

## **Wheat in motion: how the mobilities of a plant lead to sociocultural change in Rural Kazakhstan**

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### **Abstract**

Kazakhstan has gained renown as a leading producer of wheat in recent times. The country underwent an immense transformation of its steppe into the expansive vast fields of crops, and then was designated as the breadbasket of the Soviet Union. The influence of Soviet agricultural/agronomic practices continues to reverberate throughout the modern Kazakhstani crop landscape. This includes agricultural research stations and experimental fields as pivotal spaces of knowledge practices and market reliance on wheat produced in the northern parts of Kazakhstan as a primary source of wheat-based sustenance. In this presentation, the wheat landscape will be discussed through the lens of wheat's mobility as a plant, seed, grain and food in rural Kazakhstan. Drawing on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted in both the Qostanay Province in northern Kazakhstan and the Jambyl and Turkestan Provinces in southern Kazakhstan, this presentation will show how the movements of wheat grain instigate changes in the ways rural Kazakhstani communities value this crop.

### **Bio**

Togzhan Utetileuova attained her Master of Arts degree in Eurasian Studies from Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, where she had earned Bachelor of Arts degrees in Hospitality Management and Law. In her master's thesis, Togzhan delves into the topic of return migration and transnationalism of Kazakh repatriates from China, Russia, Mongolia, and Uzbekistan. In 2021 she presented her research at the 25th ASN Annual World Congress. Additionally, she was a research assistant in different projects at NU. Currently, she is a PhD student (Frankfurt, Germany) in the project "Resource Cultures of Rice and Wheat in South and Central Asia: Religious and (Agro)Economic Dimensions of Cereals" (SFB 1070). Her doctoral research primarily centers on exploring the sociocultural dynamics around wheat in rural/urban Kazakhstan.