a cosmopolitan space, the first foreign settlers in the Paxtayurt Village in recorded history were the Achaemenids, who came from neighboring Persia (Tor & Inaba, 2022). Like the Etruscans of Italy, this ancient civilization created encompassing infrastructural systems, ranging from trade routes to sophisticated aquifers (Daniel, 2001).

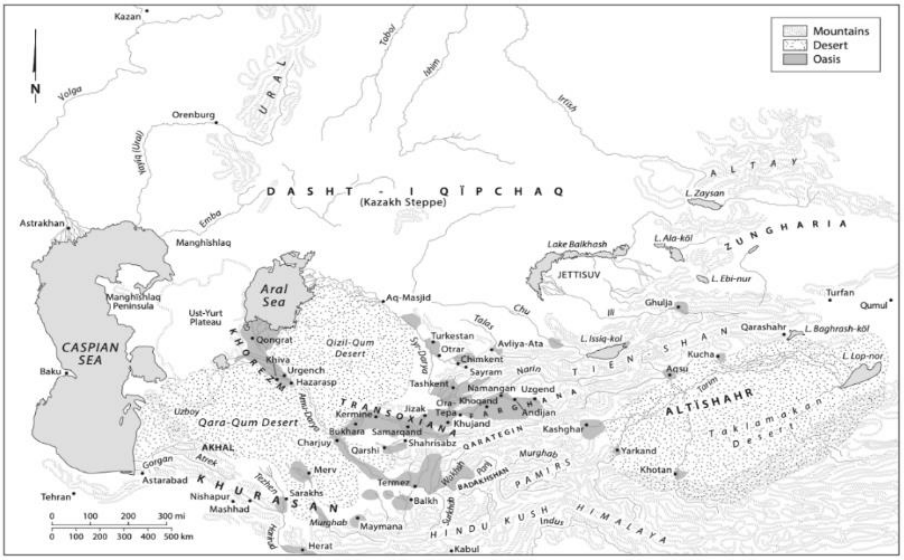

Figure 2. The Map of Central Asia: Physical Features and Old-Geographic Terminology

Source: *"Central Asia: A New History from The Imperial Conquests to the Present" Adeeb Khalid (2021) :11*

The Achaemenids were followed by Chinese influence in the region. As traders and merchants traversed The Silk Road, they brought goods (i.e., silk, spices), ideas, and cultural practices, ranging from papermaking to gunpowder (Zhenping, 2013). However, along with the subsequent decline of Chinese dynasties and years of pillaging and looting amongst various interest groups, rural Tashkent also became exposed to Hellenic and Arabic culture (Roux, (2008) [1984]). Consequentially, daily life in Central Asia, which included Paxtayurt, commenced to be molded by neo-Platonist components right on up to the arrival of Genghis Khan. Meanwhile, a Turco-Mongol warlord named Amir Timur also appeared on the annals of history.

3.2.1. The Creation of the Timurid Empire

Expanding over a vast expanse of territory, the Timurid Empire was one of the greatest throughout history (Manz, 1989). Thanks to its complex administrative mechanisms, multi-layered institutions, and versatile combat techniques, the Timurids ventured west into Afghanistan, Iran and Asia Minor (Manz, 2007). Due to his contributions to the sciences and his open-minded character, Timur (also known as the *Tamerlane* by the Anglophonic world) was also referred to as a proto-Renaissance figure by his European counterparts (Lamb, 1928), whereby Uzbekistan became a notable center of commerce, culture and agriculture under his reign. Moreover, Amir's Turkification policies in the region also had an undeniable impact on suppressing the assimilation strategies of the Persians and Arabs (Hodgson, (1974)). As was stated by Nancy Lubin (1997):

> Timur initiated the last flowering of Mawarannahr by gathering in his capital numerous artisans and scholars from the lands he had conquered. By supporting such people, Timur imbued his empire with a very rich culture. During Timur's reign, a wide range of construction projects was undertaken in Samarkand and other population centers... It was during the Timurid dynasty that Turkish in the form of the Chagatai dialect became a literary language in its own right. (Lubin et al. ed, 1997: 389-390)

Yet, not unlike Alexander the Great, Amir Timur was unable to accomplish his cosmopolitan empire-building ideal due to his sudden demise. For thinkers like Arnold Toynbee, had his ideal become sustainable, the regions encompassing rural

Tashkent and the Oxus-Jaxartes basin would have very well become the epicenter of Russian civilization, and not the Volga basin, thus it "might have coincided with the former domain of the Soviet Union" (Toynbee, (1988) [1972], 395-396).[47] The collapse of the Timurid Empire in the late 15th century, subsequent to Amir's untimely passing, also marked the beginning of an era of political and cultural turmoil in Central Asia (Marozzi, (2006) [2004]: 426). Located in the heart of the region, Paxtayurt was no exception. Meanwhile, several Uzbek Khanates emerged to vie for power and territory in Transoxiana (Marozzi, (2006) [2004]: 427). The first of these dynasties was the Shaybanids, a Persianized Turco-Mongol group that was a former vassal of the Timurids, which emerged in the 16th century.

After defeating the post-Timurid states, the Shaybanids established a large empire stretching from the Aral Sea to the Indus River (Macit, 2016). Following the collapse of this Empire, several Uzbek Khanate offshoots, such as those of Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand, rose to dominance (Hiro, 2009:20). Due to constant infighting, Uzbekistan finally fell under the influence of the Russian Empire. As historian Alexander Morrison (2021) argued, Czarist expansion into Central Asia and Paxtayurt began in the early-19th century, due in part to their takeover of the Kazakh Khanate. By the late-1860s, Russians had established control over most of the region, marking the inception of a new era of political and cultural integration.[48]

3.2.2. The Emergence of Czarist Russia in Paxtayurt's Realms

At first glance, the Russian conquest of Central Asia was a valid excuse for Czarist self-protectionism policies in the face of increasing British expansion in India and

[47] Years after Timurid's decline, nomadic Uzbek tribes took control of Uzbekistan in the early-16th century. Although the Bokhara Khanate was perceived as a strategic center, Paxtayurt still served as a stronghold in rural Tashkent as it was equipped with ecological abundance, especially water resources (Bissell, 2003).

[48] As with other colonial powers, the Romanovs attempted to legitimize their colonization acts all around the globe by framing their expansionism as a duty to civilize 'underdeveloped' Asiatic communities (Vernadsky, (1946) [1929]). On the way to vindicating their belligerent operations, atrocities were committed under the Anglo-French paradigm of *la mission civilisatrice* (i.e., civilizing mission) to prove that Russia was a civilized political entity *per se*, on par with Western powers (Hofmeister, 2016: 411)

Afghanistan (Hopkirk, 1992). Under the banner of the Great Game paradigm,[49] the whole area encompassing the Tashkent District (as a breadbasket location) was perceived an important asset in Turkestan to strengthen the hand of the Russian Empire in the International Relations system (Morrison, 2014: 136). In conjunction with their Turco-Persian predecessors, the Romanovs subjugated the entire country by instigating political quarrels between rival khanates (Morris, 1975: 521). [50]

Similar to the Ottoman vassal states (under the reign of *istimalet* strategy), the khanates of Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva and Guberniya were converted into autonomous entities in their internal affairs, whereas their foreign affairs were coerced to accept the political supremacy of their Russian patrons (Vambery, 1864). As also argued by Nancy Lubin:

> By 1876, the entire territory comprised of present-day Uzbekistan had either fallen under direct Russian rule or had become a protectorate of Russia. The treaties establishing the protectorates over Bukhara and Khiva gave Russia control of the foreign relations of these states and gave Russian merchants important concessions in foreign trade; the khanates retained control of their own internal affairs. Tashkent and Quqon fell directly under a Russian governor-general (Lubin et al. ed, 1997: 393-394).

In addition to these statements, the confiscation of Uzbek cotton also played a significant role in economic development, industrialization and changes in the social structure (Hamm, 1976: 1-2). As argued by Robert Service (2020) [1997], after successfully accomplishing this confiscation process, the Czar and the Governor-Generals began tightening the reins over the empire. The local religious leaders and

[49] The Great Game could be concisely defined as an era where British and Russian Empires struggled with each other en route to confiscating Central Asia's valuable commodities. Both Great Britain and Russia were worried about each other's expansion efforts into Central Asia for economic reasons. On the one hand, Britain was worried about potential Russian expansion into India, while Russia was equally concerned about handing Central Asia over to the British (Hopkirk, 1992).

[50] From the early-18th century onwards, the hinterlands situated north of the oases, which were utilized predominantly by Kazakh nomads, found themselves increasingly subjected to Czarist Empire campaigns. In the latter part of the 19th century, the Russians expanded southwards, conquering every inch of western Central Asia in the process significant urban centers such as Tashkent and Samarkand were brought under Russian rule in 1865 and 1868, respectively. The Amir of Bukhara acknowledged Russian authority during this time, whereas the Khan of Khiva followed suit five years later. A third political entity, the Khanate of Khokhand, was directly incorporated into the state structure in 1876, whereas the General Government of Turkestan was established through the annexation of territories from Bokhara, Khiva, and Khokhand,

aristocracy that were typically appointed by Russian authorities governed their respective regions and communities (Pierce, 1964). Often from prominent Uzbek families, the aristocracy was responsible for collecting taxes, maintaining peace and order, and meting out justice in their regions (Pierce, 1960).

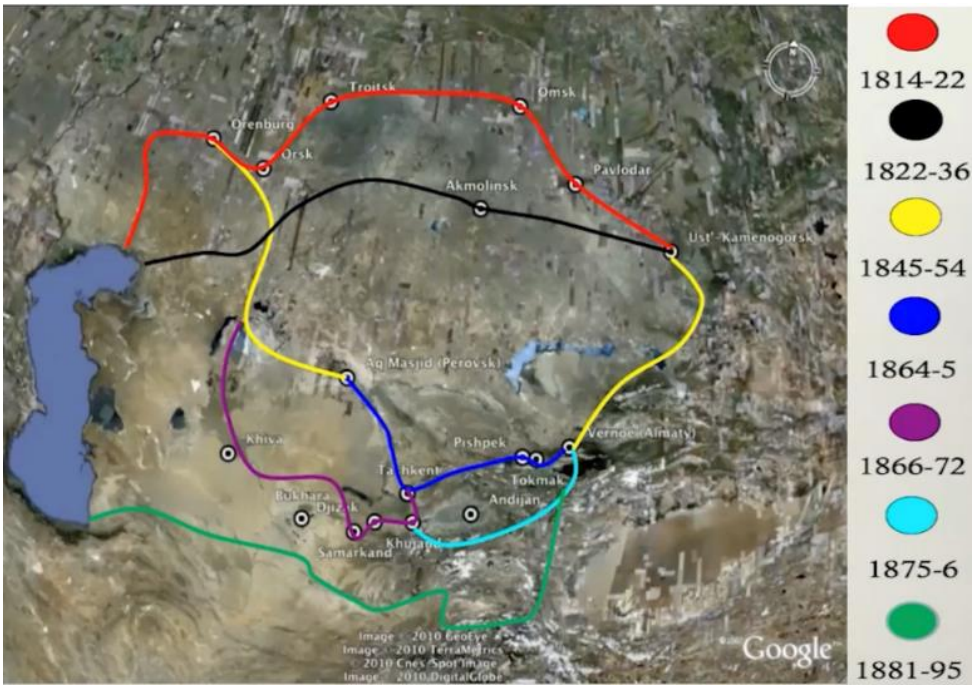

Figure 3. The Historical Trajectory of Russian Expansion in Central Asia in the 19th Century

Source:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3XN42x__rc&t=574s&ab_channel=RoyalSocietyforAsianAffairs, Copyright: Alexander Morrison, Accessed on 7 April 2022

Some of these people were also members of ethnic minority groups, and they were in charge of coordinating the flow of commercial items between Russia and Central Asia (Wortman, 2013: 273). As argued by Adeeb Khalid (2021), both of these groups were able to amass a large amount of riches and were occasionally given special privileges by the officials of the imperial government. As Robert Service stated, the common people made up the majority of the population, and those individuals were subdivided into numerous social and economic groups according to their occupation, ethnicity, and religion as well (Service (2020) [1997]: 1-2). Apart from these statements, it used to be the ordinary Moslem peasants who were considered the dregs of the social ladder (Hayit, 1965). Correspondingly, they were forced to pay taxes to the imperial government or the local nobility since they were

bound to the land that they inhabited (Khalid, 2009). On the contrary, it was the Russian-origin artisans and the soldiers who were on a higher social tier than the peasants. Blacksmiths, carpenters, and potters were some examples of artisans, as formulated by Baddeley (1999) [1908]). They were in charge of manufacturing commodities and services (the means of production) necessary for the empire to run properly or compete against the other European powers. A figure representing the class structure of the Czarist rule in the late-19th century is also provided below.

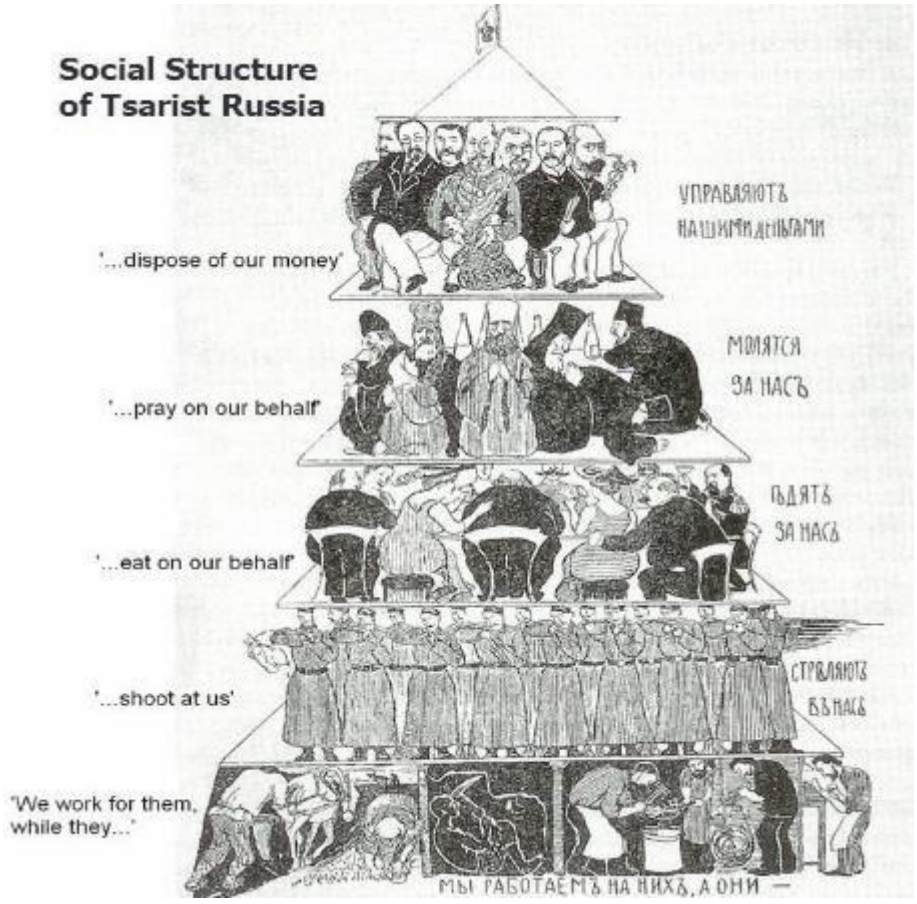

Figure 4. **The Social Structure of the Czarist Russia**

Source: *"The Penguin History of Modern Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century" Robert Service (2020) [1997]: 2*

3.2.3. The Political Economic Program of Czarist Russia and Changes in Class Relations

With the conquest of Tashkent and subsequent subjugation of the oasis regions of Turkestan, the Russians introduced socio-structural changes in four major areas. First

and foremost, they attempted to acquire a monopoly of the Uzbek market by bringing over-rationalized trade methods and creating a "price speculator" class locally known as *chayqovchi* (Allworth, 1994, Butayev & Irisqulov, 2008). On the other hand, the *kulaki* (i.e., feudal lords / farmers) were also created to lend money, employ labor, and lease or acquire property located in outlying rural communities (Khalid, 2021). Consequently, this widened the gap between the rich and poor (Blum, 1961). Secondly, once the Czarist regime commandeered its cotton and agriculture base, they began subsidizing the area's excessive cotton growth, food and vegetable production by activating authentic irrigation networks (Morrison, 2021). This in turn, gradually led cotton output to skyrocket (Newton, 1976: 87-88).

Furthermore, the foundations of industrialization were also erected in the form of miniature primary processing and extractive ventures (Geiss, 2003). Thanks to the creation of trans-national railways and telegraph lines, the buttresses of contemporary communications systems were laid (Newton, 1976: 88). The establishment of new agricultural methods such as crop diversification was also initiated. This diversification was generated through the usage of equipment produced by small enterprises. Such quasi-industrial equipment was available on large estates where hired hands comprised the majority of the labor force. When they could afford it, local peasants also purchased metal plows, corrugated-iron roofs and wooden fences, as well as leather shoes, nails and overcoats (Pavlovsky, 1930).

In other words, although making money from the augmented interest in agri-products like cotton, fruits and vegetables, the Uzbek peasantry preferred to sustain their traditional livelihood and preserve their conventional Turkic customs, which were strongly associated with collective lifestyles and taking independent decisions (Findley, 2005). This seemed applicable to the gentry class as long as "the peasantry complied with the state's demands for taxes" (Service, (2020) [1997]: 6). Yet, they could have been punished quite easily for under-quota harvest seasons. Fines were the most common form of punishment in Czarist Central Asia (Daly, 2002, Daly, 2004). This punishment was often used for misdemeanors, i.e., petty theft or excessive alcohol-related behavior (Kennan, 1891). Fines were typically imposed on the offender or their families.

As stated by Kollmann (2017), these were intended to serve as deterrents against future vice activity. However, fines were not always practical, as many people were unable to pay them, and thus were faced with further punishment, such as imprisonment or forced labor (Daly, 2000: 342).

3.2.4. Ideological State Apparatus

As mentioned before, one of the most significant social-engineering techniques systematically utilized by the Czarist regime was the suppression of Central Asia's cultural identity (Khalid, 2009: 414). Czarist rule sought to erase Uzbek Turco-Islamic heritage and replace it with homogenized Russian culture. Similar to what happened during the USSR era, Russian was indoctrinated as the official language, and Russian Orthodox Christianity was promoted as the superior religion (Morrison, 2006). Central Asian traditions were actively suppressed, and any expressions of cultural identity that were anti-Pan-Slavic were punished. Speaking in Lefebvrian terms and in terms of imposition of spatial designations under the banner of *conceived space*, the Czarist empire also had a huge impact upon the architecture of Uzbekistan, introducing a neo-Classic Western architectural style that emphasized large, ornate buildings built of stone and brick.

Figure 5. Czarist-Era Built Opera House (now operating as a Wedding Hall) in Paxtayurt

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 27.06.2022)*

This style was used for public buildings throughout Uzbekistan, including schools, hospitals and opera houses (Khalid, 2021). However, the empire surprisingly recognized the importance of traditional Uzbek ornaments, incorporated such elements into its own buildings. Below is the exterior of an opera house built during the Czarist era, and currently utilized as a wedding hall on the outskirts of Paxtayurt.

3.2.5. The Rising Tide of Nationalism and the Road to Revolution

Developments that occurred in the publishing world (i.e., periodical magazines), and influenced by Francis Bacon, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Montesquieu, Uzbek opinion-makers suggested to have autonomous social rights, as well as widespread recognition and representation in the political arena. The utmost influence of the Durkheimian school of sociology was observed in Ismail Gaspirinsky, an adherent of self-determinism. This thinker was renowned for proposing a grass-roots political program based on the idea of local and provincial independence. In the same vein, the famous-Pan-Turkic figure, Faizulla Khojayev perceived Uzbekistan to be a "Turkestani Moslem nation and home to most of the sedentary Moslems of Central Asia" (Khalid, 2015: 5).

On the way towards materializing their political aspirations, these culturalist thinkers implemented the political program of *the Committee of Union and Progress* directly into Central Asia. Whereas, the idea of "Union and Progress" was a mere derivative of sociology pioneer Auguste Comte's organicism-based ideas, which had very porous foundations (Zürcher, 2010). According to historian Erik Jan Zürcher, even the Ottomans had failed to wholeheartedly realize the cultivation ideal of *İttihadçılık*, so what was it about the Jadidist ideology that enabled practitioners to steer this flawed ideology so flawlessly? Despite all its negative points, the prominent Turkic intelligentsia insisted on hoisting their culturalist banner for various reasons. First and foremost, *harsçılık* (culturalism) was perceived as their one and only defiant mechanism against Russian absolutism (Khalid, 2015).

The second line in the study of Turkish culture came from sociologist Ziya Gökalp entitled *Kizil Elma* (influenced by Emile Durkheim and Ibn Khaldun*)* which could be

construed as an antidote to Pan-Slavism.[51] Nevertheless, the actual realization of their aspirations for emancipation from Russian (i.e., Czarist) hegemony was to come in the form of a different Russian leader, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

3.3. The Emergence of Uzbek SSR and the Making of the Uzbek Working Class

Given the above, the Czar's power waned due to the Romanov Family's perpetual hostility toward the indigenous rural-proletariat, whereby local revolutionaries used this opportunity to take their prolonged revenge to free themselves from their aristocrat patrons by instigating numerous quarrels with the imperial forces (Robinson 1967). Consequently, the village of Paxtayurt was directly subjugated to Soviet rule (Chokobaeva, Drieu & Morrison, 2020: 5), whereas the subsequent demise of the Romanovs led to the reformulation of the village's administrative fabric into a communist fold (Dobb, 1948). In order to maintain prosperity and reinforce the living standards of their subjects, Soviet officials immediately attempted to guarantee the socio-economic welfare of the peasantry while pursuing amicable relationships with the culturalists by means of several pioneering investments ranging from education to land reforms (Baykov, 1947). These reforms of Vladimir Lenin's were imposed through a brand-new social contract entitled the *New Economic Policy* (NEP) (1921-1929).

With the activation of the policy in question, "compulsory food requisitioning was replaced by a market relation between the state and peasants…small-scale industry was denationalized, state industry was required to be profitable, and private trade was legalized" (Davies, 1997: 135). The Soviet nomenclatures had also appropriated certain segments of the economy by confiscating local industries and banking institutions (Schwartz, 1950). The rationale behind this transformation was

[51] Within the aforementioned perspective, there is mutual agreement among the pro-Russian historians about the futileness of Jadidist nationalism in a cosmopolitan area like Transoxiana which was home to numerous ethnicities. As stated by Morrison (2021), unlike the backlashes of culturalist scholars, the Russian Empire had followed an anti-colonialist path in Central Asia, and it was not involved in slavery and related activities. For this reason, Russian expansion must be perceived as the lesser of two evils vis-a-vis *the mindset of the white man's* burden. In the same vein, even contemporary scholars had chosen to indicate the exploitative activities of Imperial Russia as the relatively lesser evil, "as otherwise, the region would have fallen into the rapacious hands of the British" (Morrison, 2021: 13).

straightforward. From the vantage point of the Soviet Politburo, Uzbekistan was then perceived as the most industrially developed Turkic Republic in Central Asia. As expounded by Raghavenbrarao Gidadhubli, the industrial inventory of Uzbek SSR was immense as the country was equipped with "cotton ginning and oil crushing industries, brick kilns, flour mills, mechanical workshops and so on" (Gidadhubli, 1994: 294). Due to the close vicinity of reliable allies like The People's Republic of China, Moscow also granted Uzbek SSR most-privileged trade status (Gidadhubli, 1987). With the help of the industrial and agricultural proletariat, Vladimir Lenin deleted centuries of agrarian tradition by emancipating Uzbek peasants from their former landlords (i.e., *kulakis or bois*). In the Russian Revolution's early years, some *kulaks* were still permitted to continue their agrarian practices and trade activities, which helped them accumulate more capital, but now "their lands were no longer distributed; instead, they were turned over to newly formed collective farms" (Kamp & Zanca: 2008: 13).

Subsequently, kulakis latent dominance in the agri-sector generated a manifest social disharmony, which led to class dissent and a general willingness to accept Stalin's attempt to fully collectivize also known as the *de-kulakization* strategy.[52]

In the first years of the *de-kulakization* campaign, the fountainhead of capital accumulation was provided by delivering necessary resources from Moscow to the outlying areas such as rural Tashkent. In the long run, more than two-thirds (i.e., nearly 60%) of total resources needed for cash crop (cotton and wheat) production were transferred from the Union's central budget into Uzbek agriculture (Allworth, 1990). In addition to these economic upgrades in the national economy, another significant change occurred in the sociology of everyday life. According to Shoshana Keller (2007), literacy rates in Uzbekistan soared and the rural population of the Uzbek SSR gradually transformed from being passive spectators into active political

[52] As argued by Kotkin (2015), the term *kulak* was invented to describe affluent Russian farmers who experienced poverty before the implementation of the *Stolypin Reform* of 1906-1914. Through the widespread dissemination of these reforms across the empire, individuals who demonstrated loyalty to imperial authorities and possessed an entrepreneurial spirit could amass substantial amounts of capital compared to their poor *Bednyak* and mid-income peasant *Serednyak* counterparts. However, with the advent of the Red Revolution, Lenin and Stalin began to label these people "bloodsucking vampires" who embellished their social status by accumulating more capital over the miseries of masses in times of hardships like the Great Famine (Lenin, (1974) [1965]: 57-58).

participants. Nonetheless, the central government's cumbersome bureaucracy and other surveillance mechanisms against its people remained a draconian method to prod its citizens into becoming more fearful and obedient (Figes, 2008).

Figure 6. A *Kulak* with Leather Boots, Supervizing a Subordinate Ordinary Peasant, with His Feet Wrapped in Towels and Bast Sandals, Doing The Heavy Agri-work (ca. late-1920's, prior to dekulakization)

Source: "*Stalin: Paradoxes of Power 1878-1928*" Stephen Kotkin, (2015): 618

For pro-Russian Soviet historians like Yuri Kukushkin, however, this tactic was perceived as a mandatory device that helped Communist Party members maintain control over a massive landmass comprised of different ethnic groups and ideologies (Kukushkin, 1981). For others like Baymirza Hayit, these methods were picked as a necessary evil for coping with chronic social illnesses such as radical Islamism (Hayit, 1959). Thanks to such social engineering policies of the Soviet officials, class distinctions were obliterated as the Union's founding fathers eloquently eliminated glaring socio-economic differences that had existed between city dwellers and the peasantry living in the peripheral areas for centuries (Yanowitch, 1986). To summarize, throughout his brief tenure in office, Vladimir Lenin worked to upgrade

Uzbek agriculture by bringing several land reforms. In this process, he granted subsidies and disbursed social welfare to Uzbek peasants. As someone from a rural background, Joseph Stalin similarly followed Lenin's path on the way to abolishing the oligarchy through the collectivization of agriculture.

But, as is argued by Ronald Grigor Suny (2011), unlike Lenin's humanitarian policies, Stalin generally preferred to ignore social development for industrial development. However, for card-carrying Communist Party members, the reason behind this act was equivocated with the paradigm shift in the world system which forced Stalin to implement radical economic policies like Soviet-Fordism in order to grow exponentially (Khalid, 2021). Under these circumstances, Lenin's former peasant-friendly strategies represented a significant hurdle for Stalin to achieve his political aspirations *en route* to becoming a global superpower and competing with Axis forces during World War II. To receive the consent of the masses, his over-expansionist political-economic program was also backed and glossed over by the propaganda devices of his Politburo.

All in all, Stalin's leap-forward strategies provided a plethora of socio-economic amenities like dams, railroads and other infrastructural facilities. Yet, as elucidated in a CIA report on Soviet cotton production, the hidden agenda of the Soviets was also to utilize Uzbekistan's rich natural resources in an attempt to quash American global expansionism (CIA, 1955). Over these political changes, daily life in Paxtayurt had become an authentic blend of continuity and turbulence in which the actors instituted peculiar tactics in an effort to seek remedies for their daily dilemmas. To explain the pros and cons of these structural changes more clearly, it is now essential to discuss the belligerent propaganda posters that illustrated the successes of industrialization attempts under Stalin's 'dexterous' hands.

The choice of analyzing said propaganda posters that promoted industrial growth can also be justified for some reasons. Although there are plenty of literary works and scholarly texts on the theme of Central Asia under the hammer and sickle, compared to these materials, the general public in the Uzbek SSR found these propaganda posters to be more accessible (Khalid, 2021). As with the interview data (see findings

section), they also function as educating tools for people from beyond academic circles by getting them to think more concisely about social issues. Not only were fears and hopes projected into propaganda posters, but there was also a metalinguistic side to those materials in question as well.

Figure 7. A Soviet Propaganda Poster exhorting, "The Friendship of the People of the USSR is Strong and Indissoluble"

Source: *"Central State Museum of the Contemporary History of Russia Archives" painted by Anatolii Bondarovich (1937) (Date of Access: 01.07. 2022)*

In the visual example illustrated in the propaganda poster provided above, we see the leader of the USSR, and protagonist of the communist cause, Josef Stalin. The poster is also reinforced by peasant typologies holding Uzbekistan's flagship agricultural commodity, cotton. First of all, friendship and strength connote a kind of symbol that illustrates the spread of communist ideals under the "benevolent" hand of Stalin (Geldern, 1993). Equally, there is a multi-faceted treatment of people's minds with the intermediary visual and linguistic data conveyed by such posters. This imagery creeps into the viewers' subconscious while the propagandist's written words indoctrinate the government's explicit propaganda.

Stalin accomplished this by conveying the party's mood to the Uzbeks, presenting himself as one of their kind. In the words of Robert Service, unlike Czars, the founding fathers of the Communist Party, and Stalin in particular, endeavored to introduce themselves as ordinary comrades through:

> "Wearing simple gray tunics…. to look not only non-bourgeois but also modest but militant members of a political collective. The etiquette and material tastes of the pre-revolutionary rich were repudiated. Any interest in fine clothes, furniture or interior décor was treated as downright reactionary. A roughness of comportment speech and dress was fostered" (Service,(2020) [1997]:142)

All in all, this was actually a laboratory-like social engineering endeavor in which the community organizer Stalin attempted to shape identities and the division of labor. Over the long run, while a labor force from diverse backgrounds assembled at rural-Uzbekistan (including Paxtayurt, which is famous for its agri-products such as fruit and vegetables) to be reclassified according to politically charged categories of the state motive, it was the workers inhabiting these categories who had to adapt themselves to the necessities of the Stalinist mindset. This mindset mostly indoctrinated via the mottos (1) "Workers of Uzbek SSR unite," (2) "Be good Soviet citizens," (3) "Toil and produce more to contribute to the welfare of the *Rodina* (i.e., home/motherland)." (Kotkin, 2015). Thanks to the implementation of other propaganda mediums like radio and newspapers, the Soviet Union was also able to create ideal Soviet citizens (*homo sovieticus*) throughout Uzbekistan under Stalin's heavy-handed leadership. Ronald Grigor Suny referred to this as, "learning to speak *Bolshevik*, which implied knowing how to behave in choreographed rituals, and maximizing the advantages of overfulfilling expectations" (Siegelbaum & Suny, 1994: 25). In addition to this discourse, the Soviet education system played an equally crucial role in preparing Uzbek citizens to speak this symbolic "Bolshevik" language fluently from the earliest stages of their childhood onwards. As argued by Francine Hirsch (2005), USSR officials established an extensive grid of preschools and kindergartens, catering to the educational needs of its populace from infancy. Children as young as two years old were enrolled in these institutions (i.e., preschools), and exposed to heavy government propaganda from an early age. The primary objective behind this proactive initiative was two-fold: firstly, to actively

keep men and especially women in the workforce, thereby bolstering the nation's productivity levels; secondly, to foster a sense of communal responsibility towards the upbringing and education of future generations.

Preschools were also highly popular among families, particularly those where the mother was employed or needed to work lengthy hours. They provided the only reliable source of care and education for young children while their parents were at work. According to Mervyn Matthews (2014), children remained in Soviet preschools until they turned six, after which they commenced primary school. From 1932 onwards, primary education comprised four years, followed by three years of secondary education, and then three more years of either high school or vocational school (Teknikum), depending on the student's preference. This structure mandated seven years of schooling for all Soviet children, with the option of attending university or upper-vocational school. As a result of increased education levels, there was a considerable rise in the number of well-educated citizens. However, this led to a decrease in the workforce, as many were no longer willing to engage in labor-intensive work. This posed a significant challenge for the Soviets who were in dire need of such a workforce at that time.

To address this issue, a tuition fee system was introduced in 1940 for students who wished to continue their education beyond the mandatory seven years. On the one hand, depending on the school's location (whether it was a high school or vocational school), the tuition fees in question varied, with Moscow, Leningrad, and the republic capitals charging 200 rubles, while most other places charged 150 rubles, equivalent to approximately 10% of a worker's annual wage. University fees on the other hand, ranged from 300 to 500 rubles annually. These fees persisted until 1956 when they were abolished as part of the Khrushchev reform package following Stalin's death.

In addition to these circumstances, the Soviet Government also implemented a progressive curriculum starting from the 1954-55 academic year onwards. These classes focused on instilling theoretical and practical skills related to agriculture, machinery repair, and other trades in order to better prepare children and older

students (including university students) for the workforce. This encompassed the introduction of a class called "*Trud*" (Labor) for students in the first four years of primary school, alongside the introduction of applied, hands-on sessions conducted in workshops and practice sites for students aged five through seven. For children aged eight to ten, practical lessons in mechanical and electrical engineering were also provided, along with classes teaching the inner workings of the agriculture business. After completing these lessons, children then gained the know-how needed to assist their older peers in the agricultural sector through mandatory part-time work.

Moving forward, all these changes were formalized with the enactment of the Law of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on Strengthening the Connection between School and Life and on Further Development of the System of Public Education in the USSR in 1958. Despite efforts to establish an 11-year educational program, it proved ineffective, leading to the reinstatement of the 10-year program in 1963. The university entrance system was also re-adjusted to equip students with more work and additional labor experience. Moreover, as they were required to hold daytime jobs, students were expected to attend classes and study predominantly in the evenings during the first three years of their university programs. If students got top grades and worked for at least two years (for Paxtayurt's case toiled in collective farms), they could also enroll at university without taking exams. Last but not least, it became easier for ex-military members to attend university after being discharged. All of this made it harder for those who lacked that kind of working experience. As a result, more than two-thirds (around 70%) of the total population who attended university in the late-1960's were from working backgrounds. All in all, the unique and exceptional Soviet education system enabled Uzbek citizens to produce best cotton yields and products in the entire Union to compete with their rivals on the world stage. Under the umbrella of these statements, the next poster will delve into the cotton production rivalry between USSR and US during the 20th century.

Here, we see another example of communist propaganda about protecting the mercantile interests of the USSR regime through the antagonization of American capitalism as Public Enemy No. 1. To materialize the Union's industrial aspirations on excessive cotton production, the selected poster also stigmatizes *nesoons:* i.e., one

who sneaks cotton, food and drink out of the factory thus constituting a potential threat to the welfare of the regime (Saraç, 2019: 214).

Figure 8. A Soviet Propaganda Poster from 1931 saying: "Let's Guarantee the Fulfilment of the Cotton Program: For Cotton Independence of the USSR"

Source: *"https://www.posterplakat.com/the-collection/posters/pp-389" (Date of Access: 07.07.2022)*

Sociologically speaking, *nesoon*-ing was regarded mostly as a blue-collared crime of the Soviet times. Nevertheless, as is seen in the selected image, government officials portrayed the ideal type of *nesoon* as both folk devils (*persona non grata*) and allies of American capitalism, synonymous with the bourgeoise class that cooperated with Western capitalists to augment their social status (Beermann, (1962), Fitzpatrick,

(2006)). As stated by Orlando Figes (2008), Stalin and his followers were well-acclaimed for being disciples of Machiavellian doctrines and well-rounded agitators of their constituency. By insinuating regime dissidents and reluctant citizens who did not want to work in the Soviet-type factories called *zavods*, as *nesoons* and national cotton production as the one and only exit for the creation of a sovereign Uzbek state, Stalin concurrently attempted to appropriate Uzbekistan's resources by cultivating anti-American sentiments in the Uzbek SSR to produce more cotton. In this regard, the combined effect of the Soviet legacy was to completely seize or confiscate the country's ecological, social and political landscape. Differing sharply from Lenin's agrarian-friendly policies, Uzbek administrators also turned economic life upside-down by transforming a once-socialist sovereign country into a satellite state of Moscow. The consecutive *national delimitation* campaigns of the Soviets also played a supporting role in materializing this wide-scoped social engineering project.[53]

This in turn, helped Stalin and his successors to successfully grab a steadily increasing amount of hegemony over the Uzbek SSR which enabled them to commandeer Uzbek resources according to their best interests, which were contrary to the founding principles of the Communist Manifesto. For instance, in the post-Stalin eras of Nikita Khrushchev (1953-64) and Leonid Brezhnev (1964-82), a local CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) bureaucrat named Sharaf Rashidov intentionally inflated cotton production figures to share the spoils with his crony networks. To do that, he bribed high-ranking Muscovites, such as Brezhnev's son in

[53] Chronologically speaking, in the initial phases of the revolution, Bukhara and Khiva retained autonomy as People's Soviet Republics. In the mid-1920s, political divisions in Central Asia underwent similar revisions of borders along ethnic lines, a process conducted under the direction of Joseph Stalin, who served as Lenin's Commissar for Nationalities. This resulted in the dissolution of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), the Bukharan People's Soviet Republic, and the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic. Their territories were eventually divided into five separate republics. Among these, the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was established on 27 October 1924, whereupon Uzbekistan became an official part and parcel of the USSR the following year. Moreover, this newly established socialist entity also included the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) in 1929, when the Tajik ASSR attained equal status. The Uzbek capital was also relocated from Samarkand to Tashkent in 1930. Moreover, in December of the same year, Uzbekistan's territory was expanded through the annexation of Karakalpak Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) from Kazakh SSR. Fragments of territory, including Paxtayurt, were also transferred back and forth between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan on several occasions following World War II. This was described by Adeeb Khalid (2021) as a chess endgame move that occurred during the concluding stages of the national delimitation process within the Soviet Union.

law Yuri Churbanov. Uzbek SSR became subsequently synonymous with nepotism and corruption (Lubin et al, 1997: 399).[54]

According to the factory manager whom I labelled as UWC1 (see findings section), cotton pickers resorted to filling their sacks with rocks instead of cotton in order to meet state quotas. Furthermore, empty railcars were intentionally dispatched to Moscow, which corrupt officials would accept bribes to duly register them in their logbooks as full. This Ponzi-like scheme experienced a total breakdown after Leonid Brezhnev's sudden demise in 1982. Yuri Andropov (a former KGB official) ascended to the position of Party Secretary and sentenced everyone involved in this cotton scandal (which was labelled as *Paxta ishi in* the local vernacular). Having accumulated substantial evidence, commonly called "*kompromat*", Andropov even attempted to imprison Sharaf Rashidov. After the latter passed away prior to his trial, the Politburo meted his conspirators with severe sentences (Schwartz, 1979). Apart from these statements, in the preceding image below another striking example of propaganda usage as a tool for directing the sociology of everyday life, like outlawing religious practices in rural spaces such as Paxtayurt, is presented.

As was stated by Baymirza Hayit (1975), the Bolshevik Revolution was an intrepid response in the face of capitalism, inequality and radical Islamism. Before transforming into a world-superpower, the Bolsheviks were just a local left-wing movement led by Vladimir Illich Lenin. Its founding tenets were egalitarianism, secularism and voluntarism. Subsequent to the so-called "Age of Empires" coined by

[54] As explicated by Nancy Lubin; "Following the death of Stalin in 1953, the relative relaxation of totalitarian control initiated by First Secretary Khrushchev (in office 1953-64) brought the rehabilitation of some of the Uzbek nationalists who had been purged. More Uzbeks began to join the Communist Party of Uzbekistan and to assume positions in the government….As Uzbeks were beginning to gain leading positions in society, they also were establishing or reviving unofficial networks based on regional and clan loyalties. These networks provided their members support and often profitable connections between them and the state and the party. An extreme example of this phenomenon occurred under the leadership of Sharaf Rashidov, who was first secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan from 1959 to 1982. During his tenure, Rashidov brought numerous relatives and associates from his native region into government and party leadership positions. The individuals who thus became "connected" treated their positions as personal fiefdoms to enrich themselves. In this way, Rashidov was able to initiate efforts to make Uzbekistan less subservient to Moscow. As became apparent after his death, Rashidov's strategy had been to remain a loyal ally of Leonid I. Brezhnev, leader of the Soviet Union from 1964 to 1982, by bribing high officials of the central government. With this advantage, the Uzbek Government was allowed to merely feign compliance with Moscow's demands for increasingly higher cotton quotas" (Lubin et al, 1997: 399)

Eric Hobsbawm (1989), the Bolsheviks received substantial support from the local peasantry and Moslem culturalists (Critchlow, 1991). During the confiscation policies of former Imperial Russian lands, Lenin and his fellows (Leon Trotsky and Josef Stalin) ended up transforming their local revolution into a global movement. As a non-Moslem leader of a wide swath of territory with a Moslem majority, Lenin also consolidated his omnipresence by distributing political concessions to the Jadidists (Khalid, 1998). This was done by settling Moscow-trained local Uzbeks into strategic positions as figureheads (Bennigsen, & Broxup (2011) [1983]).

Figure 9. A Post-Stalinist Era Propaganda Poster saying "In the Past They Used to Pray to God For Water for The Fields. Now We Have Built a Huge Reservoir, and We Irrigate the Fields Ourselves with Machines"

Source: *"https://www.sovietvisuals.com/propaganda, (circa 1981)" (Date of Access: 01.07.2022)*

On the other hand, those who held the most privileged governmental positions were of Slavic backgrounds, manipulation that was no different from administrative Czarist practices of yore (Akiner, 2010 [1983]). At first glance, this seemed palpable to the Uzbeks. But once the Bolsheviks began to ban public piety and Islamic

practices and appropriate the means of production in Central Asia, conservative figures of the Turkestan region immediately declared Soviets as archenemies of their "spiritual cause" known as the *ummad* (Doğan, 2021).

In the selected sample (Figure 9), anti-religious propaganda was used by the Politburo as a backlash against political Islam, which was viewed as a potential disruptive threat to the regime's sustainability. With the help of this printed-media technology, Soviet *apparatchik* subliminally directed the masses with plenty of socialist mantra in order to regulate their daily-life practices. Moreover, whenever the ruling elite was prompted to communicate with their citizens, the booming successes of the industrial *Five-Year Plans* were a prominent symbol of the Bolsheviks' grandeur to eradicate religious fanaticism (Kendzior, 2006). On the other hand, the propaganda device in this case also symbolized a kind of detachment, as the party secretary was deliberately kept out of the image. In fact, this detachment also pertained to the hierarchical organization of the system.

That is why the use of propaganda posters became a tool of class stratification; i.e., high-ranking Politburo officials were positioned separately from others, as they belonged at the top of the society within the ruling class. Thus, the instructions/indoctrination utilized in such propaganda material constituted a physical interface between different social classes, in this case, between the Politburo, as ruler/decision-maker, and the peasantry belonging to a lower position within the proletariat. In contrast, for many European leftist thinkers, Western-style Russification policies of the Bolsheviks represented the rise of Marxist ideals, which were once the singularly secular achievement of the Eurasian powers against radical Islam (Fitzpatrick, 2022). As the pendulum swung, the tensions between progressivists and sectarians became the major topic on the agenda of the Uzbek SSR. In the words of post-1950 Soviet propaganda posters conveying the idea that Communist progress still existed, Russian opinion makers also argued that the USSR was no longer just a country, but rather the guardian of scientific principles and technological breakthroughs throughout the world. In this regard, one should allude to one of the most important paradigm shifts concerning the role of religion in particular.

That is why fears about the unidimensional world order and each sectarian ideology constituted a major dilemma in Soviet discourse. Hence, they interceded by incorporating the technology element to introduce economic aspirations or restore order and progress. All in all, based on security, collectivization, monitoring social life, and controlling public opinion, state propaganda apparatus played a substantial role in the system. Around this time, the sociological implications of these state-led collective endeavors (i.e., the creation of collective farms) also step into the limelight in Paxtayurt at this point.

3.3.1. Collectivization Endeavors in Paxtayurt Under Uzbek SSR

Since the mid-1920s, the collectivization trend had escalated the previously implemented land reforms in a revolutionary manner. However, the confiscation of agricultural lands and manmade interventions such as the increased number of collective farms also gave rise to the Great Famine during which countless peasants died of starvation (Olcott, 1987). The welfare of the sedentary population was detrimentally impacted by these developments, and some people were obliged to migrate into new regions and leave their pastoral livelihoods behind forever (Kenez, 1999). Over the course of these land reforms, huge landowners in the Turkestan portion of the USSR were also permitted to protect their possessions, whereas the remaining lands were re-allotted to those who owned smaller plots (Kamp & Zanca 2008). Despite its drawbacks, life on collective farms also had its own peculiar advantages. As was indicated by Renaud Jean (1936), even the dispossessed farmers were eligible to own some of the agricultural lands. This led the Uzbek villagers to acquire their own class consciousness.

With the implementation of Stalin's first *Five-Year Plan,* which could be perceived as a sociological experiment to boost annual production rates in rural areas, all the remaining arable lands were collectivized, as more than two-thirds of the rural dwellings were added to the *kolkhoz* and *sovkhoz*-like systems. From a nationwide perspective, the total number of *kolkhozes* rose to 9,734, with approximately 1,000 *sovkhozes* throughout the Uzbek SSR at that time (Kandiyoti, 2002:2). During the initial collectivization attempts, most *kolkhozes* and *kolkhoz*-like structures were

small, functioning as independent villages specializing in particular dairy products and other agricultural staples, such as grapes, carrots and apples.

Subsequent to the onslaught of Nazi Germany into western Soviet Union (i.e. *Operation Barbarossa*) in 1941, more and more *kolkhozes* were added into the equation to supply provisions to the army and civilians (Bergson, 1953). To safeguard numerous industries from heavy industrial enterprises to canneries, industrial complexes were strategically relocated from vulnerable western regions in the USSR to relatively safe havens in Central Asia such as Paxtayurt.

This migration of industrial prowess brought with it a substantial influx of individuals hailing from diverse backgrounds, including Russians, Ukrainians, Armenians and other nationalities, rendering a transformative shift in the republic's demographic composition.

Owing to Stalin's coerced expulsion of certain ethnic groups suspected of collaborating with the Axis powers, most notably Nazi Germany, the demographic complexion of Uzbekistan and Paxtayurt underwent further tumultuous changes. This entailed the forced relocation of significant populations of ethnic Koreans, Crimean Tatars, and Chechens to Uzbek SSR.

Nonetheless, despite these dramatic events, the resolute performance of both the local populace and newly-arrived settlers in ensuring the supply of provisions and shelter for the rest of the Union proved commendable. In symbolizing its unique role in securing the sustenance and autarky of the Soviet homeland, the regional capital of Tashkent, along with outlying villages such as Paxtayurt, earned an endearing nickname by the people of the USSR, that of "*khlebnigorod.*"[55] In recognition of these changes spearheaded by Stalin's Five-Year plans, as well as the accomplishments of collective farms to meet state production targets, I would now like to offer the reader an archival image that marks the progress made by the Uzbek SSR during the post-WWII era.

[55] Meaning "The City of Bread."

Figure 10. An Archival Image from Uzbek SSR, sourced from TTF's Archives, Depicting Diverse Ethnicities of Soviet Uzbekistan and Conveying the Fact That "515 Industrial Sites Were Established in the Republic During the Five-Year Plans"

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız, (Circa 1955, Obtained from TTF Archives: 03.07.2022)*

3.3.2. Main Features of Kolkhozes and Sovkhozes

Etymologically speaking, the word *kolkhoz* is a derivative of *kollektivnoi hoziaistvo,* which could also be defined as "collective homestead" for Anglophonic readers. *Sovkhozes,* on the other hand, an abbreviated form of *sovetskoe hoziaistvo,* which could be translated into English as "Soviet homestead" (Jean, 1936). As was argued by village elders, distinguishing between these two types of collective enterprises can often be challenging, as factors such as quality of life and workload were considered more significant than the specific farm type. As suggested by Meltem Sancak (2012), both *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* featured a hierarchy that established a transparent chain of command and decision-making authority. At the top of this hierarchy was the director, known as the chief or the *rais*, who orchestrated the collective farm's overall operations. Subordinate to the director were various levels of management, including department heads (*uz. bol'im mudiri*), farm managers, and brigade leaders (*kolkhozchus* or *sovkhozchus*). These positions were responsible for supervising and

coordinating the division of labor amongst farmers (e.g., sowing, plowing or feeding the livestock) to ensure they attain the objectives set by the directors.

As for fiscal structure, *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* diverged from each other in terms of ownership and resource distribution models. With *kolkhozes*, profits obtained from agricultural activities were distributed amongst the members in proportion to their contributions to the collective. The distribution of dividends often depended on a combination of individual work quotas and a system of collective decision-making (Sancak, 2012; Kamp & Zanca, 2017). On the contrary, *sovkhozes* had a more centralized fiscal structure. While the state established production targets and determined resource allocation, profits generated from agricultural endeavors were typically directed to the state budget, whereby the government provided salaries and incentives were based on preset criteria. Thus, elderly residents of Uzbekistan recalled that life in the *sovkhozes* was relatively more prosperous than in the *kolkhozes*, proclaiming that the state met the community's daily needs regardless of crop failures (Abashin, 2016). However, in the case of Paxtayurt, there were no *sovkhozes*, but rather nearly eight collective village structures that resembled *kolkhozes* were established. These structures were eventually consolidated into a single *kolkhoz* known as "Stalin Yoli" meaning "The Path of Stalin". Similar developments occurred in neighboring villages, where some amalgamated villages were renamed "dustlik" meaning "amity kolkhoz".

During this period, cash crop cultivation experienced significant growth. Agricultural mechanization became widespread, and the construction of the Bozsu Canal in Tashkent and the development of the Ferghana Canal system provided water to new territories (Vitkovich, 1954). Similar transformations occurred in other forms of property.[56] However, despite their undeniable advantages, collective farms (including state farms and *sovkhozes*) were not immune to the complex challenges and inefficiencies inherent in a centralized economy. According to Sancak (2012), workers in these structures, particularly in *sovkhozes*, experienced reduced motivation levels due to guaranteed wages regardless of production targets. Other

[56] As argued by Peter Kenez, the necessary technical farming equipment was also concentrated in the Machine Tractor Station (MTS), which supported the farms with technical equipment (1999: 97).

issues included delayed state inputs, appropriation of collective goods, and the hoarding of surplus products.

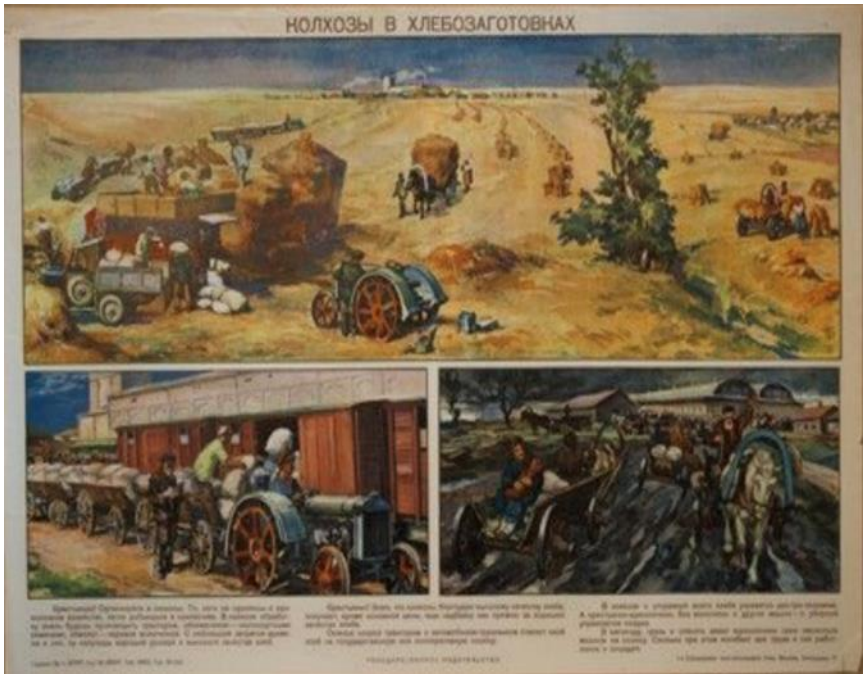

Figure 11. Life in An Ordinary Kolkhoz (Kollektivnoi Hazietsvo) for Grain Harvest Lithograph

Source: *https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/, Artist unknown, circa 1930s, (Date of Access: 03.07.2022)*

3.3.3. From Collective Farming to *Shirkat* Enterprises

In aiming to establish a socialized agriculture and production system through collective means, previous agricultural reforms based on land and water rights began to falter after the death of Stalin (Saray, 2022). According to the Communist Party Politburo, specific changes needed to be made without fundamentally mutating existing property structures by increasing transparency levels while fulfilling targeted production rates (Kenez, 1999). This led to the introduction of private land ownership under state surveillance in the countryside during the era of *glasnost* and *perestroika* (Sancak, 2012). Following the failure of *perestroika* and *glasnost* reforms, however, which drove the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Uzbek Government initiated agricultural restructuring, which primarily concerned titles (or nomenclature), while leaving the state-dependent disposition of said structures

relatively intact (Kandiyoti, 2002). The *sovkhozes* were the first to disintegrate into smaller produced spaces. As stated by Alisher Ilkhamov these gargantuan structures evolved over time into *Mustaqillik Kolkhozes*, with some subsequently turning into private livestock farms (as leased shirkat enterprises) (Ilkhamov, 1998).[57]

This was due to the substantial wage payments needed for a large workforce and the significant capital and supplementary resources the *sovkhozes* required (Karimov, 1998). Consequently, the *Kolkhoz Stalin Yoli* was renamed *Shirkat Yangibahor* (meaning "new spring"), and symbolized a shift in focus and priorities (i.e., the implementation of the Uzbek renaissance project under the banner of *Mustaqillik* ideology). In other words, in their updated form, *kolkhozes* still maintained their prominence as productive entities by constituting over half of the agricultural land until the late-1990s (Ilkhamov, 1998). Moreover, whenever queried about the differences between *shirkat* and *kolkhoz*, the unwavering answer of the Paxtayurt dwellers was; "The name has changed, but nothing more; it could be likened to old wine in new bottles." Nevertheless, despite its inefficiency, maintaining *Mustaqillik kolkhozes* (i.e., under the *shirkat* label) was seen as the only viable approach by the villagers to achieve the required cotton and wheat output targets while absorbing a large percentage of the rural labor force (Ilkhamov, 1998: 543-44).

It should also be acknowledged that profits were also gleaned through the tiny salaries paid to the new-*kolkhozcu*. Schoeller-Schletter (2008) characterized this type of production in an agricultural cooperative as a "planned contractual economy, wherein the peasant family's contractual obligations, including the predefined purchase price for the crops are systematically predetermined" (2008: 25-28). Not unlike the USSR times, the machinery and technical support, which was governed by the Machine Tractor Stations (i.e., M.T.S.), remained untouched as a distinct unit *en route* to fulfilling the 5-year plan. Inputs and outputs related to the fields also fell under state control and planning.[58] All in all, the *kolkhoz* or *shirkat* during Karimov's

[57] *Shirkat* refers to transformed collective farming, where agricultural enterprises function as joint-stock companies or cooperatives, allowing shared ownership and market-oriented practices.

[58] Notably, while input costs were calculated based on market prices; output compensation was significantly below that level, resulting in a favorable situation for the government, but not for

tenure functioned purely as a state-dependent economic institution (Humphrey, 1998).

3.4. Uzbek Style-Privatization: Creation of the *Fermer* System

Nevertheless, the aforementioned modifications yielded no significant benefits for the national economy in the long-run. This is because the substitution of *kolkhoz* with the *shirkat* brand failed to deliver the anticipated efficiency to meet monthly targets. Correspondingly, widening "private" access to land has emerged as a possible remedy to the efficiency issue. As highlighted by Caroline Humphrey (1998), restructuring a collective farm in post-Soviet spaces by permitting the "leasing" of a particular plot of land and contracting state-grown production was deemed a viable strategy (Humphrey, 1998). Instilling greater independence upon the farming sector was also viewed as an alternative for exponential growth (Gleason, 2003). In this regard, the Uzbek Government finally gave individuals the option to leave collective enterprises and establish "private" farms (Karimov, 1998). These leased farms, along with their registered lessees are referred to as *fermers* (Sancak, 2012). As one of the local village elders named ULP1 (see findings section) argued throughout our off-the record conversations, these *fermer* structures were supposed to become the new generation of rural entrepreneurs. Like those employed in *shirkats*, *fermers* could engage in animal husbandry, cotton and cereal cultivation, viticulture and vegetable production. Legislation regulating agricultural practices and animal husbandry varied depending on the type of farm. According to Schoeller and Schletter (2008), said legislation revolved mostly around regulating the number of animals one could possess based on the size of their land. Moreover, the *fermer* in Uzbekistan was still contractually bound to cultivate and deliver their produce to the state as per centralized/fixed regulations. As also stated by the aforementioned Paxtayurter named UBC3, "the *fermer* lacks the freedom to independently choose when and what to cultivate, in which methods he wanted to cultivate his products, and could not

producers. The difference between the cotton procurement price and the international market price represents the profit earned by the Uzbek Government, regardless of whether the production unit was a *shirkat* or a *fermer*. In the end, revenue earned from cotton cultivation was not invested at an institutional level, which would have allowed *kolkhozcus* to enjoy additional benefits such as healthcare or vacations, as was the case during the Soviet era. Instead of actual production, subsidies also continued to be determined by input norms and output targets.

decide whom he wanted to sell his products at the desired price". Furthermore, *fermers* were also hamstrung by numerous bureaucratic agreements with the government concerning compulsory delivery assignments for agricultural production (Sancak, 2012). Failure to meet said obligations without viable reasons could result in punishment such as land seizure. Given the constrained circumstances that prevailed in Uzbekistan (especially during the times of Uzbek SSR), such conditions may be perceived as a form of freedom within the Uzbek way of capitalist transformation (Joldoshov, 2009).

3.4.1 The Emergence of the Cluster System Under Shavkat Mirziyoyev's 'New' Uzbekistan

Subsequent to Islam Karimov's passing, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev assumed leadership of a relative stable economic system (Mirziyoyev, 2022). His tenure as Prime Minister of Uzbekistan from 2003 until the death of President Karimov also provided him with firsthand experience in implementing numerous reform policies under the umbrella of the *Yangi* (New) Uzbekistan paradigm (Bowyer, 2018). From the outset, Mirziyoyev portrayed his radical changes as measures to safeguard Uzbekistan's sovereignty, independence, economic sustainability and social progress. His reboot agenda was clearly articulated in multiple public pronouncements and in official government documents. Concurrently, in February 2017, Uzbekistan adopted a meticulously formulated reform package known as the "*2017-2021 National Development Strategy*" or simply "*The Strategy*". As explicated by Mamuka Tsereteli (2018), this strategy outlined five primary focus areas: public administration reform; judiciary enhancement and strengthening the rule of law; economic development and liberalization; social progress; and security and foreign policy. Subsequently, commencing with a gradual reduction in cotton and wheat cultivation areas in 2017 and a systematic relaxation of land ownership restrictions, a series of transformative measures were implemented in 2018. Exportation restrictions on horticultural goods were lifted and bread pricing was deregulated. Additionally, private textile clusters collaborated for cotton production through contract farming (Jumakulov, 2022). According the reports from the Uzbek Government and institutions such as International Labor Organization (ILO), the

establishment of agri-clusters alongside the existing *fermers* facilitated the cultivation of raw cotton and its subsequent transformation into higher-value products (ILO, 2020). There are currently more than 650 clusters covering various agricultural sectors (TTFR, 2021). Collectively, these clusters contribute to the entire cotton and grain production in the country, as well as over 40% of fresh produce output (TTFR, 2022).

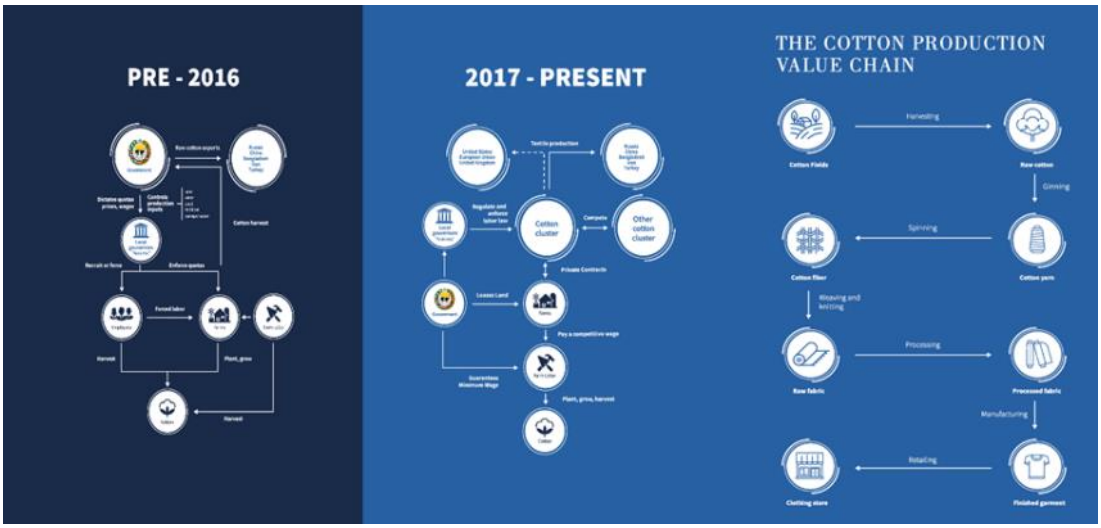

Figure 12. The History of Cotton Production and the Creation of Cotton Clusters in Yangi Uzbekistan

Source: *Progress in Uzbekistan, Environment, Social and Governance Report (2020), Published by: The Republic of Uzbekistan.*

3.4.2. Private Ownership and Diverse Categories of Private Plots

Considering the aforementioned points and further transformations in the national agricultural framework, land utilization rights similarly underwent a dramatic transition in the post-Soviet era especially since the passing of Islam Karimov. Rural inhabitants now have three distinct avenues to access land. The first two options encompass officially registered private plots: miniature gardens within the yard and supplementary fields located outside the village. In the context of Paxtayurt and the surrounding valley, the former option is directly linked to residential dwellings with courtyards. As argued by Sancak (2012), this pertains to the land parcel where the *dom* (house) is built over while the remaining area is transformed into a plot. Such land is predominantly utilized for cultivating essential produce like tomatoes,

spinach, potatoes, and onions. Depending on the specific location and housing structure, space for rearing livestock such as cows and poultry may also be allotted. These kitchen-gardens efficiently meet the immediate and daily needs of the family because of their close proximity to the domicile. Furthermore, a vineyard within the garden also serves not as pleasant shade during scorching summer days but also yields grapes to feed the dwellers in the household. A few fruit orchards scattered throughout the courtyard further complements this picturesque setting.

Figure 13. A Personal Plot in Paxtayurt

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız, (Date: 28.06. 2022)*

Even though these plots eventually belong to the state, fathers may pass them down on to their sons. This so-called inherited land parcel is unofficially treated as private property by ordinary people. Interestingly, this allocation also existed during the USSR era, with private plots remaining untouched and excluded from wheat cultivation.

Since then, said plots have been critically important for the locals in terms of acting like a *life-support unit* to bolster their living standards. Aside from being a vital source of sustenance, the produce from these private plots has always had easy marketability at communal farm markets, providing ordinary families with immediate profits (Bacon 1966; Kitching 1998). The second type of land is *tomorqa*, which translates roughly to "land behind the *dom* (building)." These private subsidiary plots which may be located adjacent to residential buildings or, more often on the outskirts of the village, have been given to people since Soviet times (Rowe, 2009). In the past, while the size of allotted land in question was minimal, the

accessibility and size of *tomorqa* plots was gradually augmented after the introduction of *perestroika* initiatives. To guarantee the self-sufficiency of regular households, this trend also continued after Uzbekistan gained independence, with the average plot size per family rising from 0.12 to 0.19 hectares (Sancak, 2012). Following a decree by Karimov, all villagers were finally granted the legal right to acquire up to 25 *sot* of land (one sot is $100m^2$) (Sancak, 2012). These additional land parcels came to be known as *koshumca tomorqa* or "presidential land" (Trevisani 2008:61). As far as I have learnt, the ontological existence of *tomorqa* plots is to grant Paxtayurters a sense of liberty, as they have the autonomy to utilize it according to their personal preferences. As previously mentioned, employees of former *shirkats* (state farms) or ex-*fermers* could similarly obtain a plot of land in a semi-legal way following their initial harvest. This arrangement functions as a shortcut to the fields, enabling individuals to cultivate a specific plot of land. Similar to the *kolkhoz* period, former-*shirkat* land now occasionally operates under the dominion of cluster system in regions like the rural Tashkent and Ferghana Valley is also divided into brigades. These are assigned a specific portion of land that they (farmers) are allowed to use for their own purposes following the harvest. This strategy akin to an insurance policy enables Paxtayurters to earn extra income.

Figure 14. A Farming Brigade Ready for Agricultural Work

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 29.06.2022)*

3.4.3. Average Salaries and Changes in Insurance System

Apart from the aforementioned statements, the average salary and insurance system in Uzbekistan has also been a subject of gradual change over the years. For instance, during the Soviet era, workers in Uzbekistan, as well as other regions of the Union, were paid base salaries that ranged between 100 – 200 rubles.[59] Skilled professionals earned slightly more, between 200 – 400 rubles. Those in high-skilled and high-profile vocations, such as engineers, artists, writers, and politicians, earned even more, with salaries ranging from 400 – 1000 rubles. Additionally, the USSR implemented a policy of extra payments named Northern extra payments for those working in remote regions with harsh climatic conditions.[60] This monetary incentive was intended to attract flocks of workers to such challenging areas and augment their skills. Despite living in the quasi-desolate landscapes of the Soviet Union, citizens such as Paxtayurters also felt secure in case of adverse circumstances, especially during summer when the heat scorched their cash crops, knowing they had certain safety nets to fall back upon. They were also aware of the fact that they possessed certain rights, like joining labor unions and voicing their concerns to superiors dwelling in central areas like Tashkent or Moscow.

This open-door policy for dialogue allowed every Soviet worker to effectively convey their messages to their superiors, thereby enabling Union nomenclatures to better address their ordinary comrades needs through the provision of certain guarantees. Central to this assurance was the robust Soviet insurance system notably managed by a state insurance enterprise entitled *Gosudarstvennoe Strakhovanie SSSR* (GOSSTRAKH). Under the guardianship of GOSSTRAKH, there were two types of property; "personal" and "socialist" (Rogers, 1965). While personal property was meant for individual use, socialist property was overseen by collective farms and cooperative organizations. Thanks to the existence of sophisticated Soviet technology, the USSR Government also introduced a brand-new computerized

[59] 1 Soviet ruble was worth approximately 1-2 United States Dollars in different eras until the 1980s. While discussing the allocations of salaries, it is equally kept in mind that an average family of three could cover their monthly needs with approximately 100 rubles without any luxury expenditures.

[60] These payments could boost workers base salaries up to 150%.

payroll deduction system, along with ubiquitous initiatives like juvenile insurance, marriage insurance, and insurance for hazardous occupations to demonstrate the Union's commitment to worker-friendly risk management.[61] Nevertheless, following the collapse of the Union, all this was lost.

As stated by Adeeb Khalid (2021), in the early years of the Republican period, the new state seemed to uphold its worker-friendly legacy, acting as a welfare-providing country akin to its predecessor (Uzbek SSR) but subsequent to the passing of the nation's founding father, Karimov, who was a former Uzbek SSR nomenclature, the country then proceeded to evolve into a breeding ground for class-based disparities. Revolving around haves and have-nots amongst the different social groups, this stark contrast is now mostly evident in the insurance sector, as also highlighted by the Russian born assistant manager of the TTF, whom I coded as RWC3. His argument is as follows;

> *"You know, it's interesting how things often don't quite pan out the way we envision them. In theory, the newly found republic aimed to create this safety net, ensuring financial stability for one and all against life's uncertainties. But, as they say, it's the fine print that gets you in the end. Despite all the noble intentions, life insurance now seems to be a bit of a fairy-tale-dream for the average guy on the street. Affordability issues and a lack of financial know-how just seem to keep it out of reach. And let's not even talk about property insurance. It's nothing but a scam. Those who already have a foot in the door of privilege seem to reap all the benefits, leaving the rest of the Uzbeks feeling like hibernating bears whenever accidents or other disasters strike. Then there's liability insurance which sounds interesting. But guess who it ends up favoring? Typically, the bigwigs. And health insurance? Well, let's just say it tends to cater more to the big shots than ordinary folks. It's a bit of a tough pill to swallow when you realize that access to quality healthcare often boils down to your bank balance rather than your health needs. And as if that wasn't enough, compulsory insurance schemes end up putting more burden on the little guy's shoulders. So, when we talk about Uzbek insurance matters, it's not just about policies and premiums. It's about a system that seems to widen the gap between the rich and poor, leaving many folks akin to a statistic in someone else's game. In theory, everything is fine as the government mandates that everyone pays a 12% allotment from their salary in exchange for free insurance, but in reality, nobody applies the rules."* **(RWC3, Age: 63, Years Employed at TTF: 1, Area of**

[61] The in-depth information regarding the Soviet-type insurance are provided in the findings and analysis section (see interview analysis of RWC3).

Specialization: Assistant Manager, Gender: Male, Date of The Interview, 01.07.2022)

As per RWC3's articulations, the Uzbek Government currently mandates all employers, including the owners of the TTF, to insure their workers. The said insurance rate is around 12% of their salaries but it is impossible for anyone to tell the exact rates due to the autocratic nature of the country. After receiving their salaries, regular workers send this 12% of their monthly stipend to the state. The state then attempts to provide free healthcare and pensions for workers when they get old. However, the health system and other welfare provision units are not the same as they once were in the USSR. Furthermore, not every business provides their employees this mandatory 12% insurance. Consequently, it is nearly impossible for a social researcher to provide exact statistics about insurance policies and the monthly salaries of ordinary people.

Nevertheless, based on my conversations with locals and personal experiences at the factory, this research now attempts to provide some insight regarding the approximate salaries of ordinary workers. According to recent statistics, work hours in Uzbekistan officially start at 8 am and finish at 5 pm. As per the current TTF reports, the estimated average monthly salary in the country is around 4.55 million Uzbek Som (UZS), which, based on the exchange rate (August, 2022) is roughly equivalent to $368, while the minimum wage was 980,000 UZS, around $80, regarded as the minimum subsistence level. However, it is crucial to keep in mind that salaries can differ depending on location and industry.

For example, while an ordinary peasant (*dehqon*) can earn between $100 - $500, a service sector worker who lives in the same village can typically earn between $150 - $1000. On the other hand, a factory worker or a cluster employee who works under contractual agreements can earn much more (depending on whether they work in a technical field or not). Those who work in blue-collar technical jobs can earn around $350 - $750, while those in non-technical jobs can also earn around $150 - $350. In contrast, white-collar workers receive the lion's share by earning between $1500 - $5000 or even more, depending on the position they hold.

Moreover, the factory supplements provided salaries with an across-the-board $50 bonus, along with a comprehensive health coverage plan and ample vacation time (which is made available mainly for white-collar staff).[62] However, due to limited worker capacity and a highly competitive job market, the doors of the factory are not open for everyone and the competition for scarce resources is growing. From a Marxist standpoint, these circumstances have transformed Paxtayurt into a symbolic battleground or an arm-wrestling territory, where individuals from diverse backgrounds vie against each other to secure a foothold in an uncanny atmosphere. Despite its advantages and disadvantages, a job at TTF is still considered by Paxtayurters as the best option at hand.

3.5. The Emergence of the Tashkent Textile Factory

As mentioned by the TTF manager and in terms of Lefebvre's representation of space (i.e., the space that factory planners wanted to construct), the TTF, which encompasses a large piece of property, was encapsulated with perpetual activity as workers move in and out of its various buildings and sections. The factory's spatial designation was carefully planned and organized, with each building and section serving a specific purpose in the production process. While the first building was exclusively reserved for the raw materials where they are received and sorted, the second building served as a facility for the spinning, weaving and dyeing of textile products. In addition, the third building was utilized as a space for the sewing of finished garments, while the fourth building was where the packaging as well as the delivery truck dispatching of the end products took place. As the workers switched between buildings, the sound of machines and the conversations of their peers filled the air. Viewed again through the spatial-triad, the TTF exemplified how the capitalist mode of production created a space that turns ordinary individuals into mere instruments of a larger automated system.

Located adjacent to the vibrant and active industrial zone, the administrative division of TTF was similarly situated in a spacious modern building overlooking the tranquil

[62] The minimum wage at TFF for workers starts is $400, gradually increasing according to the worker's tenure.

and captivating environs of Paxtayurt's mountainous terrain. The offices were large, meeting rooms were cozy, and storage areas were plenty. Upon entering the ground floor of the administrative building, visitors were greeted with a warm, inviting reception area. An amicable and helpful multi-lingual Soviet-born receptionist ensured factory guests were directed to the appropriate office or meeting room. Besides the reception area was a conference room equipped with the latest audio-visual technology (like projection devices). As described by the receptionist, the conference room served as a hub for essential meetings with suppliers, customers and foreign stakeholders. There were other administrative offices on the upper floors of the building. In order to provide its white-collar personnel with the utmost favorable conditions for productive work, the designers of these rooms strongly emphasized functionality and comfort by placing ergonomic furniture and large windows in these spaces. For instance, the offices were filled with square windows, which allowed plenty of natural light to pass through. As far as I have observed during my tenure as a part-time Human Resources worker (hereafter abbreviated as HR) in the Human Resources Office, all of this made the working environment at TTF exceptional.

Apart from these, each office was also strategically allocated to a specific department, reflecting the unique functions needed for the flawless running of the factory. In parallel with these observations, the Finance Department (hereafter abbreviated as FD) on the first floor offered a view of the courtyard through its large windows. Here, the management of monetary processes such as budgeting and invoicing was handled by specialized personnel. Responsible for handling employee management, staff recruitment, and training of the workforce, the afore-mentioned HR Department was located on the second floor in a room with the same serene courtyard view. Moreover, staff working (like myself) in this department conduct face-to-face interviews with key employees regarding monthly performances and listen to their grievances. The second floor also housed the Production Planning (PP), Information Technology (hereafter abbreviated as IT), and Research and Development (hereafter abbreviated as R&D) departments in one shared room, with a panoramic vista of the Tien Shan Mountains. Next to them is the manager's office. Within this peculiar space, critical decisions were made and overall production processes were evaluated in accordance with the demands of the TTF's owners. All

in all, and as stated before in the context of TTF, the means of production belonged to white collar class, utilized by them to control and domineer the blue-collar class (who are mentioned in the following interviews), and make that class function in accordance with their mercantile interests (Lefebvre, (1991) [1974]). Nevertheless, before further exploring the power dynamics and daily rhythm of workers at TTF, as well as the everyday practices of Paxtayurters in the age of *homo economicus* (the age of rational economic men), it is now time to proceed to the findings of this research and their subsequent analysis.

Figure 15. A Bird's Eye View of The Tashkent Textile Factory

Courtesy: *TTF, TTFR 2022 Booklet*

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In light of the above, capitalism in Uzbekistan was first launched under the guardianship of Karimov's *Mustaqillik* Uzbekistan and then burgeoned thanks to its offshoot *Yangi* Uzbekistan, with mantras of economic reform that gradually became calls for political and socio-spatial restructuring. In its struggle with the USSR mindset, the Uzbek government dismantled former collective spaces and produced capitalist spaces like textile factories due in part to the assistance of private agents like the owners of TTF. As a direct result of this situation, some people who upgraded their social standing were happy with these changes, while others were not. For example, in the TTF case, the opinions of white-collar people were highly optimistic with New Uzbekistan's neo-liberal objectives, which often went unrealized. Others who are members of the blue-collar class and local peasantry were highly critical of the ongoing situation as most of them are struggling to make ends meet. Based on interviews with these people from three distinct classes who witnessed the USSR, *Mustaqillik* and *Yangi Uzbekistan*, this chapter examines their assessments of the extant transformation process and their current comprehension of it. These assessments are derived from two distinct viewpoints.

First, they represent the memories of ordinary people regarding various events that occurred in their lives during the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of New Uzbekistan. Second, they are reconsiderations of the turbulent years from the standpoint of the interviewees' current post-Soviet life, so these evaluations also mirror public sentiment regarding their present lives within the context of the 2020s. While a considerable amount of literature concentrates on capitalism in the former Soviet states and its perception by the former Soviet people, most of these studies shed light on Russia and other non-Turkic republics of the former USSR. Thus, the

views of the Russian public are often generalized as representing the views of the entire Soviet Union populace. Case in point, the perspectives of ordinary people in the peripheral regions of the former USSR, then known as the Soviet South, are often overlooked and not given prominence. Another dimension of stressing the significance of investigating the aforementioned narratives (i.e., the voices of Central Asia or Transoxiana) is to comprehend the multi-layered dynamics at play in the making, unmaking, and remaking of the Uzbek working class through the stewardship of the first-hand experiences of selected people who have an understanding of their country's recent history.

With these in mind, this chapter assumes that the people in Paxtayurt shared similar living conditions, everyday experiences, and working environments as those in the other former Soviet South republics. It equally suggests that the experiences and narratives of the Soviet era and the post-Soviet era, as well as their Lefebvrian and Thompsonesque implications, can be considered comparable. Nevertheless, this study also speculates that some post-independence experiences and their sociological implications, such as the formation of a new type of working-class group, i.e., the gray-collar (see the final section of the interview findings), are indigenous to Paxtayurt. Within the scope of this research, these events not only influence people's perspectives on post-independence and the Uzbek Way of Capitalism but also significantly shape how they recall, reconstruct, narrate, and reconcile the *Mustaqillik* period with their Soviet past. To eliminate any uncertainties, I have also posed specific questions (which were already outlined in Figure 1 in the Methodology section) that could be viewed as extensions of my main research query. All interview responses from the selected participants are examined systematically and sequentially in the present section as follows:

1. **The Glorification of Capitalism:** The first part of the findings and analysis section includes the responses of white-collar workers to the questionnaire, exploring their positive perceptions and pro-capitalist attitudes towards the rise of capitalism in Paxtayurt.

2. **Criticizing Capitalism:** This section similarly scrutinizes the responses from blue-collar workers and local Uzbek peasants in a detailed way. It mostly delves

mainly into their criticisms and negative perceptions regarding the shift from socialism to capitalism.

3. **The Condition of In-Betweenness and the Remaking of the Uzbek Working Class:** The final section features participant observations and Paxtayurt's indigenous dynamics, such as the emergence of new types of social groups and *conformist spaces* like roadside stalls. This section additionally highlights the transitional state of the working class in the village and its sociological implications.

Finally, the *Findings and Analysis* chapter concludes by suggesting that the current socio-cultural landscape in Paxtayurt (as a microcosm of post-Soviet Uzbek villages) greatly influences how participants of this study configure their class position and proclaim their level of contentment about the rise of capitalism and production of capitalist spaces like TTF. With the title "*The Glorification of Capitalism*," then my interview findings and analysis begin.

4.1. The Glorification of Capitalism

Regarding the aforementioned information, TTF was established in Paxtayurt around two decades ago as a result of a combination of various factors, such as "the availability of high-quality cotton cultivated in Uzbekistan, and its close proximity to the city center and cotton-rich areas" (TTFR, 2022: 7). As a multinational institution, TTF has accommodated workers from a myriad of nationalities and ethnicities since its inception. My first exposure to TTF came during a brief five-week internship as a marketing consultant in 2015. While my duties revolved around participating in board meetings and preparing fiscal reports at the factory's guesthouse, I was also exposed to the dynamic atmosphere that surrounded me. During this time, I had the opportunity to interact with a number of middle-aged factory workers (both blue-collar and white-collar) who were once involved in collective agrarian activities in and around the village of Paxtayurt.

As primary witnesses of Soviet rule, they were eager to share their perspectives on how their village had changed since the collapse of the USSR and the importance

they placed on TTF as a symbol of order, triumph, and progress. Consequently, I learned much about Uzbekistan's recent so-called glorious history. Thanks to my existing network, such as the factory manager at TTF and previous acquaintances with blue-collar workers who were still living in Paxtayurt, I was able to return to the factory seven years later, during the summer months of 2022. While conducting this research, I was even offered a part-time position in the factory's HR Department. I accepted this offer without hesitation, as working in HR seemed to be an excellent opportunity to cover my expenses while learning more about the everyday life and life stories of the workers as well as their surrounding environment (TTF and Paxtayurt Village). Moreover, as stated before, being a member of the HR Department equally allowed me to conduct in-depth interviews with the new management and key workers of the factory.

This served as the pick for unlocking the latent aspects of class relations that existed between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. At TFF, I also secured permission from the mentioned factory manager (i.e., UWC1) to interview him regarding the establishment of a multinational textile factory in a former socialist domain and its impact on the existing class structure and relations. After receiving UWC1's final approval, I was promptly summoned to his office and made my way there. UWC1 greeted me upon entering the room; we shook hands, took our seats, and then the interview began. "To be honest," the manager said, leaning back in his armchair and mulling over his life story:

> *"I come from a poor background. My parents and I were hardworking peasants who once worked on collective farms gathering cotton in Ferghana. Back when I was young in that rustic place, I led a straightforward, regimented way of life, but it was the teachings of my elders that instilled a strong work ethic in me. While I toiled in the cotton fields, I managed to make connections to enroll at Tashkent State University. After graduating from there in the field of textile engineering, I spent the next 15 years of my professional career working for the Ministry of Textile. Nevertheless, in 2008 I had the chance to begin working at TTF in the position of factory manager, which is a very rewarding and progressive experience. Apart from this, as for the topic you asked me, that of privatization and its social implications in rural Tashkent, I personally align myself with the liberal perspective. I think that privatization may ultimately lead to positive things like greater economic activity, which then could lead to greater opportunities for the local people*

> *and the outlying communities. That is because in the end, it promotes innovation, efficiency, and competition. And, as for your last question about liberalization initiatives, all I can say is that thanks to capitalism, Uzbekistanis like myself, who have the right, fruitful or juicy connections and education, now earn more and spend more. Our wages are continuously circulated throughout the village and neighboring areas just like the good old days of perestroika."* **(UWC1, Age: 59, Years Employed at TTF: 11, Area of Specialization: Manager, Gender: Male, Date of the Interview: 30.06.2022)**

Given the above, UWC1's rise from so-called poverty to a managerial role reflects the classic 'rag-to-riches' tale within a capitalist framework. As he explained at the beginning of the conversation, during his youth, cotton cultivators in cotton-rich regions of Uzbekistan such as Ferghana were typically part of collective farms that were organized and regulated by the state. Unlike in the western parts of the Soviet state, life for cotton cultivators involved arduous work in the fields, particularly during planting and harvesting seasons. This meant that meeting state-planned production targets was a priority for the Uzbek SSR, and workers such as UWC1 were often under pressure to meet the quotas in question.

For this reason, the story of UWC1 was often considered by pro-liberal minded people (like himself) as a 'shining' example of individual determination and mobility within an Asiatic capitalist framework that values the possession of 'fruitful' connections. However, through a Marxist lens, this could also be viewed as a manifestation of harboring crony networks or an act of nepotism. Case in point, during the Soviet Union era, nepotism, which involves showing favoritism towards family or friends in employment or decision-making, was not as commonly recognized as it is in the *Mustaqillik* period. Life was more egalitarian and class relations and the well-being of the community was carefully planned out back then.

Yet, as with the case of other privatizing Uzbek villages, the creation of a multinational textile factory (i.e., TTF) completely altered class relations in Paxtayurt by creating blue and white-collar classes in an area where labor was once exclusively organized around the agricultural workforce and collective labor in former-Soviet *zavods*. The former Soviet cadres like UWC1, who had "juicy" or *crème de la crème* networking connections, consequentially climbed up the ranks in the social ladder,

while others were left behind. As a result, traditional lifestyles began to erode, and strict schedules and mechanized labor replaced the rhythm of agrarian labor. Besides the mass production of textile commodities, the commodification of labor equally made many people money-oriented, as the aforementioned workers began to flock to TTF. With its inevitable result of metamorphosis in daily habits and consuming practices, the gap in wealth also began to constitute a symbolic wall between employer and employee.

Lefebvre (1971) [1968] and Stanek (2011) describes this situation as "*the colonization of daily life*," in which market forces and the imperative of capital accumulation gradually took over the very fabric of human collective existence. Moreover, the capitalist integration of production processes also became prevalent, as a delay or oversight by a single worker could disrupt the entire production line. A strict timetable was enforced to avert such calamities, dictating that every worker arrived to work simultaneously. Lunch hours were equally arranged at pre-determined time slots, and a whistle in the afternoon signaled the end of the daily shift. In the face of these changes, observers, including Soviet-educated factory managers such as UWC1, expressed opinions about the transformative upbringings of the factory system. He also likened the emergence of capitalist spaces like TTF in post-Soviet villages to the arrival of *perestroika* during USSR times under the rule of Mikhail Gorbachev. During our off-the-record conversations, he additionally said rapid advances in the capitalist mindset and privatization through industrial means wash away the "dusty" remnants of collective customs by introducing an unprecedented foreign way of life to the Uzbeks. The following conclusions can be construed in light of UWC1's off-the-record statements: Each mode of production has its own designated space. Because of the establishment of a capitalist system, a new space had to be created in Paxtayurt as communism gave way to privatization. In order for Paxtayurt to fulfill its role as an ideal type of privatizing, semi-industrial village, its spatial arrangement had to adapt to industrial capitalism as the dominant mode of production (Lefebvre, (1991) [1974]).

Thus, Paxtayurt's major spatial practice became the TTF, along with workshops and general stores resembling supermarkets selling Western-branded beverages like

Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Furthermore, apart from the colonization of daily life, individuals started to resemble machines, and their mental capacities declined. From the standpoint of Henri Lefebvre and Karl Marx, they were reduced to cogs in a mechanical system. As E.P. Thompson (1967), Behice Boran (1941) and Hayriye Erbaş (2015) once argued, this situation could equally be considered as an unintended consequence of capitalist growth, which engenders a "*polished-capitalist-rational*" society. More emphatically than UWC1, Lefebvre additionally characterized the current state of the capitalist system as parasitic and antagonistic to the needs of workers (Lefebvre, (1991) [1974]) as white-collar staff members like the manager of TTF became the modern-day monarchs who had everything stacked in their favor, coercing everyone around them with power and charisma by steamrolling those in front of them with either emotional abuse or outright manipulation. Concurrently, employees in these settings would voluntarily sacrifice their freedom in order to gain financial security and make ends meet, as apart from complying with the rules set by their superiors like UWC1, there were no other options available. With these in mind, it is now imperative to thoroughly examine UWC1's following discourse about this subject.

> *Look, in the current landscape, we managers are the ones tasked with maintaining discipline and imposing our authority over those under our supervision. I firmly believe in the motivational power of fear. Because when individuals understand the consequences of underperformance, they tend to work harder and remain more focused. It's akin to walking on a tightrope. However, it's crucial to underscore that I'm a compassionate person. I also value fairness and meritocracy. In my watch, those who consistently demonstrate excellence in their roles are rapidly rewarded with promotions and opportunities for career advancement. So, all this stuff keeps my workers sharp and on the edge, while also allowing us to compete with our rivals in the world of textiles in an intrepid fashion.* **(UWC1, Age: 59, Years Employed at TTF: 11, Area of Specialization: Manager, Gender: Male, Date of The Interview: 30.06.2022)**

As stated by UWC1, his preferred tactic was coercion because he believed that fear was an excellent motivator. Under his belt, this approach turned people like him and his government-affiliated counterparts into puppet masters, giving them an advantage as they were embellished with countless rights. For example, when UWC1 wanted a task completed, he would assign the same task to more than three people and turn it

into a competition. He would then threaten to fire the stragglers, which, although mostly articulated satirically or implied jokingly, still bore the element of truth.

This in turn created a hostile environment in which workers regarded each other as competitors rather than colleagues, destroying any sense of solidarity and making them easier to control. Another example of psychological manipulation he employed was during the weekly bulletin meetings. At almost every meeting, he belittled his assistant manager in front of everyone, calling him denigrating names like 'knucklehead' and forcing him to prepare beverages like green tea (also known as the kok chay in the local vernacular) for the attendees, who were mostly his subordinates. He also made jokes about firing him if the taste of tea was not good enough. In my opinion, this was used to demonstrate to everyone in the room how UWC1 could do what he pleased, even to those holding powerful positions in the factory hierarchy. This created a tense and uncanny environment where the livelihood of employees and their financial safety was always threatened. By displaying his weaponry of threat and demonstrating that he would stoop to any level, UWC1 also created an eerie atmosphere at the plant with unreasonable requests like, "Everyone turn on your phones and place them on the table now!" or "Bring me a cup of *kok chay*!" was met with immediate obedience. Moreover, in case of disobedience or negative criticism, regardless of the class the individual belonged to, UWC1 would threaten them again with dismissal without compensation, which constituted a worst-case scenario for workers. However, he would then offer a solution, which he considers as a safe return to solid ground. While on the one hand, there was this catastrophic option, with a reassuring escape plan based upon blindly following his commands on the other.

During our final meeting, when I openly criticized his passive-aggressive actions towards his workers, he even threatened to report me as a spy to government officials, claiming I was working against the Uzbek nation by questioning his methods. In the Uzbek style of gerontocratic system[63], he said, "the orders of the elders are like unquestionable governmental decrees!" Later, he admitted he was just joking,

[63] A place where older members of the society hold elevated status and are deemed deserving of obedience and respect by their younger or socio-economically inferior peers (Eisele, 1979).

but his lack of empathy convinced me not to engage in any further argument. Instead, I thanked him for his time and decided to leave the room. With these observations and impressions in mind, I proceeded to visit the office of the head accountant (UWC 2), situated on the first floor of the administrative building. As soon as I entered the room, I felt instantly at ease. The welcoming atmosphere was one-of-a-kind due to the thoughtful placement of the whiteboards and bulletin boards as well as the storage cabinets, which safeguarded confidential financial records and documents.

This was exactly what one might expect from the office of someone who had spent his entire youth in a Soviet statistics committee located in Uzbekistan, where refinement and circumspection were highly appreciated, I thought. While making these observations, UWC2 entered the room and greeted me solemnly. Contrary to the spartan nature of the room, he looked as if he embodied the Uzbek version of the American dream. He carried a portable computer disguised in a flamboyant leather case, wore a red tailor-made blazer I could not afford, and sported a Swiss-made golden watch akin to Russian oligarchs, which could be considered a status symbol in the Uzbek Way of Capitalism. He then offered me a cup of coffee, which I later found out came from Columbia. As we enjoyed our coffees, he then lit up a Cuban cigar. In UWC2's Soviet-style office, his pricey watch and custom-made attire could have been a marker of prestige in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, but smoking the cigar with the brand name of a well-acclaimed communist revolutionary seemed like both a sign of disrespect and a betrayal of Soviet values. Still, compared to UWC1, the attitude of UWC2 was much more soothing as he was willing to answer my interview questions about the social history of Uzbekistan amicably. Remembering this helped me revert back to my questions, and our interview began without further ado with the following articulations of UWC2:

> *"Listen to me very carefully: discussing privatization in Uzbekistan, particularly in rural Tashkent, could be likened to a fast-moving bullet train going in a single direction, namely the Yangi Uzbekistan, safe and sound, thanks to our expert machinist, Mr. Mirziyoyev. It has been liberating, to say the least. During the Soviet era, it felt as though we were stuck in an open-air prison with collective houses and central planning waiting for a miracle. Yet, one of the few good things the Soviets provided to me was a decent free education, which helped me to become a hardworking person. I also had the*

> *brains, which equally led me to find a place in a high-ranking position in the government's statistics committee. Working in the statistics committee for many years finally made me a man for all seasons, so I maintained good relationships with my patrons and Soviet nomenclatures, even though I was not a big fan of communism. But with privatization, I am now the patron of my own destiny. Still, it, I mean, privatization is a controversial topic like the elephant in the old tale. Much like the blind men touching different parts of the elephant and offering varied descriptions, privatization too is a subject to diverse interpretations. If you ask the first-generation ordinary Soviet elders, for example, most of them will definitely draw you a positive picture about the Union. Nevertheless, luckily, I am not the blind man in this story."* (**UWC2, Age: 58, Years Employed at TTF: 10, Area of Specialization: Head Accountant, Gender: Male, Date of the Interview: 30.06.2022)**

From the perspective presented above, and within the sociological imagination of Lefebvre, the statement regarding the changes in Uzbek society since the collapse of the USSR seemed overly optimistic. Born before the demise of the Soviet Union, UWC2 recognized the fact his experiences differed from those of the older generation. Similar to anti-Soviet Uzbek thinkers like Baymirza Hayit (1975), he believed that, the Soviet era was characterized by various forms of control and oppression, including heavy surveillance, bureaucratic obstacles, standardized housing, and collectivized agriculture. Apart from these, while he opposed the teachings of the communist order, UWC2 was also of the firm belief that Mirziyoyev's neo-liberal Strategy Program could be the solution to all the problems that Uzbek society was facing. However, a Lefebvrian perspective would decipher this enigmatic situation differently.

According to this (Lefebvrian) view, the changes from communism towards the Uzbek Way of Liberalism could be interpreted as a transition from a rigid and controlled space under the Communist State Mode of Production (CSMP) to a more adaptable and open one that was still somewhat controlled, as observed in the Republican State Mode of Production (RSMP) and its Post-Republican interpretations under the Mirziyoyev Administration. To put it differently, like other state-controlled systems, the Uzbek State Mode of Production (UZSMP) puts the state in charge of organizing and regulating the production, distribution, and markets of goods and services (Brenner & Elden, 2009). As a result, as pro-Lefebvrian thinkers like Stuart Elden would argue, the government became more engaged in

managing the economy and providing social services (Elden 2004: 220). Furthermore, akin to the USSR era, the SMP in Uzbekistan differed significantly from its European counterparts, such as that in France.

Firstly, unlike the libertarian ideals, pro-democratic stance, and humanitarian practices of the French Government, which revolved around the notions of equality, liberty and egality, the Uzbek State under UZSMP was characterized by a high degree of centralization and a concentration of power. Similar to the Russian Government under the New Russia mindset, the state (under the Yangi Uzbekistan ideology) assumed a dominant role in coordinating economic activity and enforcing its policies through a variety of mechanisms, such as laws, regulations, and administrative structures (Elden, 2004: 221). Furthermore, the government actively interfered in the economy to materialize its own mercantile interests and those of the ruling elite (Khalid, 2021). During the Karimov and Mirziyoyev eras, the Uzbek government also provided and is still providing tax exemptions and protectionist policies to benefit those in power. Third, UZSMP was characterized by a high degree of ideological control.

As annunciated by Lefebvre, the totalitarian state under SMP (for our case Uzbekistan) promoted a particular set of values and beliefs through its policies, institutions and propaganda (Lefebvre, 1991). This ideological control reinforced the dominant social and economic order, legitimizing the power of the state and the ruling class (Elden, 2004: 223). Finally, the UZSMP was marked by a high degree of militarization and repression. The state maintained a monopoly on using force to enforce its policies and suppress dissent (Lefebvre, (1976) [1973]). This militarization and repression guaranteed the dominance of the ruling class and maintained social control (Elden, 2004: 224). Thus, Lefebvre's theory of the State Mode of Production has crucial implications for understanding the true nature of contemporary capitalism in *Yangi* Uzbekistan (a.k.a. New Uzbekistan). Looking at capitalist changes from a Lefebvrian perspective, we can lastly make the following deductions: being overly optimistic about the state of liberalism in post-Soviet South countries like Uzbekistan may not be entirely in place.

In the avenue of these debates, before parting ways with UWC2 and packing my pen and paper into my bag, I could not help but re-ask why this particular individual, who was educated in the Soviet system, admired the neo-liberal mindset of the *Yangi* Uzbekistan so much. The answer he said lied, enigmatically, amidst the fit between the Soviet society in which he grew up, blended by social and cultural conflict during Mustaqillik times, and his new office (workspace), which now allowed him to merge lucrative businesses with capitalist partners from different geographies. After providing these details, he stopped for a while and eventually uttered the following statements with an affiliative smile on his face:

> *"Okay, brother, you let the genie out of the bottle. To put it in a nutshell, I was born into a family of once-wealthy feudal landowners known as kulaks, whose lands were appropriated by the Communists. For this reason, I always hold grievances for the Soviet system while at the same time being fond of some aspects like the provision of free social services. It is also this antagonism, the "love-and-hate" situation rooted in my heart, that enabled me to reshuffle the old-revolutionary ideals in a more modern garb, suitable for the 21st century. Thanks to my new garb, God bless, my wages are up and it feels like I have hit the refresh button in my life under the guardianship of the free market economy"* **(UWC2, Age: 58, Years Employed at TTF: 10, Area of Specialization: Head Accountant, Gender: Male, Date of the Interview: 30.06.2022)**

Upon concluding his narrative, he thanked me in Uzbek, signaling the end of our conversation. Once I finished interviewing UWC2 and documented his last reflections on capitalism in my field-notebook, he accompanied me to the IT (Information Technology) department, which is located in the same room as the R&D (Research and Development) and PP (Production Planning) departments, to conduct an interview with UWC3.

As we moved into the IT department (which additionally housed the aforementioned administrative units), I was immediately impressed by the compact, meticulous design of the room. The walls were adorned with wooden panels and interactive digital displays were everywhere, showcasing TTF's latest projects in the world of textiles. The ambient lighting, made up of adjustable LED strips, offered both soothing and bright illumination, catering to both functional and aesthetic needs. The polished concrete floor added another layer to the room's sophisticated appearance.

At the center of the room, there was a large, circular conference table surrounded by ergonomic chairs. The table was equipped with built-in screens and touchpads (also known as portable tablets), which were furnished with the latest technology, allowing for seamless collaboration among participants during meetings. Surrounding the conference table were a plethora of workstations, each separated with privacy panels and decorated with personal minibars full of edible items to accommodate the food and beverage requirements of the workers with immediate effect.

One side of the room was dedicated to a lounge area, complete with plush couches and oak chairs around a low coffee table. This space was designed for relaxation and informal discussions, encouraging employees to take breaks and exchange ideas in a comfortable setting. The far wall also featured an array of glass-enclosed meeting pods, which are commonly found in university libraries. Each pod was soundproof and equipped with video conferencing technology. In my opinion, these pods were ideal for the orchestration of private discussions and virtual meetings with targeted people, as they enabled both IT and R&D workers to share information with them without interruption. Adjacent to these pods was a double-sided library stocked with reference books and technical manuals about computers and computer software. As far as I have noticed, all of these books were written in Russian, as more than two-thirds of the crowd was Russophone.

Still, among these people, I was fortunate enough to encounter UWC3, who had a strong grasp of the Turkish language, and I bid UWC2 a farewell. Despite his expertise in cybersecurity, like his peers of the same age, this 65-year-old computer engineer also possessed a deep understanding of everyday life in the Soviet Union. Following a brief chat with UWC3 about my interview questions, he then escorted me to one of the meeting pods to have a conversation. As soon as we settled in, he requested that I speak louder due to his hearing loss issues. Respecting his request, I posed my interview questions to him in a louder tone. After a moment of contemplation, he uttered the following reflections:

> *"Very well, tovarish, my feelings about privatization are crystal clear: In rural areas of Tashkent and other parts of my country, it feels like everyone*

> *has finally woken up from an extremely long sleep. As you might know, life used to be dull and the economy was unidimensional, with everything unnecessarily planned out as if we were in an Oriental bazaar or a Soviet-type department store full of empty stalls thanks to government-imposed shortages that offered nothing except basic edible items. But hey! Everything was nearly free of charge! Today, it is more like we Uzbeks are now piled in a supermarket furnished with plenty of offerings, where you can take whatever you wish and put it into your basket as long as you have the cash. Paxtayurters can now also show off their TTF-made garments to their peers while drinking Coca Cola as they hang out with them at the recently refurbished park benches in communal areas thanks to donations made by the TTF owners. It's like a software update in an obsolete computer system. By hardware, I mean the architectural silhouette of the residential areas is the same, but societal codes like the outdated Soviet habits and behavior have changed. Moreover, the availability of modern amenities at TTF and the existence of spacious dormitories as well as the welcoming atmosphere of the common rooms generally motivates us and we the white-collar employees now work harder while also boosting the productivity of the factory. Cut the long story short, as someone who spends all weekdays here in the factory dormitory, I can easily say that TTF is my second home. But hey, when the weekend rolls around, I'm eager to head back home to Tashkent to see my family and spend quality time with my loved ones, too."* (**UWC3, Age: 65, Years Employed at TTF: 12, Area of Specialization: Information Technology Operations Manager (IT Ops Manager), Gender: Male, Date of the Interview: 30.06.2022)**

Given the above, in his portrayal of capitalism's entrance and its co-product privatization in rural Tashkent, UWC3 presented an unconventional perspective by using two compelling metaphors. Under communism, everyday life was depicted by UWC3 with the image of a traditional oriental bazaar and a Soviet-type department store, where the stalls were often empty. On the other hand, life in capitalist Uzbekistan was likened by him to a flamboyant supermarket "filled with plenty of offerings." Nevertheless, while making such comparisons, it is vital to acknowledge the historical realities in an objective manner. As argued by village elders during our off-the-record conversations (in the following sections), the scarcity in Soviet markets or department stores was not due to inefficiency (as depicted by UWC3) but rather a result of deliberate state policies focused on distributing healthy, minimally processed, and locally sourced natural foods.

In simpler terms, the Soviets chose not to sell mass-produced artificial products that could cause diseases like cancer and obesity. Their emphasis was on providing fresh

and organic goods, aiming to ensure their citizens had access to healthy consumables. However, there has been a dramatic shift with the introduction of capitalism in the former USSR. Department stores like TsUM (*Tsentralnyy Universalnyy Magazin*) and GUMS (*Glavnyy Universalnyy Magazin*) were dissolved. Life has become commodified and canned goods like carbonated beverages equipped with cancerogenic ingredients were often sold like 'bread and butter' in supermarket-like structures (as capitalist spaces) at the expense of overall well-being.

Despite the potential negative health impacts, the working class predominantly regarded these products as a symbol of prestige. Consumed on newly refurbished communal benches, alongside the conspicuous display of their TTF-made clothing, these items evolved into status symbols within the framework of the Uzbek Way of caste system, as UWC3 emphasized, wearing TTF-made clothes and drinking cans of Coca-Cola as indicators for demonstrating their upgraded condition. However, in the actual context, the current 'upgraded' social condition of working class in Paxtayurt could be likened to the condition of a fish in an aquarium. As Thompson would argue, workers were seemingly content but unaware of the broader realities they were entrapped in. They were obliged to work for factories like TTF to earn a livelihood, and then spend their money on TTF-made garments and cans of Coke, thus perpetuating a cycle where their hard-earned income ultimately returned to the hands of the capitalist (i.e., the white-collar class). In this case, the Uzbek style of capitalism functioned like a casino, with the house always winning without drawing much attention from the players (i.e., the blue-collar class). Lastly, the excessive contentment experienced by ordinary individuals in their act of consumption may contribute to the continuation of a draconian system where the majority unknowingly sustains a vicious cycle that only benefits those at the top.

In the same vein, in the last part of the interview answer, UWC3 also drew an analogy between Paxtayurt's socio-spatial history and a computer system. According to this analogy, the physical features of Paxtayurt, including its buildings and architectural plans, whether designated by Soviet experts or not, were likened to computer hardware. Meanwhile, the societal mindset, collective consciousness and

consumption habits were portrayed as software for a tightly-coupled system. Thus, the introduction of capitalism and its co-product privatization symbolizes a self-imposed update to the 'obsolete' socialist system within the liberal worldview of UWC3. However, looking at the situation in Paxtayurt from a Marxist perspective could be viewed as a disruptive force, like a malware attack that introduces irreversibly malignant changes to the societal code of the Paxtayurt community. After providing these details, UWC3's overt satisfaction with the ongoing capitalist transformation could similarly be read as a form of voluntary obedience to fitting into the norms of the current economic habitat.

Figure 16. Four TTF Workers Wearing TTF-made Garments Standing in front of the Paxtayurt Mini-Market to Buy Cans of Coke

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 30.06.2022)*

Furthermore, UWC3's last articulations about living in the TTF's administrative area and lodging in a dormitory reserved for administrators also revealed spatial distinctions tied to class differences. In my capacity as a part-time HR worker, I also had the opportunity to stay in the aforementioned dormitory. As far as I observed and experienced first-hand, the administrators' dormitory offered a comforting

experience characterized by opulence and spaciousness. Private rooms equipped with amenities such as TV, minibars and restrooms for personal use contributed to a sense of exclusivity. Recreational spaces like a billiard room and a lounge with full of refreshments also represented the elevated living standards associated with administerial positions. On the contrary, the living spaces of blue-collar workers were quite different from those of administrators.

The workers' quarters were simple and practical, similar to military barracks, with limited personal freedom and lacking material comforts. Mostly coming in from nearby regions of Uzbekistan, these workers were also separated from their families for months, except for special occasions such as religious holidays. From a Lefebvrian lens, this created an additional layer to the Uzbek Way of class stratification as some administrators like UWC3 were able to spend weekends with their families in places like Tashkent City more frequently. In this regard, although they may seem conflicting at first glance, the idea of the production of space and class-based inequalities strictly overlap. In direct response to this situation, it is imperative to reassess the driving forces behind the ongoing historical change in modern-day Uzbekistan.

Lefebvre, who was a committed Marxist, and liberal-minded white-collar people like UWC3 (in line with previous white-collar employees) represent opposing viewpoints on this matter. While classes and other interest groups once traditionally steered the course of historical events, clashes between different ideologies constituted the "X" factor behind the great transformation of Uzbekistan. Still, it was UWC3's self-centric social-Darwinist approach, or the "survival of the fittest" mindset, that gained the upper hand over the collective Soviet mindset. This implied that capitalist Uzbeks who had by now acquired power often viewed the politics and sociology of everyday life as a tug-of-war between different ideologies such as 'obsolete' socialism vs. 'progressive' capitalism (*Yangi* Uzbekistan mindset). Meanwhile, akin to their Occidental counterparts, their outlook on life was also influenced by other factors, including their family background, place of birth, and the *zeitgeist* (the era they live in). Most importantly, the idea of profession had an equally significant impact on their *weltanschauung* (world-view).

For instance, as argued in the upcoming sections, those who were employed in the agricultural sector tend to have more egalitarian economic world-view than those in the private sector (TTF). This was because they tend to align their work with personal values, and their work experiences could play a role in shaping those values. In reverting back to our case, however, in order to succeed in the rapacious world of industrial capitalism, TTF workers who once worked mostly in Soviet-type jobs must embrace the capitalist customs and behavioral norms of *homo economicus*. These norms prioritized adaptability and selfishness by challenging the welfare-providing structures of the halcyon days of the Soviet Union. Employees were now expected to be agile, receptive to sudden changes, consistently take risks, and gradually reduce reliance on regulations and formal procedures. Finally, the focus on adaptability was transforming the fundamental definition of the Soviet type of labor (which revolved around solidarity and friendship) and ultimately, the terminology used to describe it. With these in mind and as our interview came to an end, I expressed my gratitude to UWC3 for his time. Shortly after, UWC3 left the room and called RWC1 from the R&D area to join us in the same meeting space. As they walked in, UWC3 introduced him, saying, "Please meet our virtuoso, RWC1, who joined us from Russia after the Ukrainian War broke out. He has been with us for almost a year and has extensive experience in R&D. But, before you start interviewing him, I kindly ask you to avoid any questions about the ongoing conflict. As you might know, in our beloved country, a shut mouth catches no flies!"

After carefully listening to UWC3's final exclamation, which seemed to me like a friendly warning, I agreed not to inquire about the Russo-Ukrainian conflict and turned my attention directly to RWC1. We shook hands, and I began, "It's a pleasure meeting you. Could you tell me more about your background and your role here?" RWC1 nodded and started, "My early career in the Soviet Union focused on developing technological appliances for state-governed businesses. I then worked in several textile firms in Russia as well as in Ukraine after the break-up of the USSR, gaining experience in the world of textiles."

His voice was calm and steady as he continued, "When the situation in Ukraine escalated, however, I decided to seek new opportunities abroad. Thanks to my

business connections in the Republic of Uzbekistan, TTF welcomed me, and I have been leading several projects since then." Upon providing this information, RWC1 commenced answering my interview questions thoroughly. While sharing his pro-capitalist thoughts, he sometimes got a bit feverish and deviated from the interview questions. As a result, to avoid any confusion, all of his views regarding capitalism are compiled in a single answer, as follows:

> *"As a Muscovite who has been living in Paxtayurt and working at TTF for around a year, I can recap my feelings about privatization as optimistic and define changes in rural Tashkent as a Big Bang moment or an act-of self-emancipation. Because people who were once part of a centrally controlled system and a cog in a machine-like big-time social malady became free individuals to sell their work and purchase whatever gems they wanted to buy as independent consumers within the framework of the post-Soviet style of capitalism thanks to the assistance of amicable white-collar people like us. Despite all this, although there exists some grievance amongst the traditionally minded people, it is important to recognize that this new perestroika-like regime is a necessary evil. I see it as similar to chemotherapy for cancer patients. This may seem like a tough example, but middle-aged people like myself who were once commandeered by the shackles of the hammer and sickle have now come to the conclusion that Marxism and its poster children, communism, are illnesses—the greatest illnesses of all time—that need to be cured by glorious capitalist forces. And, regarding your last inquiry concerning the sociological impact of privatization, in today's cutthroat world, Mr. Mirziyoyev is masterfully continuing his predecessor's progressive Mustaqillik legacy under the umbrella of the Yangi Uzbekistan program. Moreover, thanks to the introduction of the cluster system and bans on child labor, more and more global enterprises, like American, Chinese, German and Indian ones, are planning to invest in Uzbekistan's rural areas as well. So, now we all are free and everything is sunshine and rainbows, so to speak.* **(RWC1, Age: 59, Years Employed at TTF: 1, Area of Specialization: R&D, Gender: Male, Date of the Interview: 30.06.2022)**

In view of the above, despite being born and raised in the Soviet Union, RWC1 expressed a highly critical viewpoint on communism, going so far by stigmatizing Marxism as the most detrimental "malady" of modern world history. From a liberal standpoint, one possible explanation for his negative stance toward the USSR could stem from his voluntary transition to a white-collar profession which he labeled as an act of self-emancipation from the "shackles of the hammer and sickle" or a "big bang" movement that often provided a plethora of "gems" to pragmatic individuals like him in post-Soviet societies. Throughout the interview, unlike Thompson's

idealistic approach, which underscores the revolutionary potential of the working class in materializing the long-awaited humanitarian revolution, RWC1 contested the notion of progressive fervor inherent among Uzbek workers. Instead, he contended that their behavior was largely molded by the external influence exerted by capitalist state actors like him who were working for their perpetual well-being in an "amicable" manner.

However, when viewed through a Lefebvrian lens, the current condition of workers and non-white collar classes in Uzbekistan appeared to this research more desperate than those of the USSR. As argued by historians like Sven Beckert (2015), the rise of capitalism in Uzbekistan involved coercing over a million citizens to pick cotton in harsh conditions—a practice aligned with the aforementioned Uzbek Way of State Mode of Production (UZSMP). This exploitation extended to children, teachers, physicians, and nurses, who were not supposed to be involved in such arduous labor. As a direct consequence of this forced labor practice for bargain basement prices and the government's monopoly over this flagship commodity (also known as the white gold or *aq oltin* in the local vernacular), Uzbekistan since then emerged as a prominent global exporter of cotton (Bhat, 2015). However, driven by ethical concerns and after an interminable intervention by international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Cotton Campaign, Western nations implemented bans on the importation of Uzbek cotton (Tsereteli, 2018). Yet, the situation changed during the tenure of Shavkat Mirziyoyev when he implemented brand-new reforms aimed at revitalizing Uzbekistan's political economy and enhancing its international standing. As part of his *Yangi* Uzbekistan (New Uzbekistan) vision, the Uzbek Government finally banned child labor in the cotton industry. As a direct result, in 2019, Western liberal nations simultaneously lifted the aforementioned ban on Uzbek cotton which had been in effect since 2006 (ILO, 2021). This in the long run brought modernization and direct foreign investment by US, China, Germany and India into the Uzbek soil. Within that shift, a massive sectorial privatization project also aimed to reduce the government's role in this industry and address the core drivers of forced labor by creating a system of vertically integrated "clusters" operated by private companies. According to an annual report published by the Uzbek Government in 2022, said clusters were

regional and multinational, ostensibly to transfer the industry out of government hands by acting as an intermediary between cotton farmers and the state under more humane conditions.

Figure 17. Uzbek Children Picking Cotton (Circa 2005)

Source: *"Sven Beckert, The Empire of Cotton" (2015: 439)*

However, viewed through a Burawoyesque lens, the patrons of cotton clusters resembled Eastern European oligarchic models renowned for their exploitative contractual arrangements and opaque ownership structures. Furthermore, the experience of transformations in the post-Soviet space, including Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, showed that the state's captivity and formation of oligarchs within the framework of SMP most often occurred at two critical stages of the reform process; the reduction of state control and denationalization of lands, and the privatization of state-owned enterprises. Lessons learned in transition economies in post-Soviet space also showed two kinds of vested interests; the desire to control lucrative resources by the white-collar class, and preventing others from climbing up the social pyramid (Hoffman, 2002). After considering the aforementioned statements and gaining a better understanding of the cluster system, I decided to embark on an excursion to *Paxtasanoat*[64], a major governmental organ that monitors

[64] *Paxtasanoat Ilmiy Markazi* or The Cotton Industry Scientific Center is a governmental institution that was established in early 1990s. Located in Tashkent, the center conducts scientific research,

and navigates the functioning of the local textile-market including clusters, located within the city limits of Tashkent.

During this trip, I encountered a vivid mural on the walls of the *Paxtasanoat* building. The mural portrayed a young Uzbek peasant carrying a heavy burlap sack filled with cotton, which was also inscribed with the English word "corruption". From a semiotic standpoint, this visual narrative echoed the harrowing toil of entrapped Uzbek laborers, similar to the plight of 18th-century Afro-American cotton pickers in the US, with both scenarios characterized by the relentless grind of physically demanding work.

However, the shared injustice went deeper. In these unequal systems, despite all the excruciating labor, the true beneficiaries were not those toiling in the fields but rather the elite strata of society. This stark parallel highlighted the enduring impact of such systemic exploitation, with the toil of vulnerable commoners fueling the extravagance of the privileged few, leaving a haunting legacy of inequality and oppression.

However, as I wished to continue my part-time job in a semi-authoritarian country where freedom of speech is extremely restricted and complete my academic research at TTF in a tranquil manner, I preferred to avoid any situation that would jeopardize my stay, so I opted not to enter the building.

Despite these limitations, I was still able to provide a visual glimpse into *Paxtasanoat* through three field photographs that I took. The first two images portray the commanding front façade, adorned with a showcase entrance that exudes legitimate institutional prowess and grandeur. On the contrary, the last photograph I shot of the rear façade shows the aforementioned mural that depicts the desperate condition of Uzbek cotton pickers. Returning back to my field research (in the village realms), I made my way to the TTF and proceeded to my next interview with RWC2 in the reception area.

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provides expert advice, and collaborates with key actors like clusters and prominent institutions to enhance efficiency and productivity.

Figure 18. Field photos from Paxtasanoat Ilmiy Markazi

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız, (Date 01.07.2022)*

Upon arriving at the entrance of the reception**,** my attention was drawn immediately to a gigantic Uzbek flag erected in front of the administrative building, gently fluttering in the wind. Unlike the USSR flag, featuring the color red as the symbol of the revolution, the Uzbek flag's azure color symbolizes the vastness of the blue sky and the transparency of the Aral Sea, both of which bear significant meaning in Uzbek culture. On the other hand, the flag's white section symbolizes the traditional sign of peace and good. Representing nature, new life, a Soviet-free one, and plentiful harvests, the color green is equally used to emphasize agriculture's role in the Uzbek economy. Generally speaking, the many hues and their symbolic meanings in this flag embody principles of unity, capitalist patriotism, and self-identification within and without the borders of the Uzbek Republic, akin to the *Union Jack* (the British flag), as E.P. Thompson would argue.

Moving further into the mentioned building, I also noticed that the reception walls were adorned with embossed images of leading figures of Uzbekistan, such as the former President Karimov and his successor Mirziyoyev as well as photographs capturing visits to international expos held in China, France, and the US. Speaking in Lefebvrian terms similar to gargantuan statues in symbolic spaces such as the *Champs Elysées* it highlighted the factory's grandeur in the international arena. Moreover, the presence of internationally accredited certificates and awards similarly symbolized excellence and recognition in the global textile industry and the omnipresence of TTF over its competitors. Viewed in the context of Lefebvre's SMP, the image of the newly elected president of Uzbekistan (Shavkat Mirziyoyev)

and the presidential coat of arms depicting cotton and wheat lastly emphasized the significance of agriculture and textile manufacturing in the country and the state's excessive control of over them.

Shortly after completing these observations and lingering around the reception entrance for a while longer, I finally reached the heart of the reception area, which served as a main hub where visitors and employees met. Behind the sleek reception desk stood RWC2, the 54-year-old receptionist, a familiar face whom I had known since the beginning of my field research. She welcomed me with a warm smile. Dressed professionally as always, she wore a well-fitted, tailor-made black outfit with high-heeled beige shoes. She also carried a vintage, possibly Soviet-made, silver necklace around her neck, serving as a subtle expression of her personal style, which may have held sentimental value from her past.

RWC2 approached each task with precision, ensuring that nothing was overlooked, a trait that made her indispensable to the administrative team. Despite these qualities, RWC2 was also incredibly down-to-earth. She had a way of making people feel at ease, whether they were long-time employees or first-time visitors. Her ability to listen and empathize equally made her a confidante for many. She often provided sage-like advice to those in need, drawing from her life experiences and the myriad of hardships endured since the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. As she often said, "I felt compelled to leave my homeland and seek refuge and employment at TTF, hoping to find some peace and help those in need until the situation in my country improved." While uttering these words, she additionally requested that I refrain from further queries about the ongoing war in Russia to avoid any trouble. Akin to the previous interview, I agreed to this request without pause, and our interview began with the following reflections of RWC2:

> "*Previously, numerous Uzbeks migrated to Moscow, but now, thanks to privatization, many Russians, particularly those with internet-based jobs and having a command of three or more foreign languages like myself, are migrating to rural areas in Uzbekistan. The affordable housing prices and worker-friendly salaries offered by the TTF are key factors that motivated us to start a new life in a modern village located near the capital of the Uzbek Republic. Aside from these, Russians like myself now also offer new*

> *opportunities for cultural exchange. Younger Paxtayurters and other Uzbek friends in rural Tashkent region who are keen on Russian culture and the Russian way of using technology, such as social media platforms like Telegram, can now make use of our know-how. However, not all locals are pleased with the newcomers. Some older residents blame daily matters such as increasing housing prices and the high inflation to the very presence of the Russians. They are right to a certain extent. Because, we are overqualified. But as they say it's no use crying over spilt milk; we have to relearn the culture of living together just like we did way back when. And when there's a will, there's a way. It's as simple as that.*" (**RWC2, Age: 54, Years Employed at TTF: 1, Area of Specialization: Reception Ops, Gender: Female, Date of the Interview: 01.07.2022)**

Given the above, the recent movement of Russians to Uzbekistan could be understood as a manifestation of the production and consumption of space in a capitalist context. As also expressed in a most recent TTF report: "The cheap housing prices in rural Tashkent and worker-friendly salaries offered by TTF and certain perks provided by some other America, China, Germany, and Russia based companies in neighboring areas were a result of the demand for labor in Uzbekistan, driven by the growth of the country's economy...also contributed to flocking of many foreign people to rural surroundings of the Uzbek capital" (TTF 2023: 25). In addition to these, the mass-migration of Muscovite urbanities to *Bostanliq* District was equally a growing trend in recent years (even before the Ukrainian War), and its impact on rural communities was a topic of interest within the local populace.

For example, for the Paxtayurt case, the arrival of educated urban migrants (i.e., Muscovites) began to increase competition for resources and employment opportunities, leading to resentment and frustration among villagers. Because they (the locals) now do not have the same decent education and qualifications as their newcomer peers and the school system was not as good as it was during the halcyon days of the Soviet Union.[65] Additionally, the arrival of overqualified urban migrants

[65] As argued in our off-the-record conversations with RWC2, the educational journey adopted by the Russian education system in the public domain unfolds across three main stages: primary, secondary, and upper or vocational. The primary phase spans from Grade 1 to 5, followed by secondary education from Grade 5 to 9, and then the upper or vocational stage from Grade 10 to 11. Alternatively, students may pursue further education in lyceums, colleges, or trade schools, which are mostly available in central areas like *Tashkent* and *Bostanliq*. Typically, enrollment begins around the age of 7, with secondary education concluding around age 18, after which students either embark on their careers or pursue higher education at a university. The upper or vocational education segment is facilitated through a network of institutions, including *Professionalno-Tehnicheskoye Uchilishe* (PTU or

started to introduce new social norms and cultural values that may be perceived as contradictory to the traditional ways of rural life. In these respects, the current gargantuan investments made by Russians and other non-Uzbek companies in the Uzbek terrain and the younger Uzbek's interest in the Russian language and Russia-based social media platforms was not just a matter of cultural exchange but also a result of the commodification and global circulation of cultural products and practices.

Under these terms, the class conflict between the elderly locals and the newcomers was not just about economic issues but also about power and identity and gaining hegemony over the space in which they inhabit. The concept of the "right to the city" steps into the stage at this juncture. As outlined in the theoretical framework, this notion encapsulates the aspirations of commoners—for our case, the elderly residents of Paxtayurt—for improved living conditions, active participation, communal ownership, self-governance, the dismantling of capitalist state apparatus, and the elimination of class divisions akin to those experienced during the USSR era (Lefebvre, 1996).

In a Lefebvrian sense, the "right to the city" equally represents a plea for a "de-alienating space" (Purcell, 2013). This political demand has often been dismissed as overly idealistic by staunch liberals, such as the UWC1 and RWC1 I previously interviewed within our on and off the record conversations. However, this research contends that those who criticize it as utopian mostly fail to comprehend the deeper significance of the concept. As Marx (2008) [1867] asserted, utopian ideas of liberty and a new society are essential catalysts for setting the dialectical process in motion. Every revolution, including the Bolshevik Revolution that radically transformed

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Professional Technical School), *Tehnikum* (Technical College), and *Lytsei* (Lyceum), along with various training courses provided by higher education institutions or industry. Graduates from these programs earn qualifications such as a Junior Specialist Diploma or a Diploma of Academic Lyceum, equivalent to a Certificate of Complete Secondary Education. Yet, after the collapse of the Union, higher education attendance in rural Uzbekistan has declined. Only a small minority of well-off people, mostly urbanites, could access decent education that still did not meet Soviet standards. Correspondingly, people, especially those from rural backgrounds like Paxtayurt, now face challenges in finding vacant positions in well-paying jobs with social security guarantees, unlike their urbanite white-collar peers coming from places like Moscow. This disparity also reinforces class-based inequalities and widens the socioeconomic gap between urban and rural populations.

Uzbek society, began with the recognition that the existing state of affairs could be improved and with a vision for a better future. In the late 2010s, however, Mirziyoyev, much like his late neoliberal counterparts such as Islam Karimov and Mikhail Gorbachev, declared that there was no alternative to neoliberal capitalism, presenting it as the only viable framework for organizing Uzbek society anew. By doing so, he undermined Soviet ideals and extinguished the core of the struggle, much like his predecessors. Nevertheless, the enduring Soviet spirit and values within the hearts of the working-class people continue to offer hope. In the words of RWC2, "When there is a will, there is a way."[66]

After providing these details and thanking me in Russian, which was a courteous way to conclude a conversation, I understood that my time in the reception area had come to an end. I expressed my gratitude to RWC2 for her time and then went to the assistant manager's office. Upon entering the room, I immediately felt as though I had stepped into a time machine. The area designated for the assistant manager resembled a national government archive, with shelves brimming with an array of archival documents and a variety of reports about the workers' monthly performances. Two comfortable chairs and a coffee table filled with Uzbek almonds and pistachios were arranged in front of the assistant manager's wooden desk. While making these observations, RWC3, the assistant manager then entered the room and took his seat at the desk. As I introduced myself, I could sense his initial uneasiness. His responses were curt, and his body language was closed off. The tension in the room was palpable, making it extremely hard to initiate a conversation. I persevered, though, trying to find common ground and show genuine interest in his tenure at TTF, as well as his perspectives about life. "Why are you here? I mean, why are you really here in this remote part of the world?" he asked bluntly, his voice also tinged with suspicion.

"As a sociologist, I want to understand the current socio-economic landscape in Uzbekistan, which I consider a social laboratory, especially from the perspective of a Soviet-born Russian who has recently arrived in a post-Soviet village and is trying to adopt," I replied. He scrutinized me for a moment as if reading my mind through

[66] This sentiment was further elaborated upon by working class people in the subsequent interviews.

telepathy. Then, with a signal of hesitant confirmation, he seemed to decide to give me a chance. “Alright, sit down, son,” he said, his tone softening slightly. “If you want to talk, let’s talk.” As we settled in, I noticed a shift in his attitude. Slowly but steadily, he began to express himself while staunchly defending capitalism and displaying a latent aversion to socialism. “Escaping the conflict was not easy,” RWC3 began, his voice steady but tinged with emotion:

> *I had to leave everything behind in Russia: my home, my car, and most painfully, some of my family members who were unable to leave. However, upon arriving here, I found hope and a decent job in a managerial position. I owe this opportunity to capitalism, my ambitious nature and my pro-capitalist connections living in Uzbekistan. Still, this is not enough. In order to advance in the factory hierarchy, compete with my rivals and gain more authority as well as money, I tirelessly try to meet unreasonable demands and tolerate the constant insults from the factory manager by wearing a mask of resilience. I strive to be warm and diplomatic to those in higher positions while also acting tough, distant, emotion-free or stone-cold, as they say, with my subordinates to keep things running safe and sound. So, the trick, my dear son, is to know when to fight and when not to fight. It’s all playing your cards right. That’s how winning is done in the post-Soviet universe.”* **RWC3, Age: 63, Years Employed at TTF: 1, Area of Specialization: Assistant Manager, Gender: Male, Date of the Interview: 01.07.2022)**

RWC3’s life journey could be perceived as a success story in the age of post-socialism. From a critical perspective, however, he could also be seen as a Machiavellian figure driven by rapacity, who is always striving to comply with the status quo and waiting to seize the opportune moment to dominate those situated below and above him in the factory hierarchy when the right time comes. Resembling a seasoned politician, he was a man who could get things done in his own way. In his own words, being the only non-native newcomer manager in a foreign company put him in this double-edged position. He felt he had to act both “stone-cold” and distant, akin to his non-Russian counterparts, to compete while also being expected to show a warm and nurturing side to the customers and outsiders whenever the company needed it. In a nutshell, it was a “mask of resilience,” after all, that he felt compelled to wear all the time within a masquerade-like setting, which also needed to be analyzed from a Burawoyesque lens. Within these in mind and within the scope of Burawoy’s sociological imagination, one notable feature of RWC3’s dexterous usage of the mentioned “mask of resilience” as a tool of

deception was evident when he used his physicality. I equally noticed that when he was in a fierce situation, such as when he had to fire or punish a blue-collar employee who was underperforming, his voice took on a slightly deeper quality. In his daily bulletin meetings with other white-collar members as well, he likewise tended to speak in a distant, icy tone, which gave him a poker face quality and made it difficult to gauge his true feelings. Interestingly, it became evident over time that this was a learned behavior.

In his own words, this equally allowed him to maintain control over people in the way he preferred, "an emotion-free one". However, there were times when I saw him lose his temper and abandon his usual diplomat-like, composed demeanor. On one occasion, while I was present during an exclusive meeting between him and the factory foreman (whom I labeled as UBC1) in the HR department, they got into a verbal quarrel. The factory foreman then criticized RWC3's methods, accusing him of gathering information about his private life from ordinary workers working in the industrial section of TTF, which he deemed a violation of worker rights. In response, RWC3 gave UBC1 a deadly stare before breaking his usually calm demeanor and shouting at him to stop making such accusations immediately. This was the first time I bore witness to RWC3's resorted move for dealing with unexpected circumstances. To put it differently, when he did not get his way, especially if someone from what he considered a so-called inferior social status did not behave according to his plan, his calm, cool demeanor and his unique way of domineering low-ranking employees at TTF through semantics and wordplay shifted into giving commands with a raised voice and a menacing antagonistic tone.

In addition to these statements, in my last encounter with RWC3 in the HR department, RWC3 once again summoned UBC1 to the administrative building. As UBC1 entered the HR room, RWC3 smiled in a sinister manner and spoke to UBC1 in a disparaging tone, as if talking to a child. This caused UBC1 to have an outburst and throw off the office chairs to the ground. RWC3 demanded that UBC1 calm down, growing visibly angrier when UBC1 did not comply with his order. The previously calm and composed assistant manager once again mutated into a rage-filled mess. As the conversation grew heated, I finally requested to end the meeting

and we all went our separate ways. A few days after things had settled down and while RWC3 was away on a business trip, I phoned him (the assistant manager) to ask for permission to interview with UBC1. I explained that it was important for me to meet with UBC1 because of his extensive knowledge about the factory, stemming from his position as a factory foreman.

I also told him that his seniority also made him an ideal candidate for an interview, as he had formerly worked in a Soviet zavod during his youth. After gaining his trust and assuring him that I would not ask any personal questions about RWC3, but would solely focus on the sociological dynamics of the manufacturing branch, he gave me the green light. After that, I went directly to the production area to begin the second phase of my field research. From then on, the information gathered from my time interviewing UBC1 and other blue-collar workers in the production area was analyzed under the title of "*criticizing capitalism*".

4.2. Criticizing Capitalism

In view of the above and prior to meeting up with the factory foreman and interviewing with the aforementioned blue-collar members of TTF (including UBC1), I found myself deeply captivated while somewhat puzzled by the daily work patterns of the laborers in the production area. I closely studied their daily routines and chores, which Lefebvre identified as *linear* and *natural rhythms* from the moment they entered the factory to when they signed out after their shift. As Lefebvre put it aptly in his book *Rhythmanalysis*, these *linear rhythms* exerted a significant influence on the body and stemmed "from human activity; the monitoring actions and of movements-imposed structures" (Lefebvre, (2004) [1992]:8). Within the context of organizations such as TTF, these activities were typically molded by external factors imposed by spatial experts (in our case, white-collar technocrats and people like UWC1). For instance, adherence to prescribed work schedules and certain protocols was regarded as imperative for the continuation of a lab-like command and obedience system. These temporal rhythms exhibited quantitative attributes, symbolizing an externally designated framework that scrutinized every facet of the daily work life of the workers. Lefebvre and Régulier (1986:73) interpret these rhythms as the "desacralization" of time, a form of demystification in which

any potential enjoyment or spontaneity inherent in everyday life was relinquished as a result of a continuous job preponderance night and day.

Nonetheless, this was not unique, nor a singularly peculiar rhythm individuals encountered, as they remained in perpetual interaction with "what is least rational in the human being; the lived, the carnal, the body" (Lefebvre (2004) [1992]:9), particularly, the *natural rhythms* of the body which were irrational in character and strongly tied to subjective expression. *Natural rhythms* also engendered a peculiar type of anti-structure in organizational space, one that was lived, materialized spontaneously, and in some occasions could manifest a "victory…over linear, integrating it without destroying it" (Lefebvre, (2008) [1981]: 131). Linear and natural rhythms were, after all (especially in the case of TTF), inseparable; they intricately intertwined with the routines of everyday existence. To put it differently, they were "multiple interrelated rhythms functioning independently but impacting each other" (Verduyn, 2015: 641). With these considerations in mind and in keeping with the *rhythmanalysis* concept, I was modestly able to make the following observations: Factory workers, regardless of their rank, arrived before daybreak, carrying their lunch boxes and water canteens in their bags.

After passing through security, everyone donned their look-alike uniforms and safety gear in the locker rooms. As far as I have observed, the factory provided all necessary safety equipment, such as protective goggles and earplugs. As the first rays of sunlight seep through the windows, the factory came alive. Still wiping the sleep from their eyes, the workers gathered in the designated meeting area for the morning briefing. The foreman (as the chief of the production area) UBC1, a stern but easy-going individual, generally stood at the front, addressing them with instructions and reminders for their daily tasks: "Colleagues, as we begin another day, let us remember the significance of our work; each thread we take, each stitch we make, contributes to creating something meaningful akin to Soviet times to enrich ourselves and prosper our factory." UBC1's daily speeches frequently instilled a renewed sense of pride and motivation for the workers.[67] Just as the preacher assumed the role of

[67] Drawing upon the sociology of religion, it becomes clear that UBC1's daily discourse sounded like the orations of a shrine preacher or an imam.

guiding his congregation in adhering to the established norms and ideals of the prevailing ideology (i.e., the capitalist mode of production), UBC1 upheld the position of a supervisor within the factory, urging the workers to acknowledge their interdependent relationship with TTF which defined their collective existence. Furthermore, from a Lefebvrian perspective, UBC1's position could also be considered that of an intermediary who latently translated the indoctrinations of the conceived space with its planned aspects and intentions into the lived reality, aligning the proletariats' actions and practices with the demands of the architectural organization designated by technocrats. However, UBC1 considered himself to be an "ardent anti-capitalist, a Soviet man at finest, who is being compelled to earn money in a capitalist jungle."

Figure 19. Hands of Industry: TTF Workers On the Move to Do Their Tasks

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 05.07.2022)*

Having listened to UBC1's address, I also made my way to the first area, where the raw materials were processed and organized. As soon as I entered the building, I was impressed by its spatial organization and neatness. The interior was well-lit and neat, with specific areas for checking supplies and sorting them into their designated sections. There was a lively, hustling and bustling mood as people from all sorts of

different backgrounds were trying to work together to get things done. Receiving personnel, for instance, were obliged to examine and unload all goods with great care to ensure they conformed to quality and quantity specifications. People were keeping track of all the batch information while the sorters separated and categorized the materials depending on their qualities. Expert forklift drivers were also expected to carefully transport stacks of pallets and containers to their new spots (i.e., designated storage spaces).

Teamwork, collaboration and close attention to detail were all on full display throughout the sorting process. During my field research, I also overheard conversations between team leaders and their employees about workflow issues and decision-making procedures. They were striving to pin down the root causes in the manner of a factory planner so they could begin to brainstorm solutions to solve problems regarding sorting and organizing the aforementioned textile materials. However, as UBC1 pointed out, in order to have effective conversations for problem-solving, one must possess traits like active listening, respecting the opinions of others, and not dominating the debate by creating a lively atmosphere for argumentation. During our conversation, he also stressed the importance of taking rational actions while striving to earn money dexterously. Ultimately, unlike the egalitarian ideals of the USSR regime, which amalgamated people from various backgrounds in collective workspaces to work voluntarily, "it was this time a symbiotic relationship with money that united them all together," he said.

This also reminded me of a quote by Adam Smith, who stated that it is not the benevolence of workers but their pursuit of self-interest that drives them to interact and earn money under the guardianship "the free market economy" (Abercrombie et al., 2006). After finishing my first observations, I eventually proceeded to the second building to see the weaving, dyeing, and spinning processes, which were divided into compartments. While I was gazing at the spinning section, I similarly observed a pair of blue-collar workers operating German-made textile machinery.

Each worker was fully engulfed in their task, feeding cotton fibers into the spinning machines and monitoring the production process. During this observation, UBC1

approached me again with a willingness to share in-depth insights about spinning operations. He explained the spinning process by referring to how TTF produced a range of yarn counts, from Ne12 (Nm 20) to Ne 40 (Nm 68)[68]. While doing that, UBC1 also emphasized the mandatory need for quality control measures at every stage of its production. This, he said, is done "to ensure an impeccable final product that meets the factory's high standards". He further elaborated on the daily production capacity of the spinning section, highlighting the factory's capability of producing 16.5 tons of raw yarn per day thanks to their twisting machines came into play, allowing them to achieve a definite Total Productive Maintenance (TPM)[69]. As UBC1 concluded his explanations about the spinning process, he did not hesitate to reflect on the challenges encountered in the production process, which revolved around ensuring yarn quality throughout the production. Eager to show me more about the quality control process, UBC1 assisted me to the laboratory where testing and analysis of the aforementioned products took place.

He introduced me to the lab workers and stressed their role in maintaining strict quality standards to compete with other textile companies. From the vantage point of Lefebvre's ideas about the division of labor under the capitalist system, lab workers who could be perceived as equals to auditing staff in capitalist institutions had the important responsibility of performing tests, documenting data, and sharing their discoveries regarding the quality of raw and mélange yarns. This was crucial in order to avoid any potential issues that could harm TTF's reputation in the worldwide textile industry. In case of failure (i.e., failing to produce the finest quality of commodities), these lab-workers could get punished easily. Given the above and under the umbrella of TTF's factory code, the white-collar class systematically exercised their autocratic power over workers as if they were private legislators. The overseer's book of penalties was also used to deal with any potential problems in the making of garments. All punishments were in the form of fines or reductions in

[68] NM and NE are common units of measurement used in the textile industry to indicate the fineness of yarn. NM refers to the metric system (New Metric) and NE to the English system (Number English). They both represent the number of 1,000 meters of yarn that weigh one gram. A higher NM or NE value indicates a finer yarn, while a lower value indicates a thicker yarn.

[69] Total Productive Maintenance (TPM) in textiles is a methodology which focuses on the optimization of efficiency, reliability, and overall performance of the textile products.

wages. After making these deductions, I have continued my exploration with UBC1 in the mélange yarn section.

We witnessed the multi-layered process of blending various fibers to produce yarns. As we continued to roam in the production area, we instantly came across certain experts in mélange stuff and talked about trivial matters. Before parting ways, they recommended we pay a visit to the weaving section. Me and UBC1 took their advice, and upon arriving in the weaving section, we observed the weavers similarly threading colorful threads around the looms. In addition, the workers' fingers were moving with a rhythm born out of years of practice. The clatter of the looms created a cacophony of sound and the sounds were also blended with the repetitive glimpses between the workers, which could be considered as friendly. The workers also communicated with each other through applying an extensive set of hand gestures, and facial expressions which were indigenous to Uzbekistan. As regards my observations, these practices served as a reminder of their strong communal bonds, which date back to USSR times. Speaking in Lefebvrian terms, these non-verbal communication techniques also materialized Henri Lefebvre's concept of natural rhythms as a means of negotiation, rebellion or reconciliation with the dominant ideology. Each gesture thus, carried a symbolic meaning and resistance against the deafening hum of the machinery. The men often displayed a firm head nod, using it as a sign of agreement or affirmation. I also observed them engaging in a hand-on-heart gesture, placing their hand over their chest to express sincerity or gratitude. When deep in thought, many men could be seen stroking their chin, a gesture that indicated their contemplation of a particular matter. Another common gesture among the male workers was a confident thumbs-up sign, which they used to convey approval or encouragement. In moments of determination or frustration, I noticed them clenching their fists, symbolizing their commitment to a task.

Additionally, a friendly pat on the back was often exchanged between male colleagues, serving as a gesture of camaraderie or support. On the contrary, the women workers had their own distinct set of mimics and gestures as well. I observed many women raising a single eyebrow as a means to express curiosity, surprise, or skepticism. They would often tilt their heads to the side while engaged in interaction,

indicating their attentiveness and interest. Another gesture frequently employed by the women was a hand wave, a graceful motion used to greet or bid farewell. I noticed some women intertwining their fingers together when feeling anxious or nervous. A slight head tilt with a soft smile also conveyed a sense of empathy or understanding. Finally, similar to their male counterparts, a gentle touch to the arm or a comforting pat on the back was a common gesture of solidarity and companionship.

At the same time, amidst the deafening noise of the factory floor, it became challenging for me to communicate with the workers. Language barriers also stood between myself and the workers. However, displaying a remarkable respect for my fieldwork, UBC1 again graciously aided me in conveying my need for a few moments of his time. Together, we stepped outside the factory premises, away from the clamor, and he conveyed me the following articulations:

> *"Look, our weaving department is very good at making high-quality fabrics that can be used for all sorts of things. Technical opportunities also allow us to produce fabrics with the desired picture or logo on them using different dyed yarns. This is mostly preferred by customers who are engaged in the hotel and restaurant business. All of these hotels and restaurants are internationally renowned brands by the way. Thanks to the existence of our one of a kind machinery and lab facilities which constantly checks and balances the quality of their order, these big players also know that they're in good hands. So, everything's about ensuring quality. To this day, we have been doing quite well by following certain pathways and circuits in a never-ending game that resembles shakhmaty[70]. And we eventually became the best of the best in our trade. We are like the Soviet Union of the textile industry, my friend, with a capitalist touch of course. Still, all the money we make here will never buy back our glorious Soviet past. It makes me sad; it makes me mad. But no matter how much I criticize it, the past is a foreign country now and I'm unwillingly playing my part in this untrammeled charade."* **UBC1, Age: 67, Years Employed at TTF: 15, Area of Specialization: Foreman, Gender: Male, Date of The Interview, 05.07.2022)**

Given the above, capitalists like TTF owners invested and continue to invest in machinery and technology in order to remain a step ahead of their competitors in their respective fields in a circuitous way. As Lefebvre would argue, this way (which could be analyzed under his well-acclaimed theory entitled "The Circuits of

[70] Also known as chess in the English language.

Capital,") involved a series of interconnected stages that define the capitalist mode of production. The circuit began with the "production of commodities," where labor power in places like TTF was utilized to transform raw materials into value-added goods. These commodities then entered the distribution circuit, where they were shipped off and made accessible to various markets and consumers. The next phase was the "exchange circuit," where commodities were traded and monetary transactions occurred. Finally, the circuit concluded with "end-user commodity consumption" by customers such as the aforementioned hotels and restaurants, thereby satisfying their peculiar needs and desires. In the words of UBC1, it could be described as a "never-ending game," a game of chess that revolved around perpetual investment and capital accumulation.[71]

However, within the scope of Marxist sociological imagination, while these kinds of investments do not necessarily result in long-term profits, they have the potential to lead to the desire for commodity fetishism, capital obsession, and increased exploitation of the working class, which could also give way to the accumulation of humanitarian catastrophe in a setting which is also described by UBC1 as an *untrammeled charade*. After providing these details and as we made our way to the dyeing section, I could not help myself but contemplate how each building flawlessly connected to the next. It was evident that great thought had been put into ensuring the different stages of the production process flowed unproblematically, with minimal disruptions or bottlenecks. Moving to the dipping area, I similarly and unsurprisingly coincided with a well-organized space. Large vats filled with vibrant dyes lined one side of the room, each labeled with specific color codes and dye compositions. Fabric rolls were neatly arranged on shelves, ready to be thrown into the dye baths. Adjacent to the dipping area were drying racks where freshly dyed fabrics were carefully hung to dry. The layout allowed for an easy-handed transition from one stage of the dyeing process to the next, minimizing any potential disruptions. Within this spatial arrangement, some took on the role of overseeing the dyeing operations. They measured and mixed dyes, ensuring the right proportions for each batch. Others, on the other hand, focused on the dipping process, submerging

[71] In sum, it is equally important to note these circuits were not linear or isolated but rather operated within a complex network of socio-spatial configurations and perpetual investments to make money.

the fabrics into the dye baths and monitoring the timing for optimal color saturation. The attention to detail in the dyeing section was remarkable. Workers controlled the temperature and duration of the dyeing process. They closely monitored the fabric's immersion and observed the transformation taking place. In sum, it was a microcosm where the cadence of industrial rhythms mingled with the rhythm of the workers' movements, creating a synchronized production process.

Figure 20. Scenes from the Dyeing Process

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 05.07.2022)*

Last but not least, when it comes to talking about the sewing section from a Lefebvrian perspective, I made the following deductions: The space that surrounded the sewing activities was well-lit, with bright overhead lighting illuminating each workstation. Large cutting tables were placed throughout the section, allowing ample space for workers to lay out fabric and precisely measure and cut the required pieces. Alongside the cutting tables, rows of sewing machines stood in alignment, forming a symmetrical arrangement. Each sewing machine was equipped with the necessary tools and accessories, neatly organized within easy reach. The sewing section's flooring was made of a durable and easy-to-clean material designed to sustain the constant movement of workers. The equipment and workstations were arranged in a way that created well-defined paths, making it easy to move from one point to another. Workers were also provided with ergonomic seats and tables that were adjustable in height to make the long working hours more bearable. The factory planners have paid attention to every detail to ensure that workers are comfortable and able to perform at their best.

The sewing department similarly looked like a military brigade since workers specialized in different parts of the process. Some of the employees were responsible

for cutting the pieces of fabric to the precise proportions that were specified, so minimizing waste. Some worked on matching the seams and sewing the various pieces of fabric to ensure they would stay together. Others worked on adding the final touches to the garments, such as buttons, zippers, and other embellishments. In total, all of these craftsmen, in collaboration with experienced designers, were accountable for the final, expertly crafted appearance of the garments.

Figure 21. Sewers of TTF

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 05.07.2022)*

Collectively, their efforts resulted in the generation of a yearly output of 1200 metric tonnes of *terry-loop* textiles derived from recycled materials. This quantity was equivalent to the creation of around 3.0 million units of finished textile goods. After making these observations, I proceeded toward the packing and shipping division with UBC1. As argued by UBC1 this section was organized to ensure efficient packaging and loading for transportation. Workers were stationed at various packaging stations. They mostly wrapped and secured the finished products using boxes, tape and bubble wrap. The loading area was also arranged with designated zones for different products and destinations, where workers put the packaged goods onto pallets or containers, ensuring proper arrangement and security. As the sun began to set, a convoy of trucks came to the loading area. Their arrival also marked the beginning of a bilateral collaboration between drivers and loaders.

All together they formed a symbiotic relationship, working in integrity to ensure the products were loaded with the utmost care. Amidst packaging and loading, the

logistic personnel handled documentation and paperwork. Equipped with clipboards and computer tablets, they checked and cross-checked each aspect of the shipping process (i.e., necessary shipping documents, invoices, and customs forms are in order). Throughout this process, there were some verbal conflicts that arose. To alleviate these problems, however, the workers and truck drivers communicated openly to resolve disagreements. After successfully loading the trucks, the workers watched the departure of these trucks with pride. They seemed well aware that their efforts contributed to the factory's success and the satisfaction of customers who would receive these packaged products.

Figure 22. A European Truck Ready to Transport Newly Acquired Commodities

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 05.07.2022)*

Upon finishing these observations and parting ways with UBC1, the factory foreman (UBC1) graciously called me back and asked me to visit her sister UBC2, who works as a cook in the factory canteen. He believed that this visit would help me gain a better understanding of the factory's operations. Viewing every interaction as an opportunity to conduct comprehensive field research, I accepted his request without further ado and paid a visit to the factory canteen. As I approached the heaving canteen, I presented myself to UBC2 and she began to answer my interview questions about privatization by sharing the following reflections:

> *"Privatization feels like they brought back the Czarist times to modern-day Uzbekistan. Back in the day, when we were living under the reign of the USSR, our leaders worked endlessly to make us industrious, transforming us into something what they then called "the ideal Soviet citizen." Meaning that, us commoners whose grandparents were once under the thumb of the feudal-lords became free collective farmers. Some of us received fancy educations even became accountants, agronomists, doctors, teachers, lawyers, and so on. Meanwhile, another bunch of Paxtayurters started working in these new factories, processing crops or spinning cotton. We all had one goal, to meet the government's targets and help out the Union. And as a cook who had learned the art of preparing food at a nearby cannery and catered food to nearby factories in my part-time work, I must say the workplace food eating concept was regimented like today. But unlike today, regardless of our ranking and place in life, we were all in this together and were used to enjoy eating the same food processed in same Soviet vegetable zavods located in the vicinity of our beloved village and drinking the same beverages. Fresh vegetables, hearty soups, and maybe even a little bit of meat if we were lucky. It was this very special thing about the Soviet compound that connected the people living in Leningrad and Paxtayurt together in a magical way. However, that's all over now. Capitalist winds brought chaos and a nightmarish scenery for everyone. Private companies like TTF in Paxtayurt and villages like Paxtayurt now run the show. Unlike the amicable oversight of our Soviet comrades, who were managers yet also friends, we are now subjected to a draconian form of surveillance by hostile individuals who identify themselves as our superiors. This new regime enforces an environment where efficiency is divine, reducing us to passive entities who must eat quickly plasticized foods and return to our robotic tasks. So, we workers no longer have the right to voice our opinions but must instead comply with the devilish rules. Yet, still, some of us have the guts. Some of us especially the Soviet-educated ones, find ways to keep our individuality and rekindle with our former identity by bringing self-made organic food like "samsa" from home and share it with others. It's their little way of saying, "Hey, we're not machines, we're men!" In other words, it's more or less a silent rebellion against the status quo. Thus, I remain grateful to them for reminding us who we really are.* **UBC2, Age: 58, Years Employed at TTF: 10, Area of Specialization: Cooking Operations, Gender: Female, Date of The Interview, 05.07.2022)**

As per UBC2's articulations, and as stated before, over the course of the USSR, Soviet officials produced communist spaces that aimed at enhancing productivity and contributing to the formation of a more enlightened and industrious society under the banner of creating the ideal Soviet citizen (*homo sovieticus*) (Sharafutdinova, 2023).

During that time, ordinary peasants, known as *dehqons*, previously subservient to feudal lords or *bois* (rich farmers), relinquished their former roles and branched off into two main groups: one segment became peasants laboring in collective farms, while the other group, those who received substantial education in central areas, transitioned into roles such as accountants, lawyers, agronomists, technical experts and medical staff within these collective farms and areas around the Paxtayurt

Village (Vitkovich, 1954). Simultaneously, another subset of *dehqons* gained employment as factory workers in newly-established crop processing facilities or cotton *zavods* (state-run factories). The common goal of these people was to meet production targets set by the government and to work for the good for themselves and the well-being of the Union (Schlögel, 2023).

Consequently, the Soviet intelligentsia was able to create a cosmopolitan community from different nationalities whose members were determined to work with each other in a non-antagonistic manner, which also contributed to a boost in their social standing as a whole. Apart from these statements, social standing was not solely shaped by occupation, but rather it was mostly influenced by variables like education, party affiliation, nationality, and neighborhood in which one lived. Individuals who were fully dedicated to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) additionally enjoyed peculiar benefits ranging from financial perks like career promotion and political sway (Fitzpatrick, 2022).

While climbing the ranks within the party hierarchy, the newly obtained ranks could, however, not be transferred or bestowed to friends or relatives (Caroe, 1953). Moreover, the USSR system held manual labor in great esteem, and this sentiment translated into a payment system where certain skilled workers earned higher salaries compared to numerous Soviet-type white-collar workers, like physicians, engineers, and teachers (Yanowitch, 1986). Despite earning less, these individuals, especially teachers who are working in rural areas of Central Asia, received a higher social status than their technocrat comrades. Salient disparities were also evident between the Union's multiplexed socio-economic classes (ibid, 1986).[72]

Instead, these disparities were primarily observable in the lifestyle differences and preferences amongst urban and rural dwellers. For example, those inhabiting rural areas, such as Paxtayurt, were primarily occupied with agricultural chores such as vegetable cultivation and animal husbandry. Meanwhile, those residing in cities like

[72] Yet, the observed differences were not found to be correlated with the inequality that once existed in the US up until the mid-20th century, where some races, like the *WASPS* (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants), were privileged, while others, such as African-Americans, were treated as an inferior race (Robinson & Slevin, 1988).

Tashkent, Moscow, and St. Petersburg mostly engaged in desk-bound jobs and less labor-intensive tasks. Still, regardless of the color of their collar or the intensity of their work, every worker was provided with the same freshly collected edible items during their mealtime. As argued by UBC2, these items were all sourced from nearby *kolkhozes* and food processing facilities to ensure that Paxtayurters and other Soviet workers remained strong and industrious. Within the scope of this research, this was a wise labor-friendly strategy named "*bread and circus*" policy[73] of the Soviet State that kept the workers happy while still controlling them with amity.

Figure 23. Scenes from Paxtayurt's Soviet-Type Food Processing Facility

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız, (Circa 1960's, Obtained from TTF Archives on 05.07.2022)*

In the avenue of these debates and as articulated by UBC2 in the last section of our interview, the modern-day conception of the workplace lunch in Uzbekistan can thus be traced back to the Soviet era, where collective facilities like farms, *zavods*, and military-industrial complexes had to efficiently feed working-class masses in a companionate manner. Following the dissolution of the USSR, however, private companies like TTF, hospitals, and schools restructured the canteen concept (Vicky, 2014). This led to the creation of the capitalist workplace lunch tradition. Within the sociological imagination of Henri Lefebvre, the revamping of the capitalist workplace canteen in Paxtayurt in the early-2000's (through the establishment of TTF) mirrored the augmented appetite for efficiency, rationalization and discipline as per the prevailing managerial discourse, which revolved around accumulating more

[73] In the Soviet Union, the bread and circus policy (adapted from *panem and circenses* policy of the Roman Empire) aimed to maintain social stability and political dominance through providing essential needs such as food and housing in an egalitarian way, coupled with state-regulated entertainment and propaganda (Vitkovitch, 1954).

profit while saving time (Barley & Kunda, 1992). These lunch spaces were, therefore, designed to facilitate the smooth flow of blue-collar workers through the various stages of the eating process.

Moreover, in line with the insights of Michel Foucault (1991) [1975], it was possible to view these canteens as serving a disciplinary role by curbing undesirable workplace behavior, such as alcohol consumption. Waiting in line, congregating during a meal and finding a table amongst familiar people all involved highly externally structured acts, symbolizing authoritative control over the proletarians. Lunch was a rapid achievement that was comprised of programmed actions or physical activities. Within a canteen, food-consuming follow predetermined routes, essentially reproducing coded regulations and assigned roles that were enforced by planners within a highly rationalized organizational system. This constituted a spatial workplace practice, characterized by movements that could be described as disciplined within an efficient framework of predetermined actions, a concept that aligned with Lefebvre's conceived space, as discussed by Gottdiener (1993) in "*A Marx of our Time: Henri Lefebvre and the Production of Space*".

In other words, canteens seldom served as symbols of defiance or rebellion since the lunch setting tends to be associated with authoritative and bureaucratic connotations. Carrying sociological implications, industrial dining areas and TTF-like canteen practices were additionally portrayed in critically acclaimed films. As depicted in the film "Modern Times" (1936), Charlie Chaplin's (who was also praised by Lefebvre in his text *Critique of Everyday Life*) lunch machine was a powerful symbolic representation of the dehumanizing effects of industrialization and the mechanization of labor. In this iconic scene, Chaplin's character, (the Tramp), was employed as a factory worker on an assembly line. Opposite him was a contraption known as *the Lunch Machine*, an ingenious creation featuring a complex network of mechanical arms, conveyor belts, and neatly arranged compartments, akin to the automatic pecking of seeds by industrious hens.

As one would easily observe, the lunch machine's primary aim was to optimize efficiency and productivity by abbreviating the lunch break necessity for laborers,

exemplified by the Tramp (to pause for breaks or mealtime intermissions). In other words, laborers were expected to consume their food in a robotic, mechanical fashion while continuing to perform their assigned tasks. Metaphorically speaking, Chaplin used the lunch machine as a satirical device to critique the robotization and loss of self-preservation or agency experienced by proletarians under capitalism. Meanwhile, while dining at the TTF canteen and observing the workers, I could not avoid noticing the striking similarity to Chaplin's lunch machine scene. The canteen in general, operated on a strict schedule, with little time for workers to consume their meals in a rapid manner, much like the lunch machine aimed to streamline the eating process. The workers lined up, shuffled along, put dishes onto their trays, and lastly, found their seats. However, after reconsidering UBC2's statements, I similarly noticed that some people like UBC3, whom I met in the factory canteen, bucked the trend by bringing their lunch from home, such as *samsa* (a traditional Uzbek pastry filled with savory ingredients like minced meat and vegetables), to consume and share with others. From a Lefebvrian perspective, these moments of solidarity transformed the canteen from a purely functional-programmed space to a site of symbolic resistance.

Similarly, as articulated by UBC3 in a private meeting outside the canteen area, eating one's preferred food could also be considered as a brief moment of liberation from the standardized routines or a temporal break away from the hierarchical codes imposed by spatial experts. Through this act, he said, people like UBC3 reclaimed a sense of control over their own nourishment and disrupted the factory-imposed uniformity. As he was about to share more insights about himself, I decided to conduct a brief interview with him in the factory area and requested to record his last reflections in my field notebook. At first, he hesitated and perhaps felt cautious about delving further into his personal experiences and opinions about the changing socio-political landscape of his country. However, after a moment of contemplation and learning about my scholarly pursuits, he accepted my interview offer and directed me to a quiet corner of the manufacturing area, away from the prying eyes and ears of his colleagues. "Actually, I usually do not talk about myself with strangers," he began. "In my world, unchecked words that spill too quickly bring a lot of trouble. But I understand the importance of your work, and I will make an exception for you". UBC3 then gathered his thoughts and shared the following information:

> *"As you might expect, I feel anxious and nostalgic. Although I partially like my job at TTF, I believe, life was much more guaranteed back then. Unlike today's social troubles, Muscovites were providing us the best available technology, and we Uzbeks didn't disappoint them by working more and more for the common good. We practically met all the cotton and agri-produce needs of the Soviet machine. We were grateful to them and vice versa. Communism at its finest, let's say. Then the privatization came and wiped it all out. Akin to COVID-19, which killed many people in one fell swoop, the viral capitalist system wiped out our beloved Union in 1991, as quick as greased lightning. That's why, most of us, members of the Soviet generation, now prefer to refer to the year the Union collapsed as COVID-91. But unlike them, I perceive privatization and liberalization more like a vampire's bite. It's like it's sucked away the essence of our once-shared Soviet spirit. Our village, which used to be a source of communal pride, now also belongs to a strange host of characters like the owners of TTF, and we're left navigating the shadows they've cast and taking the backseat. The factory similarly brought up new antagonistic rhythms—the 24-hour work grind became a new reality for many. Meaning that, under the TTF's "early bird gets the worm" agenda, technical people like myself in machine ops are now feeling pressured to take on multi-machine-related tasks in our time off to obtain additional payments. Meanwhile, those without technical skills feel compelled to take on part-time, labor-intensive agri-jobs to live like a human. This situation, my son, is definitely taking a toll on our physical and mental well-being. Because, compared to younger peers who know new tech stuff better, we, elders and unskilled pals now feel that we are lagging behind in a never-ending race with full of rivalry.*" **Name: UBC3, Age: 60, Years Employed at TTF: 14, Area of Specialization: Machine Operations, Gender: Male**, **Date of the Interview: 05.07.2022**

As argued by UBC3, life during the Uzbek SSR for the Soviet-type workers resembled a proletarian arcadia, with Uzbek laborers like UBC3 cultivating around two-thirds of the Union's entire cotton in their fields. In addition to this, even though Uzbek agriculture was well-acclaimed for other high-quality edible agricultural cash crops like grapes and apples, it was the "*aq oltin*" (white gold or cotton) that outshined everything else. As autumn arrived and the cotton season commenced, workers from *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* dispersed in groups throughout arable lands to fulfill their duties. Thanks to the existence of their Soviet Machinery, they were able to cultivate the best cotton yields in the Transoxiana Region for decades.

As a direct result of this situation, Uzbek experts immediately initiated the industrialization program of Uzbekistan as the production of cotton necessitated the use of chemical fertilizers, including phosphatic, nitrogenous, and potassic ones, to

raise more and more everlasting crops. Thanks to the consecutive five-year plans, led by the Muscovite nomenclatures, the country made significant progress. Everything about the cotton and vegetable industry was arranged according to the latest engineering standards. Life standards were improved, people became educated, and the spirit of camaraderie was everywhere. Speaking in Thompsonesque terms, all the Soviet people then became General Ludds or the captains of their own destiny.

Then capitalism came to town and commencing with Tashkent, it spread throughout the country like a disease akin to COVID-19 (which UBC3 intentionally denominated as COVID 91, referring to the collapse year of the Union). With the creation of the TTF, everything also became rationally planned. The mood became competitive as people from all sorts of backgrounds were now trying to get things done to receive promotions or additional payments, and upper middle-age technical workers like UBC3 began to took the backseat in society.

As the days, weeks and months go by people like UBC3 were also disenchanted by the hollow and soul-crushing nature of their everyday life (as UBC3 used a metaphor and likened it to "a vampire's bite") under the hegemony of privatization. The labor-intensive job they once saw as full of potential was now increasingly transformed into a one-dimensional grind in which workers perceive themselves as rivals rather than allies, lacking any purpose or excitement. Every passing day, the capitalist organization of workspaces, in UBC3's words, brought more alienation, gradually eroding the revolutionary spirit of the working-class people. However, the eradication of Soviet values did not end here; as argued by him, some of his colleagues enrolled in part-time agri tasks to accumulate more money and re-engage with their agrarian roots.

Taking on multiple tasks also started to deteriorate their mental well-being as most TTF workers were now unable to find respite in their free time. This made it difficult for them to perform their factory work efficiently. To make matters worse, new regulations mandated by white-collar individuals simultaneously added additional burdens on the workers' (i.e., machine operators) backs. They (the machine operators) were now required to handle more than one machine at the same time

whenever possible. People like UBC3 found it difficult and perilous because they lacked the know-how how to operate high-tech stuff like TTFs akin to a multitask engineer (who are mentioned by UBC3 as young peers). I also observed some others expressing their frustration with the management for not providing essential facilities such as adequate personnel, sufficient tooling and fixtures, speedy services from auxiliary workers in case of emergency, and other things necessary to keep things running smoothly. What is more, under the factory's "*early bird gets the worm*" system, workers (machine operators) strived to earn more money and promotion by completing tasks quickly. This created a competitive atmosphere where everyone was dependent on each other and followed certain rules set by the foreman. UBC3 also explained this situation in detail by providing the following reflections:

> *"In our already-mentioned "early-bird gets the worm" system, the head foreman's decisions have a significant impact on the potential promotions on us, machine operators. This engenders so many problems. Instead of promoting teamwork, it fosters feelings of suspicion and envy. We, even me, become concerned about whether our colleagues are earning more money than us, whether their monthly wages are increasing at a faster rate than ours, and whether they are consistently getting the juicier profitable premiums and other accolades."* **Name: UBC3, Age: 60, Years Employed at TTF: 14, Area of Specialization: Machine Operations, Gender: Male**, **Date of the Interview: 05.07.2022**

Besides the aforementioned factors, there were other areas of competition. In an environment where seizing opportunities was crucial for survival and such opportunities were limited, seasoned operators fiercely guarded their accumulated expertise (or know-how). For example, when new operators join the shop floor, they undergo a learning phase under the guidance of the mentioned seasoned senior operators who manage similar machines. If the newcomer was willing to collaborate with the mentor by increasing the production rate to boost the mentor's earnings, they might have the chance to acquire valuable knowledge from these experts. Essentially, the novice operator must either closely observe their more experienced peers or engage in a reciprocal exchange with them by providing them gifts or favors to extract knowledge. After passing these steps, if the worker were lucky enough to learn the handling and configuration of the machine operating business in a well-rounded manner, they would find themselves left to their own devices. Afterwards,

competing with the auxiliary workers for scarce resources unearthed itself as another challenge to overcome.

From then on, he was dependent on these people (auxiliary workers) while at the same time harboring hostile feelings toward them due to imbalances in the payment structure. Speaking in Burawoyesque terms, the logic behind this act of resentment was simple: the operators, as technical blue-collar individuals, paid better; in case of failure in promotion time lost was money lost; the auxiliary workers (as the members of the semi-technical blue-collar group of people) paid meagre salaries even if they became the employee of the month; time lost was the effort saved. In the avenue of these debates, it did not take long for UBC3 to completely figure out the *cul-de-sac* situation he was in. He found himself in a fierce quarrel with the younger auxiliary worker who set the adjustments for machine operations. As far as I observed, this person kept distracting UBC3 with pointless tasks, causing UBC3 to waste valuable time as he tried to race against the clock to earn more money and promotion. To put it differently, what was a loss for UBC3 was a psychological gain for the auxiliary worker. What has been said so far might be associated with the fact that both sides were part of an obnoxious system that drained people's spirit of solidarity for decades. As also elucidated by UBC3:

> *"Look, these auxiliaries are just not here to make life easier for you; they are like parasites. Attempting to cut corners. Still, I am trying to stick to my work and my very own Soviet values. But it is not my cup of tea with these cunning people. If they choose to play dirty, I will respond by improving my own skills in this business. I will work hard to catch the attention of the inspector, who is a man of quality, and maybe earn a promotion in a white-collar position. If that happens, I will then work towards eliminating everyone who is causing harm to the team spirit in this factory. The chances are slim but not impossible."* **Name: UBC3, Age: 60, Years Employed at TTF: 14, Area of Specialization: Machine Operations Gender: Male**, **Date of the Interview: 05.07.2022**

As regards UBC3's final statements, the aforementioned inspectors were (in contrast to auxiliaries), on the one hand, seen by blue-collar people like UBC3 as the prime examples of discerning "*men of quality*." They were responsible for evaluating workers' performances and had the authority to promote them based on their

productivity, much like the factory manager. On the other hand, individuals like UBC3 then became the epitome of "*men of quantity*," where the entirety of their being and their future promotion at TTF was based on the amount of good work and output they generated. Therefore, within the dynamics of the class structure in the factory, class relations predominantly hinged on the interaction between individuals embodying characteristics of quality and those possessing characteristics of quantity.

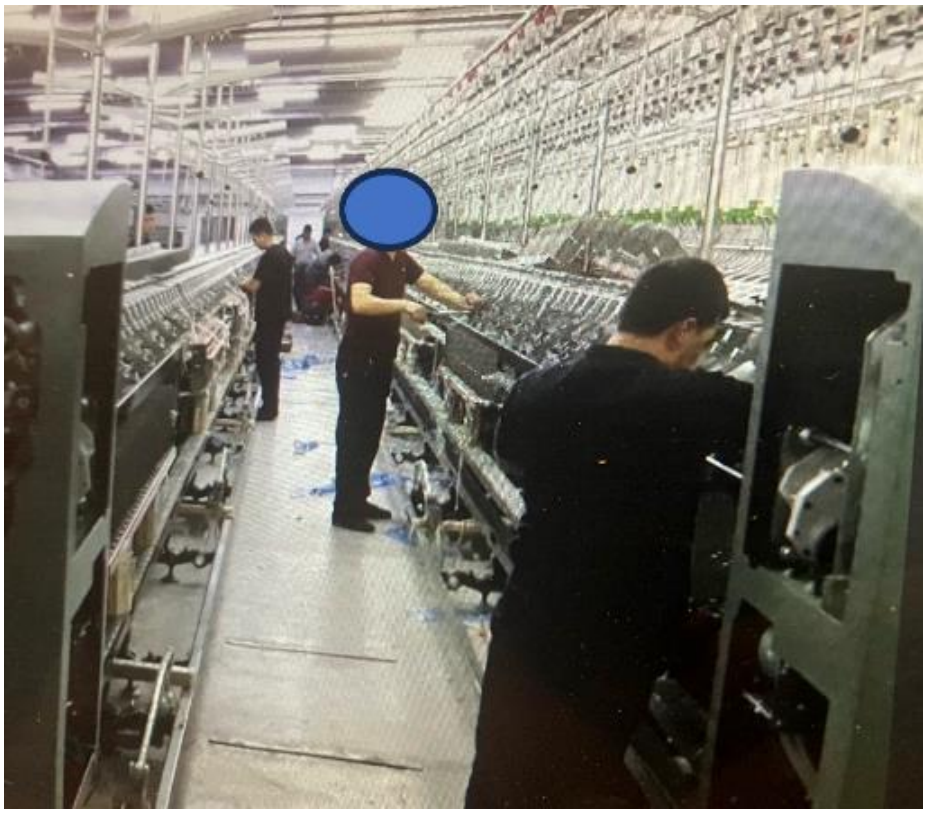

Figure 24. UBC3 in Action Trying to Learn the Inner Workings of The Newly Acquired Textile Machinery with His Colleagues

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız, (Date: 05.07.2022)*

4.2.1. Beyond The Factory and Within the Village Area

Within this framework and apart from the aforementioned observations, individuals in white-collar roles like myself, who occupied a position neither among the blue-collar workers nor the managerial echelon, functioned as emissaries of the company. Our responsibilities included enforcing regulations, keeping records, and facilitating communication between the management and blue-collar people. While employed at

TTF, my position in the HR department also allowed me to cultivate personal ties with factory workers like UBC3, who were also residing in the Paxtayurt. As a result of these connections, I was granted the opportunity to integrate myself into the community extant in the village and went beyond the factory confines to meet up with ULP1 (a close-knit cousin of UBC3 and a respected member of Paxtayurt community). As we got together in front of the courtyard of his house on a Friday morning, ULP1 immediately offered us some refreshments and subsequently uttered the following answers to my interview questions:

> *"Back then in Uzbek SSR, even in the Mustaqillik times, everything had been compact, neat, and collective. For instance, in our village, you basically had a job to do and a role to play in order to guarantee the sustenance of the state and that was it. But, hey, akin to yesteryears, we, the Soviet generation, still guard the USSR principles in our own homes, maintain discipline in our own boundaries, and we still ensure food security for places like Tashkent. We also have these things called "mahallas" in which we share our joys, our sorrows, and our secrets. Apart from these, your age, your family and gender all play a part in where you fit in within the confines of Paxtayurt, our home. We help each other out, regardless of whether we're blood relatives or not. And when it comes to showing off possessions, well, we don't go around flaunting it. You won't see any extravagant mansions or fancy cars here. What's more, in terms of who holds the power, it's usually the well-off folks. They're the ones who hire people, influence decisions, and have access to resources, the rest of us don't. They also live in relatively prettier houses with ornate doors, while the poor make do with simple wooden ones. It represents the "haves" and "have-nots." But times, they, haves and have nots, I mean, are changing, especially with the younger generation. Boys are now being taught religious teachings or some sort of technical stuff while others stick to pastoral way of living. In brief, they try to get along through various side hustles and are slowly but steadily able to build up well-decorated gates for their homes. But as for your last question, I don't want to talk about TTF. Just because I don't want any trouble. Alas, I can only say that after privatization, things got complicated once Mirziyoyev came to power. Many full-time factory workers instantly turned to part-time farming just to survive, and in the process, shaking up the social structure we call ichtimo. But amidst all these changes, one thing has remained constant, our beautiful homes. They're not just shelters; they equally reflect who we are and represent our way of life. As you might have observed, most of us have four-roomed homes with gardens where we grow our own food. It's how we've always done things around here, and it's what keeps us going, day after day. In there, we also share stories and generally eat from the same pot with family members, whether we're having breakfast or not. To put it in a nutshell, we frequently get together and make decisions. It's all about decisions, son; with privatization, we, the villagers now have to work more, think more, decide more, and strategize for ourselves more amidst the winds of change. We've even got this saying, "The wind doesn't touch the villager's chest." It means we often have to face challenges without respite. Still, against all the odds, I'm proud of myself, my family and my agrarian roots. That's all for now. Follow my lead now and I'll show you what Paxtayurt got.*" (**Name: ULP1, Age: 60, Years Employed at TTF: 0, Area of Specialization: Dehqon (Private Farmer), Gender: Male, Date of the Interview: 08.07.2022)**

As ULP1 articulated, the village has always been one of the most important social units in post-Soviet societies for producing edible items and guaranteeing the food security of metropolitan areas like Tashkent. Across many Turkic states, including a considerable portion of rural Uzbekistan, villages were self-contained social organisms set apart by borders and fenced land. Furthermore, walking from one village to another (in rural Tashkent) could take anywhere from 30 minutes to two hours or more. According to my observations, there existed three villages within a half-hour drive of Paxtayurt and another ten villages within an hour's walking distance (approximately 55 minutes). Each village, including Paxtayurt, was structured around distinct patrilineal and patrilocal households. Although multiple households might share a single block of accommodations (primarily built by blue-collar TTF workers), their physical and social boundaries remained distinct.

The Asia Minor (Anatolian) type of village households stand as the primary social units of rural Uzbekistan. With the exception of newly married women, every individual was required to belong to a single village and household. In every village, the division into quarters or precincts, referred to as *mahallas*, is evident. These divisions possessed clear demarcations and were cooperative in nature. People expressed allegiance to these precincts and may discuss communal values, accomplishments within the village, and their respective *mahallas* (Abramson, 1998). Given the tendency for close neighbors to intermarry and the co-habitation of *agnates* (paternal relatives) and sometimes other close kin, these quarters often exhibited a degree of kinship unity. Close neighbors, regardless of kin or not, frequently formed informal groups for leisure activities and conversations. In addition to these factors, an individual's stature within the network of interpersonal relationships primarily hinged on evident attributes such as gender, age, kinship, occupation, and wealth. To a lesser extent, piety and education, personal honor, and, for men, the scope and potency of their urban connections also contributed to one's position in this antediluvian network.

In contrast to the Soviet Socialist Republic era, Paxtayurters (similar to other Islamic communities in Transoxiana) now tended to place more emphasis on gender roles and the division of employment. As also argued by Marianne Kamp (2006), there

was noticeable gender segregation in most daily activities apart from manual labor in fields and factories. While not a prerequisite determinant for formal groups, age commanded respect and authority. Family ties constituted the most intimate and intense form of social relationships (Roche, 2017).

According to several local people I spoke with, particularly ULP1, close familial relationships amongst males represented the pillars of lineage groupings. Bonds between households were also bolstered by non-blood family ties, promoting exchanges and influencing matrimony traditions and new family relationships. When discussing wealth, people usually avoided bragging about their possessions or flaunting their economic capital to those who came from less affluent backgrounds. Aside from the ornamental features on the gates of dwellings, there were little outwardly evident signs of wealth. No households permanently relied on rent, but some elderly men received support from their sons, daughters and sisters. Similar to Turkish villages in the Black Sea Region, wealthy households lived comfortably, while the poor lacked clothing and edible items (Beller-Hann & Hann, 2001). While differences in wealth may not be prominently discernible in lifestyles, they held social significance.

Affluent notables of the village were in positions of power, could hire and influence others in the community through gifts and loans, and had access to resources. After the *Yangi* Uzbekistan mindset was established, boys were taught religious doctrine; some went on to become village *imams*, while others continued to live devoutly and learned farming lifestyles. Beyond highly technical positions (like those at TTF or those in the service sector work), professions played a salient role in the social structure, and there was no rigid occupationally-based social groups amongst the locals within the village domains as was prevalent in the factory. As also argued by ULP1, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the blue-collar factory workers (around 650-700 people) who used to work full-time at TTF decided to participate in part-time agricultural tasks by selling their produce on the roadsides to make extra income throughout the year. Their decision has altered the existing social structure and made me re-think about the current condition of class relations in the village (see the last part of the findings section titled "*the Remaking of Working Class in Paxtayurt*")

Apart from these macro changes, in the year 2022, ULP1 also argued that Uzbek homes as mirrors reflecting the cultural norms and daily practices mutated a lot. By studying Uzbek household dynamics in a detailed manner, he stated one can understand the rifts and shifts in distinct roles fulfilled by those residing in Paxtayurt and the changing sociology of Central Asia. For instance, here (in our case, ULP1's house, as a microcosm of Uzbek houses), after the collapse of the Union, the head of the dwelling (ULP1) now had the most authority and decision-making power, while the wife takes on a subordinate position and manages the domestic chores.

The interviewee in question, ULP1, also said (during our off the record conversations) that most people in Uzbek rural communities (including him and his wife) possessed a modest complex with two buildings and a garden area of roughly 1000 m^2 to make ends meet. In order to feed their families, these gardens were reserved for growing a wide variety of fruits, nuts, vegetables, and herbs. Families with three or more kids were also able to find enough space in these houses to breed livestock and then able to obtain economic independence by getting involved in animal husbandry. Architecturally speaking, most homes in the Paxtayurt community, as it is shown in the image below, featured corrugated metal gable roofs.

Figure 25. ULP1's House as a Representative of Typical Enclosed Uzbek Household

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 08.07.2022)*

In these enclosed compounds like ULP1's, family elders often resided on the opposite side, while the youngest son and his family typically inhabited his father's household for an extended period.[74] This arrangement was rooted in the traditional gerontocratic system, where older family members held elevated status and were deemed deserving of respect, obedience, and care (Stirling, 1965). Concurrently, despite some variations in layout, size, and decor, the majority of houses were modestly built using a cabin-like construction technique. Locally sourced mud formed the basis for all bricks, while poplar trees growing in the area provided the primary source of wood. Another common building material was straw, which, when mixed with mud, created a robust adobe for construction.

Although most floors were earthen, some incorporated a layer of concrete when available. Adobe brick houses offered the advantage of decent insulation throughout most of the year, except during periods of extreme heat or cold. The residents in this area often applied whitewash to the walls of their homes as well as those dividing the adjacent compounds. Additionally, they preferred to paint metal entrance gates and wooden doors with light red, black, blue, or green primer. However, mud brick walls and wooden doors had a major disadvantage. In extreme weather conditions, they could be easily damaged or deteriorate over time. The summer was typically the time when residents refurbished their wooden doors.

It was also customary for wealthy people to adorn their homes with hand-carved wooden doors. Such ornate doors were mostly perceived as a latent indicator of a widening economic gap among Paxtayurters. According to ULP1, this pattern was present in all villages across Uzbekistan. Below is a field photograph illustrating and demonstrating the differing income levels between households that were situated next to ULP1's house. The photo displays two adjacent houses, one with a simple wooden door and the other with an elaborately carved hardwood door. According to ULP1, this contrast was a visual representation of the income gap, which highlighted the disparity between the haves and have-nots of those in the village community.

[74] In these respects, it could easily be argued that, the family units in Uzbekistan acted out as a welfare provider or a life-insurance unit to the elder generations.

Figure 26. Contrasting Doors in Paxtayurt: Ornately Carved Hardwood versus Simple Wood

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 08.07.2022)*

After completing my investigation about the spatial design of the ordinary Uzbek houses, ULP1 invited me to his home as his guest. Upon entering the house, I have made the following observations: the interior design of Paxtayurt's dwellings, typically consisted of no more than four rooms, unless modifications had been made to accommodate married children. The largest and most important room in the house was known as the *mehmonkhona*, which served as the living room or guest room. This space was where the best quilts and pillows are kept, along with a television or music system. Although it was not necessarily where overnight guests stay, it was where Uzbeks typically entertained their guests like myself, especially during inner-chamber gatherings, weddings and other social rituals. The other rooms were generally used for sleeping, and there was typically no concept of a master bedroom. The kitchen or hearth area was generally built into the house with a separate entrance, which led into a food-storage pantry. However, as men age, they may build a room for themselves. Bedrooms were usually similar in size, as there was no separation of children's rooms or parents' rooms. Mothers and young children typically slept in one room, while fathers slept in a private one.

During breakfast (known as *nonushta*, signifying the breaking of, or sharing of bread), the practice of gender segregation was generally not observed, especially if the majority of the family were soon departing for work or school. During this

mealtime, women oversaw preparations and any necessary cooking for breakfast, but the entire family ate together swiftly. The Uzbek way of having breakfast typically constituted a simple and minimal nature.

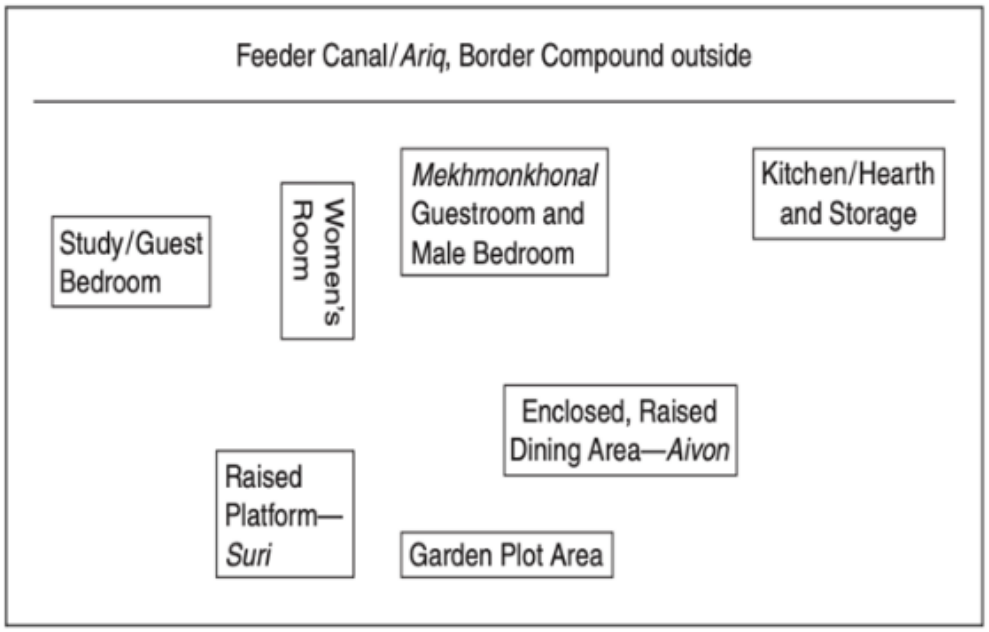

Figure 27. Spatial Designation of a Regular Rural Uzbek Household

Source: *Zanca R. "Life in a Muslim Uzbek Village: Cotton Farming After Communism, (2011): 25"*

The main staples were bread and tea, often accompanied by a handful of walnuts and raisins. Occasionally, more substantial offerings included clusters of grapes (primarily during the summer and fall), as well as honey, cups of boiled milk, or cold cream. Certainly, similar to households in other agricultural settings, the morning routines of different individuals varied within the home. School-aged children, those with jobs in nearby towns, and field workers did not all commence eating or leaving the breakfast table simultaneously. Nevertheless, a congenial breakfast was enjoyed by the entire household. As these individuals assembled, coexisted, and deliberated jointly, we can draw the following conclusions: Navigating through post-independent Uzbekistan was not an individual endeavor. It constituted a strategy of the family or household, where resources were shared and decisions were made collectively.

An Uzbek household, like ULP1's, thus served as a unit for production, consumption, and reproduction, existing within a shared physical space where

multiple generations cohabited. In the post-independence era, this social entity has grown increasingly pivotal. While it held significance during the Soviet period as well, certain facets gained prominence and visibility alongside the emergence of new responsibilities. Moreover, gender and generational roles have undergone redefinition as per the demands of the post-independence era. To illustrate the financial arrangements within a shared courtyard, the phrase "eating from the same pot" was equally articulated. For some, sharing from a single pot was practical and essential, while it had always been the cultural norm for others. Conversely, some found it burdensome due to the increased number of mouths to feed.

Figure 28. A Scene of Raw Food Being Cooked in a Pot

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 08.07.2022)*

After making these observations, ULP1 finally introduced me to his neighbor, ULP2, who was sitting on a wooden chair in his neatly tended private plot. With a courteous nod, ULP1 thereafter took his leave and I turned my attention to ULP2. *Prima facie*, his (ULP2's) garden, much like ULP1's was meticulously organized, with rows of cash crops (homegrown fruits) standing in perfect alignment as might expected from a former collective farmer. As soon as I began to settle in near to him, ULP2 graciously offered me an assortment of these cash crops (ranging from apples to figs)

to consume. Later on, our interview began, and ULP2 spoke with palpable enthusiasm about the Paxtayurt community. He vividly recounted evocative anecdotes of his life on the land, painting a picture of both the challenges and rewards of a pastoral life tied closely to the cycles of planting and harvesting. Yet, when the discussion turned to the collapse of the USSR, his emotions surfaced, and he began to weep openly. After offering him a moment of consolation and allowing him time to collect himself, ULP2 shared the following reflections:

> *"Privatization and capitalism in Uzbekistan, it's like facing a storm we can't control in an ages-old paradise. Our village, it's also like a stage, and us villagers, well, we're the actors, living out our destinies what is written for us by external forces. Nevertheless, in plain words, at the end of the day, most of us were born right here, and Paxtayurt still gives us everything we need. We have a commitment to this place. We rely on each other, and whenever we lend a hand, it's like heaven. But in case we don't, it's a whole different story – then it would become more like Hell. Still, it's a fantastic place, my friend. Even folks who work far away can't help but boast about our village while talking with outsiders. And when we chat with friendly faces like yours, it makes it even more special. As you can see, we've got the best teahouses, the finest water, the finest ariqs, the beautiful climate - nobody can beat us. Other lousy villages don't have these sorts of amenities. And that's why we've got to protect our village from any outside threats, especially after all this privatization talk. But, you know, commencing with the establishment of this whole TTF thing; nobody wants to talk about privatization business any more, not even a whisper. It's even got me feeling uneasy, like we're being watched all the time. Still, I can only tell you that many people these days, all they seem to care about is money, and ever since the TTF showed up, it's like they're obsessed with it. Back in the day, life had meaning, you know? We had dreams, we had goals. We'd hang out in the gardens, sipping on Kok Chay with our buddies in the kolkhozes. And most of the time, it didn't cost a thing. That's because that's what friendship was all about. But now? If you want to have any fun, you've got to haul yourself back to township and fork over some serious cash. But hey, don't let it get you down. We still hold onto our traditions, especially during "Navroz" and Hayit holidays. We cook up sumalak, and the ladies get together for "gap" meetings, talking weddings and lending a hand to those in need. Establishing close-knit networks is therefore like a spider's web, keeps us all connected. Helps keep our gerontocratic spirits high, you know. And weddings, it's another important story. They're a big deal around here to tie the knot early and to climb the social ladder. It's like a business deal, really. With all this pressure, younger folks now feel they have to push it harder just to get ahead by finding the ideal partner. They're chasing that dream of marrying into success and grabbing all the perks that come with it. Kin marriages, which are bad, are pretty common as well. To put it briefly, it's very nasty and derogatory to survive under capitalism. And I don't give a darn how strong you are. Life*

> *hits hard here. But it isn't about how hard you hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and move forward. That's how one wins in the Uzbek way of privatization.* **Name: ULP2, Age: 71, Years Employed at TTF: 0, Area of Specialization: Dehqon, (Private Farmer), Gender: Male, Date of the Interview: 08.07.2022)**

As elucidated by UP2, the social bonds between Paxtayurters and their commitment to the village was unique. In this intricately co-dependent community, everybody had multifaceted roles to play, which were not manifestly defined. Birth and marriage commitments, as well as many other ties correlated with labor or monetary issues, anchored them. Moreover, similar to their post-Soviet counterparts, there was no administrative or geographical unit more significant that could genuinely compare in terms of this sense of belonging than a village. Correspondingly, government officials, or those working outside of their villages, often formed friendships and social groups based on their shared place of origin.

The indigenous virtues of Paxtayurt thus were a recurring topic of discussion or a subject of bragging while talking with outsiders. In this respect, every local villager asserted that Paxtayurt had the finest quality of people, or possessed the ideal climatic conditions to live. On the other hand, the residents of neighboring villages were often described as lazy, and unfriendly. Beyond these aspects, Paxtayurt Village (like the other Uzbek Villages) governed a territory officially recognized by the Uzbek state as its administrative domain, whereas it enjoyed *de facto* pasture rights of this territory. Although villagers did not own the land (as everything belongs to the state), the village territory denoted more than just administrative boundaries. As stated ULP2 it could be considered as a potent symbol of social identity.

During Czarist times and before the omnipresent Soviet influence in Paxtayurt, if any neighboring village attempted to commandeer land located within another village's confines, the inhabitants of that village would instantly mobilize, and fight with the invaders to defend their honor with firearms if deemed mandatory. Mobilization of this nature was no longer witnessed amongst Paxtayurt residents. Nevertheless, it was evident all village members were expected to safeguard their village peacefully, regardless of the internal disagreements constantly fragmenting them. In addition to

these statements, village populations are remarkably stable and homogenous. With the exception of the newcomer Russians or seasonal agri-workers, part-time blue-collar workers in the factory, and part-time urbanite white-collar administrators dwelling at TTF, nearly all men and over half of the adult women in the village were born there (TTFR: 2023: 22) If we could quantify the strength of social bonds in terms of emotional depth, number of reciprocal obligations, and frequency of interaction, we would observe that all residents, other than recently married women, who were considered newcomer outsiders, cultivate their most profound social connections within the village.

Naturally, numerous essential economic and social interactions occurred outside the village, but these lack the depth as those in Paxtayurt. Despite this communal essence, Paxtayurt Village lacked a centralized meeting place for discussions and gatherings due to the dissolution of the collective farm areas where people used to pile up and engage in collective verbal interactions. Such interactions took place in front of houses or within courtyards. The mosque primarily served as a place of prayer or chaykhanas (unlike the afore-mentioned Soviet-type red chaykhanas) as a place to have a tea break rather than a communal gathering spot. The absence of a communal public well, which used to be in effect during SSR times, also posed particular challenges. As a result, children took water from *ariqs* (which were mentioned by ULP2 during the interview), small irrigation canals that run through or along the upper part of the village, accessible from various points. These *ariqs* not only fulfilled household water requirements but also served as a refreshing source for children during scorching summer months.

Figure 29. Three Ariq Types of Paxtayurt

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date 08.07.2022)*

Typically, social gatherings of significance were also held in the neighboring former *kolkhoz* space, and like every other village had its own collective/mutual property for these occasions. Kitchen equipment, seating (chairs, tables, benches) were all examples of this. If not readily available, these items may be borrowed from nearby settlements in exchange for similar services. Paxtayurt villagers often utilized tables, seats, and chairs as well as large kettles stored in the basement of the local mosque for various festivities. Occasionally, one of the trusted locals offered help to care for the common grounds. As far as I have observed, wealthy individuals also pooled their resources to replace worn-out or damaged furnishings. Even though the village is a social unit, it also made it hard for migrated people to interact with each other because most of the female villagers who were married with males living in mountainous areas were relocated outside of the Paxtayurt property. Although all these people were invited to social events, the distance between plain area and the outskirts might be too great, the adverse weather conditions sometimes hindered the ideal circumstances for the return trip. Only on peculiar occasions, did people go to either the *tuman* (known as head-district), or the capital of Tashkent. On some occasions, certain families with adequate incomes (people who are employed at TTF) also travelled to the capital to do some sightseeing, shopping and dine at a restaurant serving local dishes like *shashlik* or *kaynatma*. This particularly applied for younger members of the Paxtayurt community. Moreover, members of *Komsomol*[75], (i.e., the older generation that lived under Soviet rule) had far more opportunities to participate in activities of this nature than the current generation that came of age in the post-*Mustaqillik* era.

Additional reasons for visiting the capital included seeing distant family members or attending funerals. Unlike in the mountainous villages of Uzbekistan, where villages were separated by dirt roads, the main highway made getting around much simpler. Minibuses (also known as microbuses), which ran frequently between the suburbs of Tashkent, provided another mode of transportation. In short, mobility strategies were modified in response to evolving conditions. When it came to talk about other strategies employed during life changing events and communal activities dating back

[75] *Komsomol* was the Communist Party's youth organization for those aged 14 and over, after completing the earlier Pioneer stage for those aged 10-14 (Tirado, (1993), Tirado, (1996)).

to the USSR, it is important to provide the following: While arranging one's wedding or preparing *sumalak* (an Uzbek dessert) for festivals like Navroz, the women of Paxtayurt gathered and brainstormed with each other at what is called *gap meeting*. As argued by Sancak (2012), gap denoted both 'word' and to 'speak'. In addition to being a casual meeting, these gap meetings also functioned as a rotating savings association. Social bonds were fortified at these meetings, and assistance for potential aid may be requested (Kandiyoti, 2004). Furthermore, *tois* (i.e., feasts), *hashars* (voluntary work) and *hayits* (religious holidays) were other important social gatherings that bear immense cultural and social significance.

Uzbekistan observed two major *hayit* holidays: *Ramazon* and *Qurbon* (Adams, 2010). While the degree to which Uzbeks observed *Ramazon* or *Qurbon* varies, many people showed an interest on these events after the ban on these events was lifted by the post-Soviet governments (Ashirov & Hatunoğlu, 2015). It was also a time when a newly married daughter-in-law invited her family over to showcase how well her husband's family was providing for her. As far as I have deduced, marriages were also a symbol of prestige and could be considered as a mercantile pact between two parties (bride and groom), like a business partnership to bolster one's economic condition. Consanguineous marriages were equally favored, not only because they retained wealth within the family, but for a multitude of reasons. Several of these reasons gained even more significance after independence. As ULP2 stated in a critical tone, people marry close relatives in order to accumulate more money and bolster cooperation with each other in these ambiguous times.

After negotiations were finalized, preparations for marriage procedures got underway. Typically, these events occurred during the summer when there was a break from labor-intensive agricultural work. With some of the most demanding months behind them and others approaching, the initial two months of summer were deemed the optimal time for organizing celebrations. Choosing the summer season for these events was also influenced by the weather. The warm climate, reduced rainfall, longer daylight hours, and the availability of ripe fruit contributed to the decision. Moreover, the favorable weather allowed gatherings to be held outdoors, where rows of tables and chairs were set up. These tables were stacked with an array

of fresh and dried fruits, Uzbek wine, vodka as well as soft drinks. Meals were served sequentially, starting with soup and ending with *pilaf*.

Figure 30. An Image of a Dinner Table from an Expensive Wedding Toi

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 10.07.2022)*

The outlay of food and beverages depended on the family's financial situation. As previously stated, weddings were a costly affair, often requiring families to save resources for several years. Given the average salary range of $150 - $1500 (or even a lack of regular income), meeting these costs was a daunting task. Weddings were the most financially demanding festivities, but a *sunnet toi* (circumcision party) of an affluent family could also be costly. Throughout the wedding festivities, various traditions and customs were observed. For instance, the groom customarily presented a dowry, known as *kalym*, to the bride's family.[76] Following the wedding, people often gossip about every aspect of the event, including organizational shortcomings and the role of the host. Details such as the quantity of meat in *pilaf*, the number of wine or vodka bottles on the table, waiting times for service, portion sizes, and other beverage availability were all topics of conversation. While relatively uncommon,

[76] This is typically a sum of money or valuable items that the groom pays to the bride's family as a sign of respect and to show that he can support the bride financially (Kandiyoti & Azimova, 2004: 329).

some wedding celebrations also occur during winter. This is usually due to last-minute marriage arrangements or financial constraints. Financially strapped families were also compelled to postpone or reschedule already-planned events. Even if they were relatives, convincing a girl's family could be a more time-consuming and energy-intensive process for financially disadvantaged families. Wealthier families typically encounter fewer such hurdles.

As a direct consequence of this situation, many ordinary individuals, such as those who work full-time blue-collar jobs at TTF, felt the need to work additional jobs to become wealthy.

This was because they hoped to marry their ideal partner and gain access to the many opportunities that were only available to the privileged few. With these in mind and subsequent to his (ULP2's) provision of a detailed panorama about how ordinary people managed to make ends meet in the era of privatization, ULP2 thereafter introduced me to a part-time private farmer, part-time *dehqon* bazaar vendor (ULP3) who used to work in the *mahalla* committee during Soviet times up until the year 2015. Thanks to this liaison, I was able to gain a full understanding of how the *mahalla* system functioned in Uzbekistan, as well as observed everyday life in the bazaar area. Due to ULP3's fructuous connections, I was equally able to record the daily activities of the people whom I labeled as the *gray collar* ones. Still, despite his valuable insights and salient contributions to this study, ULP3 chose not to provide any personal info about himself. Upon reaching an agreement on protecting his confidentiality with utmost care and courtesy, ULP3 then shared the following insights for my interview questions:

> *"Look, under privatization, just as there are no ups, there are no downs either. There is just "every man for himself" within the deceptive game of capitalism. It is like a pungent dish that's served to us rural inhabitants as dessert. Still, amidst the frenzy of the privatization, Paxtayurt's mahalla units have always been present and serve as safe havens. It's not just a venue, but rather, a relief valve system of supports and community, kind of like a close-knit neighborhood but with some official roles thrown in. We've got local leaders with titles such as "rais", "katib", and "mahalla postpone", all working in unison to keep things running smoothly. But there's another side to it, too. It's the ideal space for the authorities to keep an eye on everyone,*

kind of like "Uncle Joe" Stalin, did while he was in power. Kids grow up under the watchful gaze of their aqsakal (village elders), learning the social codes and following the capitalist rules. And as for your second question, I can certainly share some insights with you as what TTF means to me and to our village community. As someone who's witnessed every mutation in this village firsthand, I can tell you that with the arrival of the TTF, things changed a lot and a lot of things have changed us. People are now expected to embrace new ways of living and working, even if it means bidding farewell to old habits. Despite this, the community still comes together for events like spring cleaning and friendly competitions with neighboring mahallas. Then go to shopping in the dehqon bazaar which is our space to both cooperate and compete. Now, let's shift gears a bit and talk about the bazaar area, where guys like me now sell their goods. As you'll notice, these places aren't just marketplaces like in the West; they're lifelines, especially since traveling to larger cities to shop can be a hassle. But navigating these bazaars isn't always safe and sound, so be cautious while wandering through the stalls. But most importantly, let me tell you something else that's happening these days. When you visit the surroundings of the bazaar, you'll notice groups of people involved in part-time vending along roadsides who also work full-time at the TTF. We call them '"those in between." They neither quite fit into the peasantry class like us nor factory employees. They're like chameleons, adapting to different roles and prefer to remain in the so-called liminal zone. While some of them may make decent money, it comes at a cost. They are harvesting the seeds of sorrow or despair. That's all you need to know. And now, it's time for me to introduce you to them at the "chaykhana" so you can make your own observations. But when you meet them, please avoid too many prying questions; they're a bit apprehensive about it, just like me. Anyways, thanks in advance. **Name: ULP3, Age: 73, Years Employed at TTF: 0, Area of Specialization: Dehqon (Private Farmer), Gender: Male, Date of the Interview: 11.07.2022**

As explicated by ULP3, since USSR times and amidst the turmoil of privatization *mahalla* has been defined as a social support network akin to a safe haven that governs public behavior as well as an institution proudly presented by Paxtayurters to others in order to show harmony, solidarity and friendship among its residents. Like in every Uzbek village, the administrative bodies of the *mahalla* were occupied by *tuman* authorities (as provincial authorities) together with *rais* (mahalla chief), *katib* (clerk) and *mahalla postpone*. In unison, they built-up the Paxtayurt *mahalla* committee. Beneath them were the *mahalla* elders named *mahalla aqsaqali* and street elders, *kucha aqsaqali*, the latter of which came to light in the Mustaqillik era, together with the *mahalla postpone* (who are like informants hanging and loitering around the village-council named *selsoviet*). Speaking in Weberian terms, the ideal type of *mahalla aqsakal* would have certain traits like wisdom, conscience and

having decent amount of social capital that would help facilitate his work in a flawless manner (Kavuncu, 2014).

He should also be someone the villagers admired because of his persuasive ability. His duties ranged from settling family disputes to organizing the cleaning up of public areas and directing wedding receptions. In case of failing to accomplish these tasks, he turned to the *selsoviet* (village council) for assistance. According to villagers who used to work in mahalla committee during USSR and Karimov times like ULP3, both Soviet and *Mustaqillik* governments appreciated *mahalla aqsakal* for enforcing the law and keeping the peace and order (*tertip* in the local vernacular) in Paxtayurt. Finally, based on the villagers' issues or desires, the *aqsakal* was the official who visited and spoke to the *tuman* (administrative center of Bostanliq district). For this reason, the *mahalla aqsakal* served as a mediator between communities and government officials.

His subordinate, the *kucha aqsakal*, did not always wield that sort of power. Aiding disadvantaged households with foodstuffs and other amenities like winter coal was their mutual obligation. By looking to these statements, we could make the following deductions: *Mahalla* played a major part in the Uzbek Government agenda before and after President Karimov's demise. Boards or murals with current president's image also included heavy emphasis on the significance of *mahalla* to Uzbek culture and village identity. Praising the *mahalla* as an ideal way of living, aphorisms denoting, "without the *mahalla*, a person is not a person," were written on the roadside billboards dominating the landscape. Moreover, 2022 was even designated the "Year of the *Mahalla*" by President Mirziyoyev. A field photograph of a "Year of Mahalla" billboard is provided below.

Given the below and from a Lefebvrian lens, *mahalla* could also be perceived as an extended arm of the state to exert panopticonesque authority over its citizens. In these spaces, children and adolescents were raised under the watchful eyes of their elders and expected to adhere to strict societal codes. The mahalla staff was also breathing the *Yangi* Uzbekistan's capitalistic values down people's neck, as ordinary people (particularly those who are in agrarian positions) were now latently enforced

to leave their traditional Soviet type lifestyles on the way to navigate themselves in a capitalist environment by becoming blue collar workers or the *gray collar* people at best (a concept proposed and discussed in the upcoming section).

Figure 31. Billboard at Paxtayurt Showing President Mirziyoyev and Promoting the 2022 Spirit of Mahalla Saying "The Year 2022, is the Year of a Well-Functioning Mahalla"

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız, (Date: 11.07.2022)*

Consequentially, class relations changed according to the ruling elites' very own interests. Despite this, a sense of camaraderie persisted within the mahallas. In the springtime, for example, the dwellers started to clean the canals, streets and flowers planted in front of houses. Contests were held within and between *mahallas* for the cleanest streets and most beautiful front gardens. Winners were awarded an extra budget by the state. Moreover, by lending others a helpful hand, people not only carried out their public service obligation but also fostered relationships and opened doors to further assistance. As ULP3 stated during our off-the-record conversations, "it is crucial to remember that reciprocity in *Mustaqillik* times entails being reasonable, pragmatic and realistic, rather than just giving favors out of love or kindness as it was during the SSR times". People now helped out one another because they anticipated assistance from others later on. This affected the class

consciousness of ordinary people in line with the indoctrinations of capitalist thinking. In line with these arguments, and considering the scholastic nature of this administrative entity, another field photo, a *mahalla* propaganda saying "*mahalla* is a school for peace and prosperity" is provided below.

Figure 32. Another Mahalla Propaganda Saying: Mahalla is a School for Peace and Serenity

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 11.07.2022)*

After providing these details (about the role of *mahalla* as a socially produced relief-valve-like space for the Paxtayurt community), it is now the time for this research to mention the everyday functioning of another vital capitalistic social solidarity unit of Paxtayurt named *dehqon bazaar* in which villagers like ULP3 sold their home-grown agri-produce (merchandise) during weekends. As per ULP3's articulations throughout the interview, these places, akin to Uzbek-type *mahallas*, have always acted like a lifeline in the livelihoods of the villagers. With the exception of Monday, these capitalist spaces (*dehqon* bazaars) in Uzbekistan were typically open for business every day of the week. During these designated market days, sellers and potential buyers were mobilized, recognizing that it may be the only nearby opportunity to acquire both necessities and luxuries for an entire week. From the

standpoint of the founding father of liberalism, Adam Smith, this was where individuals gathered to orchestrate monetary exchange under the latent guidance of an invisible hand that regulates the prices for commodities bought and sold (Zanca, 2011).

Marketplaces in large cities also operated six or seven days a week, but Paxtayurt citizens did not typically devote much time to searching for desired goods in the provincial capitals such as Gazalkent, or major cities like Tashkent, more than 80 km away to the west, as this distance is considered *light years away* and transportation could be difficult. Villagers may rarely make the trip to acquire electronic goods, motor vehicles, and a greater variety and quantity of imported items at lower prices than those available in regional stores. Typically, a villager would only visit such centers a few times a year. Within the domains of the officially established marketplaces (including the dehqon bazaars of Paxtayurt), which only covered a few hectares of land, there were distinct sections for various types of goods. These divisions aligned with the modest traditions of Central Asian history and the spartan (or minimalistic) spatial arrangements imposed by the former Soviet Government. In the avenue of these debates, I have additionally made the following observations:

The *dehqon bazaar* in Paxtayurt (akin to other Uzbek local peasant marketplaces) typically included sections for livestock, fruits and vegetables, dairy products, footwear, household items, confectionary, clothing, meat, cereals, animal feed, machinery spare parts, farm tools, and other goods. Upon entering this bustling environment, an outsider may initially feel disoriented, claustrophobic, and overwhelmed. However, as with Western supermarkets, it was not the stocked products that caused the panic attack feeling, but rather the confused and overwhelmed shoppers made people like myself anxious.

One confused shopper, for example, may believe he has purchased everything on his list, only to realize he forgot to buy sugar, beef, tea, or another item and must once again navigate through the crowds and give birth to a stampede. While there were other peculiar similarities between Uzbek bazaars and Western supermarkets, the analogy should not be taken too far.

Figure 33. Scenes From the Paxtayurt Dehqon Bazaar

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 12.07.2022)*

Due mostly in part to the limited space for buying and selling, as well as the post-Soviet economy of scarcity and the low purchasing power of the average Uzbek consumer, rural marketplaces in Uzbekistan were much more conflictual and haphazard than stores in the West. Additionally, bargaining and haggling were intense and fierce, with as many as 20 different vendors selling the exact same goods simultaneously. The phrase "buyer beware" was highly relevant and applicable in these bazaars, as there were typically no set prices for most transactions, and prices must satisfy the demands of both parties. In this flamboyant environment, the seller who cannot meet consumer demands was likely to fail. In the old Soviet system, however, little value was placed on the interests of the consumer.[77] Amidst the bustling crowds of the marketplace, the air was also filled with a blend of pungent aromas, including burning cottonseed oil, grilled meat, cattle and sheep dung, and the distinct smell of the *vermifuge harmela* (known as *isiriq* in Uzbek), an herb believed to possess cleansing and healing properties for both the body and spirit.

In the midst of all this sensory stimulation, men on bicycles and carts navigate through the throngs of shoppers, shouting, "Hey *Eke* (Brother)! Make Way!" Meanwhile, in one corner of the marketplace, vendors sold rice and negotiated prices based on their weight. Shoppers everywhere were also scrutinizing goods displayed at each stall. As put succinctly by UP3, "the search for the 'best' deal in the Uzbek

[77] Despite the fact that *kolkhozniks* sold goods, workers in state stores and shops in SSR times displayed little interest in whether or not people purchased their products since their salary was unaffected regardless of sales.

bazaar often involves comparing prices and products from multiple vendors selling similar goods." Customers similarly most of the time spent most their time wandering from stall to stall, in the parlance of locals, "examining the quality and prices of items, and engaging in intense bargaining with the vendors."

For many, finding the cheapest option was a matter of necessity due to one's limited purchasing power. Haggling also emerged as a way to stretch their budgets as far as possible. In the words of Zanca (2011), the bustling marketplace was full of activity as buyers and sellers engaged in a lively dance of negotiation and exchange. In the midst of frenzied shopping, refreshments could also be found in the form of teahouses or *shashlik* kebab stands situated in outdoor settings. While primarily frequented by men seeking respite, women accompanied by male relatives or their husbands may also enter these restful havens. Here, one can take a respite and savor a hot cup of tea while indulging in delicacies such as bread, noodle soups, pilaf, or succulent skewered mutton and beef. However, unlike their male counterparts who savored their tea breaks, most women tended to consume their meals quickly before resuming shopping or returning home to take care of household chores and prepare meals. As Sunday was the only day off for all former Soviet citizens, Uzbeks still regard it as such, unlike other Middle-Eastern societies in which Friday is the primary day of rest.

Figure 34. Paxtayurters Enjoying Their Meals at a Shashlik Stand Near the Bazaar Area

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 16.07.2022)*

After completing their visits to the *dehqon bazaars*, these people often congregated with friends at the nearby *chaykhana*. While these social gatherings in the vicinity of the marketplace were not formal functions, they were organized for the sake of both bolstering social capital and leisurely purposes. In there, I was also introduced to a dozen or so of the aforementioned *gray collar* people who were referred by ULP3 as 'those in between' in the English language. But I only had to chance to establish close connections with fourteen of them. Initially, they were leery of my presence, fearing I might gather information about their informal trade activities for the factory manager due to my HR work there. However, after talking open-heartedly with them and providing details about my life story, I was able to gain their trust. [78] Subsequently, they allowed me to observe their everyday routines after their shift at TTF and take photos for my ethnographic research. Yet, they objected to my interviewing them, which was understandable.[79]

Figure 35. Scene From a Male Socialization at Paxtayurt's Chaykhana

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 17.07.2022)*

[78] Trust is hard gained in close-knit societies like Uzbekistan, and I knew they had probably gathered substantial intelligence from local sources about my personal details well before I showed up. Luckily, I successfully managed to meet with them thanks to my liaisons in tow and unveil the existence of these gray-collar people.

[79] As far as I deduced, if their cover was officially blown, they would face financial penalties or permanent exclusion from employment at TTF for exerting extremely valuable energy in their agri-based side jobs.

As a direct consequence of this situation, unlike my previous interaction with factory workers and local villagers, our time spent together with these individuals was shorter than expected. Despite this, I managed to gather significant info about their daily life, and thanks to their valuable permission, I fastidiously transcribed some of our non-inquisitive chit-chats (or *gaplashmaq*) about the remaking of the Uzbek Working Class into my field notebook. With respect and mutual understanding, I was then ready to proceed to the final part of my research, which dealt with in-depth participant observation of these people.

4.3. The Condition of In-Betweenness and the Remaking of the Uzbek Working Class

Within the scope of this research, the term *gray-collar-people* (as a unique social group) refers to Uzbek individuals who worked full-time in physically demanding manual labor jobs at capitalist spaces like TTF. However, unlike their white-collar and technical blue-collar counterparts, they typically spent their spare time engaging in part-time agricultural activities such as selling their own cultivated produce on the roadside to generate additional income throughout the year. Similar to their fellow workers at TTF, they officially worked between 8 am to 5 pm and depending on their title and qualifications, their salary ranged from $150 - $600. Moreover, they were eligible to earn an additional $50 - $250 depending on the amount of time they dedicated to their extra agricultural work. Given that these individuals displayed characteristics from both blue-collar and white-collar classes and agri-based ones, it was challenging to classify them strictly into one category. Therefore, due to the in-between disposition of their class position, this research opted to refer to them as *the gray-collar-group*. In this vein, the term (*the gray-collar*) is often employed in a generalizing manner, albeit with recognition of its limitations, as Paxtayurt was the only village and TTF was the only factory observed in detail. Nevertheless, in taking inspiration from E.P. Thompson and incorporating Paxtayurt as an ideal type for modern-day Uzbek Villages, I may claim that the gray-collar group in rural Tashkent is more like a proto-class *in the making*, if not yet come to life as a class for itself, in the Marxist aspect of that term. Take Gray-Collar 1 (GC1) for example, a middle-aged Uzbek whose life story represented the everyday struggles of this newly

emerging group (in the village) in an illustrative manner. To begin with, he was born into a modest Uzbek family who taught him the Soviet values of hard work and dedication. In his formative years, he toiled in a nearby collective farm, where the land served not only as a provider but also as a life sustainer. However, with the collapse of the USSR, the stability he had known for decades vanished overnight. After the Union's demise, he sought opportunities beyond agriculture and found employment in the weaving department of TTF. Since then, he spent years wrestling with looms and spools of thread for the sake of meeting production quotas imposed by the factory owners. Though his wages were high, they were not as high as his blue-collar colleagues with technical jobs. For a while, he was able to make ends meet, but after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising inflation began eroding the purchasing power of his earnings. Consequently, he turned to the land (Paxtayurt's soil) that had raised him and transformed his personal plot into a cash-crop facility to supplement his monthly income.

Among the crops he carefully cultivated were apples and figs. After completing his daily full-time shift at the factory, which typically ended at 5 pm, he diligently prepared them for sale. He left his home around 5:45 pm to venture to a nearby strategic spot along the main road linking Paxtayurt to Tashkent, situated approximately four kilometers away. Although he had access to his father's Soviet-made tractor, GC1 opted instead for public transportation, boarding a microbus with his crates weighing around 20 kilograms of apples and 15 kilograms of figs. Upon arriving at the aforementioned spot, he meticulously set up his display in a hastily put roadside stall in order to catch the attention of potential buyers. Joining him later in the evening, around 7:30 pm, was his wife, whom I labeled as Gray-Collar 2 (GC2). This individual also worked in TTF as a dishwasher in the factory's canteen-a non-technical, low-income job. Although she did not enjoy her part-time job as a street vendor in the agricultural sector, as it required intense physical labor and left her with no time to rest, she recognized its significance for her and her family's well-being. Thus, she supported her husband's commercial endeavor by setting up an additional roadside stall next to him to expedite the selling of their produce. With a keen eye for opportunity and a natural flair for persuasion, they both engaged in favorable sales. After the last customer departed, GC1 and his wife GC2, returned

home around midnight. With only a few hours of rest, they woke up early to begin their factory work once more. Even on weekends, when rest might be expected, they found themselves engaged in the physically demanding tasks of gathering weeds and grass within the plains of Paxtayurt for their livestock (which are known as *karamal* (oxen and cows) and *maydamal* (goats and sheep). As articulated by them, these common areas were accessible to everyone and served as additional sources of fodder to feed their animals. These animals may also be used as an additional income resource in times of financial need.

Figure 36. Gray-Collar Husband and Wife Team in Action

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız, (Date:18.07.2022)*

The story of Gray-Collar 3 (GC3) stepped into the stage at this point. In his formative years, which coincided with the waning days of the Soviet Union, GC3 learned how to tend livestock, including milking cows and shearing sheep precisely. It was a pleasant job as fodder, seeds and vaccines for animals were provided by the state. In effect, GC3 was producing the finest milk (*moloko* in the local parlance) in the region. After 1991, like every other villager, the dissolution of the USSR plunged GC3 into poverty, leading him to sell off much of his livestock as well as his beloved

farmland to governmental bodies. Left with only five animals to sustain himself and his family, GC3 sought employment at TTF and accepted to a position in its janitorial department. Akin to the non-technical positions of GC1 and GC2, this low-paying job was equally demanding and energy-consuming; however, it was the most decent job he could find at the time.

From then on, he started to toil tirelessly, cleaning latrines, mopping floors, and emptying trash receptacles in and around TTF repetitively, with only brief breaks in the factory canteen up until the end of his shift. Yet, the work did not end with the factory's closing bell. Upon returning home, GC3 skillfully milked his cattle. Once the yield was collected, GC3 and his four children then embarked on another laborious task by turning the fresh milk into an assortment of dairy products. To put it differently, every weekday (starting from Monday to Friday), GC3 and his children worked tirelessly to prepare their dairy products for the weekend's sales. As the weekend arrived, they offered their handmade milk balls, cheese, and fresh milk to customers at their roadside stall, which was about 20 minutes away on foot.

Despite the sweat and toil that they put into this side job, GC3 and his children found the job rewarding. This was because, compared to his Gray Collar peers (like GC1 and GC2), who sold fruits for lengthy durations, GC3 managed to earn more money than them in a shorter period of time due to the remunerative nature of his dairy products. Once he reached his targeted sums of money (around $45-75 (dollars) per weekend), which usually happened by Sunday evening, he packed up his belongings and headed back home with his children.

Exhausted, he was still determined to return to the factory work that awaited him. Moreover, because of the salient importance of animal husbandry (as an important part and parcel of agri-business) in ordinary people's lives, transmitting essential knowledge about livestock breeding to his descendants within the *Yangi* Uzbekistan context was also considered vital by GC3. In his own words, this work would not only prepare his children for adulthood akin to a school but also teach them how to succeed in life as they were in the process of becoming self-reliant individuals while earning their 'well-deserved' money.

Figure 37. GC1 Wearing a TTF Uniform Teaching His Son How to Milk a Cow

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 19.07.2022)*

Alongside GC3, there was also a younger generation of Gray-Collar Paxtayurters (i.e., full-time non-technical factory workers part-time street vendors), who were around the same age as GC3's oldest child (23 years of age), who gathered crops from their personal plots and carted them to their neighbors, retaining the profits for themselves to glean their very own 'hardly-earned money' (this term was used to refer the money that has been honestly earned in the local parlance). For instance, Gray-Collar 4 (GC4) had an excess of carrots his family could not consume on their own. Instead of going through the trouble of personally taking them to the bazaar or a roadside stall on his day off, someone from his village approached and offered him a price much higher than what the carrots were worth in the market. GC4 decided to sell the carrots immediately to that person at a lucrative price. Following this, he thereafter intended to sell the remaining carrots to acquire a *mayda mal* (sheep and goat). He favored sheep over goats because of their higher meat content which was valued for lard. Moreover, sheep tended to reproduce more often than cattle, which had longer gestation periods. Beyond these considerations, his father (a Soviet-educated person, now a *dehqon* and a former non-technical worker at TTF) on the other hand, aspired to acquire a necessary amount of *karamal* (ox and cow) to get involved in the animal trading business in a nearby *chorva bozori* (animal bazaar in which people sell their livestock) and then purchase a Soviet-made tractor. As explicated by this person (father of GC4), despite setbacks, Soviet made Russian

machinery was preferred by ordinary people due to their familiarity and suitability for current conditions. Shifting away from these familiar technologies was regarded as daunting and unsettling.[80]

Thanks to the existence of the aforementioned Soviet technology and her early education in collective agriculture in Soviet homesteads, people like Gray Collar 5 (GC5), who worked in the sewing department at TTF, could equally be able to sell her cultivated products in a nearby roadside stall. As far as I observed, her offerings changed according to the season. In the summer, she sold freshly picked grapes, tomatoes, and ripe apples. In the fall, she was planning to accept pre-orders for her renowned hand-made strawberry jams. As also elucidated by her, apart from the part-time agri-business on roadside stalls, earning money through sewing for additional work was highly appreciated, especially when the daughters were involved. Regarding GC5's articulations, one could find numerous female Gray Collar workers like GC6 (the daughter of GC5, a full-time manual worker at TTF) in Paxtayurt who contributed to the household by working as part-time tailors and half-time home-grown cash-crop collectors during weekends. The advantage was that this work did not necessitate travel; they could work from home while still managing their household chores like cooking and housekeeping.

Nevertheless, while GC6's part-time job may seem commendable on the surface, as she contributed additional income to her household, there was also a deeper issue of gender subordination at play. This was because religious codes and patriarchal expectations had reduced women to the role of domestic caretakers, leaving them with no opportunity to pursue anything else outside of household chores in their free time. As also observable in the image below, many women in the region were currently obliged to wear veils (or *hijabs* in the local parlance), a practice prohibited during Soviet times. In the case of adhering to these values and dress codes in a flawless manner, they were then promoted to the rank of the 'ideal wife' or 'dream

[80] As also argued by Meltem Sancak (2012) and "*USSR Uzbekistan*" (1972) booklet, USSR-made Russian tractors are equipped with robust sprocket systems, considered ideal for Uzbek soil, especially in plain regions. Moreover, they have the horsepower that modern ordinary Western tractors mostly lack, while the latter produce more dust, have difficulty penetrating deep into the soil, and are prone to breakdowns.

partner' to marry. In tandem with these debates, there was a noticeable increase in piety amongst ordinary people.

Figure 38. GC5 Selling Produce with Her Daughter, GC6 at Their Roadside Stall

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 20.07.2022)*

As a result, some old-aged members of the Gray Collar class, who also possessed religious leanings, had taken up part-time roles resembling hodjas. They offered a multitude of services, like leading private religious rituals in homes and charging fees for their praying activities. By bringing their homegrown herbs to fumigate, they claimed to purify households from 'evil spirits' during these ceremonies. Still due to the clandestine nature of their work, I was unable to obtain any further details about their business as they did not prefer to exchange an extra dialogue with me about their part-time work. Returning to the topic of the Gray-Collar class, which was involved in agri-business, it is lastly important to shed light on another observed individual, whom I labeled 'Gray-Collar 7' (GC7). As far as observed, he had a life story similar to that of his peers like GC1 and GC5, as they all worked in the aforementioned *kolkhoz* together, which operated up until 1991.

However, he chose a different path than his peers. During his younger years, he was mentored by expert beekeepers from the USSR's central regions who came to work

on his *kolkhoz*. Together with these experts, who were mostly Russian, GC7 and his entourage spent a lot of time among the buzzing hives, analyzing the intriguing behavioral patterns of the bees. When the time was right, they carefully extracted the honey-filled combs from the bees and sold them to their comrades at the collective farm supermarket at a fair price. While it was a 'win-win' situation for both parties, things soon took a turn for the worse. After working there for more than a decade, the sudden dissolution of the Uzbek SSR and said *kolkhoz's* disbandment left him utterly shellshocked. During this turbulent period, a disgruntled GC7 decided to abandon the gratuities of the agri-business that revolved around beekeeping. He then sought employment in the industrial centers of Uzbekistan, and after working in a vegetable processing plant in a nearby village for some time, he finally applied for a better-paying, non-technical blue-collar position at TTF. He has been employed there since 2014.

Yet, despite his unwavering commitment to his job in TTF's Shipping Department for five years, he felt his wages were no longer enough to sustain his family due to the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising inflation trend. At that moment, with the objective of accumulating more capital, GC7 decided to rekindle his interest in beekeeping, which he learned during his formative years within the vicinities of Paxtayurt. As of 2020, he has been caring for his newly acquired bee colony in his personal plot, located in the Paxtayurt highlands. Every day, after getting off work at the factory, he carefully selected the best spots for his hives while taking measures to protect them from pests and other wild animals.

When the time was right, he then collected honey from the hives and filled the jars he brought from home, saved some for personal use and the remainder he allocated to sell. After collecting his produce, which he labeled 'the liquid gold', he immediately loaded up his Soviet-made truck and began traversing the meandering road that connected Paxtayurt's highland to the main road. Upon arrival, he wasted no time in setting up his roadside stall. In the meantime, his homemaker wife arrived bearing an array of homemade foodstuffs in a large sack. From freshly baked bread to self-extracted honey, as well as refreshing lemonades, GC7's stall then became a haven for edible items. Lastly, while describing his portable stall (as well as other roadside

stalls as produced spaces), GC7 used the term '*our kind of comfort zones,*' in which gray-collar people like him were now able to sell the same agri-produce they learned to cultivate on a Soviet homestead, but this time, in a commercial manner to render themselves economically more comfortable. By looking at the inner dynamics of the Uzbek Way of Capitalism, however, this research would rather label these stalls as *conformist or adaptable spaces*[81], lacking the revolutionary fervor that was once present within aforementioned *counter-spaces* like *kolkhozes*, which were always there to defy the capitalist norms. Furthermore, as E.P. Thompson and Lefebvre would also argue, by producing these *conformist spaces*, Paxtayurt's gray-collar workers were, in reality, unintentionally contributing to the remaking of the Uzbek working class by cooperating with an amorphous system that entrapped once Soviet-educated proletariat and their descendants who were born after the collapse of the USSR into a vicious cycle of buying and selling.

Figure 39. GC7 Wearing a TTF T-Shirt, in the Process of Gathering His Produce

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 21.07.2022)*

4.3.1. Conformist Spaces of the Gray-Collar Workers

Given the above, the origin of these three self-derived terms (i.e., 'the remaking of the working class,' 'gray-collar people,' and 'conformist space') can be traced back to the birth of capitalism in post-Soviet geographies. Said expressions were first coined indirectly when field researchers/specialists on late-USSR history, such as

[81] Within the perspective above, conformist space—termed as "uymachi mekon, konformist mekon or muvofiq mekon" in the local vernacular, is distinguished by its strict adherence to the existing state of affairs and compliance with dominant social norms (which is Uzbek Way of capitalism nowadays).

Michael Burawoy, once described the disintegration of the Soviet proletariat and their everyday predicaments resulting from a neo-liberal restructuring as 'a self-imposed social engineering project' or 'a shock to the system.' To put it differently, the interrelated concepts and the great transformation of the Uzbek country (for our case, the areas encompassing the Paxtayurt territory) refer to decades of neoliberal policy hegemony resulting in flexibilization of labor markets, insecurity, precarity and risk across the social strata. The sociological implications of this impairment include a shrinking of work rights and informalization through outsourcing, temporary labor-intensive jobs, and related processes. In this sense, it[82] is not dysfunctional or a strange creature in the modern market economy, but rather a formative element of neoliberal disorder to which it is very functional for the status quo to sustain mercantile activities without any disruption. While the *Yangi* Uzbek order has made obsolete the Soviet-type of proletariat and given way to the entrenchment of this newly made group, GC7's wife slowly reached out to me and portrayed the aforementioned post-Soviet change as an *ijtimoiy zilzila* (sociological earthquake) and delineated herself and other gray-collar people like her husband as *makonsiz gariblar* (or 'dispossessed poor' in English) who got metaphorically lost amidst the passing of a once-socialist community. The privatization of former state-created collective property like state farms (as *counter-spaces*) is perceived by these newly dispossessed people as one of many causes of the mentioned *zilzila*. Ultimately, they said (i.e., GC7 and his wife), such actions prodded a breakdown in the moral order, as a select few beneficiaries of the system were encouraged to plunder communal assets on a grand scale and with impunity. This, in turn not only undermined the essential pillars of the Soviet habitus (or Soviet way of life), but also gave way to an irreversible ethical decay. As also argued by another gray-collar female villager, named GC8, a full-time manual factory worker in the TTF canteen and part-time cash-crop seller, every high-ranking member in Paxtayurt now seemed to have turned into a modern-day sultan with an Uzbek touch, appropriating the lucrative spoils, sharing them with their entourage while making people such as GC8 feel disoriented.

[82] Here it refers to the Uzbek type gray-collar people as a disorganized class-like entity, now stripped of their former rights which were valid during the Soviet Union era.

Regarding the previously mentioned changes, GC8 also related that the extreme precariousness of living conditions had generated dissociative identity disorder (which could also be described as a form of alienation from their former selves) and psychological distress among the Paxtayurters. "The sheer randomness of life leaves no room for us to act normally," she remarked. For them, she added, the prospect of a hopeful rosy future that promises "a bowl of cherries" akin to the Soviet days is no longer an option, as making ends meet in Paxtayurt has transformed into something like living in a war zone while trying to maintain a semblance of normalcy. In response, yearning for the Soviet Union, also known as Soviet nostalgia, arose as an instinctive reaction to the Dickensian landscape that the Uzbek working class, as well as the local *baboushkas* (a term that stands to describe the elderly ladies or grandmothers like GC8 in the local parlance) found themselves in. GC8 conclusively redefined this sentiment (also known as *qo'msash* in the Uzbek language) in her own manner of speaking:

> *"In the days of old, before the act of the redistribution of our communal wealth, it seemed that everyone was a friend, and life in the world's best welfare-providing proletarian dictatorship brimmed with merriment and pride. In the face of capitalist madness, however, that is all gone now, and for us upper-middle-aged baboushkas, the Soviet nostalgia is the only reference point that we are familiar with. It's something like a sorcerer's wand connecting people here and there more to a stabler past while soothing our present anxieties. So, my child, rather than offering up an empty illusion, it continuously helps old-timers like me to motivate ourselves, to cope with the situation at hand and jump-start our immortally beloved land to produce more and sell more. Plus, it also serves as a way of reconnection with our Paxtayurter comrades, most of whom are my relatives to keep up with our mutual exchanges. As I always say, the circus has left the town, but us clowns remain, all for one and one for all. And, in case the ongoing show of reciprocity comes to a grinding halt, life will cease, and we will most likely die out of starvation" (GC8, Date: 21.07.2022)*

Following GC8's articulations regarding the redistribution of wealth and her unique portrayal of the notion of reciprocity, I have re-collected my thoughts and interpreted "the Paxtayurt-style redistribution" as a spiral-like process where the central authority (probably a former nomenclature) gathered and reallocated wealth (valuable assets), treated "the Paxtayurt version of reciprocity" as an exchange between multiple parties who involved in gray-collar work. Moreover, within the

context of the researched village in question, reciprocity does not axiomatically mean a full-fledged rational harmony amongst roadside sellers on a Weberian scale, but rather it generally signifies a symbolic exchange within the mentioned *conformist spaces* grounded upon intimate, close-knit relations that contrast with impersonal, market-driven transactions evident in the Occidental marketplaces.

Figure 40. GC8 Marching in an Event Held in 1977 Commemorating Vladimir Lenin's Birthday in Front of a Namesake Statue

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız, (Obtained from GC8's Family Archive on 21.07.2022)*

Thus, in *conformist spaces*, exemplified by roadside stalls, partners like GC8 and GC9 (another gray-collar individual whom I was introduced later on by GC8) possess at least a rudimentary acquaintance with one another, with relationships enduring over time, even if the commodities of exchange may change according to the climatic conditions. Defined by both GC8 and GC9 as "*our kind of alliance*," this peculiar type of relationship is also interlinked with terms like 'dedication,' 'obligation' and 'countenance.' Furthermore, commercial exchanges in these

conformist spaces were always accompanied by peculiar rituals like salutations and sending prayers to each other. Thus, people can boost their social capital and bolster their reputation in the village community. Nevertheless, while mentioning Bourdieusian (1986) concepts like the augmentation of social capital, my main intention is to refer to three essential network-related or class-relations-based concepts originally coined by this research.

These concepts are *flexibility*, *association* and *efficacy*. Referring to whether a network line has at least two links, *flexibility* within the Paxtayurt context possesses a symbiote like amorphous nature adaptable to any condition. *Association* signifies the various sorts of social bonds linking two or more individuals (like GC8 and GC9) via sharing the *same conformist space* (through uniting their merchandise in the same setting) such as road side stall to navigate better and eke out some extra cash. Correspondingly, *efficacy* refers to the extent of dedication as well as utilitarian behavior displayed by allied roadside sellers such as GC8 and GC9 might show during their mercantile transactions.

In GC9's own words, the display of utilitarian behavior may also be summarized as being loyal and benevolent towards fellow gray-collar Paxtayurters, while adopting a capitalist persona or a 'no holds barred' mindset with outsiders, which could be construed through the following series of incidents: On a particularly sweltering afternoon in Paxtayurt, a luxury car with a Tashkent license plate drove up to the cooperative roadside stall (a.k.a. 'conformist' space) operated by GC8 and GC9. The vehicle's polished exterior and expensive sporty sunglasses of its passengers immediately marked them as outsiders to the primarily gray-collar salespeople of the area. The clearly affluent people emerged from the car and proceeded towards the stall with a purposeful look, indicating their intent on buying some fresh produce. This maneuver did not go unnoticed by GC8 and GC9, who were acutely aware of the potential economic leverage this interaction represented.

GC8 and GC9 greeted the couple with a polite yet distinctly reserved smile. Lacking know-how of the underlying economic stratagem, the couple began selecting merchandise and inquiring about prices. "We would like to buy a bit of everything,"

the Tashkenters exclaimed, glancing at the neatly arranged baskets of wild berries, peaches and pears. In response to this demand, GC8 and GC9 rapidly exchanged a knowing look. They had dealt with city folk before, who often underestimated their understanding of the value of their goods. “Sure,” they synchronously replied, “But our prices are fixed. We offer the best quality, and that’s what our customers pay for.” The bourgeoise couple, always eager for a deal, leaned in. “We appreciate quality, but we need to negotiate. How about a discount for buying in large quantities?” GC8 and GC9 again shook their head firmly, like Siamese twins. “Our prices are fair and reflect the craftsmanship we put into growing and sourcing these products. We don’t compromise on that.” The bargaining began, each side presenting their arguments with fervor. While the Tashkenters employed all of their corporate negotiation tactics, both GC8 and GC9 held their ground, confident in the value of their produce. After an intense back-and-forth, it became clear that the gray-collar villagers were not budging. “Alright,” they said, extending a hand, “We’ll pay the price you want.” GC8 and GC9 nodded and shook their customer’s hands while their eyes twinkled with satisfaction. “The deal is sealed,” the sellers shouted with joy and Tashkenter customers left with their crates of fresh produce, having gained a newfound respect and bewilderment for the roadside sellers for their haggling skills.

Figure 41. GC8 and GC9 Negotiating with the Mentioned Couple from Tashkent

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 21.07.2022)*

On another day, a group of mostly middle-aged European travelers (who later turned out to be the owners of a well-known multinational agri-company) who were cruising around the countryside with their American-made minivan decided to stop seemingly out of nowhere alongside GC8 and GC9's stall. Upon arrival, they were immediately delighted with the picturesque display of the fruits and started picking out and buying kilograms of apples, berries and grapes to eat. When it came to consuming these items, they did not hesitate a moment to chat with GC8 and GC9 because of the sellers' obvious dedication to their craft and the wholesomeness of their produce. Impressed by the quality, they bought even more than they initially planned and then decided to have an impromptu picnic by the roadside. Under the shade of a nearby mulberry tree, the group laid out a blanket and spread out their bounty. They seemed like they were about to savor every bite. While watching the zestful picnic of their customers from their stall (*conformist space*), GC8 and GC9 seemed to be filled with *joie de vivre* (an instant self-fulfillment) for producing decent merchandise. After some time, however, and when it came for them to vacate the picnic area, one of the European customers decided to expose his true identity to the road sellers. "Lads, you know what? I'm actually a shareholder of the multinational agri-company located in the vicinity of your village, so allow me to make you a proposition," he began. "Why don't you and about 50 of your trusted fellow Paxtayurters to supply our factory with your delicious produce and I promise you'll get a steady income." GC8 and GC9 listened cautiously. "And what about our independence?" GC9 asked. "We've built these roadside businesses from scratch; our customers trust us." The European man smirked sarcastically. "In today's market, small operations like yours cannot survive long."

"We offer you security and ensuring the marketing as well as the distribution of your produce. Think about your future and make the right move, give us your so-called independence then connect with the high rollers." After listening to his final words, the thought of losing their freedom (or personal space) again, troubled GC8 and GC9 deeply, and they requested time off for a couple of days to think the matter over. The following week, they summoned all the other local gray collar people and local farmers of Paxtayurt to discuss the situation at a weekly villager meeting called 'the big gathering'. Yet, the community, which was comprised of more than 75 people,

was divided; some (especially the younger non-gray collar farmers) saw the corporate offer as a lifesaver, while others feared it would destroy their way of life. "Because," they said, in the case of Uzbekistan, the collapse of the ex-Soviet state had made foreigners like the aforementioned Europeans as the *de facto* rulers of 'high roller' private companies especially the agri-based ones which were always ready to pounce on the social and ecologic capital of breadbasket locations like Paxtayurt Village. As exclaimed by another gray-collar villager (whom I labelled as GC10):

> "*Oi Oi Oi folks, for God's sake! Give me a break! Weren't these European colonialists and their local comprador American wannabe sidekicks the ones who appropriated our beautiful lands in the first place? Weren't these bloodthirsty people the ones who bribed and gave illegal credits to the Yangi Zangins? I mean, the new rich for nothing? As you all know, we once welcomed alien invaders like TTF into our village with open arms, and you know the results. From now on, if we act silly once again and accept to work for these bandits, first, they'll take us over, then they'll confiscate our land, and then they enslave our families as they did to Africans in history. Enough is enough. I think we're all fed up with empty, dodgy Western promises and their Gorbachev-sounding financial shenanigans, which offer us everything but give us nothing in the end but sorrow and tears. Starting today, we need to hang on in there to protect our land from these alien invaders. If we won't resist, we won't exist.*" (GC10, Date: 29.07.2022)

Given the above and as also argued by Rustamjon Urinboyev and Måns Svensson (2018), the wealth accumulation and land expropriation in Uzbekistan continues through illicit means. Common methods employed by the new affluent groups (who are called as *Yangi* Zangin or the new rich) included tax evasion, customs tariff fraud, the internalization of local people who mostly dwelled in villages, the manifestation of monopolies, unethical credit allotment, the provision of bribes to people in high-ranking positions (Rasanayagam, 2011). As Michel Chossudovsky (2003) and Hayriye Erbaş (1993) would equally argue, the liberalization of prices, factory closures, mass worker redundancies, and the reduction of welfare services were all made possible under the directives of pro-liberal figures like current President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who not only followed in the footsteps of Gorbachev but also stuck tight to the guidelines of Western agencies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Along with the theft of ex-communal property, these policies were also dexterously camouflaged by capitalist institutions like the World Bank

(through the dissemination of fraudulent reports) in an anomic environment, which, in the long run, enabled an unchallenged shift to wild capitalism and prevented widespread resistance by the working class. Thus, it seems plausible to assert that the ordinary people's belief in an elite conspiracy to create chaos for the purpose of plundering is valid. In the end, GC8, GC9, and other local villagers heroically decided to stay independent and refused the so-called generous offer posed by the aforementioned Westerner passersby. Thanks to their city-dwelling relatives (who were formerly peasants), they even started a digital campaign on social media that highlighted the benefits of fresh, locally-grown produce and the personal touch that gray-collar Paxtayurters provided for the well-being of their metropolitan fellows[83], especially those who were willing to consume organically produced foods to maintain a healthy lifestyle.[84] Yet again, according to GC10, their (those who possessed the Soviet spirit as well as the aforementioned USSR nostalgia) fight for their very own rights was far from over. They knew they would have to continue to stand strong and united against the allure of any kind of potential 'devilish alien invasion' (or foreign intervention in the local parlance) either by the Westerner capitalists or their Uzbekistani collaborators.

Figure 42. A Group of Gray-Collar Workers En Route to Teaming Up with GC8 and GC9 for the "Big Gathering"

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 29.07.2022)*

[83] Those who were inhabiting in the Uzbek capital.

[84] Still, I was unable to see the results of this social media campaign because I had to return to my homeland after the completion of my in-depth participant observations.

After conversing with him (GC10) for a while, I also came to the conclusion that the reformulation of 'the evil alien,' when linked to a feverish Soviet nostalgia for the glory days of yore, engenders a type of Soviet folk (who could be considered as *narod*) whose *rodina* (living space) is now ex-Soviet territory. The central themes, which revolve around social inequality, the *Yangi Zangin*, dispossession, land expropriation, wild capitalism, colonialism, shrewdness, exploitation, anxiety, loss of meaning and uneasiness, were pivotal variables in shaping this kind of pro-Soviet discourse. Both the refusal of the 'evil alien' and the sublimation of the values of the *homo sovieticus* can also be interpreted as intrepid responses to the mentioned the sociological earthquake (or *ijtimoiy zilzila*, as previously coined by GC7's wife). From a Marxist lens, these responses were also embedded in the dynamism of contemporary ideology-driven class struggles. While the *Yangi Zangins* employ their monetary power and purchasing ability as tools to distance or alienate the dispossessed (*makansizlar*) from the means of production, the latter alienate and exclude the former from their social life and their inner circle by labeling them as traitors (or *comprador* collaborators) due to their extravagant lifestyles and their sympathy for neo-liberal values.

A money-oriented mindset, feudal-like sovereignty, conspicuous consumption, and commodity fetishism underscore the traits of the *Yangi Zangin* and also reflect the newly mushroomed sociological malaises introduced by the New Uzbekistan mindset. As a result, as E.P. Thompson would also argue, the dispossessed (*makanzilor*) repudiation of these changes conjures a nostalgic imagery of the Soviet past, or an idealistic image that undoubtedly incorporates a substantial element of self-driven collective amnesia. Based on my personal observations, the working class in Paxtayurt, however, generally intentionally resisted not to recall the economic difficulties that characterized the last days of their beloved Union. As GC10 uttered: "This reluctance shall not be misconstrued as yearning for *Gorby's* USSR (referring to Gorbachev) or an economy of scarcity; rather we want the welfare-providing one back." In taking GC10's statements into account, it is now clear that there exists, without question, a collective call for the revival of the welfare state. Nevertheless, the overly romantic view of the USSR period as a time of perpetual happiness, guarantee, and full autonomy was, ontologically speaking, mostly a product of

current suffering and a lack of optimism about the future. All in all, in their (the gray collars) conception of time, both the present and future were viewed through a kaleidoscope of the Soviet epoch, meaning that it is almost as if the time itself has come to a standstill after the dissolution of their real-time utopia (i.e., the USSR).

Yet, the vulnerable spot or the Achilles heel of this omnipresent utopian Soviet narrative was an unexpected hostile stance from the gray-collar group toward newcomer Russians and non-Uzbeks of Paxtayurt who once inhabited different parts of the former Union. Moreover, the existence of a widespread belief amongst the working-class people (whether they were Uzbek or not) that the ruling elite and Westerners were to blame for the current state affairs was also a significant determinant in hindering widespread ethno-religious skirmishes during these turbulent times. To highlight this point, GC10 additionally stated the following:

> *"Honestly, without that shared Soviet identity always lingering between Uzbeks and non-Uzbeks, these superficial conflicts would be a lot bigger and definitely more violent. Take the rural Tashkent region, for instance. The symbolic tensions between Uzbeks and migrants from Russian and Tajik backgrounds are really intense here. But what's interesting is that neither group blames the other for the mess they're in. Instead, we, I mean, us and them both regard the elites and Westeners as Public Enemy Number One. Apart from these, all I can tell you is that it is us gray-collar Uzbeks who are more sincere in ardently defending the Soviet identity, not them. It makes sense, though, because the post-Soviet changes have hit us the hardest."* (GC10, Date: 29.07.2022)

After sharing these insights, GC10 wished to conclude our conversation, whereupon he introduced me to another acquaintance of his, whom I coded GC11. Akin to his gray-collar counterparts, GC11 was a self-made man who bore a deep longing for the Soviet system. He told me that in the past, due to the caregiving nature of the Soviet entity, he was able to acquire a newly built *dom* (house), a '*Zaporojets-ZAZ*' brand automobile which was denominated as the people's car by Paxtayurters, a '*Snejinka*' brand refrigerator, and many other Soviet-made home appliances. Then, offhandedly, he gestured to the sky and said, "The salary was sufficient up to there." By the time of my fieldwork (in 2022), however, he and his family, along with most other gray-collar people in the area, could barely afford their basic needs. To illustrate his

poverty, he showed me his clothes, which were mostly disheveled, and told me that "he had to wear these beat-up garments as he was not able to buy new ones." According to GC11, the decline of his material prosperity and lack of purchasing power was attributed to the loss of Soviet-type employment and the devaluation or de-appreciation of manual industrial labor in capitalist spaces like TTF. Despite his lower wages compared to the technical blue-collar, as well as white-collar people of the private sector, he still felt blessed as unemployment was also formulated by him as a way more nightmarish scenario. "Tragically," he said, "Unemployment is more prevalent among ex-technical proletarian Uzbeks who once earned their livelihood in industrial environments. Consequently, most of them have since turned to heavy alcohol consumption, and alcoholism is on the rise."

To better illustrate and demonstrate the ongoing situation (or the rising alcoholism trend), he then told me an intriguing story about her sister's daily encounters with the so-called alcoholics of Paxtayurt. As he related, GC11's sister, a middle-aged Uzbek woman, was unable to secure a position at TTF and instead tried her fortune in another sector, working as an accountant in a *pivokhana* (beerhall) located around seven kilometers outside Paxtayurt. As her salary was inadequate to cover her bills, she engaged in the black-market sales of Turkish-produced cigarettes and an assortment of alcoholic products every morning, before punching the clock at her full-time job at the beerhall. On a Sunday morning, I was also fortunate enough to discuss with her how the Paxtayurt-type shadow economy operated and observe her early morning informal activities for a few days. During my time there, I observed that two other Tatar *baboushkas* were always present to sell homemade vodka to their all-male consumer base. On one particular morning, GC11's sister managed to sell ten bottles of vodka, while the younger Tatar woman sold seven, and the older Tatar woman sold eight. Based on my observations, it was apparent from their weary faces that more than half of the men purchasing locally distilled vodka and Turkish-branded cigarettes had been engaged in heavy drinking the night before. A couple of them who purchased these spirits were on their way to their work, while the majority of them, who were probably unemployed, came early to pick up freshly distilled vodka back home. I asked GC11's sister, "Why on Earth do these people buy alcohol so early in the morning when they are already intoxicated?" She replied, "Because

they wish to cure their hangover by drinking more." GC11's sister was also closely acquainted with some of these men, and some (who were mostly her relatives) even bought the booze on credit from her. GC11's sister, lastly, pointed out other underlying social circumstances at play that contributed to this extraordinary situation in her own flair by uttering the following statements:

> *"Some of the menfolk, who were once the primary wage-owners and family leaders, found themselves in a vicious circle of perpetual unemployment and psychological sorrow. They now consider themselves as bums or social parasites*[85] *who are being stripped of their former ranks. In addition, they also feel embarrassed to participate in business interactions that happen on the street, including those of roadside selling and suitcase trading, mostly associating that type of work with womenfolk. As they intentionally excluded themselves from the work-life, the pain went straight right to their brains and they feel amputated. As a direct consequence of their self-loathing, they have also turned to chronic drinking. And, they are now regarded as the walking dead of our once lively community"* (GC11's sister, Date: 31. 07. 2022)

Considering the aforementioned context, ex-Soviet men, especially those from industrial working-class origins, persisted in viewing capitalistic trade through the lens of Soviet ideology by stigmatizing merchants (whether they were roadside sellers or not) as immoral people. Such individuals believed that their society was evolving from one dominated by proletarians and scientists to one overrun by swindlers and frauds. Consequently, most of the formerly technical people refrained from outdoor trading and progressively became unemployed or resorted to habitual drinking, due to a lack of skills related to agribusiness. Apart from these, a significant portion of the women with Soviet-type higher education felt obliged to undertake these substandard jobs within the informal economy, such as street vending or suitcase trading, also described by Yükseker (2003) as the *chelnok* (i.e., shuttle trading) business, to make their livelihoods. Excluding pensioners, approximately half of the upper-middle-aged women and their Soviet-born daughters in the informal market were higher education graduates. Among the women in this category was a distant cousin of GC11, a 67-year-old Uzbek who was born in Russia.

[85] In the USSR, the term "social parasite" was used to describe individuals who were considered unproductive members of society. This label was mainly applied to those who did not engage in physical labor. The government considered these individuals a burden on society and enforced laws that required them to work or face penalties.

Having spent 12 years as a nurse in a nearby township, this person quit her job to engage in suitcase trading across the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Immediately after transforming herself into a black-market merchant, she found success in her trade and acquired several stalls on two distinct roadsides, one of which she co-managed with GC12 (her daughter-in-law), another gray-collar person who sold her homegrown melons as well as smuggled Russian-made spirits in front of GC11's sister workspace (i.e., the aforementioned *pivokhana*). Yet, despite the salient improvements in their life standards, both women found the work meaningless and felt disconnected from their former lives. Since their clientele was comprised of predominantly penniless men (or *pulsiz odamlar*" in the Uzbek language), I inquired how these impoverished men managed to pay for over-priced imported spirits together with pricey watermelons and cantaloupes. As expected, the feedback I received from GC12 sounded analogous to that of GC11's sister (whom I had spoken with previously):

> *"Like a bunch of cockroaches that inevitably finds its sewer, unemployed men tend to drink with their pack, relying on someone within the group to come up with the cash. Some others, like my one-of-a-kind husband and genius son, don't even bother with that. They simply take the alcohol that their breadwinner wives are supposed to be selling. What is more, while both my husband and my son are jobless, they don't lift a finger to find work. They drink like sponges, consuming half of my stock day and night. When I dare to tell them not to touch the booze because I need to sell it to keep the boat afloat, they have the audacity to tell me to shut up. Well, the house belongs to them, and I have no other place to go. But mark my words, if I ever meet a good man with a clean home and a kind heart, I will leave both of them behind without a second thought."* (GC12, 31.07.2022)

Figure 43. GC12 Selling Her Merchandise in Front of the Pivokhana

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 31.07.2022)*

Right after saying what was on her mind, GC12 told me she had to leave the area to help out her family members in doing the household chores. However, before departing, she kindly introduced me to another gray-collar acquaintance (whom I labeled as GC13), who was plodding along, pushing his fellow villager friends' produce on a donkey cart. After a brief exchange of words, he invited me to join him on his cart on his excursion to the local *dehqon* bazaar. As we proceeded along the road, GC13 began to open up about his life. Resembling the previous gray collar-peers, he was busy with TTF's non-technical janitorial work by day, but his evenings and weekends were spent nurturing cash crops on his own small plot of land. This year however, something unexpected happened. As explicated by him, torrential rains had washed away the seeds he had meticulously planted. "And just as the worst was over" he exclaimed, a searing heatwave arrived, destroying what few crops that had managed to sprout. By the time harvest season arrived, GC13 knew he could not simply sit back and let the season's hardship defeat him. Thanks to his problem-solving nature and Soviet-type determinism, he realized that his donkey cart, which had always been a means to transport his produce, could now become a means for survival. Soon after, he made the decisive decision to offer his carting services to those who had been more fortunate with their harvests. His first client was a widowed farmer in her late sixties, whose minuscule bulk of onions had survived the extreme weather. She was too delicate to carry them to the *dehqon* bazaar herself, so when GC13 offered to help, she was deeply moved. "I did not know how I was going to manage otherwise," she told him, her voice trembling with relief. Afterwards, he began providing professional carting services for her and others. He even managed to buy an additional larger donkey cart and another sturdy donkey (or a beast of burden in the local vernacular) to travel to more distant places and earn more. While he was managing to expand his customer base, another full-time private farmer who had managed to grow a substantial number of cucumbers, approached GC13 with a proposal.

According to the proposal, he would pay GC13 a small fee to transport his cucumbers, and in turn, GC13 could take a substantial portion of the produce as a bonus to sell himself. GC13 accepted the offer unflinchingly because it was a fair deal and one that helped both Paxtayurters to increase their socio-economic standing

in a difficult time. From a Marcel Maussian perspective, it was an act of gift-giving at its finest. GC13 finally summarized these experiences and the symbolic value of gift-giving in the Paxtayurt context in a solemn manner:

> *"This carting business I have is not just about earning money. People here do not always have cash, so we trade what we can. I move their goods, and they give or share me a part of their harvest. We help each other out, making sure everyone has what they need to get by. It is our kind of gift-giving in which reciprocal relationships are involved among the rustic actors like myself. Plus, under the Paxtayurt rules, whenever I receive a gift, I have to give something back in return, and everything hinges on the symmetry or asymmetry and the closeness of the relationship between the parties involved. But please do not confuse this with bribes that are being paid under the table in other parts of the world. Because every foreigner who does not have a clue about our country makes that mistake, and it upsets me to no end."* (GC13, Date: 01.08.2022)

Taking the aforementioned information into account, the Paxtayurt style of gift-giving in modern-day Uzbekistan fell into a complex and often enigmatic category and was occasionally mistaken for bribes and tributes by non-Uzbeks. However, akin to the previously mentioned notion of reciprocity in the case of GC8 and GC9, this act generally signifies an individual's connection to a group, a peculiar type of bond manifestly emphasized by the counter-accolades that complement the gift. As GC13 put it, when relationships are symmetrical, a return gift is typically provided, and its commercial value generally matches the ontological value of the original gift. Yet, the exception arises in an imbalanced power structure when the gift or counter-gift is given as a partial show of force for any particular action the recipient has already undertaken or is expected to perform for the giver shortly.

Figure 44. GC13 Carting Off His Customers' Agri Produce to the Bazaar Area

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız, (Date: 01.08.2022)*

In these seemingly miscellaneous situations, the value of a gift and its corresponding counter-gift may not always need to be of equal status. Hence, the worth of these exchanges is largely shaped by the circumstances and the hierarchical dynamics between the parties involved. For instance, in GC13's case, the sharing of produce (see below) or aiding the elderly people in their agrarian endeavors (as a form of gift-giving), along with the exchange of words and goodwill, plays a crucial role in maintaining symmetrical double-edged relationships over time and forging new ones (which involves a wider array of goods and services). Among the most significant of these exchanges is offering assistance, a common form of reciprocity amongst family members and friends, which functions much like a barter system. Like bartering, it involves giving something in return for assistance received in the past or might be anticipated in the future. However, Paxtayurters make a clear distinction between help and barter, with the former emphasizing personal, intimate relationships and the latter indicating the exchange of material goods. To explicate this situation better, consider the following example: In one instance, I observed GC13 bartering some of his homemade bread with other villagers. He also frequently bestowed it as a gift to his younger brother (another gray-collar worker whom I referred to as GC14), who generally assisted GC13 in his part-time carting business in dire circumstances, such as personal injury or illness. Later on, when I asked GC13 about the difference between barter and assistance as a means of donation, he explained:

> "*If I am bartering, it happens spontaneously with other villagers who are outsiders. And I instantly expect to receive something in return. But when I give or offer a helping hand to my family members, I am more interested in the open-ended future assistance that I may need in my part-time agri-pursuits because most of us still believe in the sanctity of family ties. So, barter is for commercial purposes with outsiders, but gifts and other donations are about keeping family ties close. Both are necessities rather than choices. It is kind of an invisible contract that everyone must follow; otherwise, there will be setbacks. To put it in other words, if you break the rules of the social contract or try to fool anyone from your inner circle, you will be ostracized and eventually get isolated."* (GC13, Date: 01.08.2022)

As illustrated here, in barter, the exchange of goods can be spontaneous and occur at the same time, whereas with assistance, giving and receiving are not bound by time. As also argued by GC13, the type of Paxtayurt-style assistance that the giver will get

in the future is open-ended and not agreed upon in advance. This, as a result, often triggers a novel cycle of giving, where present acts of giving are tied to past and future acts of receiving. However, everything can change easily if the parties do not consider themselves reliable. As Smith (2012) [1776] would argue, much like in the dynamics of the modern market economy, everything revolves around trust and mutual expectations. This can lastly be seen as a social contract or a set of unwritten rules that the villagers must adhere to; otherwise, there is the risk of seclusion.

To better illustrate this point, GC13 introduced me to his younger brother GC14, who worked at TTF as a full-time textile machine cleaner and a part-time roadside seller. Akin to his gray-collar peers, in the early days, he possessed great determination and was known by his community members as a reliable and fair partner. This reliability made him an upstanding member of the community who was synonymous with the virtuous values of the Paxtayurt village. However, over time GC14 began experiencing a deviation in his worldview. In his own words, as his roadside business grew, so did his ambition. The modest income he earned from his sales conducted in his own roadside stall no longer satisfied him. He began to seek opportunities for greater profit, driven by a growing sense of avariciousness that crept into his otherwise moderate mindset.

At first, the changes were subtle; GC14 justified his decisions to raise prices as necessary adjustments to market conditions or improvements in product quality. "I had to increase prices slightly," he explained, "To cover the rising costs of delivering fresh produce and my intent was always to offer the best to my customers." Yet, as his aspirations morphed into self-interest, these price hikes became more frequent and detached from any justifiable market rationale. The initial signs of discontent surfaced when GC14's peers noticed a growing disparity between his prices and those of other vendors. This in the long run did not escape the attention of the village elders as well as the aforementioned *aqsakals*, who were instrumental in upholding the moral fabric of Paxtayurt. In one striking incident, a village *aqsakal* confronted GC14 during his usual rounds of snooping around conformist spaces (or the roadside stalls). The *aqsakal*, inspecting the goods on offer, remarked, "Hey, don't you think

these prices seem inflated, and besides, your produce does not look as fresh as it used to. What has changed?"

Somewhat defensively, GC14 replied: "Look *eke*, the quality is still there. Market conditions have shifted, and the prices reflect that." The *aqsakal*, without hesitation and delay, responded: "Markets may change, but our commitment to fairness must remain constant. This is not about prices; it's about integrity." The conversation which started as peaceful, soon turned into a heated confrontation and drew the attention of others wandering about the neighborhood. Thanks to the support of the other community members, including the other gray-collar people, GC14 was forced to relocate his roadside stall to a less frequented area.

Following this altercation, GC14 became stigmatized with the label of "*chayqovchi*" (or the speculator), an etiquette heavy with implications of deceit and cunningness. As argued by social scientists like Heath Lowry (2016), these kinds of epithets, once attached, were nearly impossible to remove in Turkic village communities. In line with Lowry's argument, customers who had once frequented his stall began avoiding it, opting instead to purchase goods from other vendors who reputations remained untarnished. The once steady stream of income from his roadside business began to dry up, leaving GC14 in a precarious financial position. From then on, his attempts to explain or justify his actions were met with indifference or outright hostility, as the community had already rendered their judgment. GC14's brother (GC13) unwillingly explained the drawbacks of this situation by articulating the following:

> *"The psychological impact of this shift was profound. My brother, who had once taken pride in his integrity, now found himself grappling with guilt and shame. He realized too late his greed had not only damaged his reputation but had also severed the bonds of trust that were essential to his business and his standing in the community. Sadly, the toll is evident, my brother lost weight and the clothes that once fit him well hung loosely on his frame. He is sleepless and anxious. The modest house with a beautiful garden that had once been a sanctuary for him now became his prison. The guilt gnawed at him, leaving him feeling hollow and disconnected from the person he had once been. But hey, he is my brother in the end, so I try to invite him occasionally to assist me in my carting business and provide him my spare donkey and cart as well as some cash. Whether they are beleaguered or not, that's what brothers do for each other."* (GC13, Date: 01.08.2022)

As GC13 argued, during this difficult period, GC14 became increasingly reliant on the support of his older brother. In return, GC13 permitted GC14 to use one of his donkey carts from time to time to provide transportation services and earn extra income from passengers in exchange for the assistance provided. However, the dynamics of these transactions were complex and fraught with unspeakable tensions. Based on my observations, while some villagers tipped GC14 for his delivery services, these tips were often given not out of genuine appreciation for his work but rather out of respect for his brother, GC13. One such instance occurred when GC14 delivered a sack of homemade bread (of G13) to an 85-year-old male villager who lived in a nearby village next to Paxtayurt. As he unloaded the goods, the man handed him some cash (equivalent to $5 USD). “This is for your brother. He has always been kind to us.” GC14, though grateful for the tip, could not help the sting of the words because his brother’s reputation was the reason for the coinage in his hand, and not his own efforts. Over the course of these events, the sun began to set, and GC14 spontaneously invited me to have dinner at his residence. The invitation seemed almost an afterthought, as though he felt the need to offer some gesture of hospitality in these series of unfortunate events. I accepted the invitation and accompanied him to his *dom* (home).

Figure 45. GC14 at Work with His Brother’s Substitute Donkey Cart

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız, (Date: 01.08.2022)*

Upon arrival, GC14's wife, a conservative, introverted woman, greeted us with a bashful smile. She immediately returned to her tasks at the hearth, where she was preparing the evening meal. While cooking dinner, her movements were swift and precise. From an anthropological perspective, it reflected the years of experience managing the household. Yet, there was an undeniable air of fatigue about her, likely as a result of the emotional and physical toll of recent events. Though she maintained a stoic front in the presence of guests like myself, it was adamantly clear that the strain of her husband's deteriorating reputation and the resulting social stigma had impacted her deeply. The meal itself was also simple, as expected from a Soviet-educated stoic person, consisting of flatbread, a vegetable stew and a small portion of meat prepared with limited resources available. GC14's other family members, his two sons and his 91-year-old *buva* (or the grandfather in the local vernacular), who used to be a high-school history teacher during the USSR time and a retired part-time farmer, were present at the table as well. Both sons, who were approaching adulthood, exhibited signs of internal conflict, particularly in their interactions with their father, who used to be socio-economically stronger and, within the scope of their *weltanschauung*, now fell from grace. While the *buva*, the patriarch of the household, appeared less affected by the situation, he was evidently aware of the underlying tension. He participated in the meal quietly. Still, his gaze often shifted between his son and others (including me) at the table as if attempting to understand and reassess the dynamics at play. Following the meal, everybody was excused to their respective rooms, and GC14 and his father (*buva*) invited me to sit in the guest room (or the *mehmonkhona*), where we continued our discussion in a more relaxed setting.

As we took our seats on an Uzbek-type sofa, the tea was fastidiously served, and the grandfather, who was a former history teacher, began to speak with first-hand knowledge of *qishloq ijtimoisi* (village sociology). What started off with the subtly impacting changes brought about by the textile factory (TTF) in a once-socialist village soon widened into the grand sweep of world economic history. Before addressing the sociology of Uzbekistan and the present condition of the working class in his homeland (or *rodina*), the *buva* reshuffled his narrative by recounting how England (as the birthplace of the world's first working-class people) led the way

in breaking feudalism and serfdom from the 14th century onwards. “You know something?” he said, “when the demand for wool and its prices skyrocketed in Northern Europe, the British aristocrats saw their chance. They rapidly adopted large-scale sheep farming, leading to the enclosure of lands that were once communal under the feudal rule.” These enclosures, he clarified, meant fencing off large estates, converting them into private property, and freeing the serfs who had plowed the land for centuries.

“So, this enclosure movement was not merely about herding sheep, it was also about changing the very fabric of society; villages were destroyed, small peasants were displaced, and a new class of free, ambitious farmers known as *yeomen*, who were always eager to compete with the aristocracy, emerged,” he explained. “Like our collective farmers, these yeomen were resilient,” he noted, “but they were up against fierce competition from large estates and tenant farmers.” The *buva* then moved on to the 16th-century reforms when the closure of monasteries caused a second wave of mass expulsions. “During the Reformation,” he said, “parish lands were seized and distributed to royal favorites, leaving many serfs and ex-farmers, including some of the *yeomen*, landless and desperate to work for slave wages, which contributed to the primitive accumulation of capital.”

Yet, despite great material losses, these dispossessed or emancipated farmers did not disappear but rather adapted and became part of the blue-collar workforce that would later fuel the Industrial Revolution (Köymen, 2008). The *buva*’s voice grew more animated as he recounted the role of the scientific revolution in this transformation. The steam engine, mechanized looms, and other innovations, he noted, “were not just inventions, they were the means that allowed ordinary people to engage with and transform the economic landscape of England, then the entire world.” In a latent reference to E.P. Thompson (which was, of course, unintentional), he went on, “It was not just about machines, it was about the people who operated them, who turned them into engines of change.”

Taking another sip from his tea, the grandfather paused for a moment as he highlighted the importance of comprehending these macro shifts while trying to

grasp the current dynamics in Uzbekistan. “To see where we are today, we repetitively have to look at where others have been,” he underscored, setting the stage for a broader discussion. With this in mind, he then shifted his focus to America, a country that took a different path but one that was no less transformative. “The United States of America, the Anti-Christ of USSR, was also born out of revolution,” he began, “a place where so-called freedom and opportunity were promised to one and all.” As expected from a seasoned history teacher, he explained how the vast and fertile lands of the New World attracted waves of settlers, many of whom were escaping enclosures, atrocities and economic hardships back in Europe. “They came with dreams of liberty,” he said, but “they soon found that building a new society was not easy.”

“Conflict was inevitable,” he stressed, “as settlers pushed further west, they collided with natives who did not want to hand their land over to foreigners.” In the avenue of these debates, he also discussed how the American economy was built on a foundation of agriculture, with crops like tobacco, cotton, coffee and sugar playing crucial roles. “Slavery was the dark heart of this economy,” he articulated solemnly, “a heavy-handed system that exploited African labor to accelerate the growth of Southern plantations.” As the country expanded, the grandfather noted, the North began to industrialize, leading to rising tensions with the Southerners, who built up their prosperity upon their slaves’ miseries, which in the long run gave birth to the Civil War. “The Civil War was a turning point,” he enunciated, “a brutal conflict that decided the fate of slavery and set America on the path to becoming an industrial giant, and afterward allured millions of workers all around the globe to work in its newly erected factories, railroads, petroleum fields and mines.”

After calmly providing these details in a systematic order, he began to speak of Germany, a nation that industrialized later on but with great speed and intensity. “The railways connected the country,” he explained, “and factories sprang up in cities like Berlin, Cologne and the Ruhr Valley.” The grandfather simultaneously emphasized that Germany’s industrialization was fueled by a strong Prussian education system and a deep tradition of philosophy and craftsmanship. “They, I mean the German folk, valued knowledge and skill,” he remarked, “and this gave

them an edge in developing advanced industries like chemicals and engineering." However, the grandfather did not hesitate from discussing the darker aspects of the Germany's rise.

"Their rapid industrialization created social tensions," he noted. "As laborers faced long working hours, low wages, and poor conditions, these harsh realities led to the growth of a strong labor movement and the rise of socialist ideals championed by thinkers such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels." His banter then moved to France, where the *buva* explained that the path to industrialization was more turbulent. "The French Revolution altered everything," he began, "it tore down the old monarchist order and paved way towards a new society." He also described how the revolution resulted in the ascension of the bourgeoisie class, who advocated for economic changes and the growth of industry, while facing opposition from local peasants to the increasing industrialization trend. Despite this, he said, "cities like Paris, Lyon, and Marseille began to industrialize and influence countries like Russia to orchestrate a glorious revolution of their own."

Finally, the *buva* turned his attention to Russia (the former overlord of Uzbekistan), a country that industrialized much later than others but at a more dramatic pace. "Similar to our country Uzbekistan, Russia was vast and backward," he began. He explained how, in the 19th century, Russia was still largely an agrarian society with a rigid social structure that kept most people in poverty. "However, due to the fierce skirmishes with the French Empire and encounters with its revolutionary motto of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' the winds of change were blowing," he uttered. "It was a start," he exclaimed, "but freeing the serfs did not solve Russia's problems; it just created new ones."

"The peasants wanted the land, and the workers demanded better conditions," he said, "but the old order was reluctant to compromise." These harsh realities, he stated, "gave rise to revolutionary movements, and the Bolsheviks took the lead by offering free bread, free land and peace." In return, he spotlighted, "people were ready for change." The *buva* then explained how the revolution led to the establishment of the Soviet Union, the first proletarian dictatorship that aimed to

build a new kind of society, which was free from exploitation and the shackles of capitalism.[86] As he continued, his tone grew angrier, going into a tirade about the notorious *perestroika* reforms that actually meant to revitalize the Soviet Union, but instead contributed to its collapse. "With the introduction of that malarky, the world that we knew vanished almost overnight and I miss that world," he reminisced. Soon after, the *buva* excused himself to take a break and asked his son to continue the narrative.

GC14 did not refuse his father's request and began to utter the following statements:

> *"As mentioned by buva, we, the Soviet generation, have lost everything. As you can see, my reputation has been tarnished, and my sense of manhood has been stripped away. All I tried to do was earn a little more to feed my family as if no one else was doing these kinds of things, but instead, I was the one who got punished brutally. Yet, despite these happenings, my connection to the land remains strong. The goods I transport with my brother's donkey cart are still agricultural products, crops that can be planted and harvested. To put it another way, even though I can no longer sell produce from my own land, most of the money I earn still comes from the Paxtayurt's benevolent soil and the work I do at the factory. So, the emphasis is now on flexibility. But I am getting old. Soon, I will fall like the Soviet Union and rest beside my father. Before that happens, I have only one thing to say: Our experience with capitalism is nothing like what my father described about European countries. Their struggles were structural and persisted for centuries. We only learned about industry from the Soviets just a couple of decades ago. Before that, everything here was feudal, undeveloped, and imposed from above. So, capitalism struck us like a shockwave after 70 years of living in harmony under an egalitarian system. We didn't know what hit us. Immediately and grotesquely, we were transformed into slave-like factory workers and, as you put it, gray-collar laborers. Our character, posture, even the way we sit and stand, everything has changed and gone the age of the hero workers. On top of that, the roadside stalls that were supposed to bring us comfort had become our prisons. These so-called spaces of comfort have trapped our souls, and I've only recently come to realize that the system we call capitalism is, in fact, a form of Hell. Nothing more, nothing less, that's where my life story ends."* (GC14, Date: 01. 08. 2022)

Within the framework outlined above, the Uzbek men like GC14, found themselves entrapped in a complex web of historical and social changes that have profoundly transformed their everyday lives. This shift has had a devastating impact on their

[86] All of these discussions were previously mentioned in detail in Chapter 3.

mental well-being as they became passive spectators of events beyond their control. The self-references to GC14's 'tarnished' reputation and 'stripped' sense of manhood underscored some of the most profound tangible personal tolls that these social mutations have unearthed on the aforementioned gray-collar people. Furthermore, the social banishment that GC14 received for his trading efforts from his peers illustrated the severity of this new system (named the *Yangi Uzbekistan*), where even small attempts to get ahead could result in harsh consequences. In GC14's own words, this included the severance from the agri-business that evolved from the cultivation of self-collected cash-crops on a personal plot and marketing them in a roadside stall (as conformist spaces), through social isolation. After being stigmatized as a speculator (which was already mentioned in previous sections in detail), GC14 was outlawed from carrying out business activities in strategically important areas that would boost his economic capital. Still, despite the strained relationships with his land (Paxtayurt's soil), GC14 continued to earn money indirectly from the donkey-carting business by transporting the agricultural merchandise grown in other gardens. According to this research, this enduring connection to the land bore striking parallels with the Western experience during the transition from feudalism to capitalism (which was previously mentioned by the *buva*), where the peasantry class, though increasingly dispossessed and proletarianized, maintained an organic link to the soil.

Furthermore, while this organic link (with the soil) gradually diminished in Europe as capitalist relations deepened and most of the working-class Europeans became members of the newly-emerged class called the *precariat*[87], it remained a vital part of rural identity in Uzbekistan for surviving in an uncanny setting where the soil emerged as a relief valve for ordinary people to fill their stomachs and make a decent livelihood. Expanding further on the comparisons with the *precariat*, we can additionally delve into the eye-opening semblances and differences between the conditions of gray-collar individuals like GC14 and those conventionally classified as the Western *precariat*. Primarily, as seminal thinkers like Guy Standing (2011)

[87] Conceptualized by scholars like Guy Standing (2011), the precariat refers to a social class characterized by a lack of job security, agricultural knowledge, uncertain income, and overall precarious existence. This class is often marked by its detachment from stable, long-term employment, instead finding itself in temporary, part-time, or otherwise insecure forms of work.

and Michael Burawoy (2009) would argue in both cases, the condition of ambiguity and amorphous class position was a defining class characteristic. Just as the *precariat* navigates in an uncertain and ever-shifting economic landscape, individuals like GC14 found themselves in a state of flux, where their roles and identities were not fixed but continually redefined by the immediate demands of the modern market economy.

This fluidity created a sense of instability that permeated both their economic and social lives, leaving them without a clear or secure place as it used to be possible during the Soviet era (Matza, 2018). Yet, unlike the precariat, whose work was often detached from the natural world, with most of them working in urban-based jobs or occupations in the digital market, gray-collar people like GC14 were engaged in agri-based labor directly influenced by environmental factors, such as weather conditions, soil fertility, and availability of water resources. This dependence on the land and its resources created a completely different kind of ambiguity than the future anxiety experienced by the *precariat*, as gray-collar workers faced more concrete threats that were not only economic but of the ecologic sort as well. Furthermore, while the Occidental *precariat* is often associated with being detached from communal bonds, GC14's condition (as an ideal type for other gray-collar people) in post-Soviet nations, though amorphous, still maintained some bonds to communal practices and traditions. Nevertheless, compared to the stable nature of Soviet-type workers, where every individual was tasked with precise objectives, the constant need to adapt to new roles, whether as a roadside seller, donkey cart driver, or something else, correlated with the creation of another conformist space adds another layer to GC14's story and leaves the future of the gray-collar people up in the air.

Under the aegis of these statements and drawing upon the insight of sociologist Henri Lefebvre, one might argue that conformist spaces such as roadside stalls inherently possess a transformative nature, continually evolving in response to the imperatives of the *zeitgeist*. Flexibility is the prevailing principle today. The once rigid employment systems of the Soviet era, where individuals were anchored to a single job, were now under assault. Workers were increasingly expected to be agile, embrace change swiftly, undertake risks consistently and to become much less reliant

on established regulations and formal procedures. This self-imposed shift towards flexibility is transforming both the nature of work and the vocabulary used by Paxtayurters to describe it. The term *карьера* (career), for instance, in its Russo-Uzbek origins, signified a road for horse carriages and later evolved to denote a lifelong way of life for a Paxtayurter's mercantile pursuit. However, the Uzbek way of flexible capitalism has disrupted this linear career path, frequently diverting workers from one type of labor to another. The word 'job' (or *mehnat* and *mehnat qilmoq*) in the Uzbek language also connoted a 'chunk or piece of something which could be moved around through carting.'

In the words of GC14, the contemporary emphasis on flexibility, reintroduced an archaic understanding of job or labor (*ish* in the local vernacular), wherein individuals now engage in incompatible tasks or a wide range of mandatory assignments throughout their lives. This transition naturally and eventually incited distress as individuals faced uncertainty about which risks would yield success and which pathways to follow. Despite these happenings, the capitalist system has sought to alleviate its negative connotations through euphemisms such as *mustaqillik* (freedom) or *mustaqil* (free) enterprise system. In today's world, flexibility is picked repetitively as a similar rhetorical device to obscure oppressive aspects of capitalism. In waging war against the Soviet-type bureaucratic structures and prioritizing risk-taking, it is asserted that flexibility enables people to fulfill their potential on the way to becoming full-fledged *homo-economicus* who have nothing left to lose except their so-called USSR-branded chains. However, in practice, rather than simply abolishing the rules of the past, this new order imposes new forms of control that are complex, intriguing and often elusive. Perhaps the most perplexing dimension of flexibility lies in its impact on personal character. In the past, oldtimer Uzbeks like GC14's father (*buva*), who were typically bilingual in Russian and Uzbek, had a clear, straightforward comprehension of the Soviet-type conformist character, which they viewed as an ethical value (in alignment with Marxist principles) placed on non-individualistic desires and solidaristic relationships for the sake of the Soviet community.

Additionally, they mostly claimed that an individual's ideal character is based on their amicable connections and interactions with the broader world. With this in

mind, the Soviet-type conformist character was a more fully encapsulating term than the modern-day notion of conformism (and their offshoot conformist spaces), which pertains to possessing deceivingly individualistic aspirations and monetary-oriented feelings. Furthermore, the USSR type-conformist character placed a particular emphasis on the enduring nature of communal well-being, manifesting itself through steadfast loyalty, sustained commitments, and the capacity to delay immediate gratification for future perks as well as rewards. As E.P. Thompson would also argue, amidst the myriad of sentiments we might harbor at any given time, we strive to identify and cultivate those crisscrossing sentiments that will mold our characters. Thus, the Soviet-type conformist character pertained to the personal qualities Paxtayurters once held dear in themselves and for which they sought recognition from others in solidarity. Yet, in a society focused on perpetual flexibility, how do they ascertain what is truly of lasting value within themselves? How can long-term objectives be achieved within an economic system that is locked in on short-term results? Lastly, how can mutual loyalties and commitments endure in institutions that are constantly being restructured and reenvisaged? These are the fundamental questions about character that emerge under the siege of flexible capitalism. Reflecting on these concerns, GC14 expressed a profound sense of loss, lamenting his inability to keep the pace with the rapid changes that have enveloped the new Uzbek world. As he continued to speak, his voice quivered and the tears that had been brimming finally spilled over. “Look, I cry not just for the world I knew, but for the values that have been torn away from me” he exclaimed.

Figure 46. GC14 and Buva Displaying a Lenin Poster on A May Day Parade of 1979

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız, (Obtained from GC14’s Family Archives on 01.08.2022)*

At that moment, the door opened quietly, GC14's wife entered and placed a consoling hand on GC14's shoulder. "My dear," she whispered gently, "the world has changed so much, but everything is okay, we still have each other and you are in safe hands." After soothing her husband for a while, she lastly offered us a glass of ice-cold fruit compote made with raisins and apricots. "We need our strength, especially when the burdens of the past feel so heavy," she said. As we accepted her refreshment, she began to speak about the present:

> *"GC14 is absolutely right, the economy and market demands are constantly changing and pushing workers to toil more at take-it-or-leave-it salaries, making it difficult for ordinary people to keep up in this vicious cycle of poverty. What is more, upper-middle-aged, impoverished housewives like me and their poor families, who are non-technical workers and peasants, are stuck in the middle, in a gray area, and feeling pain. That's why our senior fellows like my father-in-law who are now in their 80s or 90s call us ar'ofdakilar, meaning 'those stuck in purgatory.' It's frustrating to be labelled like that, and 'eto voqeiy bardak*[88]*!' Plus, in this stinking wild capitalistic atmosphere, the labor unions that used to be strong during the USSR days now become just mere puppets of the state. They remain silent while our living spaces, our soil and our ecological assets are being contaminated by the industrialists. So, we need new strategies my dear son, new forms of organizing, and perhaps even new political movements like the revolts that are currently happening in Karakalpakstan that prioritize the rights and dignity of peasants over corporate interests. The journey ahead won't be easy, but it's essential if we want to build a fairer, more just society and claiming our very right to our villages!" (*GC14's Wife, Date: 01.08.2022*)*

As argued by GC14's wife, *bardak* (a Russian-originated word that is also used in the Uzbek language), which etymologically means 'bordello,' was used as a wordplay to symbolize 'total chaos.' It was utilized to characterize various aspects of the ongoing set of affairs ranging from nepotism to depriving a wide spectrum of individuals of former social rights, along with intolerable angst for the future. Another similar sounding term that was picked by the individual in question to portray the series of tumultuous life-changing events was 'wild capitalism' (*yovvoyi capitalism* in Uzbek). Within the sociological imagination of Joma Nazpary (2002), who conducted field research in post-Soviet Kazakhstan (in an area neighboring

[88] This is real-time chaos!

Paxtayurt) they (i.e., *bardak* and *yovvoyi capitalism*) both ontologically signify the cacophony of social life. When applied to the sphere of social interaction as well as class relations, they are mostly synonymous with everyday encounters amongst commoners based upon petty fraudulent practices such as involvement in the informal economy (or the second economy in the local lingo) through the production of conformist spaces (or roadside stalls which were previously mentioned in detail). It is also applied to portray disorderliness, randomness and loss of autonomy in an individual's mental state or daily life. Yet, the chaos (*bardak* or *o'ta tartibsizlik* of its Uzbek equivalent) is perceived by the gray-collar people to classify the working-class individual's living conditions in a myriad of ways.

Newly marginalized people, such as the wife of GC14, used the words 'poor' (*faqir* or *bechora* in the local vernacular) and 'poverty' (*kambag'allik* or *qashshoqlik* in the Uzbek language) to describe their diminished social power generally as a direct consequence of the chaos in question. In other words, what the dispossessed (who were deprived from their former collective lands) stigmatize as *bardak* was the *force majeure* consequence of their own plunder, a scenario they consider has been purposefully engineered by members of the once Soviet nomenclatures or former comrades (e.g., the white-collar employees of TTF) with managerial skills and technical know-how. Given the above and as lastly exalted by GC14's wife, during the final days of my stay in Uzbekistan, an organized peasant riot emerged in the country's Karakalpak region in response to the aforementioned *bardak*. In other words, the revolt was a significant event in *Yangi* Uzbekistan's history as it was the first organized rebellion against the neo-liberal status quo (or the Mirziyoyevian Regime).

People from all walks of life took an active role in these protests. Speaking in Lefebvrian terms, it was an act of valor on the way to claiming their very right to the city (for our case their living spaces). As with the Kazakh rebellions of 2022 and on-going farmer rebellions in India and Europe, the main motive behind these riots were the authoritarian pro-liberal stance of the government's pro-liberal position as well as societal grievances but also included Uzbekistan's heavily fractured ecologic fabric and socio-economic imbalances between the wealthy and the average man who has

been caught in limbo. Therefore, while conducting social research about the Uzbek experience and other farmer protests that have recently occurred in different geographies, it is necessary to consider spatial factors in relation to neo-liberalism and capitalism-induced anthropogenic climate change.

In those revolts, the three factors in question (spatial issues, neoliberalism and ecological degradation) played a dynamic and interconnected role in the unfolding of the ongoing unrest. The current socio-ecological deterioration in Paxtayurt (which was mentioned by GC14's wife) also showed that capitalism has become a force that needs to be tamed by force. This was because in today's technological jungle infested with industrial plants, once pastoral spaces like plain villages, and formerly communal areas (like *kolkhozes*) were being systematically exploited by capitalist actors for industrial activities or other commercial purposes, resulting in irreversible damage to existing class structure, human well-being and ecological fabric. This is clearly visible in the photograph below, which shows a chemical plant located five kilometers from TTF, contrasting sharply with the natural scenery.

Figure 47. A Newly Established Chemical Plant within the Vicinity of Paxtayurt

Courtesy: *Batuhan Yıldız (Date: 02.08.2022)*

At first glance, we see that machinery has replaced human activity, and natural life has been hindered by industrial production. Secondly, dairy cows belonging to gray-

collar employees have been forced to graze in comparatively more restricted spaces than those inhabiting 'abstract spaces' (a term coined by Henri Lefebvre to define 'virgin territory). The formerly crystal-clear waterways and streams that once flowed through the valleys have now become clogged with industrial sludge. Once adorned with vibrant vegetation, the riverbanks are polluted nowadays with oil slicks and debris. On the distant horizon, the outline of a once-mighty green plain is also barely visible due to the layer of haze hanging persistently low over the landscape. The sounds of wildlife have also been replaced by a ceaseless mechanical clanking noise splitting the air. Still, this research observed that industrial growth and capitalist progression were repetitively and relentlessly promoted in the responses of every white-collar factory worker mentioned in previous interviews. This was because their financial stability became increasingly tied to maintaining decent relations with state actors (also known as the status quo). Correspondingly, it became even harder for them, especially if they had not lived through the USSR, to imagine any social system other than the current one. As Karl Marx would have argued, most people who lived in the Czarist Uzbekistan, for example, did not perceive themselves to be slaves of the Czar or prisoners of their feudal lords. For them, the holy order of lordship and serfdom was taken for granted or God-given.

If we could travel back to before the 19th century and inform a local feudal lord (who was then called *bek*) that in the near future, his serfs were going to be free wage laborers, he most likely would have paid us no heed. For him, the social order or class structure could not be organized any other way. This is precisely what advocates of the existing social system (in *Yangi* Uzbekistan) claim today as well. They assert that socialist management would not be possible, people are insatiable, and so on, and we must stick to the principles of the *laissez-faire* economy. Still, what is it about capitalism that deems it akin to a so-called objective reality that cannot be challenged? By staking a claim to the idea of the right to the village, people like GC14's wife and Henri Lefebvre aim to broaden our horizons for something novel by challenging restrictive ideas and stimulating conversations about new methods of uniting people against oppressive systems, much like breaking free from our own metaphorical Platonian caves.

This is the most important and pragmatic deduction of a progressive movement like the Karakalpak Revolts of Uzbekistan and other peasant rebellions (taking place in Europe and India) today we can find in Lefebvre's work. The emphasis on dialectical understanding over taken-for-granted and structuralist approaches holds immense importance in current discourse. Lest we forget, few scholars in rural sociology, human geography, and urban studies have delved into the analysis of modern-day predatory capitalism, its trajectory, and its contradictions with precision, as Lefebvre did in his entire works. Reflecting on Hegel's and E.P. Thompson's assertation regarding the power of individuals who grasp the concept of true emancipation by planting a symbolic *Liberty Tree* (which was elaborated upon in the theoretical framework section), Lefebvre's exploration centers on the notion of genuine freedom. In other words, each age has its own variation of the *Liberty Tree*. For the factory workers of TTF, the peasants and gray-collar people of Paxtayurt and the cash-crop collectors throughout the entire country, the *Liberty Tree* is for democratic rights. Thompson and Lefebvre raised an interesting unprecedented point. The concept of democratic rights was not simply passed down to the working class from the so-called privileged Enlightenment of the bourgeoisie. Rather, it was the hard-working laborers themselves who conceived of democratic rights as a means of expressing their self-interests and yearning for autonomy in politics, production, and life in general. Therefore, thanks to the existence of the aforementioned peasant movements, it is now time to plant the *Liberty Tree* once again on Uzbek soil. How it grows and what it produces is up to the active agency of the working-class people, as it was during the halcyon days of the Soviet years.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Thirty years have passed since Uzbekistan gained independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of the most salient changes was the adoption of market-oriented policies, which included the privatization of Soviet enterprises, the dissolution of collective lands, and the creation of privately owned factories like TTF (as produced capitalist spaces). At first, these socio-spatial engineering projects aimed to bring more freedom to working-class people, stimulate economic growth, and limit state intervention in daily life. Nevertheless, despite their ambitious goals, these self-imposed liberal policies did not yield the anticipated results. Similar to other authoritarian regimes in Transoxiana, the production of capitalist spaces intensified class-based conflicts, heightened social distress and fragmented the once-homogenous class structure. What is more, due to the oppressive nature of *Yangi* Uzbekistan (New Uzbekistan), where access to resources and freedom of speech is extremely limited, there is a lack of academic research on this subject, especially about life in Uzbek villages after the passing of Islam Karimov in 2016.

To fill this void, I picked Paxtayurt as my social laboratory and spent the summer of 2022 there as a part-time white-collar factory worker at TTF's HR department. Throughout this period, I aimed to synthesize Lefebvre's theories on the production of space (particularly its perceived dimension) with Thompson's theories on the active role of working-class people in shaping and reshaping class relations in a way that had not been scrutinized before. By orchestrating performative fieldwork and immersing myself in the daily life of the Paxtayurt community through participant observation and semi-structured interviews, I was then able to engage in the lifeworld of the selected individuals (from distinct social classes) in an authentic way. In the course of these inquiries, applying Michael Burawoy's extended case

method equally enabled me to understand their perception of capitalism as well as the process of making and remaking the Uzbek-type working class in a critical Marxist manner. Anchored by my research question regarding the sociological impacts of the establishment of a multinational textile factory in a once-socialist village, along with in-depth perspectives of my interviewees about the entrance of capitalism to Paxtayurt village through the TTF, my analysis finally produced the following key findings: Each mode of production designates its own social space. Following the establishment of a capitalist system, a new spatial order needed to emerge in Paxtayurt as socialism gave way to the so-called free-market economy.

The process of gradually dismantling the pre-existing class structure subsequently ensued, and the social fabric of Uzbekistan eventually underwent a subtle stratification into several distinctive tiers. At the base, there now existed laborers; blue-collar individuals (full-time factory workers) and peasants. They all sustained themselves through the sale of their physical labor, working diligently in fields or industrial spaces to meet production targets dictated by either governmental bodies or private enterprises. Above them were capitalists and white-collar workers, proprietors of capital whose primary income stemmed from profits or surplus value. The next tier constituted the state and its actors in the service sector, accumulating considerable wealth and wielding executive power over ordinary citizens. What is more, similar to the condition of the English working class mentioned by E.P Thompson (2013) [1963], the Uzbek working class equally came under the dominance of the bourgeoisie due to the so-called capitalist progression in the textile industry.

As argued by every working-class participant, following the entry of capitalism into the village through the establishment of TTF, there was a noticeable decline in living standards and consumption practices compared to the times of the USSR. According to them, only a select few in white-collar or technical blue-collar positions could now benefit from the new opportunities arising from political reforms after the collapse of the Union. In the face of these adversities, the average man on the street, like the peasants and non-technical blue-collar workers of Paxtayurt, was forcibly coerced to work in the fields or factory spaces with the challenge of having to pay market prices

for goods while not being paid market rates for their own labor in return. As a direct response to this situation, many industrial workers in places like Paxtayurt now supplemented their income by cultivating personal plots to sell their cash crops to potential customers, thus engaging in both agricultural and industrial labor simultaneously by producing their very own kind of conformist spaces.

As this research also revealed, this dual engagement was less common in the Western regions of the ex-Soviet countries, a predicament that also makes it impossible for social scientists to draw clear class distinctions in the context of the 2020s as opposed to socialist times. Nonetheless, in order to address these complexities, this research has modestly classified these individuals as members of the '*gray-collar'* group. Within this framework, the notion '*gray collar*' encompasses non-technical Uzbek workers who engage in full-time manual labor in capitalist spaces like TTF, while also participating in part-time farming activities to supplement their monthly income.

As argued in the findings section, these workers officially work from 8 am to 5 pm, earning between $150 - $600 depending on their title and skills, with an extra $50 to $250 earned through agricultural work. Given that these Paxtayurters exhibited characteristics of both blue-collar, white-collar, and agriculture-based classes, this research has chosen to associate them with the color *gray*, a color that possesses amorphous ontology. The term *gray collar* was also used in a broader context but with an understanding of its limitations, as Paxtayurt was the only village and TTF was the only factory thoroughly studied. Nevertheless, drawing inspiration from E.P. Thompson and picking Paxtayurt as a microcosm of modern-day Uzbek villages, it is plausible to consider the gray-collar group in rural Tashkent as a proto-class *in the making*, albeit one that has yet to fully emerge as a class for itself in the Marxist sense.

This is because, as Marx (2008) [1867] would argue, for any particular group to be fully recognized as a class, it typically requires the involvement of millions of individuals to engage in a similar type of work. Thus, it would be erroneous to categorize these gray-collar individuals under the umbrella of an 'at least a few

million members only' category. In addition to these statements, despite the erosion of the traditional class structure in the researched village and the decentralization of power among the ex-proletariat people, the gray collar Paxtayurters, thanks to their former Soviet education and everlasting USSR-type camaraderie, still maintain a considerable degree of active agency in their roadside stalls which enables them to enact lucrative sales in a solidaristic manner.

For this reason, when gray-collar individuals like GC7 describe their portable stalls (and other roadside stalls as produced spaces), they generally prefer to label them as 'our kind of comfort zones,' where they can now sell the agricultural merchandise they learned to cultivate on Soviet homesteads, but this time in a commercial context to upgrade their economic situation. Still, contrary to their overly optimistic description, this research views these stalls as *conformist* or adaptable spaces, lacking the revolutionary fervor that once characterized *counter-spaces* like *kolkhozes*, which were always known for challenging capitalist norms. Moreover, as E.P. Thompson and Henri Lefebvre might also argue, by creating these conformist spaces, Paxtayurt's gray-collar workers unintentionally aided in the neutralization of the Uzbek working class by engaging with a nebulous system that trapped the Soviet-educated proletariat and their post-Soviet offspring in a perpetual cycle of buying and selling.

Drawing upon these debates, this research has found that the preference for maintaining these conformist spaces primarily stems from Western-type pragmatism and the survival instinct. As also discovered by this research, they avoided the risks and potential monetary repercussions that might arise by continuing to orchestrate their mercantile activities in these comfort zones while complying with the status quo. Hence, their acts of conformism became a rational choice to make ends meet. Additionally, commercial interactions in these conformist spaces often included unique rituals, such as exchanging greetings and good wishes amongst gray-collar members, which serves to boost their social standing in the village community. In the words of the gray-collar people, this behavior can also be summed up as showing allegiance and benignity to fellow Paxtayurters while adopting a more competitive or self-centric capitalist approach with outsiders.

This eventually paved the way for the reshuffling of social relations and contributed to the remaking of the Uzbek working class in Paxtayurt. In this light, this research also unearthed that the origins of terms like 'the remaking of the working class,' 'gray-collar people,' and 'conformist spaces' can be traced back to the rise of capitalism in post-Soviet South domains. Therefore, they should equally be regarded as a form of self-imposed social engineering or a shock to the system. To put it another way, these intertwined concepts and the great transformation of Uzbekistan, including Paxtayurt Village, refer to decades of neoliberal dominance, leading to flexibility in the labor markets, insecurity, precarity, and risk amongst the commoners. The sociological drawbacks of this metamorphosis include the minimalization of workers' rights and the rise of informal labor practices. In this context, the gray-collar group and their roadside stalls, namely conformist spaces, were not an unexpected phenomenon in the modern market economy but rather vital elements or the staple ingredients of neoliberal disorder.

While the *Yangi* Uzbek order rendered the Soviet-style proletariat obsolete and entrenched the existence of this newly emerging group, the post-Soviet changes in Paxtayurt were also described by locals as a sociological earthquake. In other words, what the working-class people who were deprived of their former collective lands, stigmatized as an earthquake was the unstoppable consequence of their plunder, a chaotic scenario they consider has been purposefully engineered by members of the once Soviet nomenclatures or else the former comrades with managerial skills and technical know-how.

Moreover, after the fall of the Soviet Union, they said, the revolutionary fervor of the Uzbek working class vanished as the focus shifted from an altruistic mindset to rampant individualism. As also found out by this research, ordinary people experienced a loss of meaning. Akin to what has occurred in France, the UK and the US, in their pursuit of satisfying artificially imposed desires, these individuals eventually became subservient to the very commodities they consume. Meanwhile, this lack of awareness extended beyond mere consumer choices, reflecting a broader societal shift in which individuals find themselves shorn of the agency they once had during pivotal moments like the Bolshevik Revolution. Nevertheless, despite this

apparent loss of autonomy, there are some surprisingly unexpected developments happening in the country.

Recent peasant uprisings in the nearby Karakalpakstan region of Uzbekistan, for instance, signify a trend of working-class people standing up for their rights in their communities en route to creating a new lifestyle that aligns with their best interests. This phenomenon, which E.P. Thompson aptly described as an act of "planting the liberty tree," signals a shift in which ordinary people are now beginning to rewrite history from the below on the way to becoming a total person in the Lefebvrian sense. All in all, amidst these majestic shifts, this dissertation attempted to explore the lives and evolving class relations as well as sociological dynamics following the founding of a multinational textile company (TTF) in the post-Soviet Uzbek village of Paxtayurt.

Another facet of this research focused on how individuals from various backgrounds handle the new realities imposed by this capitalist transformation. As my study was limited to Paxtayurt and its singularly multinational factory, TTF (as a produced capitalist space), it was not intended to cover each and every aspect of village life. Instead, it aimed to depict the essence of post-socialist life or the Uzbek Way towards capitalist transformation in Paxtayurt, where remnants of the Soviet era (termed as "sociological fossils" by Lefebvre) continue to shape past and present. While I have found some concrete answers and explanations for my inquiries, others remain unresolved due to complexities inherent in the subject matter. Several socio-political factors contributed to the aforementioned limitations of this research. One was that many participants, particularly the gray-collar workers, were hesitant to engage in semi-structured interviews, sharing only partial insights into their first-hand life experiences.

The relatively small sample size of 26 participants (12 TTF workers for the interviews and 14 gray-collar people for the participant observation) from diverse occupational backgrounds and the fact the inability to include younger workers who were born in the post-USSR period further limited the generalizability of the findings. Lastly, their reluctance to criticize TTF's working conditions or its

workspace policies, coupled with the unwillingness of Russian and Uzbek white-collar participants to discuss current sociological issues in detail restricted an exhaustive understanding of the newly emerging class identities. Furthermore, as my research was a case study that focused solely on TTF and the village of Paxtayurt, it was impossible to draw upon broader generalizations about the spatial and class-based issues in post-Soviet Uzbekistan.

In order to address these limitations, future research should extend its geographical scope beyond Paxtayurt, by including a broader spectrum of post-Soviet villages, factories and industrial towns influenced by newly emerging capitalist actors, i.e., German, American and Chinese companies that invest in Uzbekistan's lucrative industries ranging from textiles to agriculture. This expansion would be crucial for generating conclusions that are more widely applicable to capitalist transformations, such as the formation of gray-collar people across Uzbekistan and other post-socialist regions. Longitudinal studies that compare Soviet-born individuals with younger generations, especially those engaged in full-time industrial and part-time agricultural roles in different villages, would also provide valuable insights into how perceptions of labor, class, and identity shift over time.

By contrasting these generational perspectives, researchers could determine whether the gray-collar identity represents a lasting class formation or else a temporary, context-specific phenomenon. Furthermore, an interdisciplinary approach that integrates perspectives from sociology, anthropology, political economy, and cultural studies would offer a more holistic understanding of not only economic and class transformations but also the accompanying cultural, ideological, and psychological changes driven by the spread of capitalist models in places like Uzbekistan. Finally, another critical area for possible future studies lies in investigating whether Soviet-era factories remain operational or have fallen into disuse. This line of research would allow scholars to explore the "life and death" of Soviet industry, offering a deeper understanding of how these industrial-produced spaces, once central to the Soviet socialist system, have either adapted to, or ceased under the pressures of capitalist transformation. By integrating this inquiry with broader perspectives on how former socialist populations reconcile their Soviet legacies with capitalist

realities, future researchers may gain valuable insights into the evolving conditions of the working class and the future of gray-collar workers in Uzbekistan in a more comprehensive manner.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

DUMLUPINAR BULVARI 06800
ÇANKAYA ANKARA/TURKEY
T: +90 312 210 22 91
F: +90 312 210 79 59
uearm@metu.edu.tr
www.uearm.metu.edu.tr

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Sayı: 28620816 /

20 MAYIS 2022

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Helga RITTERSBERGER-TILIÇ

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Batuhan YILDIZ'ın "MEKÂNIN ÜRETİMİ VE SINIF İLİŞKİLERİ: TAŞKENT TEKSTİL FABRİKASI ÖRNEĞİ" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **0252-ODTUİAEK-2022** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
İAEK Başkan

B. ARAŞTIRMAYA GÖNÜLLÜ KATILIM FORMU

Institution Name

MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY (METU), ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ (ODTÜ)

Student Information

Name and Student Identity Number: BATUHAN YILDIZ, [redacted]

Contact Details: [redacted]

Research Question:

The main objective of this research is to analyze the production of space and class relations in a newly privatizing village through the establishment of the Tashkent Textile Factory. In view of the above, the research question is as follows: What kind of consequences does the implementation of a multinational textile factory have on the class structure of a once socialist village? The first group of interviewees is comprised of the class of white-collar factory administrators. The second group consists of the workers of the factory who will be coded as members of the blue-collared class. The third group consists of the villagers who will be coded as members of the peasantry of Paxtayurt.

A Note for The Participants

This research will NOT include any participants who have a learning disability, have a mental health condition, have impairments (both sensory and physical), and have previous life experiences (e.g., victims of abuse).

Before and during data collection

The researcher will

1. Display his whole identity to all participants.
2. Give all participants reliable info about the essence of the research and the objectives to which the data will be provided
3. Will not ask leading questions on prospective participants to take part
4. Present participants with their contact details; thus, they will be able to learn about any aspect of the research.
5. Enlighten all participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study.

After data collection

This research will not be used to further an academic opportunity in research design relating to questionnaires and surveys.

Information about the research participants and the factory will not be provided. However, it is acceptable for research participants to ask about the overall findings/results on an informal/personal basis if they prefer to do so.

By signing this form, you agree to the ethical rules mentioned above.

Signed …… Date ……..

C. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Age: **Gender:**

Nationality and Ethnicity: **Profession:**

Education: **Monthly Income:**

Your Parents' Profession and Their Education:

THE RESEARCH QUESTION (OR THE MAIN RESEARCH QUERY): What kind of consequences does the implementation of a multinational textile factory have on the class structure of a once socialist village?

THE QUESTION SET FOR THE FACTORY WORKERS: ***The Perception of Capitalism by the White-Collar and the Blue-Collar Class***

1. What are your feelings about privatization in Uzbekistan and its social implications for rural Tashkent? Has it changed your daily life?

2. If so, what are your opinions and perceptions about the changes in Paxtayurt before and after the liberalization initiatives like the creation of the Tashkent Textile Factory?

THE QUESTION SET FOR THE LOCAL PEASANTS OF PAXTAYURT: ***The Perception of Capitalism by the Peasantry***

1. What are the pros and cons of the privatization experience? Please do not hesitate to make comparisons between the everyday life in Uzbek SSR, Mustaqillik and Post-Mustaqillik eras.

2. What does the establishment of the Tashkent Textile Factory mean to you? In other words, how do you perceive it?

D. CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: Yıldız, Batuhan
Nationality: Turkish (TC)
Date and Place of Birth: [redacted]
Marital Status: [redacted]
Phone: [redacted]
e-mail: [redacted]
ORCID Number: [redacted]

EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
MS	Istanbul Bilgi University, International Relations	2018
BS	The University of Nottingham, Sociology	2015

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English, Fluent French, Beginner Russian, Beginner Chinese

HOBBIES

Playing Chess, Playing Drums, Collecting Vintage Books and Vinyls

E. TURKISH SUMMARY/ TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, mekânın üretimi ve sınıf ilişkileri arasındaki bağımlı dinamikleri bir post-Sovyet köyü olan Paxtayurt'taki ilk özel teşebbüs olarak kurulan Taşkent Tekstil Fabrikası (TTF) üzerinden analiz etmektir. Tezin temel argümanları, TTF'nin mekânsal özellikleri ve seçili fabrikanın Paxtayurt sakinlerinin üzerindeki dönüştürücü etkisi, Henri Lefebvre'in (1991) [1974] mekânsal üçlemesinde ele aldığı "*algılanan mekân*" kavramı üzerine kurulmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra, Edward Palmer Thompson'un (2013) [1963] *İngiliz İşçi Sınıfının Oluşumu* adlı eseri, SSCB dönemi ve Sovyetler sonrası Özbekistan'da yeni tip bir işçi sınıfının doğuşunu anlamada önemli bir teorik dayanak noktası olarak kullanılmıştır. Araştırmamın metodolojisi ise bahsi geçen kuramcıların seçili teorilerin tek bir çatı altında, sistematik bir biçimde toplanmasına imkân sağlayan Michael Burawoy'un "*genişletilmiş durum çalışması metodu*" olarak seçilmiştir. Her ne kadar Burawoy'un tüm saha çalışmalarında gerçekleştirdiği gibi emek yoğun mavi yakalı işlerde çalışmamış olsam da onun yönergelerine uyarak araştırma sahasında kayda değer bir süre geçirdim.

2022 yazı boyunca, TTF'nin İnsan Kaynakları Departmanında yarı zamanlı bir beyaz yakalı çalışan olarak yer aldım. Bu deneyim, fabrika ortamında ve Paxtayurt köyünde katılımcı gözlemler yapmama olanak tanıdı ayrıca Sovyetler dönemine tanıklık etmiş fabrika işçileri ve yerel köylülerle yarı yapılandırılmış, açık uçlu görüşmeler gerçekleştirmeme yardımcı oldu. Görüşmelerde sorulan sorular (bkz. Ek 1), "çok uluslu bir tekstil fabrikasının sosyalist bir geçmişe sahip olan bir köyde yarattığı kimilerine göre olumlu kimilerine göre olumsuz içtimai değişikliklerin netleştirilmesi" sorunsalı etrafında şekillenmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında, toplamda 12 katılımcı ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiş ve 14 gri yakalı Paxtayurtlunun gündelik yaşam pratikleri de katılımcı gözlem yoluyla incelenmiştir. Görüşülen ilk sosyal sınıf kategorisi, 3 Özbek Beyaz Yakalı (ÖBY) ve 3 Rus Beyaz Yakalı (RBY) olmak üzere iki ayrı gruba ayrılmıştır. İkinci sınıf kategorisi de mavi

yakalı fabrika işçilerinden oluşan ve tamamı Özbek olan 3 kişilik bir gruptur. Bu grup, Özbek Mavi Yakalılar (ÖMY) olarak kodlanmıştır. Üçüncü kategoride bulunan son 3 kişi ise yine tamamen Özbek kökenli olup Paxtayurt'ta geçimini sağlamaya çalışan köylülerden oluşmaktadır ve Özbek Lokal Köylü (ÖLK) olarak kodlanmıştır. Görüşme yapılan kişilerin tamamı 54 ile 74 yaş grubu aralığındadır.

54-74 yaş grubu aralığının seçilmesinin ardındaki başat sebep ise bu kişilerin SSCB döneminde kolektif çiftliklerde ya da Sovyet tipi fabrikalarda çalışmış ve ülkelerinin kapitalizme geçiş sürecine birinci elden tanıklık etmiş olmalarıdır. Bu çalışmanın daha anlaşılır olması için, beyaz yakalı bireylere yöneltilen sorulara verilen yanıtlar "Kapitalizmin Yüceltilmesi" başlığı altında, mavi yakalı ve köylü sınıfının yanıtları ise "Kapitalizmin Eleştirisi" başlığı altında analiz edilmiştir. Ayrıca, katılımcı gözlemlerim sonucunda gri yakalılar olarak tanımladığım yeni bir sosyal grubun ortaya çıkışı gibi yerel dinamiklerle ilgili çıkarımlarımsa "Arada Kalma Durumu ve Özbek İşçi Sınıfının Yeniden Oluşumu" başlığı altında incelenmiştir. Ancak, bahsi geçen analizlerimi kapsamlı bir biçimde özetlemeden önce seçili köyün coğrafi özellikleri ve hemen sonrasında sosyal tarihinin açıklanması, araştırma bulgularımın daha kapsamlı bir biçimde kavranması açısından önem arz etmektedir.

Yukarıda zikredilen katılımcıların da belirttiği üzere, Paxtayurt köyü, Özbekistan'ın başkentine yaklaşık 120 km uzaklıkta, Taşkent Bölgesi'nin Bostanlık ilçesinde yer almaktadır. Lefebvre'in ilk etnografik saha araştırmasını gerçekleştirdiği İtalya'nın Toskana bölgesindeki köylerle birçok açıdan benzerlik gösteren bu köy; tarihi mirası, verimli tarım arazileri, gelişmiş altyapı tesisleri ve Özbek ekonomisine katkıları nedeniyle Özbekistan halkının içtimai tarihinde önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Ancak bu iki köy tipi arasında bazı önemli farklar da mevcuttur. İklim açısından Toskana köyleri ılıman bir iklime sahipken, Paxtayurt karasal bir iklime sahiptir. Yazlar 40°C'yi bulan sıcaklıklarla kavurucu olmakla birlikte, kışlar 0-15°C aralığında seyretmekte ve nispeten soğuk ve yağışlı geçmektedir. Tüm bunlara rağmen Paxtayurt, verimli ovalara ev sahipliği yapmakla kalmayıp Çirçik Nehri ve Tanrı Dağları gibi bir dağ sistemini içerisinde bulunduran çok katmanlı bir coğrafi yapıya maliktir.

Bu ekolojik zenginlikler, köy halkı için hayvancılığı ve buğday gibi kazançlı tarımsal ürünlerin yetiştirilmesini kolaylaştırmaktadır. Ancak bölgenin topografik yapısı Paxtayurt köyünde pamuk tarımı yapılmasına imkân tanımamaktadır. En yakın pamuk tarlaları Yeni (Yangi) Yol ve Zengi Ata'da bulunmakta olup araştırma yapılan köye yaklaşık 100-150 km uzaklıkta bir mesafededir. Tüm bu olumsuzluklara rağmen TTF'nin sahipleri, Paxtayurt'ta çok uluslu bir tekstil fabrikası kurma kararı almıştır. Fabrika müdürüne göre bu kararın ardındaki temel nedenlerinden ilki, Paxtayurt'un Taşkent'e olan yakınlığı ve köyün sahip olduğu gelişmiş ulaşım ağlarıdır. Bu durum, çoğunluğu şehirde yaşayan fabrika müdürlerinin ve diğer tüm çalışanların sorunsuz bir şekilde işe gidip gelmelerine olanak vermektedir. İkinci neden ise köyün bereketli arazisi ve görece ılıman iklimidir.

Yukarıda formüle edilen emsalsiz özellikleri sayesinde 2007 yılında kurulan TTF, daha önce pamuk üretimi yapılmayan bu alanı bir pamuk üretim merkezi haline getirmiştir. Şirket, Surhanderya, Kaşkaderya, Harezm ve Karakalpakistan gibi pamuk zengini bölgelerden tonlarca birinci sınıf pamuk satın almakta ve bu pamuklar, ihtiyatlı bir biçimde işlendikten sonra uluslararası pazarlara dağıtılmaktadır. Paxtayurt, önemli bir ticaret merkezi olmanın yanı sıra, geniş ölçekli altyapı olanaklarına da sahiptir. Köyde darıhane (*dorixona*) adı verilen yerel bir eczane, cami, ilkokul, pazar yeri (*dehqon bozori*), sağlık ocağı (*Qishloq Shifokorlik Punkti*), çayhane, evlere su sağlayan arık adı verilen sulama kanalları, otobüs durakları, makine tamir atölyeleri, kırsal idari meclis, küçük bir karakol ve "Mini-Market Pepsi" gibi küresel markalar adı altında işletilen çeşitli yapılar bulunmaktadır. Ancak köyde Batı tipi bir hastane veya lise bulunmamaktadır. Bu nedenle, daha ileri eğitim görmek ya da daha iyi sağlık hizmeti almak için köylüler, Paxtayurt'a en yakın merkezi yerleşim olan Gazalkent veya Taşkent'e gitmek zorundadır.

Tüm bu eksiklerinin haricinde Paxtayurt, yaklaşık 620 hane ve 3.000 kişiden oluşan nüfusuyla büyük ölçekli, gelişkin bir yerleşim birimi olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Nüfus Özbek, Tacik, Rus, Tatar, Karakalpak ve Kazak gibi çeşitli etnik gruplardan oluşmaktadır. Köy halkının yaklaşık dörtte ikisi TTF'de çalışırken 1480 kişi ise sebze yetiştiriciliği, hayvancılık, kümes hayvancılığı ve arıcılık gibi tarımsal

faaliyetlerle uğraşmaktadır. Geriye kalan nüfus ticaret ve hizmet sektörlerinde çalışmaktadır. TTF'de iş bulamayan ya da tarım ve ticaretle uğraşmayan bazı kişilerse Almanya veya Amerika Birleşik Devletleri gibi gelişmiş ülkelere göç etmiştir. Köyde ayrıca, devlet tarafından atanmış Gazalkent kökenli 8 kişiden oluşan bir sağlık ekibi de görev yapmaktadır. Öte yandan, köydeki eczane personeli Sovyet döneminde eğitim almış olup, Taşkent'te öğrenim gördükten sonra köylerine dönerek yerel topluma hizmet etmeyi tercih etmiş üç orta yaşlı kişiden oluşmaktadır.

Bu kişilere ek olarak diğer emek yoğun işlerde de orta yaşlı kişilerin sayıca çok bulunması, köy nüfusunun çoğunlukla orta yaşlıymış gibi görünmesine neden olmaktadır. Fakat sanılanın aksine Paxtayurt'un genel demografik yapısı piramidal bir şekle sahiptir. Köyde çocuklar ve gençler, nüfusun %25'ini oluşturmaktadır ve tüm bu kişiler 0-14 yaş arası bireylerden oluşmaktadır. 15-65 yaş arası nüfus ise çalışma çağındaki büyük grubu temsil etmekte ve köy nüfusunun %70'inden fazlasını oluşturmaktadır. En büyük alt grup, %50'lik oran ile 31-45 yaş arası bireylerdir.

Bunu %40'lık bir oran ile 15-30 yaş aralığındaki grup takip etmektedir. 65 yaş ve üzeri kişiler ise toplam nüfusun yalnızca %5'ini oluşturmaktadır. Cinsiyet dağılımı açısından, köyde yaklaşık %51,5 oranında kadın, %48,5 oranında erkek bulunmaktadır. Ancak, tarımsal faaliyetler için köye gelen 700'den fazla mevsimlik erkek işçi, bu cinsiyet dengesini dönemsel olarak değiştirmektedir. Fabrika müdürü, bu işçilerin çoğunun 25-40 yaş aralığında olduğunu, yaşça daha genç olan işçilerin ise tarım konusunda deneyim kazanmak amacıyla köye geldiğini belirtmiştir. Ayrıca TTF'de çalışan ve geçici olarak Paxtayurt'ta yaşayan 10 yabancı işçi de Rusya-Ukrayna savaşından kaçan ve TTF'yi bir sığınak olarak gören Rus teknikerlerdir. Bu tercihlerinin ardında yatan en önemli neden ise Özbekistan'ın hoşgörü ve kapsayıcılığıyla bilinen sosyalist tarihinde yatmaktadır.

Görüşme yaptığım tümü Özbek kökenli ve bunların haricindeki Rus katılımcıların da bahsettiği üzere, 1917 devriminin hemen sonrasında Paxtayurt köyü doğrudan Sovyet boyunduruğu altına girmiş ve Romanovların çöküşü köyün idari yapısını feodal bir düzenden sosyalist bir sisteme geçirmiştir. Bu süre zarfında Sovyet

yetkililer, halkın refahını sağlamak ve yaşam standartlarını yükseltmek amacıyla eğitime ve toprağın nasıl işleneceğine dair yenilikçi reformlar yapmışlardır. Bu reformlar, 1921 ve 1929 yılları arasında Vladimir İlyiç Lenin'in Yeni Ekonomik Politika (NEP) adı altında sunduğu emsalsiz bir sosyal kontrat aracılığıyla hayata geçirilmiştir. Bu politikaların başarılı bir şekilde uygulanması, devlet ile köylüler arasında kazan-kazan sistematiğinde bir piyasa ilişkisi oluşturmuş ve yerel sanayi pürüzsüz bir biçimde kamusallaştırılmıştır. Ancak Lenin'in ani vefatı, Yeni Ekonomik Politika'nın Jozef Stalin tarafından termine edilişine ve NEP'in alternatifi olan 5 Yıllık Kalkınma Planlarının dehşetengiz bir biçimde uygulanmaya başlamasına sebebiyet vermiştir.

Robert Service'in de (2020) [1997] belirttiği üzere, Stalin'in aşırı derecede iddialı endüstriyelleşme politikaları, SSCB'ye ABD'nin alternatifi bir süper güç olma yolunda gözle görülür ilerlemeler sağlarken bu süreçte Özbekistan'ın doğal kaynakları da Amerikan yayılmacılığını durdurmak amacıyla cömertçe kullanılmıştır. Bunun haricinde, Paxtayurt gibi kırsal alanlarda gündelik yaşam, başarılı Sovyet propagandası sayesinde değişmiştir. Bu propaganda girişimleri, Stalin'in Özbek işçi sınıfını mobilize etmesine yardımcı olmuş ve onları ideal tip Sovyet vatandaşları haline getirmiştir (Siegelbaum ve Suny, 1994). Ayrıca Lenin'in ölümünden kısa bir süre sonra ivme kazanan istikrarlı kolektifleşme eğilimi, köylülerin kendi sınıf bilincini kazanmalarına olanak tanımıştır.

Ulusal çapta bakıldığında, Özbek SSC'deki *kolhozların* toplam sayısı 9.734'e ulaşmış, *sovhoz* sayısı ise yaklaşık 1000 civarına kadar çıkmıştır (Kandiyoti, 2002: 2). 1941 yılında Nazi Almanya'sının Sovyetler Birliği'nin Batı porsiyonlarına yaptığı beklenmedik yıldırım tipi saldırısından sonraysa yeni tip kolektif tarım işletmelerinden ağır sanayi fabrikalarına kadar birçok stratejik sanayi kompleksi, sistematik bir biçimde SSCB'nin savunmasız olarak addedilen garp bölgelerinden, Merkez Asya'nın güvenli bölgelerine taşınmıştır. Bunun sonucunda Rusya, Ukrayna ve Ermenistan gibi, SSCB'nin çeşitli milletlerinden gelen nitelikli işçiler; Paxtayurt gibi alanlara kalıcı olarak göç ettirilerek yerel iş gücünün eğitilmesinde katkıda bulunmuştur. Benzer bir motivasyonla, Özbek SSC genelinde *kızıl çayhaneler* kurulmuştur (Khalid, 2021). Bu çayhanelerde kritik toplantılar düzenlenmiş, dersler

verilmiş ve SSCB'nin çeşitli yerlerinden gelen bilim insanları yeni oluşturulan Özbek işçi sınıfını üst düzey teknoloji ve pozitivist düşünce ile tanıştırmıştır.

Thompson'un bahsettiği İngiliz tipi çayevleri ya da avam sınıfın bir araya geldiği birahaneler gibi, Özbek proletaryası da bu mekânlarda bir araya gelmiş ve çeşitli sosyal konular hakkında tartışmışlardır. Bu tartışmalar genellikle devletin dayattığı üretim kotalarını yerine getirme konusundaki yükümlülüklerden, Sovyet işçileri arasındaki başarı hikayelerine kadar geniş bir yelpazede şekillenmiştir. Tam da bu noktada, Ukrayna'da bir kömür madeninde çalışan madenci Aleksey Stakhanov'un çalıştığı iş yerinde sergilediği üstün başarı öyküsü ve buna bağlı olarak ortaya çıkan *Stakhanov* hareketi, Özbek işçi sınıfının daha da bilinçlenmesinde kritik bir rol oynamıştır. *Politbüro*, emek yoğun işlerde çalışan sınıf arasında *Stakhanovculuğun* artan popülaritesini fark ederek onu Sovyet radyosunda ulusal bir kahraman olarak tanıtmıştır.

Kendi sektörlerinde çok çalışan ve üretim rekoru kıran işçiler, "*Stakhanovcu*" statüsüyle onurlandırılmaya başlanmıştır. Bu statüye erişen işçiler ayrıca daha yüksek maaşlar, daha iyi mesken imkânları ve çocukları için üst düzey eğitim olanakları gibi sosyal ayrıcalıklar elde etmiştir. *Stakhanovcu* statüsüne erişemeyen diğer işçiler de daha fazla çalışmaya teşvik edilmiştir. Bunun sonucunda üretim seviyeleri yükselmiş ve yeni bir iş ahlakı ortaya çıkmıştır. Aleksey Stakhanov'un kendi sözleriyle, Stakhanov kelimesi sıradan bir kişiyi temsil etmeyi bırakıp SSCB'de yaşayan tüm insanlar açısından, iş hakkında yeni bir düşünme veya hissetme biçimi haline gelmiştir (Stakhanov, 1939). Sonuç olarak her Özbek vatandaşı, ideal tip birer Sovyet işçisi olabilmek için Weberyen tarzda bir iş ahlakı edinmeye başlamıştır.

Bu sırada geniş ölçekli işçi sendikalarının kurulması, devletle toplu pazarlık yapmayı mümkün kılmıştır. Özbek SSC, işçi refahı ve gelişiminin yüceltildiği bir işçi cennetine dönüşmüştür. Ancak uzay yarışı ve 1980 yılında meydana gelen Sovyet-Afgan savaşı, SSCB'nin kaynaklarını ve insan sermayesini geri dönülmez bir biçimde tüketmiş ve en nihayetinde birliğin dağılmasına yol açmıştır (Ro'i, 2022). Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasından kısa bir süre sonra, TTF gibi kapitalist yapılar

ortaya çıkmış ve yerel iş gücü, eski haklarından mahrum kalmıştır. SSCB döneminde olduğu gibi eski tarz işçi sendikaları kurma girişiminde bulunanlar ya da mevcut sistemi eleştirenler ağır yaptırımlarla karşılaşmış ve sesleri sistematik bir biçimde bastırılmıştır.

Bu umut kırıcı durumun lineer bir sonucu olarak SSCB'nin dağılmasına tanıklık eden bireyler ve Paxtayurt gibi bölgelerde yaşayanlar için iki seçenek belirmiştir: Bu kişiler ya kapitalist yapılarda düşük ücretlerle mavi yakalı işçi olarak çalışmak ya da kapitalist sistem ile iş birliği yaparak beyaz yakalı mesleklere sahip olmak zorunda kalmışlardır. Elde ettikleri maaşlardan memnun olmayan bazı çalışanlar ise yarı zamanlı girişimci olarak yol kenarında kendi yetiştirdikleri tarım ürünlerini satmaya yönelmişlerdir. Diğerleri ise tam zamanlı tarım işçisi olarak zirai faaliyetlerle uğraşmayı tercih etmişlerdir. Bu yeni esnek kapitalizm anlayışı, iş kavramını köklü bir biçimde değiştirmiş ve "Sovyet tipi homojen Özbek işçi sınıfı" gibi kavramların geçerliliğini ortadan kaldırmıştır.

Fabrika müdürü olan ÖBY1'in ve diğer tüm beyaz yakalı çalışanların (ÖBY2, ÖBY3, RBY1, RBY2, RBY3) da belirttikleri üzere, Sovyet döneminde eğitim görmüş ve güçlü sosyal bağlantıları olan eski kadrolar, sosyal merdivende hızla yükselirken bu bağlantılara sahip olmayanlar geride kalmışlardır. Geleneksel eşitlikçi yaşam tarzları ve sosyalist emeğin hegemonyası, yerini sömürüye dayalı bir düzene bırakmıştır. Araştırmamı gerçekleştirdiğim tekstil fabrikası gibi yapılarda emeğin ticarileşmesi ve kitlesel üretim, birçok insanın para odaklı bir yaşam sürmesine neden olmuştur. Bu durum, Özbek Mavi Yakalı işçiler (ÖMY1, ÖMY2, ÖMY3) tarafından da olumsuz bir şekilde karşılanmıştır. Onlara göre, kapitalizmin Sovyet sonrası Özbekistan'a bir Truva atı gibi sunulan entegrasyonu, toplumsal refahı arttırmak ya da işçi sınıfını güçlendirmek yerine, işçileri üretim süreçlerinden kopartmış ve bu kişileri bireyselleştirip, yalnızlaştırarak sistemin birer dişlisi haline getirmiştir. Aşırı bireyselleşmenin yol açtığı rekabet ve para kazanma hırsı, iş gücü ücretlerinin de düşmesine neden olmuştur.

Bu nedenle söz konusu dönüşümden kazananlar emekçiler değil, beyaz yakalı bireyler ve kapitalizmle iş birliği yapan diğer kimseler olmuştur. Bu geçiş, aynı

zamanda sosyal dayanışmanın zayıflamasına, bireylerin iş yerlerindeki rollerine yabancılaşmasına ve kapitalist düzenin getirdiği sürekli belirsizlik hissinin yaygınlaşmasına yol açmıştır. Süregelen değişikliklerin yıkıcı etkisi sadece TTF'nin ofis ortamında ve fabrika alanında değil, günlük yaşamda da gözlemlenebilmektedir. Fransız felsefeci Henri Lefebvre (1971) [1968] ve Stanek (2011)'de bu durumu "gündelik yaşamın kolonizasyonu" olarak tanımlamaktadır. Görüşme yaptığım köylüler de (ÖLK1, ÖLK2 ve ÖLK3) mevcut statüko hakkında Lefebvre'in yaklaşımına benzer bir düşünce yapısına sahiptir. Onlara göre, kapitalizmin girişiyle kolektif çiftlikler ve bu komünal alanların etkinleşmesinin doğal bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan kolektif yaşam pratikleri hileli yollarla yok edilmiştir. Her köylü, kendi ektiği ürünün üretiminden ve satışından sorumlu hale gelmiştir. Kolektif üretimin yerini bireysel üretim alınca, bu yeni düzene ayak uyduramayan köylüler ekonomik zorluklarla karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Kimileri *fermerlik* ya da *klasterlik* adı altında sözleşmeli işlerde çalışmayı tercih ederken kimileri ise mahsullerini kişisel kullanım için yetiştirmeye devam etmiştir.

Bu süreçte köy mahalleleri ve aile bireylerinin bir arada ve uyum içerisinde yaşadığı geleneksel Özbek tipi evler, mikro-sosyal dayanışma birimleri olarak varlıklarını sürdürmüştür ancak hiçbir şey eskisi gibi olmamıştır. Roller değişmiş, zaman ilerlemiş ve köyde yeni tip bir işçi grubu ortaya çıkmıştır. Katılımcı gözlemlerimi yaparken "*gri yakalı*" olarak adlandırdığım bu grup, TTF gibi fabrikalarda teknik olmayan işlerde tam zamanlı çalışan ve aynı zamanda boş zamanlarında kendi yetiştirdikleri tarım ürünlerini satarak ek gelir elde eden bireylerden oluşmaktadır. Bu insanların birkaç istisna haricindeki çok büyük bir bölümü Sovyetler birliğine tanıklık etmiştir.

Örneğin, araştırmamın ideal-tip bir gri yakalı olarak tanımladığı GY1, Sovyetler Birliği döneminde kolektif çiftliklerde çalışmış ve toprağı yalnızca bir geçim aracı değil, aynı zamanda bir yaşam tarzı olarak benimsemiştir. Sovyetler Birliği'nin çöküşünün ardından yeni iş arayışlarına girmiş ve nihayetinde TTF'de çalışmaya başlamıştır. Ancak elde ettiği maaş, teknik mavi yakalı mevkidaşlarının aldığı ücretlerin oldukça gerisinde kalmıştır. COVID-19 pandemisi ve sonrasında patlak veren ekonomik kriz, GY1'in maaşının alım gücünü daha da zayıflatmıştır. Bu

ekonomik zorluklar karşısında, GY1 diğer tüm gri yakalılar gibi evinin bahçesinde tarımsal faaliyetlere yönelmiş ve ticari tarım yaparak ek gelir elde etmeye başlamıştır.

Özenle yetiştirdiği mahsuller arasında elma ve incir gibi, besin değeri yüksek meyveler bulunmaktadır. Fabrikadaki tam zamanlı işini genellikle akşam saat 17.00 civarında bitirdikten sonra, bu ürünleri titizlikle satışa hazırlamaktadır. GY1, saat 17.45 civarında evinden çıkarak Paxtayurt'u Taşkent'e bağlayan ana yol üzerindeki stratejik bir noktaya gitmektedir. Bu yer, evine yaklaşık dört kilometre mesafededir. Belirtilen yere vardığında, aceleyle kurduğu yol kenarı tezgâhını dikkatlice düzenleyerek satışlarına başlamaktadır. Akşam saat 19.30 civarında, bir başka fabrika işçisi olan eşi GY2 de kendisine katılmaktadır. GY2, GY1'in aksine sokakta satış yapmayı meşakkatli bulmakta ve bu nedenle yarı zamanlı sokak satıcılığından pek hoşlanmamaktadır. Ancak bu işin hem kendisi hem de ailesi için ne denli önemli olduğunu bilmektedir. Bu nedenle, kocasının ticari girişimine gönüllü olarak destek vermekte ve yanına ek bir tezgâh kurarak yılmaz bir biçimde satışların hızlanmasına yardımcı olmaktadır.

Satışlarını tamamladıktan sonra, GY1 ve GY2 gece yarısına doğru evlerine dönmekte ve birkaç saatlik dinlenmenin ardından, sabahın erken saatlerinde fabrika işlerine yeniden başlamaktadırlar. Bu aşamada, bir diğer gri yakalı olan GY3'ün yaşam hikâyesi de mevcut durumu daha iyi anlamak ve yukarıda bahsi geçen gri yakalıların çok katmanlı gündelik yaşam pratiklerine yeni bir katman eklemek açısından oldukça önemlidir. Kendisinin bana aktardığı üzere GY3, 1960'lı yılların başında doğmuş, Sovyetler Birliği'nin son yıllarına denk gelen gençlik döneminde, inek sağma ve peynir üreticiliği gibi hayvancılık faaliyetlerini işin en ince ayrıntısına kadar öğrenmiştir. Ancak 1991'den sonra SSCB'nin çöküşüyle birlikte, birçok köylü gibi kendisini bir mavi yakalı işçiye dönüştürmüş ve TTF'de temizlik işçisi olarak çalışmaya başlamıştır. COVID-19 ve onun beraberinde getirdiği ekonomik sıkıntılardan sonra ise işten arta kalan zamanlarında süt sağarak ve bu sütü çeşitli süt ürünlerine dönüştürerek ek gelir elde etmeye çalışmaktadır. Bu döngü yıl boyunca devam etmektedir. Bu satışlar sonucunda hedeflediği kazancı elde ettiğinde, tezgâhını kapatıp kendisine yardım eden çocuklarıyla birlikte evine dönmektedir. Bu

kişiye benzer şekilde ve GY3, GY2 ve GY1 gibi bireylerin haricinde, Paxtayurt'ta görece genç yaşta olan bir gri yakalı grubu da bulunmaktadır. Bu kişiler, tam zamanlı fabrika işlerinde çalışırken, boş zamanlarında kendi yetiştirdikleri mahsulleri komşularına satarak yaşamlarını sürdürmektedirler. Örneğin, GY4 olarak adlandırdığım bir kişi, kendisinin ve ailesinin tüketebileceğinden fazla miktarda havuç üretmiştir.

Bu havuçları pazara ya da yol kenarına götürüp satmak yerine, kendisine daha kazançlı teklifler sunan komşuları ile alışveriş etmektedir. Öte yandan, GY5 ve onun kızı olan GY6 gibi şahıslar da yarı zamanlı olarak tarım ürünü ticareti yapmanın yanı sıra arta kalan zamanlarında terzilik de yaparak ev ekonomisine katkıda bulunmaktadır. Tarım sektörüyle ilgilenen gri yaka sınıfına tekrar dönecek olursak fabrika işinin haricinde salt hayvancılık ile uğraşan GY7 gibi kişiler de geçmişte kolektif tarım ile uğraşırken öğrendikleri arıcılık ve balcılığı günümüzde de yarı zamanlı ticari iş olarak sürdürmektedirler. Benzer şekilde, GY8, GY9, GY10, GY11 ve GY12 olarak kodladığım kişiler de ürettikleri tarım ürünlerini yarı zamanlı olarak yol kenarlarında, "*konformist mekân*" olarak tanımladıkları tezgâhlarında satarak geçimlerini sağlamaktadır.

Tüm bu gelişmelere ek olarak GC13'ün yaşadıkları da, Paxtayurt köyünde meydana gelen sosyoekonomik dönüşümlerin insan yaşamını nasıl şekillendirdiğini anlamak için önemli bir kaynak olarak anlatmaya değerdir. Gözlemlerime göre, GC13, köyde "gri yakalı" olarak addedilen işçilerden biridir. Gündüzlerini TTF'de temizlik işleri yaparak geçirirken, akşamları ve hafta sonlarını kişisel kullanımına açık tarlasında mahsul yetiştirerek değerlendirmektedir. Ancak bu yıl, beklenmedik bir dizi doğal felaketlerle karşılaşmıştır. Önce şiddetli yağmurlar, ektiği tohumları yerinden söküp götürmüş; ardından kavurucu sıcaklar, yağmurlardan sağ kalan az sayıdaki filizi yok etmiştir. Hasat zamanı geldiğinde GC13 bu zorlukların üstesinden gelmek için yeni bir çözüm bulması gerektiğini fark etmiştir.

Zorluklarla mücadele etmekte kararlı olan GC13, sahip olduğu yük arabasının ona yalnızca mahsullerini taşımada değil, geçimini sağlamada da yardımcı olabileceğini hatırlamıştır. Bu farkındalıkla birlikte, köydeki diğer çiftçilere taşıma hizmeti

sunmaya karar vermiştir. İlk müşterisi, mahsullerini pazara götürmekte zorlanan yaşlı bir dul çiftçi olmuştur. Soğanları hava koşullarından sağ çıkmış ancak yaşlı çiftçi bunları taşıyabilecek güce sahip hissetmemiştir. GC13 ona yardım teklif ettiğinde yaşlı çiftçi derinden etkilenmiş ve bu yardımı cüzi bir ücret ödemek karşılığında kabul etmiştir. Böylece GC13, akşamları ve hafta sonları Paxtayurtlulara taşıma hizmeti sunarak ek gelir elde etmeye başlamıştır. GC13, bu işi büyütürken daha fazla müşteri kazanmıştır. Bu esnada, Paxtayurtlu bir başka çiftçi ise ona, mahsulünü pazara taşıması karşılığında hem makul bir ücret ödeyeceğini hem de mahsulünün bir kısmını kendisine hediye edebileceğini söylemiştir. Bu teklif, her iki tarafın da zor ekonomik koşullarda sosyal ve ekonomik kapitallerini artırmasına olanak tanıyan adil bir anlaşma olarak algılanmıştır. GC13, bu durumu şöyle özetlemiştir:

"Yaptığımız iş sadece para kazanmakla ilgili değil. Ben köylülerimin ürünlerini taşıyorum, onlar da bana mahsullerinden pay veriyorlar. Bu, köyümüz içerisinde bir çeşit hediyeleşme biçimi. Herkesin kendini güvence altına aldığından emin oluyoruz. Ancak her şeyden önce yanlış yola sapıp her şeyini kaybeden kardeşime yardımcı olmaya çalışıyorum. Kendisi benim gibi köyün en çalışkan, dürüst ve saygıdeğer kişilerindendi. Maalesef, aşırı para hırsı yüzünden her şeyini kaybetti ama beni kaybetmedi." GC13'ün de belirttiği gibi, GC14 başlangıçta ağabeyi gibi çalışkan, dürüst ve topluluk içinde saygınlık gören biri olmuştur. Ancak işlerini büyütmeye başladıkça hırsı artmış ve sattığı ürünlerin fiyatlarını spekülatif bir şekilde yükselterek toplum tarafından hoş karşılanmayan hatalı kararlar almaya başlamıştır. Fiyatlardaki aşırı artışı enflasyona dayandırmaya çalışsa da köyün ileri gelenleri bu durumu fark ederek ona uyarılarda bulunmuştur.

GC14, bu uyarıları dikkate almamış ve sonunda Paxtayurtlu akranları tarafından sembolik bir şekilde cezalandırılmıştır. Kendisinin de ifade ettiği üzere, eski müşterileri ona boykot uygulayıp başka satıcılardan alışveriş yaparken GC14 "*spekülatör*" olarak damgalanmış, topluluktan dışlanmış ve ekonomik bir darboğazın içerisine girmiştir. Ağabeyi GC13 ise ona yardım etmeyi bırakmamıştır. Kardeşini zaman zaman taşıma işlerine dahil etmiş ve kendisinin yük arabasını yarı zamanlı olarak ödünç almasına izin vermiştir. Bu sayede GC14, TTF'deki düşük maaşına ek olarak az da olsa bir gelir elde etmiştir. Ancak GC14, cebine giren bu ekstra paranın

aslında kendisinin emeğine duyulan saygıdan değil de GC13'e duyulan hürmetten kaynaklandığını içten içe bilmiş ve bu durum onu daha da derin bir hayal kırıklığına sürüklemiştir.

Bu hayal kırıklığı, onun hem ruhsal hem de bedensel sağlığını olumsuz etkilemiştir. Fakat yine de şanslıydı ki tüm Paxtayurtluların hayatında yaşam destek ünitesi rolü gören toprakla olan organik bağını dolaylı da olsa kaybetmemişti. GC14 de içerisinde bulunduğu durumu şöyle özetlemiştir: "Ben ve benim gibi Sovyet kuşağı mensubu insanlar, her şeyimizi kaybettik. Görüyorsunuz ki itibarım zedelendi ve erkeklik onurum elimden alındı. Tüm yaptığım, ailemi beslemek için alternatif yollara başvurarak biraz daha para kazanmaya çalışmaktı. Sanki bu tür şeyleri yapan tek kişi benmişim gibi acımasızca cezalandırılan yine de ben oldum. Fakat tüm bu yaşananlara rağmen, toprakla olan bağım güçlü bir şekilde devam ediyor. Kardeşimin yük arabasıyla taşıdığım metalar, en nihayetinde tarımsal ürünler yani ekilip toplanabilen mahsuller. Uzun lafın kısası hayatımı dolaylı da olsa halen topraktan kazanıyorum."

GC14 yukarıda bahsettiği açıklamalara ek olarak, Özbek tipi kapitalizm hakkındaki düşüncelerini şu sözlerle nihayete erdirmiştir: "Başka bir deyişle, artık kendi toprağımda ürettiğim ürünleri satamıyor olsam da kazandığım paranın büyük bir kısmı ne mutlu ki Paxtayurt'un bereketli toprağından ve TTF'deki işimden geliyor. Fakat artık yaşlanıyorum bu esnek sistem içerisindeki belirsizliklerle baş etmekte zorlanıyorum. Yakında Sovyetler Birliği gibi ben de çökeceğim ve kendimi kızağa çekip emekliye ayıracağım. Bu gerçekleşmeden önce söylemek istediğim son bir şey daha var: Kapitalizmle olan ilişkimiz bizden daha gelişmiş olan Avrupa ülkelerinin kapitalizm deneyimiyle çoğu açıdan benzerlik gösterse de kimi açılardan da farklılıklar göstermektedir. Onların ülkelerinde feodalizmin çözülüşü ve kapitalizm kaynaklı endüstriyelleşme hareketinin ortaya çıkışı yüzyıllara dayanan planlı bir birikimin sonucuydu. Oysa biz sanayiyi yalnızca birkaç on yıl önce Sovyetlerden öğrendik. SSCB'den önce buralarda hemen hemen her şey feodal, geri kalmış ve yukarıdan dayatılan bir yapıdaydı. Dolayısıyla kapitalizm, 70 yıl kadar bir süre boyunca eşitlikçi bir sistem içerisinde huzur içinde yaşayan bizleri adeta bir şok dalgası gibi çarptı. Ne olduğunu bile anlayamadan birdenbire mavi yakalı kölelere ya

da gri yakalı işçilere dönüşüverdik. Karakterimiz, oturuş kalkış şeklimiz ve diğer her şey değişti. En nihayetinde, kahraman işçiler çağı sona erdi. Tüm bunlara ek olarak bize rahatlık getireceğine inandığımız yol kenarı tezgahlarımız da adete birer hapishaneye evrildi ve babamın da her zaman dediği gibi hayat bir çeşit cehenneme dönüştü."

Yukarıda GC14 tarafından da belirtildiği üzere ve bu araştırmaya göre, GC14 ve onun gibi Paxtayurtlu bireylerin toprakla olan bağımlı ilişkisi, Avrupa'daki feodalizmden kapitalizme geçiş sırasında köylü sınıfının toprakla olan bağı ile tarihsel düzlemde önemli benzerlikler taşımaktadır. Ancak günümüzde Avrupa'da kapitalist ilişkilerin derinleşmesiyle birlikte birçok işçi sınıfı mensubu, topraktan koparak "*prekarya*" sınıfına dâhil olurken Özbekistan'da toprak, gri yakalı bireyler için hâlâ temel geçim kaynağı olmaya devam etmiştir. Bu argümanlara ek olarak *prekarya* ve *gri yakalılar* arasında daha fazla karşılaştırma yapılacağı takdirde, GC14 gibi gri yakalı bireylerin yaşam koşulları ile Batı *prekaryası* arasında dikkate değer başka benzerliklere ve farklılıklara da ulaşılacaktır. Guy Standing (2011) ve Michael Burawoy (2009) gibi öncü Marxist düşünürlerin de öne sürdüğü üzere, her iki durumda da belirsizlik ve çarpık sınıf pozisyonu, iki durumu (*prekarya* ve *gri yakalıların* durumunu) daha iyi anlayabilmek açısından tanımlayıcı bir özelliktir. Nasıl ki *prekarya,* belirsiz ve sürekli değişen bir ekonomik yapının içerisine hapsolarak var olmak zorunda kalıyorsa GC14 gibi *gri yakalı* bireyler de modern piyasa ekonomisinin anlık talepleriyle sürekli yeniden tanımlanan bir akış hâlinde, sabit olmayan roller ve görevlerle karşı karşıya kalmaktadır.

Bu nedenle GC14 ve onun gibi, Sovyetler Birliği'ne tanıklık etmiş kimseler, içinde bulundukları bu karmaşık durumu "*kaos*" kelimesi ile özdeşleştirmiştir ve GC14'ün eşi de kapitalizm hakkındaki düşüncelerini şu şekilde ifade etmiştir: "Eşim GC14 ve onun gibi gri yakalı bireyler elbette doğruyu söylemekte. Piyasa koşulları ve ekonomik yapı her geçen gün akılalmaz bir biçimde değişiyor, bu durum işçileri '*Ya kabul et ya da terk et*' sistematiğindeki düşük maaşlara mahkûm ederek daha fazla çalışmaya ve çabalamaya zorluyor. Sonuç olarak sıradan insanlar ve dar gelirli kimseler, giderek derinleşen bir yoksulluk sarmalının içerisinde kaybolup duruyor. Başka bir deyişle, benim gibi yaşını başını almış, geçim sıkıntısı çeken ve tekniker

olmayan kişiler ve sıradan köylüler, bu düzensizliğin tam ortasında kalakalmış durumda. Kayınpederim gibi 80'li 90'lı yaşlardaki büyüklerimiz de bu durumda biçare bir biçimde bulunan bizlere '*araftakiler*' ya da '*aradakiler*' gibi sıfatlar takıyor. Yaşadığımız acılara ek olarak büyüklerimiz tarafından bu sıfatlarla anılmak hem utanç verici hem de umut kırıcı. Bazen tüm bu çaresizliğin içinde içerisinde bulunduğum bu acınası duruma tepki olarak 'Bu tam bir kaos' ya da bizim yerel dildeki şekliyle '*bardak*' diyerek haykırmak istiyorum."

Yukarıda ifade edilenlerden hareketle *bardak* terimi, insan kayırmacılıktan (*nepotizm*), geniş bir kesimin eski sosyal haklarından mahrum bırakılmasına ve geleceğe yönelik dayanılmaz bir endişeye kadar birçok durumu tanımlamak amacıyla tercih edilmiştir. Buna benzer şekilde, GC14'ün eşi gibi Paxtayurtlu kişiler tarafından hayatlarındaki sarsıcı olayları anlatmak için seçilen bir başka terim de "vahşi kapitalizm" (Özbekçede *yovvoyi kapitalizm* olarak geçer) olmuştur. Ayrıca bu kavramlar, bireyin zihinsel dünyasında ya da günlük yaşamındaki düzensizliği, gelişigüzelliği ve öz kimlik kaybını ifade etmek için de kullanılmıştır. Fakat tam da bu esnada işçi sınıfı için her şeyin bittiği düşünülürken GC14'ün eşinin de aşağıda vurguladığı üzere, Özbekistan'ın Karakalpak bölgesinde bahsi geçen kaosa karşı, örgütlü bir köylü isyanı patlak vermiştir.

GC14'ün eşi, bu isyanı ve bu isyanı hazırlayan faktörleri kısaca şu sözlerle özetlemiştir: "Karakalpak köylü isyanları çıktı çünkü bu yozlaşmış kapitalist düzende, bir zamanlar işçilerin sesi olan ve onların yanında olan sendikalar artık eski güçlerinden yoksundur. Bir diğer ifadeyle, bu oluşumlar bizlere yani emekçilere sırt çevirmiş durumdadır. Fabrika sahipleri ve sanayiciler, ortak yaşam alanlarımızı ve ekolojik varlıklarımızı yok ederken hiçbiri sesini çıkarmaya tenezzül etmedi. Özetle, Yeni Özbekistan tarihinin ilk organize köylü isyanı olan Karakalpak ayaklanması ile birlikte uzun, çetin bir yola girdiğimiz aşikârdır. Bu yolculukta, bir zamanlar olduğu gibi yoldaşlık uğurunda bir araya gelerek köylerimize, haklarımıza ve doğamıza sahip çıkmak zorundayız. Yalnızca bu sayede kendi topraklarımızda insanca bir yaşam sürdürme şansını tam anlamıyla hayata geçirebiliriz."

GC14'ün eşi tarafından da formüle edildiği üzere Karakalpak isyanı, Yeni Özbekistan tarihinde neoliberal statükoya (Mirziyoyev rejimine) karşı yapılan ilk

örgütlü direniş olarak kayıtlara geçmiştir. Toplumun her kesiminden insan bu direnişe aktif olarak katılmıştır. Lefebvre'in bakış açısıyla değerlendirildiğinde bu isyan, temel hak talep etme yolunda gösterilen cesur bir eylemdir. Edward Palmer Thompson'a göreyse bu tip protestolar kişilerin yaşamakta olduğu topluluklarda yöneticilerinin despotik politikalarına karşı gerçekleştirdiği kendilerine has "*özgürlük ağacını dikme*" eylemi olarak da tanımlanabilir. Tıpkı 2022'deki Kazak isyanları ve Hindistan ile Avrupa'da devam eden çiftçi isyanlarında olduğu gibi bu ayaklanmaların temel nedeni, hükümetin otoriter ve liberal yanlısı duruşundan kaynaklanan rahatsızlıklar olmuştur. Ancak aynı zamanda, Özbekistan'ın ekolojik yapısının ciddi şekilde bozulması ve zengin ile yoksul arasındaki sosyoekonomik uçurumların kademeli olarak artması da bu isyanların ardındaki diğer etkenlerdendir. Örneğin, GC14'ün eşinin bahsettiği gibi, Paxtayurt'taki ve bunun gibi kırsal mekânlarda mevcut sosyoekolojik bozulma, kapitalizmin artık kontrol altına alınması gereken bir güç haline geldiğini göstermektedir.

Sonuç olarak, Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasının ardından ve Özbekistan'ın bağımsızlığını kazanmasından bu yana otuz yılı aşkın bir süre geçmiştir. Bu süreçte yaşanan en dikkat çekici toplumsal değişimlerden biri, piyasa odaklı politikaların hayatın her alanına yayılması olmuştur. Özellikle Sovyet işletmelerinin özelleştirilmesi, kolektif mülkiyetin bireysel mülkiyete dönüştürülmesi ve TTF gibi kapitalist üretim alanlarının oluşturulması bu politikaların en somut örnekleri arasında yer almaktadır. Başlangıçta bu tür projeler, işçi sınıfına daha fazla özgürlük sağlamayı, ekonomik büyümeyi teşvik etmeyi ve devletin bireylerin gündelik yaşamına müdahalesini azaltmayı amaçlamıştır. Ancak bu hedefler büyük ölçüde gerçekleştirilememiş ve beklenen sonuçlar elde edilememiştir. Merkez Asya'daki diğer otoriter rejimlerde de görüldüğü gibi, kapitalist üretim alanlarının inşası sınıfsal gerilimleri artırmış, toplumsal huzursuzluklara yol açmış ve önceden daha homojen olan sınıfsal yapıyı parçalamıştır. Özbekistan'da yaşanan bu sınıfsal değişimlerin sosyolojik etkileri üzerine akademik çalışmalar yapılması ise ülkedeki baskıcı siyasal ortam nedeniyle sınırlı kalmıştır. Bu boşluğu doldurmak amacıyla Paxtayurt köyünü sosyal bir laboratuvar olarak seçtim ve 2022 yazında TTF'nin insan kaynakları departmanında beyaz yakalı fabrika işçisi olarak yarı zamanlı çalıştım. Bu süreçte

katılımcı gözlem ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yöntemleriyle Paxtayurt topluluğunun günlük yaşamına dahil oldum.

Görüştüğüm bireylerin deneyim ve gözlemlerine dayanarak yaptığım analizler, her üretim tarzının kendine özgü bir sosyal mekân yarattığını ortaya koydu. Kapitalist sistemin yerleşmesiyle birlikte Paxtayurt'ta da sosyalizmin yerini serbest piyasa ekonomisi almış ve yeni bir mekânsal düzen oluşmuştur. Bu dönüşüm, var olan sınıfsal yapının çözülmesine ve Özbekistan'ın toplumsal dokusunun çeşitli sınıfsal katmanlara bölünmesine neden olmuştur. Yeni sınıfsal yapının en alt tabakasını, tam zamanlı fabrika işçileri olan mavi yakalılar ve köylüler oluşturmaktadır. Bu grubun hemen üzerinde ise kapitalist sınıf ve beyaz yakalı çalışanlar bulunmaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra, TTF gibi fabrikalarda el emeğiyle çalışan birçok sanayi işçisi, tarımsal faaliyetler ve yarattıkları *konformist mekânlar* yoluyla ek gelir elde etmek amacıyla evinin bahçesinde tarım ürünleri yetiştirmekte ve iş gücüne çift yönlü bir katılım sergilemektedir. Hem sanayi hem de tarım iş gücüne eş zamanlı olarak katılan bu işçilerin sınıfsal konumunun net bir şekilde tanımlanması ise sosyal bilim dünyasında kafa karışıklıklarına neden olabilme potansiyeli taşımaktadır. Bu olası karmaşıklığı gidermek amacıyla araştırmamda, bu işçileri "*gri yakalı grup*" olarak tanımladım.

Gri yakalılar, kapitalist üretim alanlarında tam zamanlı olarak çalışan aynı zamanda tarımsal faaliyetlerden ek gelir sağlayan ancak tekniker olmayan işçilerdir. Bulgularım doğrultusunda, bu işçiler sabah 8'den akşam 5'e kadar TTF gibi fabrikalarda çalışmakta ve ünvanlarına göre aylık 150 ila 600 dolar arasında bir kazanç elde etmektedirler. Ek olarak yarattıkları *konformist mekânlar* sayesinde tarımsal faaliyetlerinden aylık 50 ila 250 dolar civarında gelir sağlamaktadırlar. Son olarak gri yakalı kavramı, yalnızca Paxtayurt'taki mikro ölçekte gözlemlenen bir durumu ifade etse de geniş bir toplumsal ve ekonomik bağlamda değerlendirilmesi gereken önemli bir kavramdır.

Bu bağlamda, Marxist teoriye göre henüz tam anlamıyla sınıfsal bir yapı oluşturmamış, yani evrimini henüz tamamlamış bir "*proto-sınıf*" olarak da değerlendirilebilir. Marx'a göre, bir sınıfın oluşumu, milyonlarca bireyin benzer iş kollarında çalışmasını gerektirir. Ancak benim araştırmam, yalnızca 12 TTF çalışanı

ve 14 *gri yakalı* işçi ile sınırlı olduğu için bulgularım genellenebilir nitelikte değildir. Bu sınırlamaların aşılabilmesi için, gelecekteki çalışmaların Paxtayurt örneği dışında da yani Sovyet sonrası dönemdeki diğer köyler ve sanayi kasabalarını da kapsayacak şekilde, geniş ölçekli bir coğrafyada araştırmalar yapılması gerekmektedir. Çalışmanın kapsamının genişletilmesi, Özbekistan ve diğer post-sosyalist bölgelerde *gri yakalı* sınıfın oluşumu ve *konformist mekânların* inşası gibi, kapitalist dönüşümlere dair daha net sonuçlar elde edilmesini sağlayacaktır.

Aynı zamanda, Sovyet döneminde doğan bireylerle 1991 sonrası dünyaya gelen genç nesilleri karşılaştıran geniş ölçekli (*longitudinal*) çalışmalar, zaman içinde emek, sınıf ve kimlik algılarının nasıl değiştiğine dair derinlemesine bulgular sunabilir. Nesiller arası bu karşılaştırmalar, *gri yakalı* kimliğinin ve *konformist mekân* üretiminin kalıcı bir sınıfsal oluşum mu yoksa geçici ve bağlama özgü bir toplumsal gerçeklik mi olduğunu daha açık bir biçimde ortaya koyacaktır. Tüm bunların haricinde Özbekistan ve Özbekistan gibi post-Sovyet ülkelerinde SSCB döneminde kurulan Sovyet tipi fabrikaların da halen çalışır olup olmadığının araştırılması ise Sovyet endüstrisinin kuruluşu, çözülüşü ve SSCB sonrası kapitalizme eklemlenmesi ile ilgili bu metinde incelenemeyen tarihsel detayların gün yüzüne çıkarılmasına katkıda bulunacaktır.

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YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname : Yıldız
Adı / Name : Batuhan
Bölümü / Department : Sosyoloji / Sociology

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