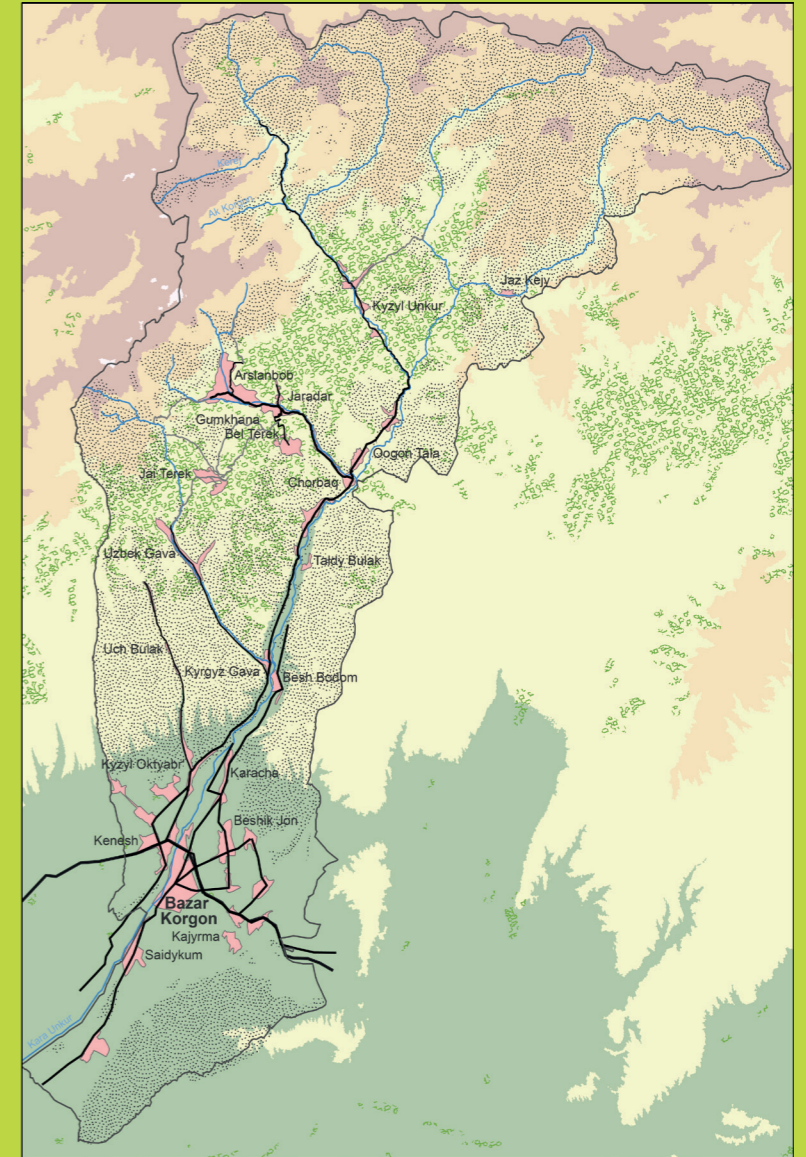


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## Utilisation and Management of Natural Resources in Kyrgyzstan



Edited by

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Stefan Schütte

Centre for Development Studies (ZELF)  
Institute of Geographical Sciences  
Freie Universität Berlin

2014

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Fax: +49 - 30 - 838 70757

ISBN 978-3-946742-07-4 (PDF)  
doi: 10.11588/xabooks.132.165

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Cover figure by Andrei Dörre (2014)

ISSN: 1869-3377

BERLIN GEOGRAPHICAL PAPERS

Vol. 43

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2014



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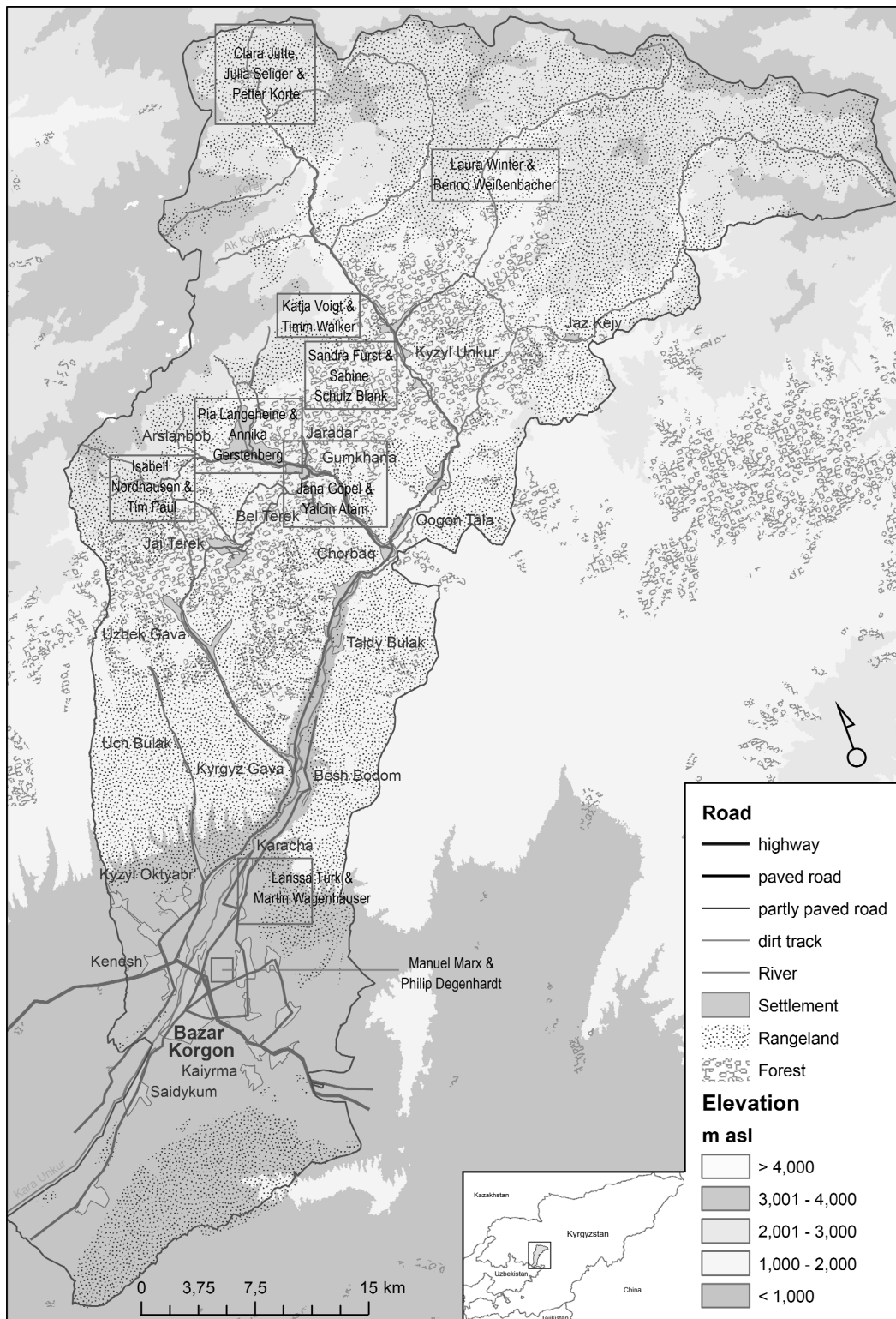
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## **Foreword**

The training of students in the Department of Geography at the Centre for Development Studies (ZELF) of the Freie Universität Berlin includes the scientific preoccupation with theories of development, with social inequalities at multiple scales reaching from global to local arenas, and with questions of international development policies and practices aimed to ensure basic needs and sustainable development. Such theoretical and conceptual training goes along with the facilitation of methodical skills in empirical investigations. This shall help students to gather own experiences in empirical fieldwork and establish the link between development theories and practice. For this reason, we regularly conduct student projects in developing and post-socialist transition countries. These projects also form part of the curriculum of the Master's programme in 'Geographical Development Studies'. The experience of everyday life in urban and rural contexts, the perception of regional and global disparities, and the testing of own designed research tools to answer specific research questions provides the students with a high degree of exposure to various professional aspects of possible future employment as development experts as well as valuable personal experience for intended activities in teaching.

Following this approach, the project in 2013 was dedicated to specific issues of Kyrgyzstan's development after 1991. The rural population of the post-socialist society depends to a great extent on the utilisation of natural resources, and the project focused primarily on the use and the management of natural resources that occur in the context of development efforts of governmental and non-governmental institutions. The studies were conducted in the district of Bazar Korgon that forms a part of the walnut-fruit forest region located in the Jalal-Abad Province in the southwest of the country. Ten Kyrgyz-German groups of up to three students addressed specific issues through case study approaches and integrated their insights within this joint report. Two teams were dealing with the current utilisation, allocation and management practices of pasture resources (Jütte, Korte & Seliger). In addition, Voigt & Walker addressed the constellation of pasture-related legal pluralism and social practices, and another group of students conducted a research on the organisation of rural dairy farming (Weißenbacher & Winter). Furthermore, a conflict about the access to, and the utilisation of a pasture was analysed by Nordhausen & Paul, and the tension between utilisation and conservation approaches for the walnut-fruit forest was examined by Fürst & Schulz-Blank. Another group studied the role of agriculture for the livelihoods of local households, and the post-Soviet transformation of land use systems (Türk & Wagenhäuser). Degenhardt & Marx attempted to understand socio-economic practices of a livestock market, and Atam & Göpel the different migration regimes and the role of remittances for development processes in rural Kyrgyzstan. Finally, development efforts of local and external actors and organisations were explored by Gerstenberg & Langeheine (Fig. A).



**Fig. A: Distribution and location of the research sites within the Bazar Korgon Rayon**

Source: Dörre 2014 based on KIRGIZGIPROZEM 1983; GLSKR & GUL 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Jarvis et al. 2008

The implementation of the whole enterprise with all its subprojects would not have been possible without the support of many people and institutions. First, we want to thank our Kyrgyz team partners from the Jalal-Abad State University, namely Dastanbek Ulurbek uulu, Nuriya Toktonalieva, Sherbet Suranbekova, Üpöl Kozukeeva, Adilet Kambarov, Gulina Egemberdieva, Akinai Ismailova, Kajrat Amankulov, Zhenishbek Abdkalykov and Asel Abdkalykova. Without their invaluable support as members of the ten different research teams, fieldwork and communication with people would have been nearly impossible. Furthermore, we want to express our thanks to their instructors Zulfia Sakbaeva and Kunduz Myrsakulova. The Kyrgyzstani NGO CAMP Alatoo and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) provided us with important background knowledge for our research projects. The late Dr. Almaz Orozumbekov from the Agrarian University in Bishkek, the director of the Community Based Tourism Organisation Asylbek Rajiev, and Bolotbek Tagaev, teacher at the school in Gumkhana delivered invaluable logistical support by providing venues for our workshops, means of transport and accommodation. Finally, special thanks to all the interviewees, for their hospitality and patience.

Berlin, May 2014

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## **Transformation of Pasture Utilization and Management. An Example from the Bazar Korgon Rayon**

### **The pastoral household as object of research**

This paper discusses the transformation of natural resource utilization and its management in post-socialist Kyrgyzstan. The main focus of this study is directed on the livelihood of rural societies and how their dependency on natural resources is affected by change through the transformation process in Kyrgyzstan. Keeping in mind that “for hundreds of years, animal husbandry has played a crucial role in Central Asian economies, societies and cultures” (Dörre 2012: 128), pastoral practices are seen here as an indicator for change, reflecting the socio-economic and institutional changes during transformation processes. Pastoral households have the flexibility to adapt to changing socio-political conditions (Kreutzmann 2012: 2), and this paper will explore and compare aspects of continuity and change in strategies of pastoral households within the transformation process in Kyrgyzstan. The household is a “socio economic foundation comprised of one or more individuals who share living quarters” (Katz 2009: 345). In the context of the present study, households are often organized in camps that are erected seasonally on pasture areas. Coping with numerous changes, households have to organize their labour, time and other resources to meet the daily costs (De la Rocha 2000: 3; Ellis 1998: 4-5).

The paper focuses on pastoral livelihoods and mobility aspects on one specific pasture area, namely *Kichi Kenkol* of Bazar Korgon District. Three main objectives guide the argument presented here are the analysis of pastoral mobility strategies, the examination of different types of pasture utilization, and an analysis of social structures on the pasture. In order to examine those objectives, the research was guided by gaining an understanding about the different fundamental aspects that characterise a pastoral household and its members. According to Scoones (2009: 186), households can be best examined on the micro level by “asking the basic questions: who owns what, who does what, who gets what and what do they do with it?” Geared by this argument, certain knowledge about the household’s seasonal journey to and from the pasture and their intra-seasonal movements on the pasture was required. Other questions included the subsistence strategy, the generation and diversification of income, the ownership and tenure structure of livestock and ground, the social structures on the pasture in one single camp, the social relations to other camps and their daily routine amongst others. In regard to our main objectives, the empirical findings will be integrated in the framework of transformation and it affected the pastoralists’ daily life.

After a short summary of the historical development of today’s Kyrgyzstan, the comprehension of the term ‘transformation’ and its integration in the pastoral context will be addressed. This is followed by the third part, which comprises the research area and our empirical findings summing up with a conclusion.

## Historical precedents

Using the social process of transformation as explanatory framework requires looking at the situation in Soviet Kyrgyzstan. In the late 1920s the Soviet government implemented the collectivization of agricultural production as a major project of social and technical engineering. Collectivization was interpreted as an essential part of the communist ideology and an opportunity to establish a new and alternative society besides the dominating capitalistic systems (Hobsbawn 1994: 80). Collectivization included the expropriation of former land-owners, the forced organization of the population in agricultural production units and a rapid mechanization (Eriksson 2005: 1-2). Accompanied by the processes of collectivization was the forced settlement of the nomadic pastoralists that played an important role in Kyrgyzstan (Bacon 1966: 118; Giese 1982: 219). The agricultural production and animal husbandry of Soviet Kyrgyzstan was predominantly organized in three different agricultural types: collective farms (*kolkhozy*, rus.), state farms (*sovkhoby*, rus.) and the farm members' private agricultural production and animal husbandry (Giese 1973: 6, 467; Khan & Ghai 1979: 103).

After gaining formal independence in August 1991 the then president of Kyrgyzstan Askar Akaev initiated certain reforms, which were supposed to lead to "one of the most radical programs of privatization in the region" (Abazov 1999: 218). Kyrgyzstan implemented a transitional approach to a market economy known as 'shock therapy' and adopted the structural reform measures promoted and supported by international policy advisors and the donor community (Bloch 2002: 53; Steimann 2010: 56). The main point of this strategy was the immediate liberalization of prices, the dissolution of former administration structures and the introduction of market-based finance conditions (Trouchine & Zitzmann 2005: 9). President Akaev implemented two laws to enable the creation of private peasant farms, and he established the first National Land Fund and commissions for the distribution of former *kolkhoz* lands. This was the first step towards privatization and a restructuring of the dominant sector of the *sovkhob* and *kolkhoz* system (Steimann 2010: 55; Trouchine & Zitzmann 2005: 33). The rapid privatization of the agrarian sector, as well as the collapse of productivity after 1991 and the incomplete reforms of the administrative structure, gave rise to "a number of challenges which shape agropastoral practices today" (Steimann 2012: 146).

The definition of the term 'transformation' is crucial to understand the challenges regarding the utilization of natural resources and the subsequent adaptation strategies of the pastoral households.

### 'Transformation' in the pastoral context

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and gaining of independence in 1991, the five Central Asian states were subject to radical changes subsumed under the term 'transformation'. This paper uses the definition of Fassmann (1999), which quite generally specifies the post-socialist transformation as a "fundamental change of the political, economic and social system" (11).

Over the last decades various academic and policy-oriented debates on development in the post-socialist societies and economies have thrown up contrasting approaches to

conceptualizing ‘transition’ or ‘transformation’ (Fassmann 1999, Stadelbauer 2000, Steimann 2010, Schmidt 2013). The early 1990s were dominated by approaches informed by the neoliberal principles of the Washington Consensus, specifying ‘transition’ as a rapid and linear change from the former inefficient socialist system towards a modern market capitalism (Steimann 2010: 3). These economic and relatively functionalist approaches recommended the rapid privatization of state assets, liberalization of prices and deregulation of markets for the fast progress in transformation (Dietz 1995: 5; Henzler 1994: 13-16). The neoliberal concept of transformation was also heavily criticised (Carothers 2002, Fassmann 1999, Schmidt 2013, Steimann 2010). Schmidt (2013: 75) argued against the teleology of the paradigm, the assumed linear and evolutionary process of transformation and its obvious euro-centrism. Steimann (2010: 3) commented that the post-socialist transformation cannot be seen as a “linear process from socialism towards free market capitalism”. Others point at the paradigm’s normative character and its orientation towards the purpose of the transformation rather than the course of the process (Klüter 2000: 35; Steimann 2010: 3). A few years later the impairment of neoliberal hegemony cleared the way for alternative approaches embedded in new institutional economics, property rights theory and legal pluralism, trying to adequately describe and explain the apparent diversity of transformation processes. These approaches built on the idea of

“[...] ‘transformation’ as a bundle of evolutionary, multi-directional and open-ended processes, in which actors recombine and improvise on the old and the new in order to cope with the numerous challenges ‘transition’ poses [...]. These alternative approaches promoted a shift away from the previous macroeconomic focus towards the multi-level analysis and particularly emphasized actor research at the micro level” (Steimann 2010: 4).

Actor-oriented research on the micro level is especially important when studying how the transformation process affected rural households. Conceptualizing transformation needs to preserve a critical understanding of the process as an active moment of change (Fassmann 1997: 30) that does not anticipate research findings. The transformation processes have to be seen as open developments with unknown results (Schmidt 2013: 75-76).

How can such an understanding of transformation be applied to the pastoral context? The collapse of the Soviet Union caught the attention of many scholars, creating a wide range of diverse literature on different forms of mobile animal husbandry (Farrington 2005, Van Veen 1995), and adaptation processes to changing economic, political and environmental conditions and its consequences for pastoral livelihoods (Finke 2004, Kreutzmann 1995, Wilson 1997).

When discussing the transformation of pastoral households it is important to keep in mind that the post-socialist transformation affects the whole society. In order to provide a workable operationalization of transformation it can be assessed by focusing on three dimensions: the institutional dimension, the economic dimension and the social dimension. This analytical pattern is employed to structure research observations in relation to the main objectives. The economic aspect of transformation deals with income generation and diversification and the amount of livestock amongst others. The institutional dimension is concerned with questions about management structures and laws and pasture regulations.

The social dimension deals with the social relationships of a single camp, its social networks and possible conflicts on the pasture, and the shape of mutual support systems among pastoral groups. These three dimensions are interrelated and all connected to mobility strategies and types of pasture utilization on the local level. The various transformation processes are marked by change and continuity. Some aspects of mobility strategies, social structures and types of pasture utilization within the three transformation dimensions may have changed during Kyrgyzstan's development from a Soviet republic to the independent state, other aspects may have stayed the same. There is no inevitable change, because transformation processes may also preserve conditions of Soviet structures.

### ***Participative observation, mapping and a survey***

When analysing the transformational process in its different dimensions it is important to consider the historical background. The knowledge of the social, economic and institutional background of Kyrgyzstan's pastoral history in the former Soviet Union is important for identifying the different aspects of the pastoral household transformation between continuity and change today. In the field, it was aimed to assess the shape of transformation on the pasture by means of qualitative interviews and observations. The qualitative interviews were guided by a short questionnaire to quantify some structural data and more in-depth open questions with resident pastoralists. These interviews were supplemented by expert interviews with various officials having a stake in pasture management. It was aimed to attain a better understanding of the pastoral transformation through the eyes of the affected people themselves. The goal was to recognize the 'ways of transformation' on the specific pasture. Interviews were conducted with almost all pastoral households on the pasture as well as the managers and a former employee of the local *leskhoz* (rus.), a forestry enterprise based in the settlement Kyzyl Unkur, and the owner of the central delivery point called *Saty Key* on the pasture. Additionally, the distribution of camps on the pasture was mapped, and single camp structures, mobility patterns, the daily camp routines and the familial and neighbourly relationships on the pasture were assessed. As such, the research aimed to bring the post-socialist transformation to the ground by focusing on changes and continuities at the local level.

### **Utilization and management transformations of the Kichi Kenkol Pasture**

The research site is located in the northern extensions of the Bazar Korgon District on the mountainous pasture *Kenkol*. The *Kenkol* pasture consists of the two sections *Chon Kenkol* (Big Kenkol, krg.) and *Kichi Kenkol* (Little Kenkol, krg.). Our research area is the lower section of the latter part, which has an altitude that ranges between 1800 and 2700 meters. The distance to the next settlement Kyzyl Unkur is about 25 kilometres. Twenty-two camps were identified on *Kichi Kenkol*, as shown in Fig. 1. The pasture area itself is affiliated to the 'State Forest Fund', which is generally managed by forestry enterprises as the local branches of the 'State Agency for Environment Protection, Forestry and Hunting Resources. In our case, the agency and the *leskhoz* 'Kyzyl Unkur' are responsible for the distribution of the pasture area, the collecting of the yearly lease of pasture land and the control of the pasture utilization.



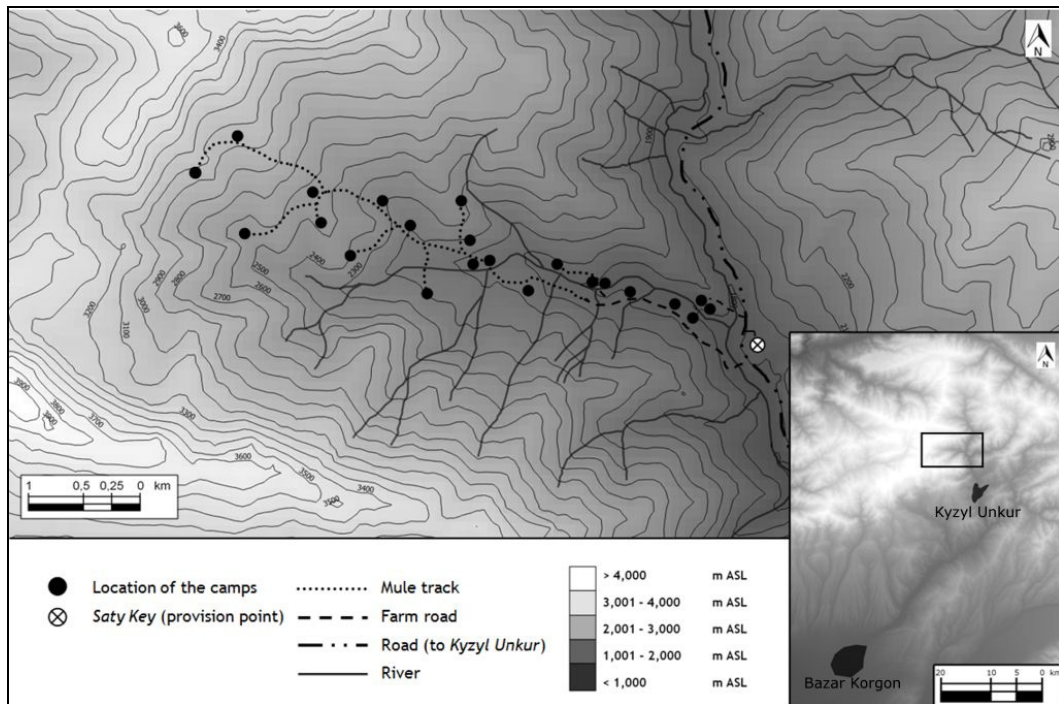


Fig. 1.1: Sketch of *Kichi Kenkol* and distribution of the camps

Draft: Jütte, Korte & Seliger 2014

### ***Pasture utilization in the light of changing economic and institutional conditions***

This section highlights the types of pasture utilization in relation to the economic and institutional dimension of transformation. It focuses on pastoral households and the economic and institutional aspects related to the management and utilization of the natural resources in post-soviet Kyrgyzstan. The exploitation rights of the pastures northward of Kyzyl Unkur, including *Kenkol*, belonged to the *kolkhozy* ‘60th anniversary of October’, ‘Engels’ and ‘Dzerzhinsky’ at the times of the Soviet Union (Blank 2007: 8). The *kolkhozes* were agricultural production cooperatives, based on existing settlements and farms (Giese 1973: 467). Although the collective farm was cooperatively administrated by the people, it was the state that owned the ground, provided the management and instituted the five-year plans. Animals, machines and infrastructure were formally owned by the *kolkhozniki* (rus.) - the cooperative community of peasants. The organizational structure of a *kolkhoz* was built up of several production units (brigades), which served as ‘new social entities’ replacing the kin-groups and village structures (Steimann 2010: 99-100). The brigades were mostly sub-divided into specialized farms with own technical experts such as herders. Every farm had its own pastures, stables and land for forage production and haymaking. The animal husbandry was mechanized and state controlled, along with breeding plans to attain maximum output (Wilson 1997: 57-59, 64). A specified amount, not the total quantity of the agricultural production (crops and livestock products), had to be delivered to the state at fixed prices. The *kolkhozniki* were paid a share of the farms product and profit, according to the number of working days. Compared

to the workers of the *sovkhoz*, the salaries of the *kolkhozniki* were rather low. Only “... leading personnel and specialists, including herders, were in full-time employment” (Steimann 2010: 100-102, 105). The livelihood of the *kolkhozniki* was secured within the collective farms, which included a dwelling, an income, social service, childcare, health care and pension payment amongst others (Blank 2007: 19). The social life, like the political and civil regime and the retail trade, was organized based on the agro pastoral production unit (Dekker 2003: 47; Yurkova 2004: 41, 43). Numerous administration allocations of jobs demanded a professional flexibility of the *kolkhozniki*. The herders were responsible for droves of 500 to 600 sheep (Steimann 2010: 101-102, 104; Schmidt 2013: 201). Every *kolkhoznik* received a basic wage, additional social benefits and a small piece of land. The individual agricultural production of the farm members played an important role in soviet Kyrgyzstan husbandry (Giese 1973: 6). The Soviet government instituted a predetermined size for private agricultural farming units, however the actual size varied (Giese 1973: 238; Stadelbauer 1991: 2). The job of herders offered good opportunities to “supplement one’s income through informal means” (Steimann 2010: 107; Wädekin 1975: 25). For most of the *kolkhozniki* the individual agricultural production as well as animal husbandry were the main reliable income sources (*kolkhoz* markets) (Stadelbauer 1991: 13). Throughout the transformation process in Kyrgyzstan many aspects concerning the pasture utilization as a source of income have changed. Two main types of pasture utilization can be distinguished on the *Kichi Kenkol*: animal husbandry and beekeeping.

Animal husbandry has played an important role both in Soviet Kyrgyzstan and today, providing an essential part of the pastoralists’ income. It mainly implies the herding of sheep, cows and horses. Additionally, pastoralists focus on dairy farming, processing almost exclusively cow milk. All camps have their own “kitchen garden” (e.g. potato field, turkeys, hens) on the pasture used for subsistence during the pasture season. Compared to times of the Soviet Union when mechanized and state controlled forms of animal husbandry predominated in order to gain maximum output (e.g. breeding plans), today’s herders might still be responsible for large droves but are no longer attached to any governmental targets. Nowadays, the herds may consist of several types of animals whereas during soviet times the pastoralists were responsible for only one type of animal (Blank 2007: 21). The livestock of a pastoralist varies greatly: some only oversee a drove of five cattle and 20 sheep, whereas others manage more than 100 cattle and 600 sheep.

Pastoralists can be divided into two herder profiles, the private herders, who only bring their own livestock to the summer pasture, and the professional ones who earn money by taking care of additional livestock of neighbours, friends and relatives. The private pastoralists often buy animals in spring and sell them in autumn after they have gained weight on the pasture, in addition to their own stock hold perennially. Sheep and cattle can easily be sold on the local livestock markets (chapter on socio-economic practices on Bazar Korgon’s Livestock bazaar). In contrast to the fixed animal prices during soviet times, the pastoralists now have to market their livestock individually. Therefore, livestock represents not only a source of income for pastoralists but also a way to save money, making investments in livestock an attractive option. Livestock gets sold in relatively rare

occasions, for instance in case of an emergency or an important event. (e.g. financing a funeral). Like professional herders, private owners process dairy products as an additional source of income. The dairy products are produced for self supply and additionally for the selling on the markets during the winter. The three most prominent products are *qurut*, *tshobogo* and *sary maj*. The fresh milk gets heated on the fireplace and afterwards processed through a milk separator. Through this process *aborot syt* (skimmed milk, rus.- krg.) and *kaymak* (cream, krg.) are produced. *Kaymak* can be processed further into *sary maj* (clarified butter, krg.) and *tshobogo* (roasted butter, krg.). The production of *qurut* takes about a day, because the *aborot syt* and the added *ayran* have to rest 14 hours before the mixture can be processed further. Due to the addition of salt, *qurut* has a high product durability. In a last step, the mixture gets rolled into *qurut*-balls and can thus be stored in the tents without the risk of decay (see chapter on ). Another form of income generation is the extraction of horse milk (*kumys*, krg.). Because of the short-term product durability, the milk has to be processed directly. *Kumys* is a speciality of the area and is said to have a therapeutic effect on a variety of diseases. Therefore people from the neighbouring cities, like Jalal-Abad, Arslanbob and sometimes even Bishkek visit the pasture to drink fresh horse milk, and they are accommodated as paying guests by some pastoral households on *Kichi Kenkol*. This additional income provided by the tourists during their often extended vacation on the pasture and their regularly drinking of fresh horse milk is unique to *Kenkol* and financially very profitable. To gain a deeper insight on the production of the dairy farming products and the relevant value chains see the chapter on the organization of dairy farming.

Professional herders take care about livestock of relatives, friends and neighbours of their hometown during the summer. They get paid on a monthly basis per animal (about 350 KGS/6.50 USD a month per cattle, 75 KGS/1.40 USD a month per sheep). However, if cows can be used for dairy production herders do not get paid, but are instead allowed to use and sell the dairy products themselves. The mutual trust amongst family members, friends and neighbours makes this business model attractive for pastoralists. Livestock-owners benefit from exchange in two ways. First, they do not have to look after their own animals during summer time and can profit from the gain of weight in that time period. Secondly, they can invest in livestock without spending time on the pasture. If an animal perishes during the time on the pasture, the herders are not liable for the loss. Only if an animal disappears the owner needs to be compensated. In case of a rock landslide or a similar natural accident herders bring the animal skin and the earmark back to the owner without having to refund the loss. Most households on *Kichi Kenkol* combine both utilization practices as the money they earn through professional herding is a steady income and because most of the households have the capacity to look after more animals than their own livestock.

The second type of pasture utilization on *Kichi Kenkol* is beekeeping. During Soviet times beekeeping played a significant role in Kyrgyzstan's *leskhoz* economy. The responsible employees were organized in bee keeper brigades (Steimann 2010: 101-102, 104; Schmidt 2013: 201). Nowadays, the beehives are still owned by the forestry based in Kyzyl Unkur and beekeepers take care of 70 to 80 beehives on average, each extracting the honey two

or three times a year during months of June and July. The beehives stay on the pasture throughout the whole year with two beekeepers as guardians. Although beekeepers do not have to pay for the usage of the beehives they have to dispense five kg of honey per beehive a year to the *leskhoz*. The remaining honey is sold by the beekeepers themselves. In contrast to Soviet times the beekeepers are no longer organized in brigades and are therefore responsible on their own. Their usage right is managed through a licence agreement with the local *leskhoz*. In addition, they are private herdsman taking care of small droves, and producing dairy farming for self-supply. Just as in Soviet times, beekeeping still plays an important role as it is one of the main income sources of these pasture users and is a means to secure their livelihood.

Having presented the main types of pasture utilization, the following part will give a detailed account of two exemplary camps, focusing amongst other things on the different types of pasture utilization and how they are reflected in the camps' structure. Furthermore, we will discuss how households combine these utilization strategies. Because *Kichi Kenkol* has huge altitude ranges, the structure of the camps varies greatly depending on its accessibility, the types of utilization and the terrain. The infrastructure of each individual camp decreases on higher altitudes. Fig. 1.2 shows the camps of a professional herder (3 household members, 13 horses, 11 cattle, 20 sheep) and a beekeeper (7 household members, 75 beehives, 16 cattle) on *Kichi Kenkol*.

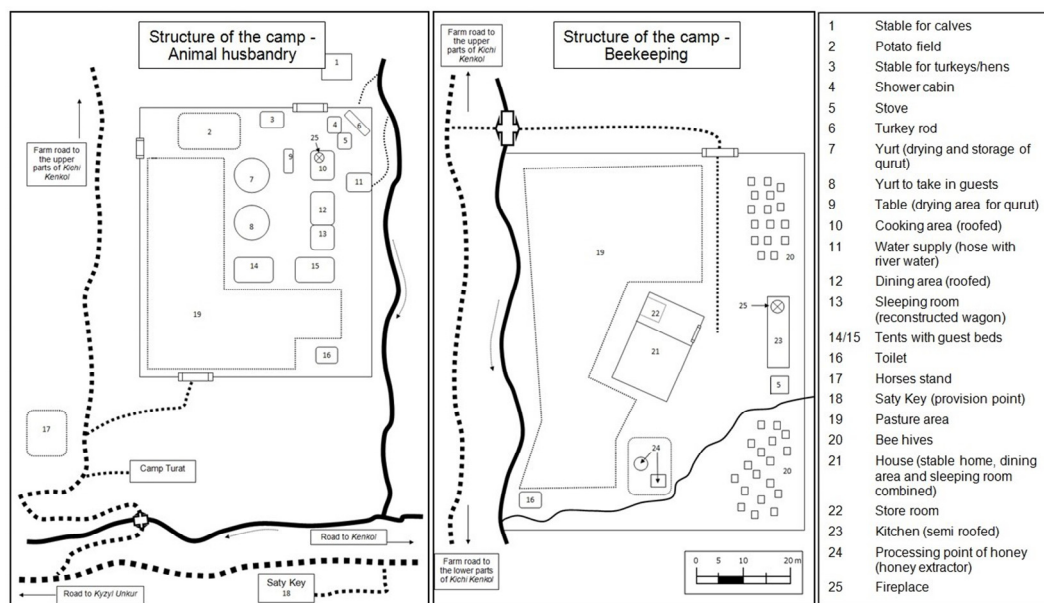


Fig. 1.2: Camp structures in comparison

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Both camp grounds are rented long-term by the households from the *Kyzyl Unkur Leskhoz*. Each household pays a yearly fee of 1500 KGS for the right to camp and to collect firewood. Therefore, the fenced area is their own rented territory, while the rest of the surrounding pasture land is open for common use of all pastoral households. Compared to pastoral herders, the beekeepers are allowed to build a solid house because they have to look after the beehives also during winter times. In contrast, the pastoral herders live in provisional dwellings, for example in a reconstructed wagon or in tents. Every camp

pursues multiple activities to secure their own livelihood (subsistence production), as well as having an additional market-orientated production. Often, household members are engaged in several jobs such as marketing dairy products and overseeing honey production. The horses and cattle of both households graze on the common pasture land and the cows are milked twice a day for dairy farming production. The calves stay in the fenced pasture area and therefore the cattle do not move far away either. The beekeepers' primary assignment is the production of honey, but they additionally care for a few cattle and produce dairy products for self-supply. Some of the household members move down to the walnut-fruit-forests in autumn, together with their livestock. For example, the beekeeper whose camp is illustrated in Fig. 1.2 has rented two hectare of walnut-fruit forest to collect and sell nuts to the local markets as extra income.

Handling several different jobs requires a professional flexibility. At times of the Soviet Union, there were plenty allocations and re-allocations of jobs. Today these different jobs are all managed by the same people to raise money for a suitable standard of living. The animal husbandry and beekeeping remain the major income sources for the pastoralists, and a certain kind of continuity throughout the transformation can be observed. Although the individual agricultural production on an informal basis played an important role in Soviet Kyrgyzstan, the diversity has increased and changed during the transformation process. Income is attained through several different sources and the necessary demands of day-to-day life are supplied through subsistence activities which enable the households to better deals with risks. These risks can be the death of livestock, the death or the injury of a household member, shrinking price stability on the local markets or the inflation of the local currency to just name a few. The presented types of pasture utilization (herding and beekeeping) still remain one of the most important sources of income today but are added onto by various other means of profit through diversification (e.g. nuts, tourism, dairy farming).

It is evident that the mentioned aspects do affect the utilization of natural resources in post-soviet Kyrgyzstan, making the pastoralists more dependent on the natural resources than ever before. However, the drastic changes of the organization and management structures during the transformation process made the social bonds and networks between the pastoralists stronger.

### ***Social Structures on the Pasture***

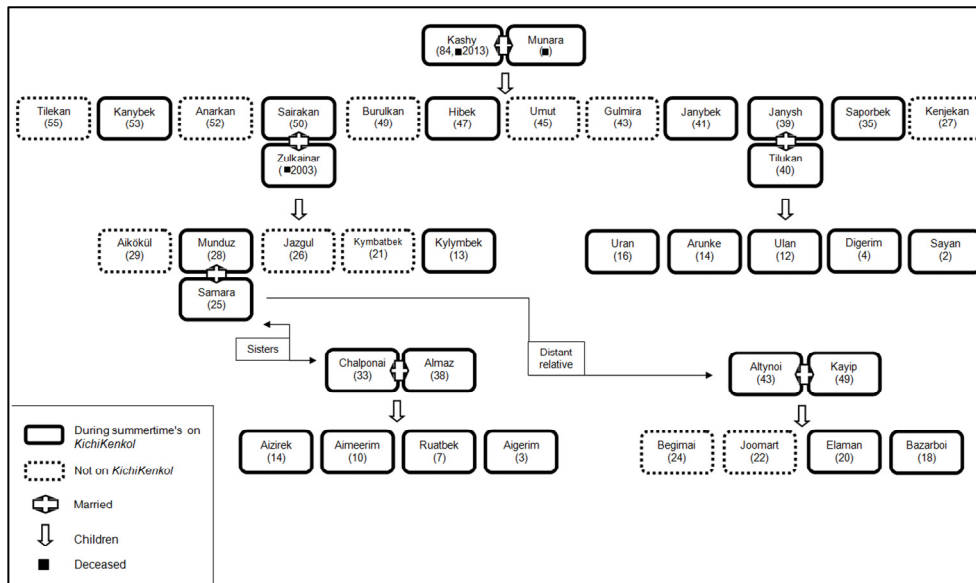
This section deals with the social dimension of transformation highlighting the pastoralists' social structures within a single camp and the social networks on the pasture. The cognitive interest is aligned with aspects of the social organization of the household, the social status of members in the household and society, the division of labour among age and gender and potential social conflicts on the pasture in the light of the transformation process. It is important to consider to which extent the social aspects of transformation affect the management and utilization of natural resources in post-soviet Kyrgyzstan.

Collectivization was interpreted as an essential part of the communist ideology facing an opportunity to establish a new and alternative society besides the dominating capitalistic system by rejecting individualism and declaring the community as the crucial reference and the key for success (Hobsbawn 1994: 100). The *kolkhoz* developed into "a system that

governed not only the production and redistribution of goods and services, but also the [...] social relations of the rural population” (Steimann 2010: 99) as well as the social community (Dekker 2003: 47). The professional herders of the livestock farms often spent the whole year on the pasture accompanied by their families. Holding the position of a specialist assuming responsibility of the farm’s capital they often had a privileged and notable reputation in the Kyrgyz society (Steimann 2010: 106). The communist system fostered good personal relationships with those in power to get a good job within the *kolkhoz*, which stimulated clientelism and patronage (Trevisani 2007: 101). The relationships within the *kolkhoz* system can be seen as a form of social cooperation based on mutual support and trust and therefore on effective social networks within the Soviet system (Steimann 2010: 104). Although the Soviet Union declared itself as a ‘workers’ state, the strong professional and social hierarchies and power imbalances of the Soviet system that were established through the strict division of labour led to social stratification and inequalities (Steimann 2010: 103). The *kolkhoz* as a ‘total social institution’ can no longer be seen as a socialist system of rational distribution but led to “far less equality and social justice than was promised by the socialist ideals” (Steimann 2010: 113).

The social organization of pastoral households changed significantly during the last decades. The average household size on *Kichi Kenkol* is between four and six persons. Some households accommodate one employee for the summer. The number of household members did not change when compared to Soviet times, but household structures and compositions did. For instance, one camp consisted of three generations working and living together as the vagaries of transformation forced the people to move closer together. During the research several camp leaders were interviewed who confirmed close kinship ties between about one third of the existing camps on the pasture. The utilization of *Kichi Kenkol* has a long tradition. The Choitov family can be cited as an example, husbanding this pasture since more than a century. Six out of twenty-two camp leaders on the pasture are sons and daughters of Kashy Choitov running animal husbandry and beekeeping enterprises. The social organization of the Choitov family is illustrated in Fig. 1.3, which shows the old and traditional family ties on the pasture.

The fact that animal husbandry still plays an important role in post-soviet Kyrgyzstan can be interrelated to the social status and the reputation of the pastoralist profession today. The pastoral herders had a privileged and notable reputation in the Soviet society, and while they are not as privileged today as in the past there is still widespread respect for the profession. Especially the herders of large droves enjoy high status in the society. Additionally, the autochthonous pastoral families with their indigenous knowledge and tradition have social prestige in the Kyrgyz society at large. The social reputation of pastoralists did not change much after independence. It is an aspect that endured during the transformation processes because of the fact that animal husbandry remains important also in today’s Kyrgyzstan.



**Fig. 1.3: Family tree of the Choitov family**

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Another focus within the social dimension of transformation was the division of labour between men and women and between adults and children in the pastoral camp. After the dissolution of the Soviet system the former specialized workers of the kolkhoz became sudden autonomous employers being in charge of securing their households livelihood. The outcome of this was the diversification of income with diverse jobs requiring the division of labour between household members. Once the children reach the age by what they are able to responsibly execute different jobs they have to contribute to the household's income. The children are acquainted already in younger days with the different pastoral duties and responsibilities. In terms of gendered divisions of labour there is a great difference between the responsibilities of male and female pastoralists. The female household members are specialized in the dairy farming, i.e. the milking of livestock and processing of dairy farming products. Additionally, they are responsible for the cooking of meals and maintaining the camp space. The male household members usually take care of the livestock (beekeeping/herding) and are responsible for the purchase and sale of livestock, the provision and collecting of firewood and making hay in the hayfields of the residential village. Although the daily routine runs accordingly, in times of need every member of the household is able to execute all camp chores. Additionally, some members of the household are temporarily absent for the selling of livestock or hay making. This changed compared to the situation during the former Soviet Union. Today, pastoralists have to be open and flexible in order to successfully contribute to the securing of their livelihood. The transformation challenged the pastoralist former way of life, but coincidentally provided them with a necessary flexibility for today's life.

### Box 1.1: The death of Kashy Choitov

A story, which supports empirical findings in respect to the important role of the children within the pastoral household relates to the death of Kashy Choitov whom we met during one of our interviews. He became critically ill, which resulted in his sudden death. Every adult family member left the pasture instantly for his funeral. Immediately the children, mainly under the age of 18, were made responsible to run the pastoral camp. One example is the 12 year old son of Sairakan Choitov, who was at that time in charge for the control of the sheep close to a mountain peak. Therefore he started his control walk during dawn, coming back long after dusk. The 16-year-old girl, who worked for the pastoral camp during the summer holidays, was responsible henceforward for the milking of the livestock and the production of the dairy produce. Additionally, she had to take care of the meals. The camps nearby were all run by Kashy Choitov's sons and daughters too. We could observe an association of the particular children of the camps. They managed the daily pastoral life in collaboration and with coping with every possible task that normally is executed by or together with the adult household members. This example shows that every child is able to perform almost all tasks related to the daily routine on the pasture.

There also several collaborations exist between the different households based on kinship, amicable bonds and neighbourly friendship. Although today the social association is not as broad as in Soviet Kyrgyzstan, the existence of social networks on the pasture is prevalent. These networks are no longer concentrated on the forced collaboration and circuitousness of the *kolkhoz*, but rather on strong bonds between the camps on a smaller scale. This implies common transport of livestock and mutual support in daily work. Social transformation evidently gave rise to increased forms of solidarity between the pastoral households. These close relations between the different camps suggest that possible social conflicts can be handled constructive between the households. Pastoralists on other pastures report conflicting use of the pasture area between long-established pastoralists, former *kolkhozniki* and 'new' pastoralists who were not in business before. Regarding to the pastoralists on *Kichi Kenkol* no social conflicts were observed and competitive situations or conflicts regarding the pasture utilization were seemingly non-existent.

There were many aspects of the social structure, which changed during the transformation, as well as aspects, which continued from former soviet structures. Considering the social dimension of transformation by comparing the social structures at times of the Soviet Union and today's Kyrgyzstan, the aspects of continuity and change keep the level. It seems to be that the pastoralists picked supporting aspects known from the Soviet pastoralism and combined them with new and diverse social strategies. This renders the possibility to cope with their pastoral life practically as possible.

Summing up, one can say that the members of one single camp as well as the different camps on the pasture are socially associated to each other. The social networks within a single camp and in between the different pastoral households became more important during the transformation process of post-socialist Kyrgyzstan. Kinship, friendship and neighbourhood significantly contribute to the coping with the daily pastoral routine and the securing of the livelihood. Today's strong company is a product of the transformation from a soviet state to an independent state with all its changes and challenges. All



mentioned social aspects do affect the management and utilization of natural resources in post-soviet Kyrgyzstan.

### **Mobility Strategies of the Pastoral Households**

This section will take a closer look into the mobility strategies of the pastoral households of *Kichi Kenkol* that crosscut with the social and institutional-territorial dimensions of transformation. It will focus on seasonal and intra-seasonal movements interpreted in light of changes that occurred after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Mobility strategies have often been considered as coping responses to ecological uncertainty, and mobile herders are frequently represented as quick and flexible responder to natural disasters and general resource scarcity (Kreutzmann 2012: 6). However, it is argued here that mobility not only serves as a coping strategy to deal with ecological and environmental issues, but is also important to handle socio-economic and political challenges. Accordingly, mobility can be seen as an indicator of adaptation to transformation processes.

Historically, herders in what today is Kyrgyzstan practiced a system of migration and vertical transhumance for grazing livestock over centuries, often based on kinship structures. Grasslands were predominantly used as forage grounds by applying spatio-temporal mobility patterns between seasonal pastures (Dörre 2012: 128). Several authors have claimed the “end of nomadism” (Humphrey & Sneath 1999), however it is evident from fieldwork that pastoral practices are still applied in a very flexible manner. With the sedentarization measures that were implemented during the Soviet era, the importance of settled operational bases has grown while at the same time introducing intensified pasture utilization. Not only the allocation of grazing land and production targets were determined by the state but also the transportation of livestock and herders was centrally organized. Rail and road transport became available in various areas and made even remote pastures accessible.

The annual cycle of pastoral households during Soviet times was characterized by winter housing, intermediate spring and autumn periods and mountain grazing for a short time in the summer. Summer pastures (*jailoos*) were often located about 200 km away from the *kolkhozy* and livestock was mainly moved by mechanized transport. Herders had a specific camp site on the *jailoos* (Wilson 1997: 59).

After the demise of the Soviet Union, large numbers of mobile herders had to operate as individual households and herders became private livestock owners for the first time. Accordingly, household organisation and mobility strategies needed to be adopted. Limited access to often defective vehicles as well as the lack of fuel and a deficient infrastructure constrained the mobility options of herders and complicated the access to pasture land (Wilson 1997: 58-60). According to Farrington (2005: 172), migration patterns and cultural identity among Kyrgyz herders have persisted in spite of the many dramatic changes that occurred during the last 150 years. This has found to be true for the pasture users of *Kichi Kenkol* as well, whose migration patterns have changed little since Soviet times.

Different mobility strategies as well as different annual cycles of the households could be identified on *Kichi Kenkol*. The strategies primarily depend on the pasture utilization patterns animal husbandry and beekeeping, but also on the location of the residential village of the pastoralists and its distance to the summer pasture.

One of the major challenges after the demise of the Soviet Union was the allocation of the pastures to herders since the institutional responsibilities and tenures have changed. During Soviet times, the utilization rights of *Kenkol* were distributed between several livestock *kolkhozy* of the Bazar Korgon *Rayon*. During winter, the livestock was kept mainly in barns, in autumn and spring it was kept on pasturelands in the lower *Kara-Unkur* Valley (Schmidt & Gottschling 2004: 23). Herders from the southern settlement Birinchi May, Sovetskoe and Kyzyl Oktyabr' were sent to *Kichi Kenkol*, whereas households from Kyzyl Unkur were employed in the local forest enterprise. Only few of the households from Kyzyl Unkur went to pastures during Soviet times to work as beekeepers (Blank 2007: 22). Nowadays, the pasture is still mainly used by households of former *kolkhoz* members. However, due to the lack of employment opportunities in the *leskhoz* households from Kyzyl Unkur increasingly invested in livestock and started moving to *Kichi Kenkol* during the summer season. Since the *leskhoz* is in charge of control on *Kichi Kenkol*, the enterprise demands usage fees from the herders, depending on the size of the camp site and the amount of animals that are taken to the pasture. Pastoralists with their origin in Kyzyl Unkur directly pay to the *leskhoz*. Herders coming from the southern parts of Bazar Korgon *Rayon* need to pay at the control point *Shlagbaum* before entering the territory of the *leskhoz* 'Kyzyl Unkur'. For letting their stock graze on the spring and autumn pastures around Bazar Korgon, the pasture users pay a fee to the respective local administration as the body in charge of those southern parts.

*Kichi Kenkol* is relatively easy accessible as a road directly leads to the lower parts of the pasture up to the central provision point *Saty Key* (Fig. 1.1). The higher parts of the pasture can be reached with horses and donkeys as means of transportation. It was noticeable that almost every household with a camp on the pasture has got access to a motorized vehicle available for the transportation of food and belongings. Herders own a car, use one of relatives or rent a vehicle.

From the Bazar Korgon region including the settlements Kyzyl Oktyabr', Saidykum, Gava, Birinchi May and Beshik Jon, it is a three to four-hour car ride to the pasture. Often female members and small belongings are transported by car. Cattle and sheep are mainly walked on the main roads for the two days commute to *Kichi Kenkol*. The animals usually walk behind the car, being accompanied and guided by horse-riding male members of the households. At night the interviewed herders either sleep in their car, while one or two household members are looking after the livestock that is allowed to graze on low pasture lands. Some herders also stay at relative's places on the way. Either way, people do not have to pay for their night-stay en route. Herders coming from the southern part of Bazar Korgon *Rayon* must stop at a control point located right at the entrance to the 'Kyzyl Unkur' forest enterprise. Here, livestock is counted and registered. Herders from Kyzyl Unkur can reach *Kichi Kenkol* within one day.

Not only the route to and from the pasture is now organized by herders themselves; they also established new ways for the organization of intra-seasonal movements on the pasture, including the regular provision of food. Women usually stay at the camp and take care of cooking, cleaning, milking the horses and producing *kumys* and *qurut* that are marketed in times of winter. During the day, the livestock can move freely even outside the camp. At certain times of the day, horses and cattle return to the camp to get milked. Younger boys gather the livestock often grazing at higher altitudes, and mother cows return voluntarily as their calves are kept close to the camp itself. Cattle, horses and donkeys are kept in lower altitudes whereas sheep graze in higher altitudes, usually staying there during the whole of summer. Male household members take smaller tents into those higher altitudes to guard the sheep. Several shepherds of *Kichi Kenkol* put their tents together and share the work in the upper heights. Only once or twice a week, shepherds move downwards to their camps to restore food provisions.

Amongst the 22 identified households on the pasture there was only one shepherd who was exclusively keeping sheep. He has got the smallest and most flexible camp in the highest altitudes of *Kichi Kenkol* and usually relocates twice during a summer once an area is exhausted. His family members visit him during the summer but generally stay at the home village. He is strongly dependent on the support of his neighbours on the pasture, especially when he is in need of food supply or livestock transportation to the market.

During Soviet times, the state farms provided the herders with inputs, such as fertilizer, fuel, forage and hay, and were also responsible for the marketing of the produced goods (Wilson 1997: 59-60). Since state-organized provision of food broke down after the dissolution of the Soviet Union herders had to find new ways to supply themselves during the summer months.

On *Kichi Kenkol* most of the food supply is managed through the central provision point *Saty Key* that is easily accessible by cars and trucks. From *Saty Key* it takes around two hours to the village Kyzyl Unkur and around five hours to Bazar Korgon. Pastoralists can buy fruits, vegetables, eggs and water amongst others items at *Saty Key*. Apart from food supply, *Saty Key* also plays a crucial role for the organization of livestock transport to markets, the transportation of hay to the pastoralists' home villages as well as food from Bazar Korgon. Some of the herders gain an additional income by regularly driving to the city of Bazar Korgon with their trucks that transport livestock of fellow herders to the livestock bazaar in Bazar Korgon and bring more food back to their own camps. Also, they help neighbours or friends to gather hay for the winter and transport it to the home villages. This valuable and profitable service is offered once or twice a week, and more and more households consider purchasing a truck as a possible means for an additional income.

Generally, pastoralists work on the pasture from early May and stay until autumn when much of the grazing land is exhausted. Households with young children leave the pasture in September when school starts in their home villages. They leave their camps and sometimes even some of their belongings on the pasture to return in the following summer to the same camp site which was also the case during Soviet times. The less steep pasture areas at lower altitudes open up the opportunity to build bigger camps as is possible in

higher altitudes. Most of the camps are easily rebuilt in case that they get destroyed during the winter. Large snow falls in winter times require that the camps located on the upper parts of the pasture need to move their equipment. However, most camp owners, who work the upper parts of the pasture, have a storage place at the local provision point *Saty Key*. In contrast to those higher camps, those dwellings at lower altitudes are equipped more extensively.

When leaving the pasture in autumn, professional herders return the animals to their owners. Pastoralists with their origin around the village of Bazar Korgon transport their livestock back to the residential village where it can graze on spring and autumn pastures. These areas are in the responsibility of the *Ayil Okmotu* (local self administration), whom the pastoralists pay a fee for the usage of those areas. Almost all of the Kyzyl Unkur households make a stop at the walnut-fruit forests that spread over the area. They let their livestock graze on forest land and gather walnuts for an additional income. Once it starts getting colder, they move to their houses where they stay over the winter. Livestock is kept in stalls and fed with hay that has been gathered during the summer. Only beekeepers have to revisit and check their beehives a few times during the winter months. Due to the snow they have to walk the distance as the roads cannot be accessed by cars anymore. Those visits take about one week in total. Fig. 1.4 shows a typical annual cycle of the households utilizing the *Kichi Kenkol* Pasture.

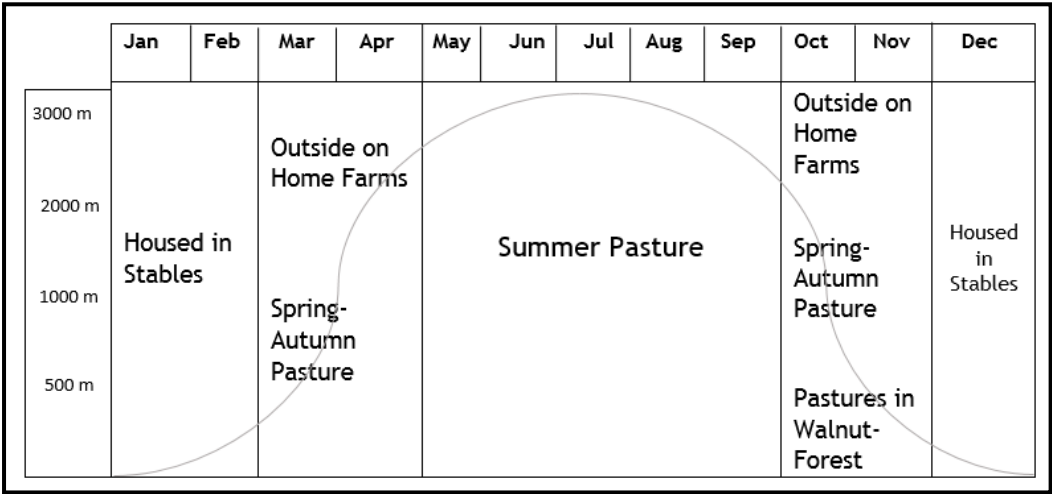


Fig. 1.4: Annual cycle of the pastoralist households on *Kichi Kenkol*

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It is evident that mobility plays a crucial role within the livelihood strategies of pastoral households. It helps pastoral households to flexibly adapt to political and socio-economic transformation and to deal with new challenges. Institutional regulations have changed as there is no centrally organized control over the pasture lands anymore. At the first glance, those regulations seem to be very versatile and confusing as responsibilities differ depending on the origin of the households using *Kichi Kenkol* pasture land. However, among the interviewed herders there were no complaints about any irregularities or non-transparent bureaucracy regarding the contribution of pasture land or the counting of animals. Even though administrative responsibilities have changed, it is mostly still the

same households that use *Kichi Kenkol*. Institutional changes thus had only a small impact on the pastoralists' strategies in the present case study.

Because transportation of livestock and food is not organized by the state anymore social relations not only with family members but also with neighbouring pastoralists have gotten more and more important when it comes to the organization of mobility. If a household is not able to bring own livestock to a summer pasture it may assign that job to relatives or professional herders. In case herders are in need of food or transport of livestock to a market professional truck-drivers need to be approached. Pastoralists have re-organized themselves and their mobility strategies and have developed the capacity to create new sources of income by adapting to new challenges.

## Conclusion

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the gaining of independence, Kyrgyzstan was subject to radical transformations of the political, economic and social system. The transition from a mechanized and state controlled animal husbandry to individual livestock herding made the pastoralists independently responsible for the securing of their livelihood. This was reflected by reverting to the agricultural production for personal usage and the diversification of income (herding, beekeeping, dairy production, tourism, nuts) using a plurality of local land and natural resources.

The active, multi-directional and open-ended processes of transformation altered pastoral livelihood strategies. The households on *Kichi Kenkol* showed best practice in recombining and improvising on old Soviet traditions and new post-Soviet influences in order to cope with the numerous challenges that transformation poses. While certain aspects of the Soviet pastoral practice, its natural resource utilization and its management remained (*continuity*) others appeared to happen in the light of a post-socialist life (*change*).

Compared to the later socialist times, when mechanized and state controlled animal husbandry predominated, today's herders are individually responsible for their livestock and are no longer attached to any governmental targets. This is one of the major challenges the pastoralists face regarding the utilization of the pasture land. They have to organize the transport on and off the pasture individually and have to market the dairy products and livestock on their own. In contrast to the fixed prices of livestock during soviet times, the pastoralists nowadays face the challenges of the free market. Therefore the pastoral households diversify their income generation through several sources. The types of pasture utilization consist of those, which were practiced during soviet times, but changed, in its internal structure (e.g. ownership). To perceive the pastoral households as individual entities only would neglect the close social relationships between them. The social relations of the pastoralists on *Kichi Kenkol* can be described as a social network, which consists of friendly working connections between households, whole families and neighbours. In that sense the social ties between the pastoral households have strengthened through the challenges of the transformation.

Summing up, all main objectives of this study showed aspects of change and continuity converging within the different transformational dimensions. The analysis of the pastoral household on the micro level has shown that their practices and strategies can be

understood as indicators of socio-economic and political changes. It is the picture of today's pastoralists adapting to a self-contained and independent livelihood. However, this individual responsibility and the aligned diversification of income also implies a higher risk pastoral households are exposed to and a rising dependency on natural resources.

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## Legal Pluralism and Social Practice. A Case Study of Kara Bulak Pasture

### Decentralisation of pasture management in Kyrgyzstan

A relatively new law 'On pastures', as ratified in 2009 in Central Asia's Kyrgyz Republic is trying to move responsibilities of natural resource management towards newly formed pasture committees and thus attempts to facilitate a shift towards an increased decentralisation of pasture governance. Interestingly, herders are currently being motivated to (re-)turn to a community-based (local) management of pastures.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, community-based management is now starting to be widely implemented throughout the country, being recognised as 'good governance' by leading consultative agencies, such as USAID, the World Bank, or Germany's federal development agency GIZ (Bussler 2010: 21-23, USAID 2007). Following Bichsel et al. (2010: 261), emerging regimes of natural resource governance shall be understood as, "the arrangements of power and forms of authority that regularise the appropriation, distribution and value of natural resources in society".

Altered governance features or modes immediately raise questions on the underlying legislative framework, as well as on the 'ifs and hows' of other norms and non-judicial relationships that might be involved in shaping the status quo in terms of social practices related to natural resources. Questions concerning the underpinning complex interrelations of the setting of norms and rules (institutionalisation) of pasture utilisation by the state on the one hand, and their practical application in concerned user's daily routines, will hence be given priority throughout this paper. In what exact manner do these spheres affect each other? Simply put: Do new legislations reach the pastures themselves, and if so, are they being transformed and/or appropriated by local user communities and stakeholders? Bichsel et al. (2010: 263) give a formulaic assessment of this general unease of formal versus non-formal arrangements in the following words,

"The discrepancy between the legal framework and social practices entails inherent tension. Law is a normative prescription for behaviour, and the gap between the 'ought' and the 'is' raises questions about forms of authority and power that regulate actual social practices, and about their basis for legitimacy".

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<sup>1</sup> The term, "return to" is used because there appears to be a general assessment and preconception of the inner workings of Central Asian nomadic traditions as largely being based on the concept of kinship and community, rather than a state-centred structure. All too often, in, "following the idealised image of Western democracy, or, alternatively, aid projects build on so-called 'local traditions' but include only selective aspects of these traditions that are of interest, while at the same time attempting to transform their underlying model." (Bichsel et al. 2010: 264) Often, in relying on (the declining use of) elders' courts (*aksakal*) and, "the long tradition of pastoralism" (Beyer 2006, Bussler 2010: 50, Eurasia Foundation 2012), for example, hopes are being generated that those might represent a distinctively Kyrgyz feature of customary self-government and tradition that then helps in further facilitating development (Esengulova et al. 2008: 6, Jacquesson 2010). For a generally contrasting overview on certain historical misrepresentations of nomadic Inner Asia and the distortions that took place in shaping them and also continue to shape today's perception onto issues like these see Sneath (2007: 1) whose aim it is, "[...] to rethink the traditional dichotomy between state and non-state society and to approach the state in a different way - in terms of the decentralised and distributed power found in aristocratic orders".

The research approach can mainly be divided along two lines. First, a series of semi-structured qualitative household interviews with pastoralists on the pasture Kara Bulak were conducted. Secondly, various expert interviews with local officials in the area of Bazar Korgon *Rayon* (district) were being held. The work in hand initially starts off by introducing the specific locality of the study area and by presenting the applied research methods during field research. The main section reviews the modes of legality of pasture use (and their narrative), their application (in observed practice) and a theoretical classification anchored in the concept of legal pluralism. Finally, section three discusses the research outcomes, presents main findings, and provides a conclusion addressing problematic areas that warrant a need for further research.

### The pasture Kara Bulak

The study area is located within the Bazar Korgon District in the Jalal-Abad *Oblast'* (province) in south-western Kyrgyzstan. The area is largely characterised by mountain pastures of various altitudes, a walnut-fruit forest, small villages, and an intersecting river, Kara Unkur. Research was conducted on the medium-altitude summer pasture *Kara Bulak* which can be divided into two sections, starkly separated from each other by a steep climb in between the respective pasture grounds. Situated in the north of the *rayon*, Kara Bulak's elevation varies between 1,800m and 2,750m. Its lower part, *kichi* (small, krg.) *Kara Bulak*, shows sporadic growth of trees and vegetation that is not uncommon to be found below tree line. The upper part starts at an elevation of about 2,300m and is in striking contrast to the lower one, with clear signs of landslides triggered by repeatedly occurring rainfalls (Fig. 2.1). Both of those pasture parts are connected with each other by a small river- the pasture's sole water source.



Fig. 2.1: *Kara Bulak* Pasture's lower and upper parts

Pictures taken by Voigt & Walker 2013

During the time span of the fieldwork, nine camps were using the pasture grounds, tending to their flock of cows, horses, and sheep. Five of them were encountered on the upper pasture. However, one turned out to be a shepherd's tent who worked for one of the households on this pasture. The other four households were situated on the lower reigns of Kara Bulak pasture. Since one needs to cross to reach the mountain slope, the accessibility of the pasture depends on the river's gauge. In any case, the distance to the nearest settlement - Kyzyl Unkur - is less than ten kilometers and therefore *Kara Bulak* is

commonly being described as a summer pasture with comparatively easy access. The second part of the research was conducted in different villages and municipalities in the *rayon*. Officials in Kyzyl Unkur and in the district's administrative centre, the town of Bazar Korgon, were interviewed. These represent relevant stakeholders that facilitate utilisation and management of pastures.

## Methods

Two questionnaires, one for the time on the pasture, the other for local officials, were in constant use. For the pasture, a census was prepared to summarise general household structures. The semi-structured household interviews covered nine main categories, ranging from daily routines to schemes of (shared) pasture management. Among other issues, research focused on the question whether or not the pastoralists had heard about a pasture committee (*jaiyt comitet*, krg-rus.), as being prescribed by the new law 'On pastures', as well as the procedures they were required to go through in order to facilitate usage of this pasture (e.g. fees, documentation, meetings, etc.).<sup>2</sup> For expert interviews with local authorities the questionnaire was grouped into five different categories: structure of the committee (if applicable), social network, legitimacy and acceptance, knowledge bases, and exclusion (or rather inclusion). All interviews were supported by a Kyrgyz interpreter, who beyond translating the interview also helped in gaining a deeper understanding of Kyrgyz culture in general. Surrounding environs were observed throughout the interviews and the extended stays on the pasture, tackling the issues: How do people spend their lives on the pasture? How do they react to questions and/or which status in their respective institutional department do they have? These observations, coupled with statements given, though not claiming to be conclusive in character, helped shaping an overall image of the underlying principles of social and legal constellation at work. In order to spend more time with the households on the pasture and thus generating mutual trust, we assisted with simple duties (e.g. forming *qurut* as one of the main sources of protein and surplus income) or asked to explain the activities they were occupied with (e.g. how to bake bread, milk the horses, etc.).

## Pasture legality within official narratives and social practices on the pasture

The official narratives, as being shared by state representatives throughout the research area, often are in seemingly stark contrast to observed social practices, meaning the recurrent daily activities of pastoralists of the *Kara Bulak* pasture grounds, hence raising questions about frictions between those two general spheres of interest. The overall picture is being further complicated by a diverse set of legal land categories relating to the allocation and management of pastures. As Dörre & Borchardt (2012: 316) state,

“Pastures, since Soviet time an exclusive state property, are located on communal lands that belong to the *ayil oktmotu* (Kyrgyz for local authority, since 2009 expressed in Russian as *aiylnyi okrug*) and on areas of the forest fund and the land reserve. They are categorized

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<sup>2</sup> From here on the term *jaiyt committee* will be used according to the new law “On pastures”. Such a committee is described as “the executive body of the association of pasture users” (Law of the Kyrgyz Republic 2009: 1) and therefore represents the community-based pasture management committee. The concept of associations of pasture users will be described below.

based on their distance from settlements [...] According to the legal requirements formulated in the Land Code of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Resolution ‘On Pasture Lease and Use’ (ROPLU 2002), which was valid until 2009, local authorities were responsible for managing pastures located close to settlements.”

A seminal text, informing about the legal foundations of recent standards on the distribution (or: allocation), maintenance and ownership issues (among others) of the country’s pastures, is the 2009 ‘On pastures’.<sup>3</sup> The law’s declared goal is an attempt to move administrative responsibility towards the newly formed *jaiyt* committees. Until 2009, as was partially described above, pasture management was organised in a three tier system that put different categories of pastures under the administration and responsibility of different governmental and legal institutions or entities (UNU-IAS 2012: 3).<sup>4</sup> With the new law, land reserve territory and communal land comes under the administration of pasture committees, whereas forest fund land will remain to be managed by organizations of the national forestry sector. According to Dörre & Borchardt (2012: 317) *Kara Bulak* belongs to the category of land reserve territory and should be managed by a pasture committee. Therefore it was chosen as a representative study area.

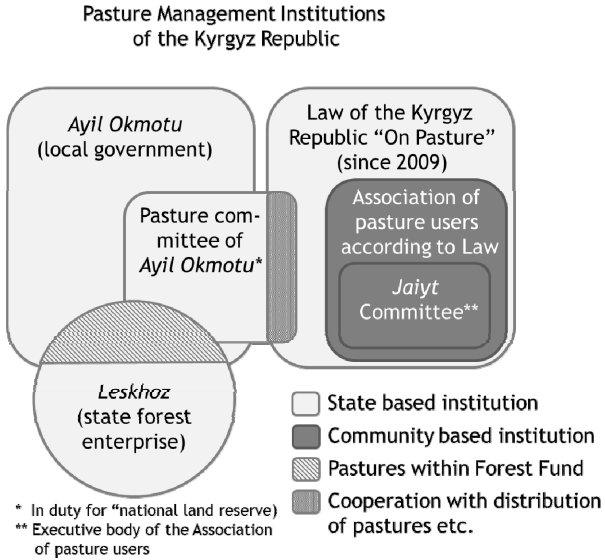
With the new shift towards the decentralisation of pasture governance, herders are currently being motivated to organise around community-based (local) management (*ayil oktmotu*, krg.) of pastures through increased participation in the decision making process. With the establishment of an association of pasture users, “which represents the interests of pasture users, [as a] corresponding administrative-territorial unit with reference to utilization of pastures,” (Law of the Kyrgyz Republic 2009: 1) a pasture committee can be elected by the users themselves. The organization hereby represents the executive body and develops an annual community plan on pasture utilisation. The community plan on management and utilisation of pastures is valid for five consecutive years and contains: border drawing, the (re-)construction of pastoral infrastructure (like water supply), monitoring of pasture conditions and the distribution of land with an optimal amount of animals. Such organisational patterns, perceived by agenda setters, legislative bodies, and executing organs alike as measures of ‘good governance’, strongly rely upon local peoples’ knowledge, willingness, and ability to adapt and adhere to newly set standards (Bussler 2010: 21). Kyzyl Unkur’s Forest administration (*leskhoz*), as well as the *ayil oktmotu*, and the pasture committee of Bazar Korgon Municipality were being questioned and put under scrutiny by the authors in several expert interviews. Although Bazar Korgon’s pasture committee of *ayil oktmotu* is not legally responsible for the particular pasture that is *Kara Bulak*, it was of particular interest due to the inner functioning of such an administrative body. In order to foster a better understanding of the connections between the mentioned

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<sup>3</sup> Dörre & Borchardt (2012) state that the change towards the new law of 2009 ‘On pastures’ was mainly being informed by the previous failures of the 2002 regulation ‘On Pasture Lease and Use’, to address, “unequal resource allocations”, (316) and a complicated, largely non-transparent mechanism of administration in use (ibid.).

<sup>4</sup> A detailed chronology of the chequered history of land codes and legal arrangements concerning pastures in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, reaching as far back as to the country’s independence in 1991, can be found in Dörre (2012: 133-137).

institutions, Fig. 2.2 illustrates the relations between the individual pasture management institutions.



- State based institution
- Community based institution
- Pastures within Forest Fund
- Cooperation with distribution of pastures etc.

**Fig. 2.2: Pasture management institutions of the Kyrgyz Republic**

Draft: Voigt & Walker 2014

Analytically, seven core areas of scholarly concern are identified, namely documentation, lease and ownership, appropriation and distribution, commodification and conservation, legitimacy, corruption, and monitoring. An overview over interview statements and their relation to primary and secondary literature is being given in light of these seven areas. Set against the backdrop of social practice observed on *Kara Bulak*, those statements are painting a multi-faceted picture of pluralism of legality at work. The aim of the semi-structured household interviews with users of *Kara Bulak* was to evaluate whether and how this specific law is being implemented, or rather, internalised into the daily routines of the people. However, slightly against our expectations, interviewees had rarely heard about such a law and/or the *jaiyt* committee. Furthermore nearly all camps pay their fees to a local forestry enterprise, which is not in accordance with the above-mentioned land category (land reserve territory) of *Kara Bulak*. The households on the pasture presented a differentiated picture of social stratification. Measured by the amount of owned animals, there were camps which seemed to be economically weaker (e.g. one with two own sheep and one horse only), and those which appeared to be richer (as one household with 550 own sheep and more than ten horses of own belonging implied). These property and income differences could be additionally seen in the diverging living standards on the pasture. Some tents were small, with tent poles made of tree limbs, while others, in contrast, were bigger, generally in good condition, and came equipped with different layers (e.g. one tent on the lower pasture had a mosquito net). Nearly all camps had a built fence around their tent and outdoor area and had special places for milking horses and cows. Furthermore, the production of *qurut* to be sold on the market was observed in all camps. Most of the households had arrived in June and were about to leave in September, except for one that had decided to leave in July since the pasture's resources were presumably not sufficient for their animals. The semi-structured household interviews were mostly conducted with women, as most men kept on staying in their home

villages, cutting grass in order to produce fodder for the time after their family's extended stay on the pasture.

### **Documentation**

According to the legal framework set out by the Kyrgyz Republic in 2009, all pastoralists are required to obtain, maintain, and carry along all necessary legal documents to their grazing grounds at all applicable times. This reading of the 2009 law 'On pastures' was reconfirmed time and again by the official state representatives we conducted interviews with. So-called pastoral tickets serve as an officially acknowledged document, "[...] certifying the right for access to pastures and their utilization" (Law of the Kyrgyz Republic 2009: art. 2). The documentation shall not be left behind in the villages of origin but must instead be taken along to the semi-permanent tent settlements on the pastures; something that could rarely be observed in practice.

Several interview partners stressed that in theory, to check on this state-sanctioned legislation, monitoring members of *leskhoz* could drop in anytime. However, according to them this rarely happened. Only once (out of nine households) the document asked for – a pasture book/ticket – was shown, the ratio thus being a meagre 1:9. None of the pasture users seemed overly worried about monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms regarding the pasture documentation. It appears that the importance of these documents is either not clear (which would imply insufficient communication between the officials and pasture users), or absolutely clear, so that people are afraid to lose or damage them on the pasture. Pasture users apply for the documents at the *leskhoz* village where they also pay a fee to access and use the land. Interestingly, the pastoralists do not see a problem in receiving the documents and usage rights, especially those who have been on *Kara Bulak* pasture before. During a meeting in May, *leskhoz* and *ayil oktmotu* decide on the precise utilisation of the pasture and prepare the documents for the users. In one interview, a woman commented that new applicants for the pasture are obliged to attend this meeting. Furthermore, it was noted that every local administration had its own rules of usage noted in those documents.

### **Lease and Ownership**

Private Ownership of pasture land is not being granted according to the legal codes in action. The right to pasture land, including the license to use water infrastructure or other necessary means, is being given through the process of lease for up to one year at a time, according to the *leskhoz* in Kyzyl Unkur. This right to lease needs to be renewed the following year. Households that have accommodated themselves to the same spot in recurring years, gain a privileged status in negotiations with newcomers to the pasture that claim that exact spot. It is thus being made more difficult to give away a plot of pasture that has been in continuous use by one particular family, a practice that greatly simplifies peoples' preparation of pasture spots for their livestock (for example, one of the households of *Kara Bulak* used the exact same spot on the pasture for seventeen years in a row).<sup>5</sup> Now, with the slow emergence of *jaiyt* committee throughout the *rayon*, and with

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<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, we stumbled across a case of 'sub-lease', a particular case where someone must have had obtained a one-year license, then re-rented that out to the highest bidder, thus turning a profit on pasture land

Bazar Korgon *ayil oktmotu* pasture committee in particular (its executive heads being elected by 57 pasture users in total), this new institution will itself take on the job of first leasing vacant pasture land, to subsequently rent it out again to pasture users in need.

Every year, the grounds of *Kara Bulak* pasture are distributed in a similar fashion - at least this picture arises after conducting the interviews. Except of one household, all semi-pastoralist camps have used this particular summer pasture for more than four years, with one camp allegedly returning there for at least 50 years in succession.<sup>6</sup> They had kept on using the exact same spot and repairing their old infrastructure (like the fence, clay cooking spot, etc.) every year anew. One of the households on the lower pasture was using their relatives' spot until these were to finish erecting their house they had started to build in the village. Thus, no pastoralist alien to these users is using their pasture while they themselves are hindered to do so. This illustrates the above mentioned fact that known users seem to gain a privileged status for negotiations. Nevertheless, one woman assured that no furthered relation with *leskhoz* staff would be necessary to obtain the same spot each year. However, that does not mean that newcomers may not begin to use *Kara Bulak* pasture. Generally, the upper and lower parts of the pasture – against the expectations – were administered by the *leskhoz*. However, some users are paying their fees to a businessman (named Bakhit). Estimations differ when considering that person's position in regard to pasture lease or ownership. One woman thought that he rented 100 ha of pasture ground for a long time and would sublet it now (this might or might not be connected to a higher price). This was confirmed by Nurbek (head of one household) who had paid Bakhit to use those 100 ha. Others said he had purchased it from *leskhoz*, but *leskhoz* is still obliged to its duty to manage the pasture. In any case, three households were paying to him (Bakhit) for the pasture and in addition they would pay fixed prices to *leskhoz* for using water and fire wood. When we asked about the isolated spot of one camp at the end of the upper pasture, that particular woman told us that this had been Bakhit's decision. After a while we found out that this businessman is a relative of mentioned Nurbek, the richest user of *Kara Bulak* pasture. Given that no response was to be heard about Bakhit on official side, his precise standing remains obscured.

### ***Appropriation and Distribution***

Contrary to the initial assumption that *Kara Bulak* would be administered by the National Land Reserve, the administration of the pasture, including both the lower and upper parts, falls under supervision of the *leskhoz* based in KyzylUnkur, as its director and the head of Kyzyl Unkur's *ayil oktmotu*, repeatedly stated. In fact, administration appears to have undergone a recent change from *ayil oktmotu* to *leskhoz*.<sup>7</sup> Seasonal meetings are being

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that he himself would not use. Repeated efforts to locate that businessman and learn more about his peculiar practices remained unsuccessful unfortunately.

<sup>6</sup> That particular household had relatives who had used this pasture before. They applied in the name of those relatives for continual use of the pasture. That household had a new-born child on the pasture and was relieved to be able to use this pasture since their previous pasture grounds had been in *Toktogul* with chillier nights, were more difficult to access, and were higher in elevation than *Kara Bulak*.

<sup>7</sup> In total, Kyzyl Unkur's *leskhoz* manages 17,000 ha of grazing and forest ground which is, according to its director, not subject to the reforms of the 2009 law 'On pastures' due to its special status as a joint forestry administration. However, the fact that most pasture users stated to pay to *leskhoz* from the beginning of their usage of *Kara Bulak* give rise to more questions.

held in order to (re-)distribute vacant pasture land on a regular basis. New boundaries for available pasture space are being (re-)negotiated on a seasonal basis as well, the price currently being 87 KGS per hectare.<sup>8</sup> In distributing leased land, the local pasture committee and *leskhoz* follow a simple distributional formula of 1 cow equalling 1 ha, and 4 sheep equalling 1 ha respectively.

Besides distribution of pasture land, being decided at the annual meeting in May (open for participation by pastoralists), the pasture committee is responsible for solving border problems between pasture neighbours. The households on *Kara Bulak* pasture are aware of the limited space of their pasture. They articulated the capacity of the upper and larger areas being able to accommodate between five and seven households, while the lower part would be able to provide resources for four to five households. Beyond this number the amount of grass would no longer be adequate for livestock. The appropriation and distribution between the pastoralists is not seen as a problem at all. Each family uses a different part of the pasture for their animals, and even if an animal is grazing at the wrong location this is generally tolerated without any quarrels. On the contrary, the neighbouring camps even work together at times. On the upper pasture, for example, people helped each other with major tasks such as sheep shearing. Also, two camps are related to each other and set up their tents directly adjacent to each other. But most of the times they are busy with their own daily routines. Nevertheless, pasture users tend to plan at least one common gathering during the season where all families are being present. On the lower pasture, we observed a stronger cooperation between the neighbours. Here, people know each other quite well and also share their facilities with each other.<sup>9</sup> However, the biggest support comes from family members who live in nearby villages and come up to the pasture whenever any help is needed.

### ***Commodification and Conservation***

Kyzyl Unkur's head of *ayil oktmotu* revealed enlargement plans for the national nature reserve that comprises the Dashman walnut forest district. Due to the gross area affected, such an enlargement would touch on the status of *Kara Bulak* pasture as well, as there are plans of further afforestation of walnut trees within feasible elevation. In fact, first general assessments of the area in question have already been undertaken. Cartographic coverage, as an essential step towards the inclusion of *Kara Bulak* pasture, seems to have been pushed forward, even though the produced maps were not available to the authors. Subsequently, a ban on all livestock grazing could follow, involving all current pasture users, since herders would have to drive their animals through the fragile environment of a young walnut tree forest and planted saplings. Currently, a decision on the area of and around *Kara Bulak* is still pending. Obviously, a potential area of conflict revolves around the issues of necessary environmental protection as stressed by officials on the one hand (conservation), and economic considerations and the protection of peoples' livelihoods on the other hand, in particular pastoral usage regimes (commodification). In practice, it may not be feasible to hold apart these two opposing agendas if one were to go through with

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<sup>8</sup> 87 KGS roughly equal 1.60 US-\$ (as of the publishing date of this paper).

<sup>9</sup> One family owned a clay oven which could be used for baking bread by the neighbors.



those plans. A process on which all of the interviewed experts were unable to elaborate on due to a pending clearance of an issue considered to be of national interest. Surely enough, the economic function of the nut trees themselves is being taken into account and current pasture users would find compensation through the move to nearby pastures (e.g. *Kenkol* pasture) and by means of a division of tents. A follow-up question concerning possible over-usage –considering that nearby *Kenkol* pasture is already habitat for up to twenty households – was being brushed away by the questioned representatives of *ayil oktmotu*.

The plans to enlarge the national protection area of the natural reserve of Dashman were never being mentioned throughout the interviews with semi-pastoralists on *Kara Bulak*. However, the facts that the users are aware of the limited space and that one family already decided to leave in July instead of September (due to a lack of resources) show that there does exist a certain environmental consciousness. Furthermore, this in part acknowledged by the usage of dead wood for fire instead of resorting to tree cutting. One of the households had at one point made a distinct experience when a pasture had been changed into an area of natural protection only feasible for cutting grass which finally forced the family to migrate to another pasture (to be exact, migrating from *Kol Kamush* pasture to *Kara Bulak* pasture).

### ***Legitimacy***

The general impression while interviewing the decision makers at all levels of Bazar Korgon district was either an unreserved or only partially disturbed trust in their own capacities. Kyzyl Unkur's head of the local government, the *ayil oktmotu*, gets newly elected every five years with the last election having been held two months before arrival in the research area. The assumed head of the local pasture committee -the committee theoretically responsible for *Kara Bulak* pasture – could not be located during our stay there and we even got to hear disdainful words about his work by several villagers:

“I have no idea what Torogeldi [name of the head of Kyzyl Unkur's pasture committee] actually does. Nobody in the village really does.” And further on, “nobody ever goes to see him when concerned with any specific problem” (inhabitant of Kyzyl Unkur).<sup>10</sup>

However, as Kyzyl Unkur's head of *ayil oktmotu* stated, “everybody knows about it [the 2009 law]”. This was clearly contrasted by opposing facts gained through observation on the pastures. Concerning the pending decision on the instalment, or rather enlargement of the natural reserve, official interviewees stated that people knew about those plans and most likely would not happily agree to a final decision, but would probably cooperate at one point in time one way or another. Participation in the decision process by concerned user groups was neither planned for nor actively encouraged by officials.

Since all pasture users discharge their fees at *leskhoz* (at least for water and fire wood) we asked them how they thought that money was put to use. Most of the interviewees were

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<sup>10</sup> In all fairness though: Now, with the decision regarding an enlargement of the natural reserve still pending, Kyzyl Unkur's pasture committee seems to be void of any necessary agency to direct. Therefore, as *ayil oktmotu* head Ömurbek claims, Torogeldi as designated chief of the pasture committee, simply *cannot* thwart any momentum at any issue at the moment, even if he wanted to do so.

rather puzzled with that question emerging.<sup>11</sup> One woman could not grasp why she paid at all when after all she had had such trouble to come up to the pasture - one has to cross a river and cannot use a road to access the pasture. Only one household purported that its money was being used to build bridges or repair roads. In theory, the *leskhoz* can be contacted whenever there are problems on the pasture. However, only a few households on the lower pasture had received help yet. After a landslide during the previous year (2012) they were supported by the Ministry for Emergency Situations, sent in by the *leskhoz*, whereas users of the upper pasture who experienced heavy rainfall coupled with a loss of some livestock in 2012, had not received any help. When displeased with the work of *leskhoz* members, the users are able to impeach the head of *leskhoz* (who is elected for a period of five years) through a certain constructive vote of non-confidence. However, there seemed to be a general trust in the work of *leskhoz* staff. With the information about a new law on pastures in mind, we were interested in whether they had heard about this and if a *jaiyt* committee existed at all. However, no one, except of Nurbek (head of one camp), had heard about the law or such a committee before. Nurbek told us about the existence of a committee before and after 2009 but also stated that nothing really had changed after 2009 - except of some rules that no one seemed to oblige to anyways. As a regular participant of several other committee meetings he asserted that neither does it consist of pasture users, as the aforesaid *jaiyt* committee mentioned in the law, nor is it being granted the trust of the tasks and responsibilities outlined in the legislative text. As Nurbek noticed, the committee is important at the beginning of a summer pasture season to divide the pasture only. Beyond this it seems to have no further tasks. We therefore assume that Nurbek was talking about the Kyzyl Unkur's committee.

### **Corruption**

During a workshop on energy efficiency in reversing natural resource degradation in Arslanbob, a Rural Advisory Service's (RAS) expert stated,

“The legal basis is very good in Kyrgyzstan, much better than in other countries of Central Asia. One problem remains corruption, though”.

This contentious issue is difficult to address openly during interviews but can be illuminated nevertheless. Wherever there is a pasture committee responsible for issues of pasture governance, pasture users will discharge their respective fees to that committee directly - with the price currently being set at 87 KGS/ha and an 'animal head fee' corresponding to the exact size of the herd. Regarding the pastures of the so-called national forest fund people will have to pay their fees for pasture usage to the respective *leskhoz*.<sup>12</sup> Local pasture committees, if they are in existence like the one in Bazar Korgon, will effectively function as an intermediary. By signing a contract, they legally bind

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<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, all pastoralists told us that the amount of money to be spent for one hectare was 88 KGS, while *leskhoz* and *ayil oktmotu* claim to take in 87 KGS. Unfortunately, we did not find out where exactly the difference of one Som gets lost at.

<sup>12</sup> Asked about what direct use the fees that people transfer to Kyzyl Unkur' *sayiloktmotu* were given to, we got the answer that only about 15 % were being kept by the local administration itself. With the rest of the budgeted money, pasture committees had a free choice to either maintain or upgrade existing infrastructure (e.g. water supply, roads, bridges), as well as cover their own expenses (e.g. salaries, transport). But in the words of an official delegate himself, “roads are the biggest problem here”.

themselves to the principle of not misusing the land, as well as solving any potential disputes over emerging conflicts of territoriality. Generally, only ten percent of local pasture users originate from Kyzyl Unkur itself and fall under administrative reach of Kyzyl Unkur's *leskhoz*. Before entering their pastures, local users will have to go through a headcount at a certain checkpoint - the so-called *Shlagbaum* - as well as a veterinary check-up. Oftentimes though, as several sources openly admitted to, at least the latter often simply will not happen on a regular basis. Deliberately and falsely-stated quantities are being fined with 87 KGS per animal if found out about during monitoring by simple comparison of the pre-/post-status. Representatives of Bazar Korgon's *ayil oktmotu* pasture committee openly admitted to frequent problems with corruption at the checkpoint. This constitutes one of the re-occurring issues of past times, although it had not been duplicated since their arrival on their posts two months prior to the interview.

As already mentioned before, the interviewees commented that no relation to *leskhoz* whatsoever was necessary to achieve access to pasture land. There was no obvious sign of corruption and/or misused authority mentioned during the interviews.

### **Monitoring**

According to the *leskhoz* in Kyzyl Unkur, there is one forester who routinely will go up to the pasture every season and will then also live there for an extended period while checking on trees and firewood usage. Still, many pasture users themselves negated the presence of official delegates, stating that only rarely, if ever, someone from *leskhoz* or the *ayil oktmotu* pasture committee would make their way up to the pastures to inquire about their livelihoods. An international expert comments, "On the one hand there is good law, on the other hand there is no way to enforce, to monitor it".

Nonetheless, there was one dangerous occurrence with a wolf attack in particular when the *leskhoz* send someone in to help. The wolf had attacked two women – one was bitten in her arm, the other one was bitten into her face. The two women were then carried down to the village and later on to Bazar Korgon's hospital. Directly after this incident had happened, the police and a veterinarian were called in and arrived at the pasture. However, a frequent monitoring of pasture utilisation allegedly appears not to occur.

The following table summarizes the seven areas of scholarly concern and gives an overview of the diverse picture of pluralism of legality in practice.

**Table 2.1: Pasture-related pluralism of legality in practice**

...official narratives	Pasture legality within ...	...social practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pastoral tickets certify the right for access to pastures and their utilization</li> <li>All pastoralists are required to obtain, maintain and carry along all necessary legal documents (pastoral tickets)</li> </ul>	documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People are generally afraid to lose or damage pastoral tickets on the pasture</li> <li>None of the pasture users seemed overly worried about sanctioning monitoring mechanisms regarding the pasture documentation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private ownership of pasture land is not being granted according to the legal codes in action</li> <li>Right to pasture land is given through the process of lease for up to one year at a time. Lease rights can be renewed the following year</li> <li>Households that use the same spot in recurring years, gain a privileged status in negotiations with newcomers to the pasture</li> </ul>	lease & ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Sub-lease” seems to be a common practice. One user will obtain a one-year license, then re-rent that out to the highest bidder, thus turning a profit on pasture land that he himself would not use</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administration of the pasture <i>Kara Bulak</i> lies with <i>leskhoz</i>, whereas the upper parts would be administered by the National Land Reserve</li> <li>Seasonal meetings are being held in order to (re-)distribute pasture land and (re-)negotiate boundaries on a regular basis</li> </ul>	appropriation & distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribution is decided on in the annual meeting in May of <i>ayil oktmotu</i> pasture committee (pastoralists can participate here)</li> <li>Appropriation and distribution between the pastoralists is generally not perceived as a problem. Each family uses a different part of the pasture with a high degree of cooperation and mutual trust</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are plans to enlarge the national protection area of the Dashman walnut forest district</li> <li>Subsequently, a ban on all livestock grazing could follow</li> <li>Current pasture users might find compensation through the move to nearby pastures (e.g. <i>Kenkol</i> pasture)</li> </ul>	commodification & conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans to enlarge the national protection area of the Dashman District are largely unknown</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officials showed an unreserved or only partially disturbed trust in their own capacities</li> <li>Participation in the pending decision process by concerned user groups regarding the natural reserve was neither planned for nor actively encouraged by officials</li> </ul>	legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General trust in the work of <i>leskhoz</i> staff</li> <li>Some pasture users show dissatisfaction with the work in certain areas (e.g. infrastructure improvement)</li> <li>When displeased with the work of <i>leskhoz</i>, users are able to vote the head of <i>leskhoz</i> (he is elected for five years) out</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives of Bazar Korgon’s pasture committee openly admitted to frequent problems with corruption at the checkpoint (<i>Shlagbaum</i>)</li> </ul>	corruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was no obvious sign of corruption and/or misused authority mentioned during the interviews</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to the <i>leskhoz</i> in Kyzyl Unkur, there is one forester who routinely will go up to the pasture every season and check on trees and fire wood usage</li> </ul>	monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A frequent monitoring of pasture utilization allegedly appears to not occur</li> </ul>

## The concept of legal pluralism and its application in the scope of this case study

Discussing legal pluralism as a conceptual category necessarily harbours a certain problematic. Debates around the concept are far and wide, and it would be grossly negligent to even assume that a conclusive discussion of the various interpretations at hand could be sufficiently done in the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, a few sides around dominating arguments shall be illuminated upon, as basic assumptions on the existence of multiple legal systems within one geographic area can be further enlightening once planted against our case study of *Kara Bulak* pasture.

A large and ever-growing body of academic texts focuses on the possibility of dual or even plural legal orders.<sup>13</sup> Meinen-Dick & Pradhan (2002: 11) grasp the concept of legal pluralism therein as follows,

“In most social settings more than one legal system (defined broadly) becomes relevant. For many social scientists, law is not limited to state law but is understood very broadly, at least by legal anthropologists, as cognitive and normative orders generated and maintained in a social field. It is thus possible to have various kinds of law such as state law, religious law, customary law, donor law and local law. The coexistence and interaction of multiple legal orders within a social setting or domain of social life is called legal pluralism.”

Sure enough though, co-existing legal orders with their inherent connotation of equality are rarely symmetrically aligned around the distribution of power. Judicial systems may co-exist, as often occurs in many colonial and post-colonial states where the colonizing power originally installed a prescriptive legal order next to prevalent customary law, in the hope of a gradual dissemination of state-sanctioned actions into general societal consensus (Griffiths 2004: 2, Starr/Collier 1989: 9, Tamanaha 2008: 381-386).<sup>14</sup> In fact, in an overwhelming majority of parts of the world, complex situations around consensual community norms antedate the establishment of a modern state per se - a history which abundantly has been tracked through insights into the character and colonial spread of, in the widest sense, European-fashioned politico-economic organisation. In the younger and youngest history of Central Asia (encompassing the Kyrgyz Republic), an obvious case can be made for the ‘invention’, or rather construction of the region’s states, as has been done amply before - first during the era of the Russian czars, then in the Soviet Union and its periphery, and finally with the Central Asian nation’s proclaimed independence in 1991 and the ongoing process of nation-building since then (Roy 2000, Tolz 1998). Socio-political entities or systems without any distinct state-like hierarchy,

“where no courts or clearly recognisable third party institutions were institutionalised, which had no written rule systems, and in which normative knowledge was not sharply differentiated” (von Benda-Beckmann 2002: 52),

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<sup>13</sup> For an introduction into the conceptual landscape around discussions of the term ‘legal pluralism’ see, for example, Griffiths (2004), Tamanaha (2008), and von Benda-Beckmann (2002) whose working group at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, Germany, places a special research focus on legal pluralism for more than a decade (2000-2012). Legal pluralism and its implications for natural resource management are specifically being discussed in Meinen-Dick & Pradhan (2002), and Meinen-Dick & Nkonya (2005).

<sup>14</sup> To further complicate the task of finding *the* one definition for the concept of legal pluralism (again: a discussion that is far from being fully resolved), some authors argue for including ‘pluralism within state law’ into the kaleidoscope that is legal pluralism, as does Woodman (1998).

clearly presented a problem to 19th and 20th, and arguably 21st, century decision-makers who would be struggling whether or not such communities knew the concept of 'law' at all. With later writings, the relation between the state and the law became more differentiated and 'watered-down' in its evolutionist assumptions. While the normative sphere of law still largely remained tied to political organisation, that organisation was however not necessarily dependent on a state's specific character - legal pluralism thus became non-statist in a sense (Griffiths 2004: 8, von Benda-Beckmann 2002: 53).<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless though, colonial administrative groundwork often continues to serve as a legal base even for more autonomous post-colonial settings. This groundwork frequently tends to overlook infinitely more complex social, economic, and political relations among (semi-) pastoralists in favour of reductionist administrative jargon - such as 'communal use', or 'custom' (Jacquesson 2010: 104). It is due to this fact that several authors draw a rather derogatory picture of the latest attempts at installing decentralised institutions such as the pasture committees - reforms that commonly have been pushed at through the expertise of large donor organisations.<sup>16</sup> A focused decentralisation of 'central state machineries' through community-based conservation and natural resource management tries to promote small-scale responses that empower rural people's democratic self-governance and further forge and strengthen their livelihoods (Mehta et al. 1999: 9). But in those authors' critical perspective, these newly-formed institutions fail or only insufficiently recognise or consider alternate views on Kyrgyz herding practices. In particular, in lumping together any remains of (pre-) Soviet herding practices under a common denominator such as 'tradition', the effects of laws such as the one from 2009, 'On pastures', greatly simplify the process of administration, allocation and monitoring by assuming that certain communal capacities, like the seemingly long-lasting tradition of decentralisation and self-government among nomads, can be trustingly counted upon - without at the same time truly offering a road map towards consolidating state law within the complex iterations of social practices on the pastures and within the socio-economically stratifying communities that inhabit those pastures (Earle 2005, Jacquesson 2010: 114-116).

Regulating societies through its undeniable embeddedness in social, economic and political functions, the power of law is widely recognised. In modern legal theory in turn it is predicated on the concept of legitimacy: Citizens of a nation state abide to and accept the legal rules set through the state's judicial portfolio. However, laws and their respectively connected rights are dynamic and flexible, often of overlapping nature, and subject to constant negotiations involving various stakeholders. It is due to this that,

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<sup>15</sup> Resisting an urge to engage in the debate of grouping law as an analytical category and whether law should be seen as social control, as culture, as discourse, as power, or as process first and foremost (von Benda-Beckmann 2002: 48), still it should again be emphasised that in following the same author, here law shall be generally understood as normative action, or, "conceptions [that] recognise and restrict society's members' autonomy to behave and construct their own conceptions. All legal phenomena, including the cognitive conceptions, are normative in this sense." (von Benda-Beckmann 2002: Ibid.)

<sup>16</sup> For example, the tremendous influence on Kyrgyz decision-makers and their instigated law, "On pastures," (2009) can easily be traced back to the World Bank and other donors and their finalised reports (Jacquesson 2010: 114).

“[i]n general, legal pluralism calls for greater humility in policies and programmes. It is not a matter of getting the 'right' law or 'right' institution to allocate or manage resources. Instead, rights to resources will be determined through messy, dynamic processes. Yet this also provides the scope to respond to the uncertainties that resource users face” (Meinzen-Dick & Pradhan 2002: 16).

Pasture users of *Kara Bulak* certainly demonstrated great capacities in managing their own livestock and would engage in cooperative work wherever appropriate and needed. Certain regulations made on state and sub-state levels did not seem to touch people's everyday lives nearly as all-encompassing as would have been expected. Instead, customary practices and norms could be observed that would definitely need more ample time to observe in full effect and meaning. The law 'On pastures' on the other hand could hardly be counted amongst a legal text that people would have heard about or whose effect they would have felt in any deciding way - for instance, in the form of decentralised entities like pasture committees working close with and for the people. Because of this, it is a fair usage of the term 'legal pluralism' when assuming that in administering pastoral use on *Kara Bulak*, there is more than meets the observer's eye. In particular those short-term observers' eyes whose fleeting presence can only mark the most fundamental amongst the obvious.

### **Consolidating legal pluralism and social practice? A conclusion and outlook**

Obviously, legal reforms need their own time-frame in disseminating down to all strata of society and the people concerned. It is due to this that no generalisation and over-hasty conclusions should be drawn out of a singular case study like ours. Still, a few remarks shall be made in summarizing some of the observed overarching themes during our research. First and foremost it can be stated that the gap between the *is* and the *ought* does truly exist and is even bigger than we had originally thought it to be. Relevant changes bound to the legislation seem to be not sufficiently communicated – even when considering the fact of the management of *Kara Bulak* being in *leskhoz*' hands as a forest fund since one year (or more) instead of a land reserve area and the full extent of the laws purported effects thus not fully or only marginally applying to the case study. In bringing to mind the original research question it therefore follows that the first part of the question (*Do new legislations reach the pastures themselves?*), can be negated without much hesitation, while for sufficiently answering the second part (*If so, are they being transformed and/or appropriated by local user communities and stakeholders?*), we were not able to draw any conclusions in this paper. It should be noted that in order to fully respond to this question it might be more appropriate to spend an extended period of research time on a pasture where it can be assured that the new pasture law is willingly and knowingly applied to full extent. Furthermore, the plan to enlarge the natural reserve area was unknown to a large number of the pasture users who after all strive for their own livelihoods on that exact same pasture. It can thus be inferred that no sufficiently transparent and participatory planning process of the enlargement did take place. The question remains whether environmental protection is inevitably deemed worth more than the livelihoods of the households concerned and whether or not the area of conflict between conservation on the one hand and small-scale commodification on the other hand

can be brought into any meaningful equilibrium. This question can only be answered in a flexible, dynamic, and yes, maybe even messy process, if to be answered in any democratic and transparent sense. Ongoing research should therefore concentrate on the developments regarding the proposed nature reserve in the area and the question of whether and how such a delicate manoeuvre in balancing and trying to unify opposing interests is being tackled.

Several other questions about the nature of power relations, the distribution and perceived value of land, and the legitimacy of it all arise: For example, who holds distributional power when a household is trying to obtain the same spot on *Kara Bulak* for continuous years –as frequently happens there, in some cases for as long as fifty years in succession? Is it the users, is it the *leskhoz*? Again, this would further facilitate an understanding of the nexus of customary laws and/or gained privilege through institutions. Finally, in what exact manner are local elites profiteers of the situation by gaining more decision and negotiating power than others? Understandably, those questions could only rudimentarily be answered due to their sensitive nature.

The large gap between official narratives and observed social practices brings to mind new questions around the possibility of pluralistic modes of legal action. Some of the core aspects of this pluralism of legality in social practice could be satisfactorily shown through the seven core discursive areas of scholarly concern (documentation, lease and ownership, appropriation and distribution, commodification and conservation, legitimacy, corruption, monitoring), while others continue to remain dubious and certainly would require an extended period of mutual trust-building together with the pasture users (and officials for that matter), plus an increased understanding of the concerned people's precise procedures in managing their livelihoods. Our research thus does not propagate to be of any concluding nature whatsoever –something that in light of the complex social and legal arrangements would be slightly presumptuous anyways. It rather opens up the field for further analysis and deepened understanding of the situation and context.

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## The Social, Economic and Spatial Organisation of Rural Dairy Farming. Examples from the Torpu Kyr Pasture

### Introduction

In order to cope with complex economic challenges, the rural population of south-western Kyrgyzstan makes use of quite different approaches in their attempt to diversify income sources and strategies. One of the most important income activities is rural dairy farming and the processing of milk into value-added products. Animal husbandry has always played an important role in Kyrgyzstan, only the way how it was put into practice varied significantly from period to period.

“Until the early socialist times, pastoralists exploited the [...] grasslands [...] as natural forage grounds by applying spatio-temporal mobility patterns between seasonal pastures” (Dörre 2012: 128).

During Soviet times mobile pastoralism was reduced to a minimum by the state administration using the argument that intensification of meat, wool and milk production only could go along with strict five year plans and sedentarization policies. After the collapse of the Soviet Union people were hit hard by a crucial economic decline that was compounded by financial instability and social insecurity. Still, livestock production was adding more than 40 % to the whole primary sectoral value creation in 2008 (Dörre & Borchardt 2012: 313) showing that animal husbandry still forms a significant part of Kyrgyzstan’s society and economic identity. However, little is known about the logistical and economic challenges of rural dairy farming. This paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of dairy farming in Kyrgyzstan by looking at social and economic practices carried out in the summer season on the high pastures of the country. Analytically, the commodity chain approach promoted by Hopkins (1986), Wallerstein (1986) and Gereffi (1994) is employed to focus on the social, economic, and spatial organisation of rural dairy farming. Methodically, a case study approach centers on a specific summer pasture (*jailoo*, krg.) named *Torpu Kyr* that is located near the village Kyzyl Unkur. The research team spent one week among pastoralists on this high pasture in order to develop a better understanding on how dairy farming is organised, both socially and economically. The majority of interviews with place-based actors were carried out on *Torpu Kyr*, followed by additional interviews with local authorities and merchants on various markets where the products generated on the pasture are sold. This methodology aimed both at arriving at an understanding of place-based rural dairy farming in the case study area and a wide perspective on economical key aspects which included different production processes, financial coping strategies as well as the relevant commodity chain.

### Commodity chain concepts as theoretical framework

Commodity Chain approaches offer a suitable framework for the analysis of rural dairy farming that in Kyrgyzstan is organised around the production of a few major products resulting out of specific labour sources, socio-political contexts and production processes.

Generally, the commodity chain debate focuses on *production* as the main unit of analysis. Following Hopkins & Wallerstein (1986), a commodity chain is to be understood as “a network of labour and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity” (Hopkins & Wallerstein 1986: 159). Gereffi (1994: 2) takes the debate one step further by including additional dimensions of analysis:

“A Global Commodity Chain consists of a set of interorganizational networks clustered around one commodity or product, linking households, enterprises, and states to one another within the world-economy. These networks are situationally specific, socially constructed, and locally integrated, underscoring the social embeddedness of economic organization.”

All proponents of the approach place commodity chains in the centre of global economic activities and try to explain the complexity of production processes crosscutting regional and national borders along different analytical perspectives that not only include hard economic facts but also socio-political, institutional and cultural parameters which all together form and influence commodity chains (Hassler 2009: 202). While taking global economic networks and developments into consideration, these concepts do not neglect the single actor on the micro level whose decisions are deeply influenced by very specific local or regional settings (ibid.: 203). Commodity chain concepts have furthermore been instrumental in changing the understanding of the term ‘production’ which now is not solely seen as a simple combination of inputs and outputs but is described as “a more dynamic approach whereby production takes place in time and space” (Hassler 2009: 203). As such, production is developed into a more complex and realistic model that comprises numerous activities and interconnected functions as well as *all* the processes (on *all* levels) enabling the production of a commodity.

The analysis of rural dairy farming on the high pastures in Kyrgyzstan takes these considerations into account and employs a more comprehensive approach, not focusing on specific parts of the commodity chain of certain dairy products but instead trying to grasp the chain in its entirety.

### ***Analytical dimensions of commodity chains***

Following Gereffi (1994) there are four analytical dimensions which offer four different perspectives on one commodity chain. These dimensions take note of economic, social, political, institutional, spatial and cultural parameters.

#### ***Economics: input-output structure***

The input-output structure of a commodity chain can be defined as “a value-added chain of products, services, and resources linked together across relevant industries” (Hassler 2009: 202). Basically, the various stakeholders contributing to the commodity chain are analysed by taking a precise look at the value they add to a specific product. This analytical dimension addresses predominantly economic issues. Who is part of the value chain and how are all the contributors linked to each other? Where are the individual stakeholders located within the commodity chain? Analysis of input-output structures looks at so-called ‘nodes’ that can be understood as specific processes with different sets of components providing a product which is either submitted to the end consumer or to a successive node (Hassler 2009: 203). The value added to the final commodity usually

differs from node to node and therefore establishes a hierarchy of stakeholders. The aim is to provide an exact division of a particular commodity chain into its individual sequences while taking into account backward and forward linkages (ibid.). For the case of *Torpu Kyr* attention is drawn to the most important stakeholders regulating the commodity chain. Furthermore, it will be analysed how pastoralists and merchants are linked to each other and which value they add to the commodity chain.

### *Territoriality*

Looking at the territoriality of a commodity chain attention is directed to the geographical dispersion of the chain elements, comprising geographical locations as well as geographical linkages between certain nodes or elements at local, regional, national and international levels (Hassler 2009: 204). The territoriality of commodity chains is very heterogeneous and can range from very concentrated and local to extremely disperse and global levels. As *Torpu Kyr* is located in the periphery of south-western Kyrgyzstan there is reason to presume that the commodity chain is local and concentrated. Another relevant task is to analyse the selling market of the dairy produce in order to identify the commodity chain as dispersed or concentrated. Generally, the geographical extension often derives from the final commodity and its role in the consumer market as well as its technologies of transport and communication. Furthermore, aspects like competitors, innovations and industrial capabilities can deeply influence the geographical concentration or dispersion of commodity chains (ibid.).

### *Governance structures*

While input-output structures aim at gathering information about stakeholders and their locations and roles within the commodity chain and territoriality covers geographical aspects, the analysis of governance structures in commodity chains stresses the crucial importance of power relations. Governance in the context of chain concepts deals with “authority and power relationships [...] that determine how financial, material and, human resources are allocated and flow within a commodity chain” (Hassler 2009: 202). Typically the governance structure of each commodity chain is formed by its explicit economic agents and their relations to each other also addressing power relations. Hierarchies arise from the role of different actors in the chain and these hierarchies are addressed by placing a strong analytical emphasis on governance structures (Hassler 2009: 204). Following Gereffi, the distinction between *producer-driven* commodity and *buyer-driven* chains appears to be practical. Producer-driven chains are concerned with mass production and therefore not directly influenced by consumption patterns. These producer-driven models are usually dominated by one specific (often transnational) stakeholder who is capable of controlling backward and forward linkages (1999: 1). In contrast, buyer-driven commodity chains are often more flexible and refer to those industries in which the production is carried out by contractors that provide finished goods for foreign buyers (ibid.). In the case of *Torpu Kyr* it has to be analysed if relations between different stakeholders have a strong formal or a rather informal and personal background.

### *Institutional framework*

Institutional frameworks provide the rules of production and trade of certain products. They take note of the fact that “state policy plays a major role in Global Commodity

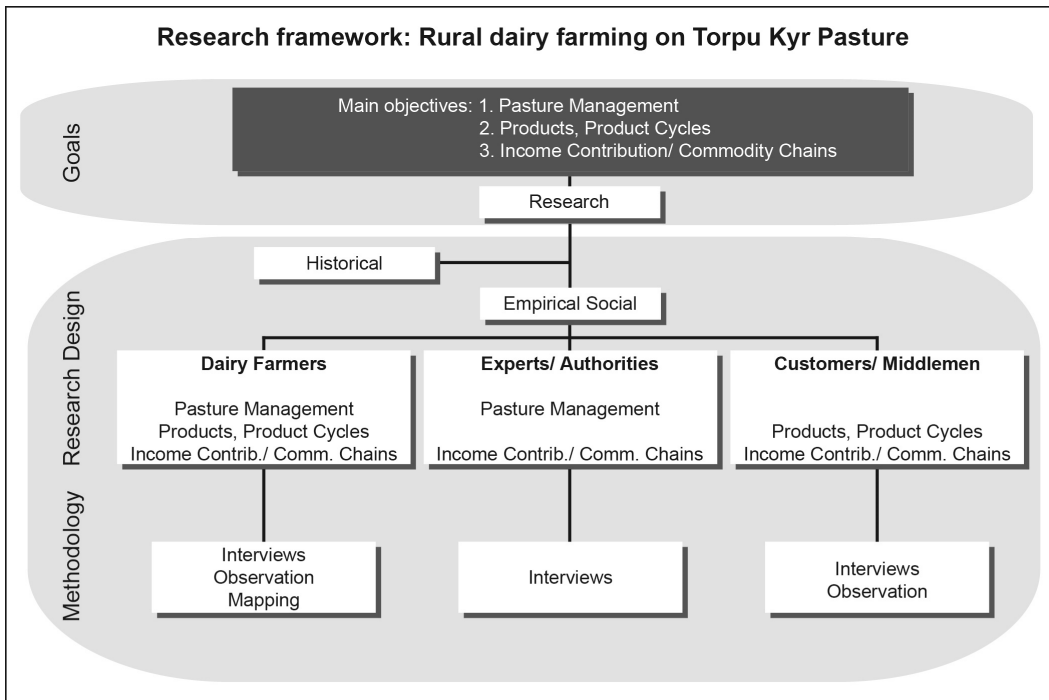
Chains” (Gereffi 1994: 100 quoted after Hassler 2009: 205). However, institutional frameworks may not affect commodity chains in the way the other dimensions do. The more local a commodity chain is operating, the more it will be influenced by the regional or national institutions and the more a commodity chain is globally organised, the less it is dependent on certain state-centred institutional frameworks. The setting on Torpu Kyr is influenced by Kyrgyz laws which regulate certain parameters playing a role in the rural dairy commodity chain.

### ***Commodity Systems in pastoral contexts***

The fourfold framework is instrumental in analysing the economic, social, and spatial organisation of rural dairy farming on the *Torpu Kyr* pasture area. However, pastoralism assumes a special role in commodity chain concepts. These approaches are usually applied to conventional production processes that usually do not include pastoral activities, even though extensive animal husbandry takes place on around 25 % of the world’s area and provides about ten percent of global meat production (Gertel & Le Heron 2011: 5). Often characterized by non-market transactions, the use of unpaid labour, ‘informal’ activities and no official recording of pastoral economic activities, pastoralism and its significance as essential contributor to the livelihoods of up to 200 million households worldwide are clearly undervalued (ibid.: 6). The present focus on rural dairy farming and analysis of its commodity chain in Kyrgyzstan directs attention to an often neglected and chronically underestimated topic.

### **Rural dairy farming - research framework**

Analysing the structure and the functioning of rural dairy farming on *Torpu Kyr* - looking at its impact on the local population and their income and disassembling the commodity chain, required to develop an understanding about how pastoralists were organised in their daily routines on the pasture itself and how raw milk is refined into durable products while at the same time focusing on the ways of marketing their produce. Questions and observations during pasture-based fieldwork centered on the significant value-added products that contribute to the pastoralists’ incomes and the means of producing these commodities. In a second step interviews with customers, wholesale traders and merchandising partners aimed at disassembling the commodity chain (Fig. 3.1). Altogether twelve in-depth interviews focusing on a variety of issues were conducted on the *Torpu Kyr* pasture itself during one week of empirical fieldwork. These twelve interviews were conducted with the respective tent owners and heads of households and essentially cover the entire summer population on the study pasture. Subsequently interviews with representatives of local authorities and merchants on the markets in Bazar Korgon and Jalal-Abad were carried out. Observations and mapping the physical arrangements of tents and households on the pasture provide contextual information and a sense of the physical challenges of high mountain dairy production (Fig. 3.2). These qualitative methodologies were complemented by a brief questionnaire survey among pastoral households in the pasture itself, focusing on the amounts of pasture-based dairy production, on price levels and livestock properties.

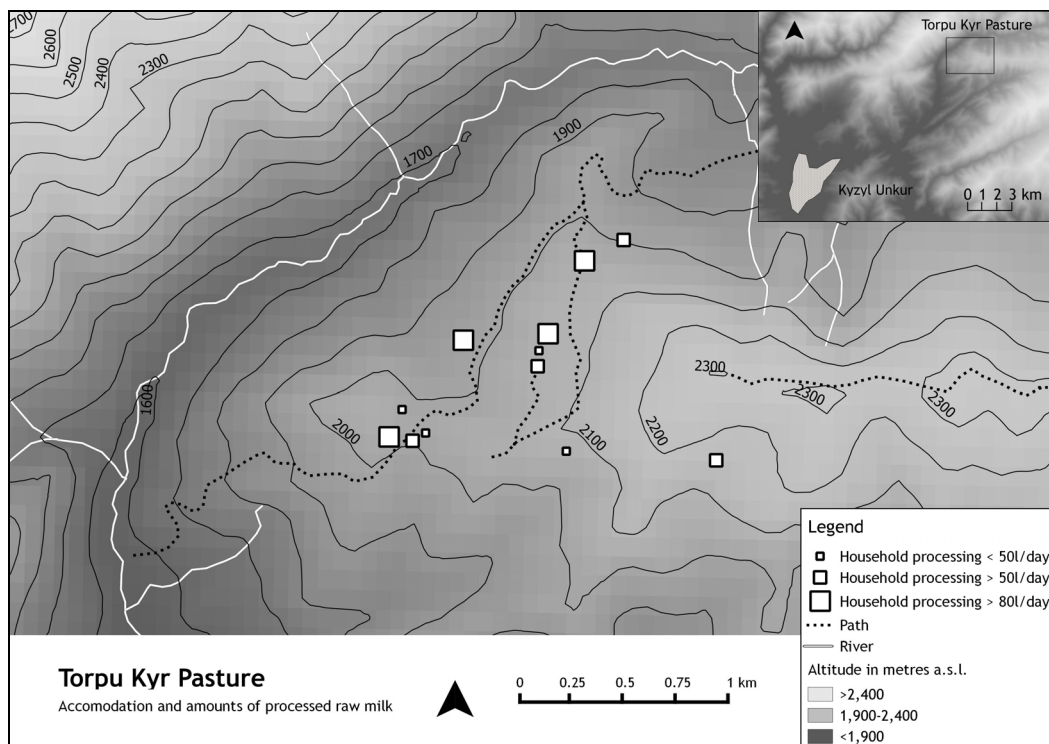


**Fig. 3.1: Research framework: rural dairy farming**

Draft: Weißenbacher & Winter 2014

**Research area**

Torpu Kyr is accessible through a six to seven hours horse ride from the village Kyzyl Unkur. It involves several river crossings and steep ascents before reaching an altitude between 1,800 and 2,200 meters (Fig. 3.2).



**Fig. 3.2: Torpu Kyr Pasture: Accommodation and amounts of processed raw milk**

Draft: Weißenbacher & Winter 2014

The difficulty of access leads to the moderate use of the pasture by twelve households who benefit from abundant fodder supply. The pasture is officially declared as a forest fund area which means that the State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry (SAEPFUGKR) as well as the local forest enterprise (*leskhoz*, rus.) are responsible for the maintenance and distribution of annual user permits that pastoralists need to purchase. However, most of the pastoralists interviewed on *Torpu Kyr* either did not know exactly how much they pay or were not willing to tell us, and controls by the authorities on this remote pasture appear to be rather unusual.

### **Basic findings**

An introduction into the basic elements of rural dairy farming in high mountain areas is crucial in order to better understand the shape and elements of commodity chains. These basic elements refer to as the general management of dairy farming in terms of location and daily practices on the high pasture, the essential products and their specific product-cycles contribution of marketing dairy products to household incomes.

#### ***Management of rural dairy farming on Torpu Kyr***

*Torpu Kyr* Pasture is used by twelve independent pastoral households residing in a cluster of tents from April/May to August/September. Partly, these tents were installed in close proximity to another, indicating blood relationship or the same origin, while other tents are widely dispersed over rather large distances and require walking up to 40 minutes. Depending on the village of origin (five households originate from Karacha, four from Bazar Korgon and three from Kyzyl Unkur) different state authorities are in charge of collecting usage fees for the pasture. The twelve households on *Torpu Kyr* practice dairy farming and professional herding. Dairy farming exclusively addresses the processing of cow milk. Even though there are numerous sheep on the pasture, these are not used for any dairy production but rather as meat supply or marketing product. The selling of livestock forms a kind of economic 'emergency kit' in times of financial scarcity.

Herding practices vary. Households often consist of professional herders in charge of livestock that is not their own. In these cases payment is arranged per animal, 80 KGS for one sheep per month, and 350 KGS for one cow per month. Cows currently giving milk are considered as a form payment itself - professional herders are allowed to use this milk instead of being paid in cash. This practice of payment pertains to all twelve households. Just a few percent of the whole livestock on *Torpu Kyr* belong to the pastoral households themselves, but every entity possesses at least two own cows. The average amount of gathered milk per household per day is 85 litres which can be turned into valuable commodities. Average household sizes range among three to seven people, including brothers, sisters-in-law, children and sometimes grandchildren. Children support their families as most of the pasture period falls into school summer vacations.

Pastoral households in their summer areas stressed the importance of social and economic cooperation among themselves. This pertains to caring for the neighbours' livestock, giving support in milking cows, and mutual cooperation regarding the transportation down to the valley, through sharing the transport costs for animals and dairy produce. Cooperation is especially strong within groups residing in the same village. All pastoral households are



from the Bazar Korgon District, but distances to respective home villages vary significantly. This fact leads to different strategies regarding product storage and mobility: Households originating from Kyzyl Unkur as one of the closest villages to *Torpu Kyr* prefer storing goods in the village itself. They are transported to the valley several times during the pasture season, whenever somebody is going down e.g. for transferring animals to the market. Others residing in more distant villages keep the products in their tents on the pasture itself and take everything down in autumn when the pasture period finishes. All households market their products on the Bazar Korgon District market.

**Products and product cycles on Torpu Kyr**

Dairy farming on the high pastures concentrates on a few specific products that contribute to household income and for which the major Commodity Chains are assessed and analysed.

Specifically, three major dairy products dominate on the *Torpu Kyr* pasture, namely *qurut*, *tshobogo* and *sary maj* all of which show an extraordinary high durability. Once dried and stored they can be kept for up to two years. By using a so-called milk separator two production lines can be opened. The following illustration shows the detailed product cycle of these production lines.

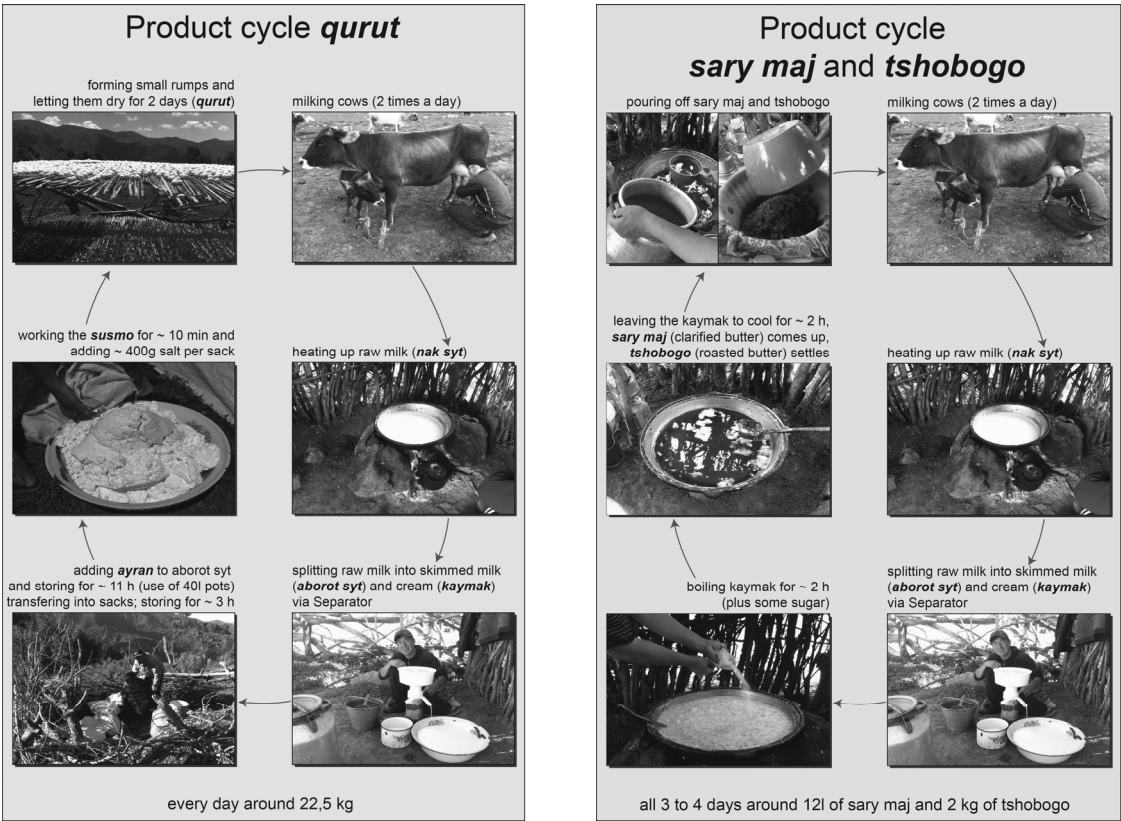


Fig. 3.3: Product cycles *qurut*, *tshobogo* and *sary mai*

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The raw cow milk is directly processed in order to receive durable products. After heating up, the milk is split into skimmed milk (*aborot syt*, rus.-krg.) and cream (*kaymak*, krg.) through the separator. Hence two production lines are established. The process for producing *qurut* is started by adding yoghurt (*ayran*, krg.) to the skimmed milk. This

composite is then stored for about eleven hours in specific pots. The next day it is transferred into sacks from where the remaining liquid is drained. After another three hours of storing, so-called *susmo* (krq.) is obtained. That soft bulk is now worked over for ten minutes and enriched with 400 g salt per sack. The final step is to form small rumps and let them dry for two days. This second production line can be illustrated as follows:

In comparison to the product cycle for *qurut*, the second production line focuses on the cream (*kaymak*) received after splitting the raw milk via the separator. All the *kaymak* (enriched with some sugar) is boiled for about two hours. During this boiling process, the cream is segregated into clarified butter (*sary mai*, krq.) and roasted butter (*tshobogo*, krq.). After leaving the *kaymak* to cool for about two hours the *sary mai* rises to the surface while the *tshobogo* settles on the bottom of the pot. The final step consists in pouring off the clarified butter and then collecting the roasted butter on the bottom.

*Qurut*, *tshobogo* and *sary maj* are the three most important commodities produced on the high pastures of Kyrgyzstan. In the following chapter we now want to link these products to their role of household income contribution.

### ***Income contribution of dairy products***

Evidence suggests that the income of all twelve households spending the summer on *Torpu Kyr* is based on two main pillars. All depend on professional herding with its huge advantage of providing a predictable income which enables pastoralists to calculate their revenue. For instance, if a certain household is taking care of 60 sheep for a period of six months (April to September) an amount of 28,800 KGS (around 430 Euro) is generated and can be planned with.

Dairy farming is the second important pillar of households' economic portfolios. Milk processing offers the possibility for households to trade in commodities to be sold on the market after the summer pasture period. Instead of merely being paid for cows giving milk, the pastoralists make productive use of that milk. In daily routine all twelve households on *Torpu Kyr* produce *qurut*, *tshobogo* and *sary mai* with respective amounts depending on the number of cows giving milk. Quantities among the twelve households differ significantly. The minimal amount of *qurut* produced within the summer pasture period is 120 kg while the maximum is around a ton. The minimal amount of *tshobogo* is only ten kg while the maximum is 300 kg, whereas the minimal amount of *sary mai* is 60 l while the maximum is 800 l. Regardless of the heterogeneous quantities every single household knows how much is paid for any produce at Bazar Korgon Market where demand for the produce is high. Again, such predictability makes the calculation of revenue easier. In average, one kg of *qurut* is sold for 110 KGS (around 1.65 Euro), 1 kg of *tshobogo* for 130 KGS (around 2 Euro) and 1 l of *sary maj* for 150 KGS (around 2.25 Euro).

Now, bringing these two pillars together the income gained through dairy production and shepherding on high pastures can be calculated which is complemented through possession of own as 'emergency kit' that can be used in the case of financial scarcity. One sheep can be sold for around 3,000-8,000 KGS (45-120 Euro), a cow is worth 35,000 to 40,000 KGS (520-600 Euro) and horses range between 80,000 and 120,000 KGS (1,200-1,800 Euro).

Yet it was evident that only four out of twelve households were able to make a secure living out of animal husbandry, since they can rely on enough cattle. The remaining eight families had to make use of additional strategies to raise their incomes. Five households were dependent on remittances relatives were sending from Russia. Two were involved in agricultural activities. Other income sources such as bee-keeping, renting trucks or working at the Bazar Korgon Market were evident too. The numbers behind the specific coping strategies in 3.4 indicate the quantity of households relying on the respective strategies.

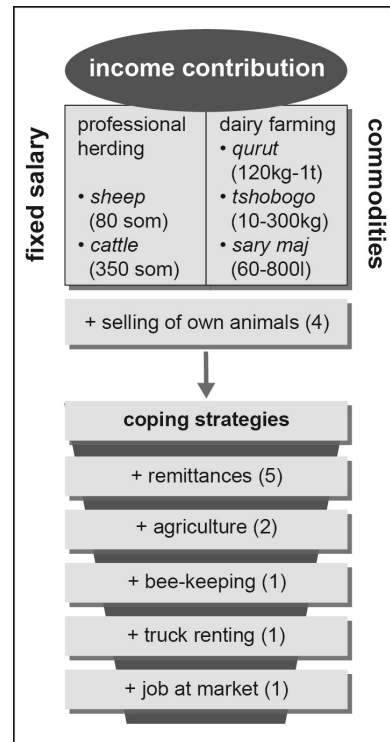


Fig. 3.4: Income contribution of livelihood strategies

Draft: Weißenbacher & Winter 2014

The final research step focused on the commodity chain of the dairy products. After dealing with the concrete production processes of *qurut*, *tshobogo* and *sary maj* interest shifted to the actual way of these commodities when leaving the pasture and the nodes of trade that can be identified on their way to end consumers. The analytical dimensions described above are used to disassemble the commodity chain illustrated in Fig. 3.5.

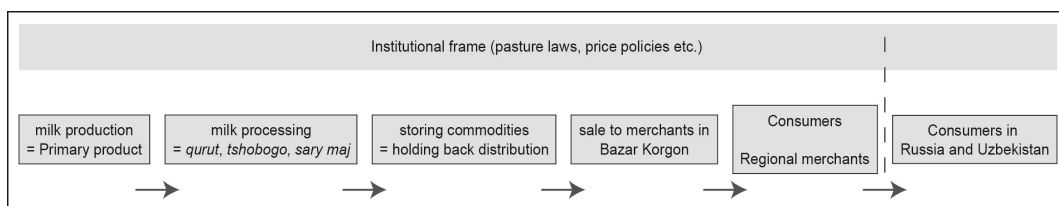


Fig. 3.5: Commodity chain of dairy farming

Draft: Weißenbacher & Winter 2014

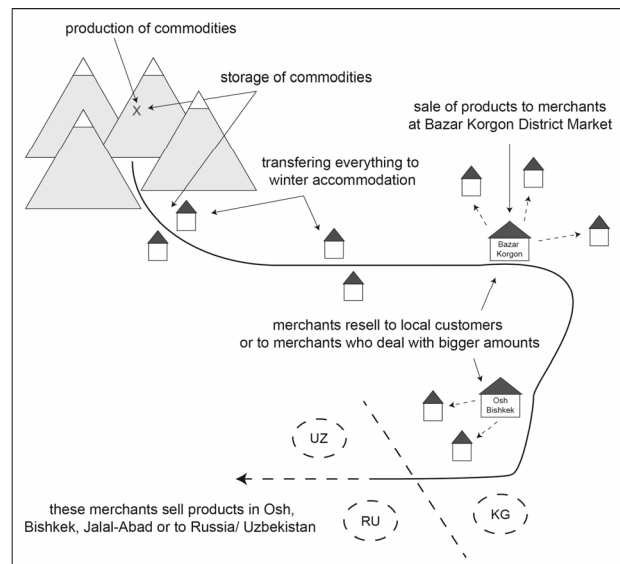
### Rural dairy farming: input-output structure

There are two major groups of stakeholders regulating the commodity chain. While pastoralists or farmers are in charge of milk production and processing as well as the storing of commodities, merchants take over at the Bazar Korgon Market, reselling the products to either local end consumers or to other wholesale merchants. These in turn frequently cross national borders and sell the dairy products to Russia and Uzbekistan. Because of the commodity chain consisting of two powerful parties the linkage between pastoralists and merchants is important. Prior to fieldwork it was expected that so-called middlemen take over the goods on the pasture directly after their production. However, in

the field it was learned that the farmers store their products until the end of the summer period (prices rise in the winter), but then need the merchants for further marketing of their commodities. In contrary, the merchants need the farmers and their know-how to produce the goods. Taking a look at the individual nodes and asking for the value added to the products, it can be stated that the farmers invest labour and know-how while the merchants add value through their ability to sell and their contacts and customers. Regarding power issues none of these two stakeholder groups dominates the other one or the commodity chain as a whole. In fact, pastoralists and merchants are equally dependent on each other. While pastoralists rely on the acceptance of their produce merchants are not able to trade without the dairy products being delivered. This equilibrium is crucial to the functioning of the dairy farming commodity chain. Still, from an analytical point of view there is a difference in contributing to the commodity chain. Pastoralists submit their products to a successive node (merchants) while these merchants often submit their purchased goods to the end consumer.

### ***Rural dairy farming: Territoriality***

Investigating the dairy farming commodity chain in south-western Kyrgyzstan meant to deal with a very concentrated and local chain. Geographically all farmers and the majority of the merchants act in the district of Bazar Korgon. The geographical dimension is subsequently expanded through regional merchants who buy in Bazar Korgon and resell in Kyrgyzstan's cities as Osh, Jalal-Abad and Bishkek. Furthermore there are consumers in Uzbekistan and Russia who are supplied by these merchants too. The following illustration shows the territorial dimensions of rural dairy products.



**Fig. 3.6: Geographical dimension of the commodity chain**

Draft: Weißenbacher & Winter 2014

### ***Rural dairy farming: Governance structure***

Looking at governance structures the field of power relations in rural dairy farming is addressed. Negotiations between relevant economic agents take place in quite informal ways. Personal relations matter and merchants buying the products of certain farmers often do so because they know each other and have worked together for years. The same is true for merchants from Osh, Bishkek or Jalal-Abad, buying from local merchants in Bazar Korgon. The governance structure appears to be very long-established and often personal. In essence, the dairy farming commodity chain is a clearly buyer-driven commodity chain with low entry barriers. The producers are bound to the decisions of buyers and are not dominated by one specific stakeholder.

### ***Rural dairy farming: Institutional framework***

The institutional framework of rural dairy farming refers to laws - especially pasture laws - as well as further national regulations that frame the room for manoeuvre within the commodity chain. However, formal institutions did not play a significant role in the interaction between farmers and merchants at all. Possibly because of the very regional character of the commodity chain, informal institutions such as family relations and personal friendship play a much larger role than any formal legislation.

### **Conclusion**

As little is known about logistical and economic challenges of rural dairy farming in Kyrgyzstan this paper aimed at a better understanding of dairy farming by looking at social and economic practices carried out on a specific pasture. The final research step focused on the commodity chain of *qurut*, *tshobogo* and *sary maj* in order to track their way to end consumers. The research project on rural dairy production is to be seen in the context of further investigations of different study groups focusing on related issues together offering a quite comprehensive overview on the utilisation and management of natural resources in Kyrgyzstan. Field work on the *jailoo* is essential to develop a better understanding on how daily routines are organised. Introducing the basic elements of dairy farming was crucial in order to properly analyse shape and elements of the commodity chain.

As looking at economic and logistical challenges identification of major income sources was necessary. Evidence suggests that all twelve households are dependent on diversification of sources and relying on two main pillars of which one is shepherding and the other one is dairy farming. Yet it is evident that only four out of twelve households are able to make a living out of animal husbandry. The eight remaining families highly depend on additional coping strategies. To address logistics, interest was shifted to storage and transportation strategies which differ from household to household and are correlated with the origins of the families.

The commodity chains of rural dairy products are small-scale. *Qurut*, *tshobogo* and *sary maj* are very popular in the study region and hence mostly bought and consumed there. As such local markets play a significant role. The products can be seen as niche-products less influenced by globalization and less integrated into global power-structures and related disempowerment. The pastoralists of *Torpu Kyr* are no victims of hierarchical global market-structures but for the most part independent actors. They do not only provide the raw material but also run the processing and storage of the commodities. It is only at the marketing level where external actors come into play. Middlemen are non-existent while farmers sell directly to merchants they know personally at local markets. Both parties can be seen as equally dependent on each other. Dairy farming and the marketing of products are household businesses and no mighty power brokers dominating the market were identified.

Understanding the organisation patterns of pastoralists may be able to modify the utilisation of natural resources. Daily routines when carried out in non-sustainable manners are able to severely damage the environment and hence the livelihoods of pastoralist households. But as *Torpu Kyr* is difficult to access, use of the pasture is moderate and so is human-

related impact on the environment. Research on the commodity chain can carve out crucial dependencies between relevant actors and nodes which often deeply influence the interactions and functioning of the respective commodity chain. In this case study it became obvious that the equilibrium between pastoralists and merchants is essential as both fully depend on each other. Still, the commodity chain seems to work efficiently. In fact, dairy farming does not seem to be a major problem area. This may indicate that the diverse additional coping strategies should be addressed when aiming at improving the livelihood conditions of pastoralists.

On a conceptual level this study focusing on the social, economic, and spatial organisation of rural dairy farming contributes to the growing canon of literature that is drawing attention to pastoralists' situation in a globalizing world and the underrepresentation of animal husbandry in commodity chain concepts.

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## Conflict Resolution Mechanisms on the Contested Kara Art Pasture

### Utilization conflict on the Kara Art Pasture

In Kyrgyzstan, a majority of the rural population relies on the use of natural resources, especially pastures, for their livelihoods and household economy. Livestock husbandry has been the most important activity in the past and represents an important pillar of the rural economy of the country (Wilson 1997: 57). After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, mismanagement and weak institutions led to overexploitation and utilization conflicts on several pastures throughout Kyrgyzstan (Dörre 2012: 129). The case study area of the pasture *Kara Art* provides a case in point and has undergone a major utilization conflict. The aim of this paper is to analyse this conflict in terms of the actors involved, using geographical conflict research as explanatory framework.

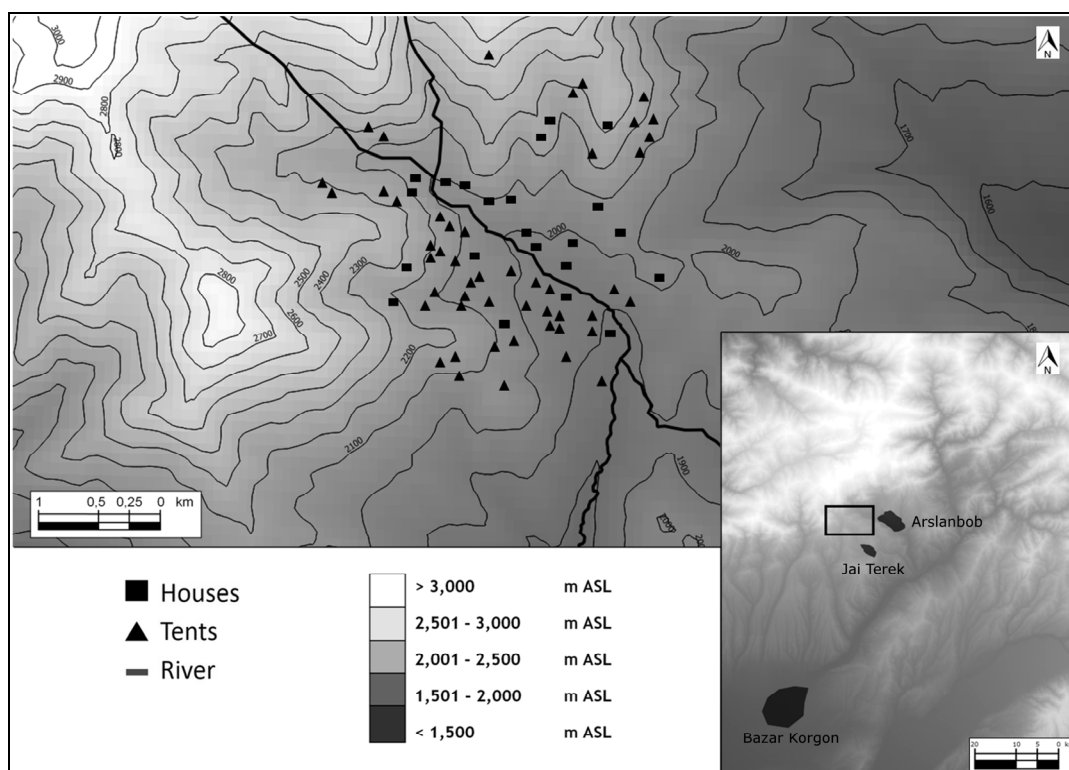


Fig. 4.1: Overview of the investigation area, *Kara Art Pasture*

Draft: Nordhausen & Paul 2014

*Kara Art* (krg. for ‘high’ or ‘big pass’) is located at the southern edge of the mountain range *Babash Ata* in the western part of the country. It is a heavily used summer pasture, situated within the forest fund territory close to the two settlements of Jai Terek and Arslanbob in the *rayon* Bazar Korgon (Fig. 4.1). With over 13 km<sup>2</sup>, the major part of the pasture belongs to the forest district of Jai Terek (Dörre 2014: 182-183). After 1991, the former herdsmen informally took over the pasture for private purposes. The inhabitants of Jai Terek and Arslanbob also took possession of that same territory in search of arable land or grazing grounds. Consequently, a competition between farming households cultivating

land and households relying on animal husbandry has occurred. This competition has evolved into an open conflict fuelled by informal allocation practices and maladjusted use and further compounded by overexploitation and ecological degradation (Dörre 2012: 138).

### Geographical conflict research as analytical framework

The concept of ‘geographical conflict research’ developed in the frame of Political Geography offers a methodology to achieve a deeper understanding of the prevailing conflict. Conflict research focuses on the actions of stakeholders in the context of disputes over “power and space” (Reuber & Wolkersdorfer 2007: 756). The core idea of this concept is that spatial conflicts represent a kind of variation of human interaction or social action (Reuber 2012: 117). The concept focuses on the actions of individual stakeholders, perceiving those actions as products of individual preferences, social rules, and spatial conditions (Reuber & Wolkersdorfer 2007: 761). Consequently, in order to analyse a conflict according to the ‘geographical conflict research’, three fundamental elements need to be examined (Reuber 2012: 119; Fig. 4.2):

1. Spatial patterns - Which spatial structures and linkages provoke the spatial conflict?
2. Sociopolitical determining factors - How do interactions between the stakeholders, the relevant institutions, and the socio-political structures influence the spatial conflict?
3. Individual stakeholders - What are the the strategies pursued by different groups of stakeholders within space-related disputes?

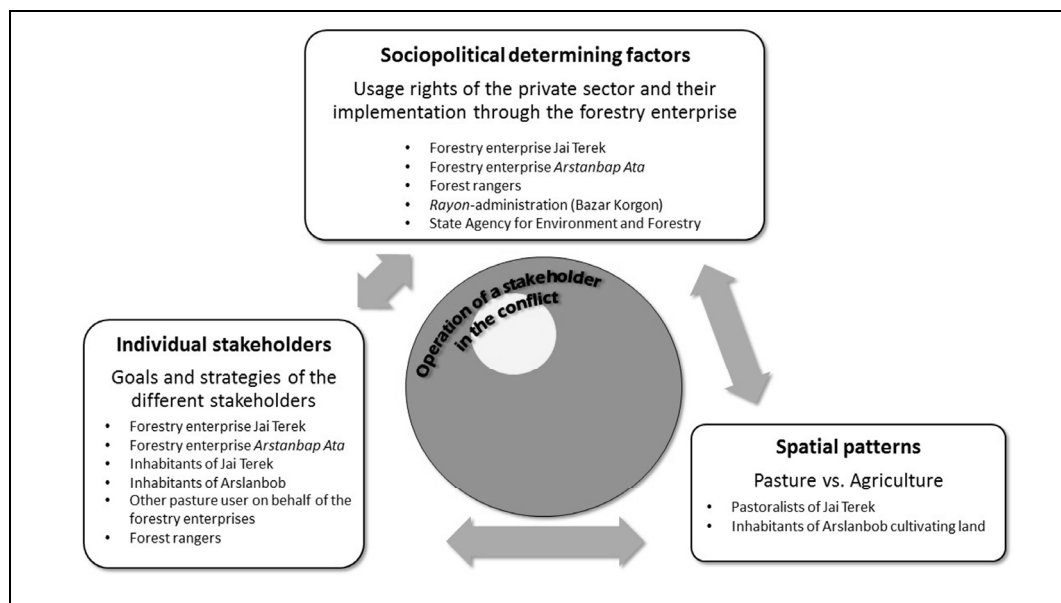


Fig. 4.2: Operation of a stakeholder in the conflict on the *Kara Art Pasture*

Draft: Nordhausen & Paul 2014 modified according to Reuber & Wolkersdorfer 2007: 760

This paper builds on this understanding of conflict research and applies its toolbox to the case of *Kara Art Pasture*. It is evident that spatial patterns in the usage of *Kara Art* are significant for understanding the conflict. The construction of spatial structures will be investigated through two interrelated levels of analysis: First, the subjective perception of



the initial situation by different stakeholders. And, secondly, actor-specific spatial and conflict-related visions (Reuber & Wolkersdorfer 2007: 761).

The research interest of this study is to illustrate the current situation of the conflict and to reconstruct its past course of events. The elaborated theory provides a guideline for the detailed historical reconstruction of the conflict (Reuber 2012: 117). Building on this, the socio-political factors determining the conflict are analysed by focusing on the prevalent institutional setting framing pasture usage in Krygyzstan. The study aims to obtain a better understanding of the goals and strategies of individual stakeholders, as well as the role of groups of stakeholders, and how both aspects determine the spatial conflict. To achieve this goal, a stakeholder analysis including a stakeholder mapping is conducted. The analysis focuses on how different stakeholders perceive the course of events, who has been involved or affected, and how their opinions differ.

The (key) stakeholders in the conflict have already been identified prior to fieldwork. They include the forestry enterprise 'Jai Terek', the forestry enterprise 'Arstanbap-Ata', the inhabitants of Jai Terek and Arslanbob, as well as non-local and other pasture users on behalf of the forestry enterprises. They further include forest rangers, the State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry and the district administration in Bazar Korgon (Dörre 2014: 279-296). The study illustrates the different perceptions of the conflict made by these stakeholders and the diverse interests they pursue. Besides, the different power positions and the connections and cross-linkages of the stakeholders are demonstrated in the study. A major purpose of this research centers on the stakeholders' perceptions of the conflict, always taking into consideration the so-called constructivism premise, which forms an important fundament of geographical conflict research. According to this premise, the basis for action or the 'reality' that is perceived by a stakeholder, always represents a construction that emerges from the socially existing spatial representations, symbolisms, and interpretation patterns. It is assumed that actor-specific perspectives and spatial interests explicitly form the starting point of any conflict (Reuber & Wolkersdorfer 2007: 761). In terms of the conflict on the *Kara Art* pasture, this is also evident because it only appeared when different stakeholders pursued interfering interests. In order to assess the issues concerned, 31 problem-centred, guideline-based interviews with stakeholders on the pasture were conducted and were supplemented through interviews with officials from different government departments, focusing on the just described three thematic blocks proposed by 'geographical conflict research' concept.

### **Components of the conflict on Kara Art**

Applying the toolbox of conflict research to the case of *Kara Art*, the results of the field work have to be analysed from three different perspectives. First of all, the current situation of the conflict is characterized and its past course of events is reconstructed. Then, the contribution of the institutional setting to the existing conflict is analysed. The last part of this chapter is about the prevailing constellation of the stakeholders.

### ***Characterization and reconstruction of the conflict***

In order to understand the conflict, both spatial patterns of the pasture as well as the historical background of the investigation area are significant. Therefore, in this chapter,

both are going to be examined, analysing the circumstances that led to the current situation.

### *Spatial patterns on Kara Art*

Kyrgyzstan's ecological structure is dominated by grasslands that cover nearly 46 % of the country's total surface area and around 90 % of the agricultural surface (Dörre 2012: 129). Because of topographic and climatic limitations,

“the natural environment for agriculture in the Kyrgyz Republic is nowhere very favorable and in some areas can be extremely hostile, and the growing period is everywhere rather short” (Wilson 1997: 58).

As previously mentioned, *Kara Art* is a heavily used summer pasture located near the two settlements of Jai Terek and Arslanbob at an altitude between 2,000 and 3,000 m (Fig. 4.1). Due to the rather small distance to both settlements and the existence of a navigable path, the use of *Kara Art* involves only low temporal and material costs and allows spontaneous errands into town (Dörre 2014: 286). One can get to Jai Terek and Arslanbob in less than half a day's walk from the pasture. Because of its easy accessibility, people of both settlements are asserting their claims to use the area. Indeed, all interviewed pasture users hail from either Arslanbob or Jai Terek which is why in this study pasture users are generally divided into two groups pertaining to their settlement of origin. These groups, however, are not in the least homogenous groups, since each member of each household has its individual history and characteristics. Nevertheless, in some respects they exhibit similarities or similar interests, e.g. regarding the type of utilization of the pasture. With respect to the pasture utilization, the two groups significantly differ from each other. Actors of each settlement are aware of their unique natural resources and the resources they lack. Since Arslanbob has little arable land, the people use *Kara Art* for cultivating crops to ensure their subsistence. On the contrary, being well endowed with farming land, the Jai Terekis face a more serious scarcity of pastures. Consequently, the latter use *Kara Art* solely as grazing area for their animals. These conflicting forms of land use led to the emergence of conflict.

The field work shows that in 2013 the people from Arslanbob still use *Kara Art* for cultivating most people from Jai Terek use the pasture to feed their animals. In order to protect their crops from the animals, the people from Arslanbob built fences around their fields. This causes the main problem since the animals of the people from Jai Terek do not have sufficient area to live and graze. Feeling constrained, the animals frequently destroy the fences and eat the cultivated crops of the people from Arslanbob. When this happens, the animals run the risk of being forcibly evicted or physical harmed. For instance, the farmers hit the cows, take them into custody until the owner comes to pay a fee, and sometimes even kill them. Since the land officially belongs to Jai Terek and it is forbidden to use pasture area for agriculture, the people from Jai Terek want the fences to be destroyed so that all area is accessible for their animals.

### *Historical background and current situation on Kara Art*

During the Soviet Union the *Kara Art* pasture belonged to two collective farms - the *kolhozy* 'Engel's' and '60th anniversary of October'. The utilization of the pasture was

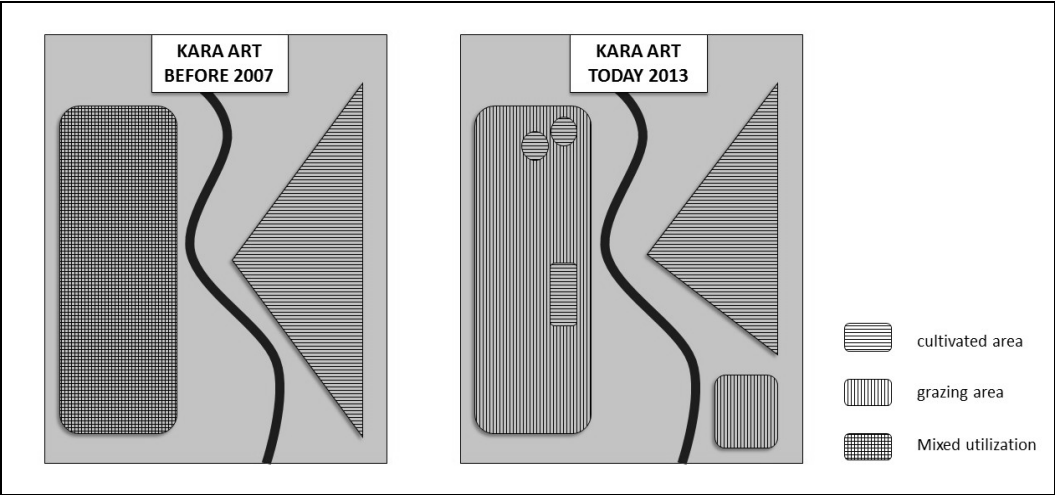
centrally planned and it was only used for feeding livestock. Other economic uses of these grazing areas by the local population were prohibited and did not take place during this time (Dörre 2014: 249). Livestock husbandry was based on production systems with so called 'State Breeding Plants' to achieve the maximum output. During the summer months, sheep were transported to remote summer pastures like e.g. *Kara Art*. The rest of the year, the livestock was kept on spring and autumn pastures, and during winter in stables and raised with concentrate feed (Wilson 1997: 58-59).

The collective farms were dissolved by the 1990s after the Soviet Union collapsed and all livestock was privatized. The radical change from a centrally planned economic system to a free market economy led to serious consequences for the national economy. Many of the former pastoralists were left with very few farm animals and were often forced to sell their animals to be able to purchase food for the remaining livestock. This caused a rapid decline in livestock numbers at the beginning of the 1990s. The national sheep flock fell from over nine million in 1991 to three to four million towards the end of 1995 (Schmidt 2001: 109). The winter months exacerbated the decline due to food supply shortages, a lack of food imports, and the overall limited availability of winter pastures (Blank 2007: 15). Since 1996, flock numbers have increased but still have not reached the pre-independence level (Steimann 2012: 149).

The general historical changes had a great impact on the utilization conflict on the *Kara Art* pasture. After the dissolution of the USSR, the Kyrgyz government did not have enough resources to take care of the region and its people. Ludi's statement that "as a consequence of the individualization of agricultural production, combined with decreasing support, farmers are more dependent on natural resources close by" (2003: 121) became also valid for the walnut fruit forest region. For instance, many households started to use rangelands near villages for diverse agricultural practices. The inhabitants of Jai Terek were particularly poor and most of them had to sell their animals in order to survive. At this point in time, there was no need for them to use the *Kara Art* pasture. At the same time, in 1992, the forestry enterprise of Arslanbob induced to permit usage of limited areas of *Kara Art* for agriculture - despite its designation as a pasture area - because of the economic crisis, demographic pressure and growing scarcity of arable land (Dörre 2014: 281). Many people from Arslanbob came to the pasture, starting to cultivate the land. The field work shows that this can also be attributed to the fact, that during the time of the USSR most of the persons of authority in the region were located in Arslanbob. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union these persons of authority gave the usage rights to *Kara Art* informally to the population of Arslanbob. Around ten years later the lives of the population generally improved, including those in Jai Terek. The people of Jai Terek started to come to *Kara Art* with their animals, but, from their point of view, there was not enough space due to the agricultural activities of the people from Arslanbob. Additionally, the overall quality of the pasture declined.

Kyrgyzstan's summer pastures are characterized by a high biodiversity of vascular plants, being most of them endemics. The effects of land use change on the biodiversity of this mountain habitat are immense (Borchardt 2011: 196).

Before 2007, around 30 households (more than 100 people) from Arslanbob were using the *Kara Art* pasture for agriculture during the summer months. A lot of people from Jai Terek complained to different governmental authorities about the lack of space and food for their animals and about the bad conditions of the pasture. This led to the abolishment of the toleration of agriculture on *Kara Art* by order of the Director of the State Committee on Environmental Protection in 2007 (Dörre 2014: 285). Around nine persons from the province (*oblast'*, rus.), district (*rayon*, rus.) and republic administration came to *Kara Art* to talk to the inhabitants of Arslanbob about this change of the legal situation. The area officially belongs to the 'Jai Terek' Forestry. Therefore all people from Arslanbob who cultivated land on the western river side of the pasture, where agriculture is forbidden, had to leave or move to the eastern river side, where agriculture is still tolerated (Fig. 4.3). In order to ensure that the people from Arslanbob obeyed this law, the people from Jai Terek destroyed the fences the people from Arslanbob kept around their fields on the western river side without waiting for official permission of the forestry enterprise. According to field work, this led to additional tensions between both populations.



**Fig. 4.3: Cultivation systems on the *Kara Art* Pasture before 2007 and today**

Draft: Nordhausen & Paul 2014

In 2013, only two households from Arslanbob live on the western river side of the pasture, using the area for agricultural purposes. Besides, a beekeeper from Arslanbob still cultivates an area of seven hectares on the western river side. Also, on the eastside of the pasture, there are less people from Arslanbob than before 2007. Only seven of the 30 households stayed to cultivate the land on the other river side; the rest of them went back to Arslanbob. People from Jai Terek are now using on both pasture sides, herding their animals (Fig. 4.3). In 2013, there were in total 49 tents and 22 houses on the pasture (Fig. 4.1). The number of tents has increased from year to year. However, the maximum number of tents permitted by the forestry enterprise 'Jai Terek' is 50, so there is not much room for growth in the future. Even with the current amount of 49 tents it can be questioned whether a sustainable use of the pasture is possible. The forestry enterprise wants to more strictly enforce and restrict the future access to the pasture.

### ***Institutional setting***

The authority for the *Kara Art* pasture is concentrated at the forestry enterprise level because it is located on forest fund land. After the dissolution of the USSR, all responsibilities were reallocated to the state-owned forestry enterprise 'Arstanbap-Ata'. The forestry enterprise based in Jai Terek became a new stakeholder because of the secession of the forest district 'Jai Terek' in 2000, of which *Kara Art* is a part. Since then, this enterprise is the main stakeholder regarding legal arrangements for this particular pasture.

The field research shows that there is an enormous miscommunication between the pasture legislation and its actual implementation. It starts with the registration process that every user must do in the forestry enterprise of *Jaj Terek* prior to using the pasture. In reality, however, a lot of pasture users use the pasture without any leasing contract, paying the fees during or at the end of the usage period.

Competition between cultivation and animal husbandry as the main cause of the pasture conflict likely would not occur if the legislation was properly implemented; there is a law that prohibits agriculture on pasture areas. However, the forestry enterprise has no interest in displacing the people from Arslanbob since they pay high fees for cultivating the land. It is evident that a weak institutional setting contributes to the existing conflict. This is further compounded by the fact that neither the State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry nor the *rayon* administration was able or willing to provide any useful information about the *Kara Art* pasture.

A lot of pasture users complained about the lack of intervention of the forestry enterprise. For example, the forestry enterprise promised to build a proper bridge crossing the wide stream crosscutting *Kara Art* several years ago but have not yet started construction, reportedly because of the lack of funds. That is not the only promise the forestry enterprise has reneged. Since the abolishment of the toleration of agriculture on pasture area in 2007, the enterprise has promised to implement the prohibition of agriculture on *Kara Art*. In the end, formal institutions still take money from the people cultivating subsistence crops and tolerate their violation of this regulation. In an interview, the current director of the forestry enterprise 'Jai Terek' claimed that in 2014 the pasture law will finally be implemented and cultivation prohibited on *Kara Art*. The probability of that happening is however very low as Dörre noted:

“[...] it is lucrative for the forestry enterprise to allow certain harmful practices not in spite of but because of their legal ban.” (2012: 140)

The problem hereby is based on the fact that the enterprise foregrounds its commercial advantage of the current situation instead of incorporating the interests of the pasture users from Jai Terek even if it is against the legal basis. Through its management strategies, the forestry enterprise causes both social conflict as well as ecological pasture problems. Even though nothing has changed yet, the people from Arslanbob are scared that in the future they might not be able to continue with cultivating the areas they have been using for several years. The forestry enterprise of Arslanbob tries to advocate for the rights of the people from Arslanbob. But since the individual forest authorities largely work

for themselves with only very loose cooperation between the two agencies, the forestry enterprise of Arslanbob cannot guarantee the future use of *Kara Art* to its people. Just once a year the two agencies have an official meeting to discuss official matters. An employee of the forestry enterprise 'Arstanbap-Ata' based in Gumkhana<sup>1</sup> mentioned in an interview that he hopes in the near future closer cooperation will be possible. For instance, an alignment of the forestry districts is being discussed, as every 10 years the maps are being reallocated. The next time of reallocation will be in 2014. Making the eastern river side of *Kara Art* part of the area of influence of the *leskhoz* 'Arstanbap-Ata' would ensure the people from Arslanbob the right of disposal of *Kara Art* in the future. Therefore, it is in the interest of this forestry enterprise, as well as of the pasture users from Arslanbob, to support this suggestion. The forestry enterprise 'Jai Terek', however, does not agree with this proposal. The director of the latter enterprise claims that the pastoralists of Jai Terek require the entire pasture for feeding their livestock. The forestry enterprise is aware of the lack of grasslands and tries, together with the State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry, to get the usage rights of an area of *Kyzul Unkur* for the people of Jai Terek and that way to ease the conflict by trying to reduce the number of pasture users on *Kara Art*. Thus, it can be said that the two forestry enterprises both make small efforts to support the people from Jai Terek and Arslanbob respectively. Although these forestry enterprises are relatively powerful organizations, the implementation of consents they have been made is very slow to nonexistent.

All in all it can be said that the institutional setting largely contributes to the maintenance of the conflict, since the socio-ecological pasture problem partly results from the economic needs of the forestry staff, the unreliability of the legislation and enforcement authorities as well as the weakness of the public administration.

### ***Stakeholder constellation***

In terms of national composition, Kyrgyzstan is one of the most diverse republics in Central Asia, even though the structure of the population always fluctuated due to migration (Abazov 1999: 240).

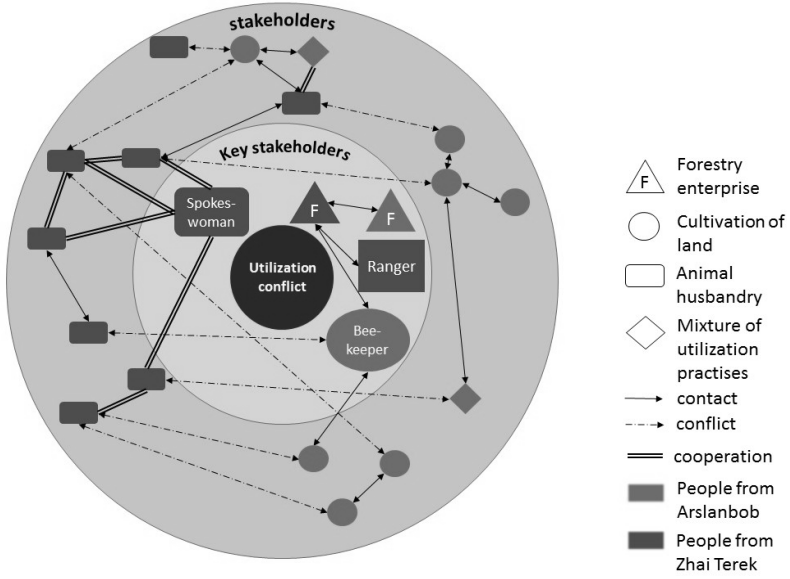
“Throughout the Soviet era the proportion of the Uzbek community in Kyrgyzstan fluctuated between 10 % and 12 % of the population, making the Uzbeks the third largest ethnic group in Kyrgyzstan after the Kyrgyz and Russians. [...] Under conditions of low living standards, socio-economic crisis and political destabilisation, interethnic tension [between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks] erupted due to inter alia increasing intergroup competition over resources (land lots)[...] and a struggle to gain control over power structures.” (Tishkov 1995: 134)

During the past decades, there have been some conflict escalations in form of mass riots, intercommunal clashes and violence directed against Uzbeks, as for example in 1990 and 2010 mainly in the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad (Tishkov 1995: 134). The conflict on *Kara Art*, though, is not at all related to these ethnic tensions as the interviewed persons did not express any provenance or ethnic related issues between the users but rather a utilization conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to ensure the anonymity of the interviewed persons, no real name is being used in this study.

On *Kara Art*, cross-linkages between the pasture users are vast (Fig. 4.4). Pasture users are both located close to each other and geographically isolated from other users. Regardless, some of the pasture users have frequent contact with their neighbours, others hardly talk. Most people from Arslanbob utilize separately the eastern side of the river. Only two households from Arslanbob are close to the tents from Jai Terek on the western river side. Additionally, some of the people who practice different land-use types did not express any conflict at all and even mentioned cooperation with each other. For example, one household from Arslanbob on the western river side offers their neighbours the use of their oven, animal shelter, and let them leave tents in their house during the winter.



**Fig. 4.4: Stakeholder mapping of the utilization conflict on *Kara Art***

Draft: Nordhausen & Paul 2014 based on Zimmermann 2006: 15

Organized cooperation could be identified among the people from Jai Terek. For several years there was only a temporary bridge that connected the two riversides. The crossing was dangerous for both people and their animals. In the last few years, three calves and three donkeys drowned in the river as well as a close call for a little boy who almost drowned. The forestry enterprise ‘Jai Terek’ promised to build a proper bridge but it never did. Therefore, people from this settlement organized themselves to push the process further and to build the bridge by themselves without the enterprise. In order to arrange this process, they decided to collect money. They would need 1,500 KGS per tent and they elected a leader who is responsible for the collection of the money. But, so far, only three households have paid the fee.

Although cooperation is evident, problematic relationships sometimes build between the users. Most of the pasture users perceive a utilization conflict on the pasture. Distinct signs of insufficient land resources, such as the frequent incidences with cows eating crops, make the conflict even more evident. The diverse goals and strategies of the different stakeholders provide a deeper understanding of the prevailing conflict.

As previously mentioned, all people from Arslanbob on the pasture cultivate fields and most of them face similar problems. Cows, usually belonging to the people of Jai Terek,

destroy their fences and consume their harvests. It is indeed a fact that doing agriculture on pastures is illegal in Kyrgyzstan. The forestry enterprise responsible for monitoring and ensuring compliance with the legislation for the pasture *Kara Art* permits the illegal activity in return for payments. As a result of this behavior, the people of Arslanbob become entitled to grow crops on the pasture even though it is legally prohibited. This strengthens the position of the people from Arslanbob against the people from Jai Terek which provokes resistance. About two-thirds of the interviewed persons from Jai Terek emphasize the informal character of these arrangements. The people from *Arslanbob* accuse the people of Jai Terek to be responsible for the pasture problem because of their excessive use of land. They take the view that in their district there is not enough arable land to meet their basic food needs and demand that the people from Jai Terek should use other pastures higher up the mountains to feed their animals, as they used to do in the past. The people of Arslanbob blame others for being too lazy to walk that distance. They do not understand why every household of Jai Terek must send members to the pasture if they have only very few cows. If they collected the animals and sent herdsmen instead, the pasture would not be as crowded and as resource deficient (e.g. water and firewood). Above all, the conflict escalation in 2007 where many households from Arslanbob had to leave the pasture irritates them. The often expressed claim of the exclusive usage right by the people of Jai Terek results in great uncertainty and fear on the side of the people of Arslanbob.

The people of Jai Terek claim the exclusive right to use the pasture for themselves, because officially the area belongs to their forestry enterprise. Even after 2007 when the people of Arslanbob had to leave the entire western part of the pasture there was not sufficient space for all their animals. The people of Jai Terek are of the opinion that the people of Arslanbob possess much more land and that they could use other pastures as an alternative to *Kara Art*. They hold that apart from having access to additional pastures, the people of Arslanbob benefit from tourism. The people from Jai Terek believe that *Kara Art* is the only pasture they can use and they depend on it. There are different perceptions of the conflict. For a deeper understanding, two exemplarily pasture users' daily activities as well as their perceptions of the conflict are described in more detail in the textbox below.

#### **Box 4.1: Pasture users' daily activities and perceptions of the conflict**

##### ***Oruchan, 56 year old woman from Arslanbob***

*Oruchan* has been coming to *Kara Art* for 20 years during the summertime between May and August. During that time she lives in a small house on the eastern part of the pasture. She grows mostly garlic, corn, and small amounts of potatoes on a 0.04 ha plot. In 2013, she spends the summer on the pasture with her youngest son. Her husband and the other two children are working in Russia (Moscow) to contribute some money to the household's livelihood. In Arslanbob she does not earn enough money to make a living. Thus, her household depends on the food she grows in *Kara Art*. Besides growing crops on her land, *Oruchan* also owns two cows and 15 chickens. To protect her harvest from the ravenous cattle she has established a wooden fence around her plot. Nonetheless, she has had several



problems with her neighbour's livestock. In her opinion, the people from Jai Terek do not look after their animals. Their negligence leads to the fact that the cows are frequently destroying her fence and eat parts of the harvest. She feels very angry about this. She is of the opinion that the people from Jai Terek, in general, are making an excessive use of the existing land. She remembers the time right after the dissolution of the Soviet Union when just a few people from Jai Terek used the pasture and none of these problems occurred. "Step-by-step they took over the land. Since 2007 the entire western part of the pasture belongs to them." From 2005 to 2007, *Oruchan's* household also had a plot of arable land on the other side of the pasture but had to abandon it after the people of Jai Terek claimed it as their own. *Oruchan* does not understand why these people request the exclusive usage right of the pasture. She believes that people from Arslanbob have the right to use the pasture as well. Doing agriculture on the pasture is also not a problem, she argues, because she pays for it. *Oruchan* is certain that she will defend herself against this process. For example, she and some other people of Arslanbob are planning to block the road to Arslanbob if the people from Jai Terek tell them to leave the pasture. This would be a problem for the people from Jai Terek since a lot of them sell their products at the market in Arslanbob - stealing income opportunities from the people from Arslanbob.

#### ***Adashka, 44 year old woman from Jai Terek***

It is the seventh year that *Adashka* has come from Jai Terek to *Kara Art*. From May to August she and her son share a tent on the pasture. Their three cows are the reason that they spend the summertime on the pasture. With the milk from the cows, *Adashka* produces different local products which she sells at least twice a week in Arslanbob. Besides that income source, *Adashka's* family collects walnuts in the forest in autumn and they sell them in Bazar Korgon. The time on the pasture plays an important role for the livelihood of her household. Nowadays it is more difficult to find enough food for their animals on *Kara Art*. When she first came here seven years ago, the condition of the pasture was much better. Now she has frequent problems with neighbours because her cows destroy their fences in order to get food. Then she must pay penalty fees to compensate the damage her cows have done to the neighbour's crops, which she does not seem to be willing to accept. She does not understand why the people from Arslanbob have to use this pasture since they have five other pastures. For Jai Terek it is the only one. This is why she holds the opinion that the people from Arslanbob should leave *Kara Art* and the usage rights should be given exclusively to the people from Jai Terek. She is aware of the fact that *Kara Art* officially belongs to the people of Jai Terek so she spoke with the forestry enterprise 'Jai Terek' about her problems. They told her that they are willing to support her and that they are finally going to implement the usage rights of the people from Jai Terek for *Kara Art* next year. But, since the forestry enterprise always promises things and does nothing in return, *Adashka* and a lot of people are tired of waiting for state intervention and would rather take action themselves such as destroying all fences of the people from *Arslanbob*.

These two examples reveal different perspectives and spatial interests of two exemplary persons of the two stakeholder groups. During the period of field work, the antagonistic relation between the two groups became evident, with neither group understanding the perspective of the other. The only vague and contradictory involvement of state institutions contributes to the lack of conflict resolution.

Taking a closer look at the official key stakeholders of the conflict reveals further problems. The forestry enterprise 'Jai Terek' as the responsible authority regarding the legislation and its implementation has wide influence. As local state representatives the forest rangers are entitled to enforce the interests of the enterprise on site. Rangers control the adherence of the legislation while they register and punish any kind of defiance to formal rules. They are also responsible for briefing the administration about any occurrences. Through their control and power, rangers play an important role as gatekeepers. Even though they are not in possession of the pasture resources, they control its access and use in the interest of their employer, the forestry enterprise. Twice or three times a week they monitor and patrol the pasture.

Despite the small salary (Dörre 2014: 290-291), the job as a ranger is of great importance, embedded in a particular social environment. Pasture users might be relatives, acquaintances, or friends of the ranger who pursue interests that contradict the interests of his employer. Taking this into consideration, the inconsistent implementation of the provisions including all informal arrangements are easier to understand. Beyond that, the economical aspect plays an important role. The ranger knows about the dependency of the pasture users on accessible land plots. He also has knowledge of the financial situation of most pasture users. Many are able to pay a higher fee for the land and are willing to do so because of the privileges they get from the informal arrangement. This causes a situation where the ranger profits from the current situation and therefore makes a significant contribution to the maladjusted utilization practises.

The forestry enterprise 'Arstanbap-Ata' is an important economic stakeholder within the conflict. Its economic activities range from forestry to marketing of forest products (walnuts, honey and burls) to animal husbandry. Even though *Kara Art* is located outside of their territory after the secession of the forestry district, the forestry enterprise still uses land area on the pasture. The reason is the scarcity of grassland and arable land resources plus the continuation of the utilization practices of the USSR. Because of the economic power that the forestry enterprise possesses, its administration has the ability to extract usage rights from its neighbouring forestry enterprise. For instance, it receives a large area (eight ha) from the Jai Terek-based forestry enterprise in order to provide a beekeeper with sufficient area for his bees. This agreement is financially very attractive for both enterprises. On the one hand, the forestry enterprise 'Jai Terek' gets a significant additional income. On the other hand, the forestry enterprise 'Arstanbap-Ata' which uses the pasture not itself, but by pasture users on its behalf, realizes important revenues through this agreement. Moreover, the latter enterprise significantly influences the utilization practices of the pasture. Based on the applied (resp. commissioned) utilization practice, it provides pasture users from Arslanbob with a reasonable basis for argumentation. They can appeal to the forestry enterprise 'Arstanbap-Ata' and demand

the same usage rights for themselves. An interview with a *leskhoz* employee has resulted in the commitment of the enterprise to support the remaining people from Arslanbob on the pasture *Kara Art* by trying to reallocate the forestry district and that way acquiring the usage rights of *Kara Art* for the people of *Arslanbob* in the future.

#### **Box 4.2: The beekeeper as a pasture user on behalf of the forestry enterprise**

The beekeeper is a pasture user on behalf of the forestry enterprise. He is held in high esteem as a long-established user of *Kara Art* with a good social reputation. For 20 years now he has made his living through the production and sale of honey alongside with agriculture and animal husbandry. He runs a territory of about one hectare on the eastern riverside plus another territory on the western river side of about seven hectares. On this comparatively large plot he mostly cultivates potatoes and collects grass to feed his six cows and calves. Additionally, he manages 100 bee colonies while 60 of those colonies belong to the forestry enterprise 'Arstanbap-Ata'. In return, he must pay a fee of 300 kg of honey per year (equal to five kg per bee colony of the *leskhoz*). The *leskhoz* advocates to ensure that the beekeeper gets a license continuously from the forestry enterprise 'Jai Terek'. For the forestry enterprise 'Arstanbap-Ata', the delivery of honey is a crucial sector of the economy that prevents the enterprise from financial difficulties. For the beekeeper, it is important to know that this actor stands behind him. However, that would not be of any use if he had not a sufficient amount of financial capital. As demonstrated before, the beekeeper has a comparatively high income and is relatively wealthy. Recently though, the beekeeper has faced some difficulties with honey extraction. In the last few years it has rained a lot and there have not been enough flowers for pollination. This compelled him to bring the bee boxes to the cotton flowers in Bazar Kargon. The beekeeper's solid financial capital resources, his facilities with social capital through the linkage with other actors, plus his social position make him a key stakeholder within the conflict. He holds a strong position and a lot of power to act within the pasture land ratios.

Reportedly there are also non-local pasture users on *Kara Art* (Dörre 2014) that however have not been encountered during fieldwork. Instead, an emerging key stakeholder could be discovered during the time on site: The *spokeswoman* for an amalgamation of several people from *Jai Terek* regarding a bridge project on the pasture. It is the only unexpected key stakeholder on the pasture which could not be identified prior to the fieldwork. Due to the already mentioned problematic situation regarding the river crossing and the inaction of the forestry enterprise on that score, a group of pasture users (around 15 households) felt compelled to take action by themselves. They voted in an informal organized meeting for *Haptiza* to collect the money for the self-construction of the bridge as well as to express the opinion of the group to authorities. *Haptiza*, a 50 years old woman, is highly valued in *Jai Terek* for frequently supporting and helping households from this settlement with arising problems. Due to her high social acceptance and her disposition to commit to responsibility she is predetermined to conduct this task. It is the first time on the pasture that some kind of self-organization has occurred. Dörre (2014: 291) came to the conclusion that no evidence of self-organized structures existed on the pasture in due course. Indeed,

the current form of self-organization does not refer to pasture management in particular but it shows the willingness of the people to develop and implement autonomous forms of organization. Because of the pooling of interests and the representation in form of one person, the spokeswoman holds great bargaining power. This could certainly have an increasing effect of the pasture management and existence of the conflict in the near future if the self-organization applies also in other fields of the pasture users than the bridge project.

Through the analysis of the different (key) stakeholders, one gets insights and a deeper understanding of the different aspects of the conflict. The actions of each stakeholder can be perceived as the product of their individual preferences, the social rules in Kyrgyzstan, and the spatial conditions of *Kara Art* as proposed by the 'geographical conflict research' (Reuber & Wolkersdorfer 2007: 761).

### **Conflict resolution – a difficult task to undertake**

The conducted study resulted in the prolonged existence of the utilization conflict between the people from Arslanbob and Jai Terek on the pasture *Kara Art*. To this day there is a lack of arable land and easily accessible pastures. In the year of 2007, an escalation of the conflict occurred. Several people from Arslanbob were expelled from the pasture because of not following the instruction to stop protecting their crops with fences. Since then, the situation has calmed down but subliminally still exists. There are still areas on the pasture where people from Arslanbob are cultivating crops. It is very difficult to forecast what will happen on the pasture in the future. The people from Jai Terek claim the exclusive right to use the pasture and want all fences to be destroyed. They hope that the legal basis will finally be implemented by the responsible authorities. There are rumours that the forestry enterprise of Jai Terek will destroy all fences in 2014 so that only animal husbandry will be practiced. This plan has existed for several years<sup>2</sup>, but has not yet been implemented. On the other hand, the people from Arslanbob hope that they can carry on growing crops on the pasture. The uncertainty about the permanence of their acquired rights of disposal weakens their position in the conflict since their practices are illegal and their existence depends on the corruption of the forest administration.

In order to identify the interests and perspectives of the different stakeholders that are involved in the spatial conflict, a detailed stakeholder analysis has been executed. As a result, a better understanding of their objectives and actions as well as their different perceptions of the conflict and their relationships to each other is obtained. In doing so, the 'geographical conflict research' provided an appropriate theoretical and methodological framework to understand and describe the conflict more accurately.

The institutional setting constitutes a crucial role within the conflict constellation. As previously mentioned, the socio-ecological pasture problem is the result of an interplay of the economic needs of the users and forestry staff, but also the unreliability of the legislation and enforcement authorities and weakness of the public administration. A situation arose where the forestry enterprise profits from the status quo, therefore a

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<sup>2</sup> Dörre (2014: 287) mentioned the same observation.

conflict resolution is not in their least interest. The informal agreements certainly bring along uncertainties about the duration of the usage rights for the pasture users because it is impossible to sue for a land plot acquired informally. As a result, short term and maximum resource extraction oriented forms of valorisation occurred. Informal agreements foster resource related social conflicts between the local population as well as ecological damage of the pasture.

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## **Natural Landscape or Anthropogenic Environment? A Case Study on the 'Wild' Fruit and Walnut Forests in Southern Kyrgyzstan**

### **The challenge of determining the value and 'nature' of a landscape**

In recent years, the establishment of nature reserves, national parks and other enclosed biosphere preservation areas has increased rapidly and on a global scale. This development is characterized not only by an accelerated spatial expansion of environments demarcated as being protected in some way, but also becomes visible in the increased rhetorical impact that conservational issues have on many aspects of daily life, scientific discourses and political debates (Zimmerer 2006a: 4). This is a favourable progress and can only be regarded as an important achievement in human development. The time when nature was seen mainly as a source for resources has lasted more than long enough. This advancement, however, comes with certain difficulties.

The pressure on regions whose landscapes are considered as being natural, original or unique is starting to be increasingly demanding. For economically fragile people living in areas destined for nature reserves, the conservational pressure induced by outside, global actors often poses many difficulties for their daily survival. In light of the ever-expanding demarcation of conservation or protection areas, it seems necessary to rethink our concept of nature in order to be able to make decisions that ensure both environmental protection and a fair share of resources for people living close-by to areas the global conservation community wishes to protect. In the process of deciding upon reservation areas, a set of seemingly banal but nevertheless crucially important questions often remain unanswered: What is nature? Is it the opposite to culture, meaning it is that realm which has not been altered by human influence? Is nature that part of the world that one can find in forests and other seemingly untouched places, or is it something else? How can nature be protected if no one even knows what or where it is?

These often overlooked, seemingly philosophical issues have to be answered before implementing any environmental enclosure, as they lead to an even more controversial yet decisive problem: If nature is defined as a pure form of being, the opposite to human culture, then one has to ask - is there any nature left at all on this planet that humanity might be able to conserve? Is it a wise choice to proclaim areas inhabited by humans as the domain of some form of 'pure' nature where it ought to be preserved in a museum-like and anthropogenic-free form?

Not attending to this problem can have severe negative consequences and potentially destroy all conservation efforts at their very base. It is easy to imagine a situation where environmentalists put strong efforts into the establishment of a conservation area, making it come to life after years of hard work and obstacles - and then their definition of nature is scrutinized, in the way that all that they have been trying to protect is in fact not nature, but 'only' a 'worthless' relict of human-environment interaction. The definition of what 'valuable nature' is and what is not has to be discussed beforehand. If we don't think

about these issues today then many of our current conservation efforts might be seen as pointless in the future.

The study presented here wants to contribute to the conservational discourse surrounding different perceptions of human-environment-relations as well as the debate between utilization of resources and protection of pristine nature for future generations. In order to investigate these contradictory intentions in more detail, a case study of the inhabited forest reserve of Dashman, located in the famous 'wild' walnut-fruit forest of southern Kyrgyzstan, will be analysed. This area, which will be outlined in more detail further below entails both the 'natural' forest and a small settlement which is inhabited during the summer months. This case is a good example for the dichotomy between the intention to establish a natural reserve and the currently existing usage of the land and its products by local inhabitants for their everyday needs. In order to analyse this deep-rooted disagreement in regard of the assumed need to protect nature from anthropogenic influences it is seen as highly important to learn how different stakeholders currently use the assets in this area. Therefore the overall research question of this study is to examine how and to what extent the different stakeholders conserve and utilize natural resources in the semi-permanent forest settlement of Dashman and the surrounding woodlands. To describe the analytical framework behind this approach, the here presented paper will first describe the theoretical concept of historical ecology in order to define the understanding of human-environment relations for this study. This section is followed by an empirical investigation, which forms the main part of this study: the case study will be examined through three dimensions, namely the social economy, the institutional regulations and the conservation discourse. The final section gives an outlook into possible future handling of the here proposed redefined understanding of the nexus between nature and culture.

In total, the analysis of the research question and topic will examine the dilemma of restricting resource utilization in an area marked by a high dependency on natural assets by local inhabitants and simultaneously high conservational pressure by the national government as well as the international environmental community. In this context, the idea of imagining nature as an untouched, unaffected area or value which should be protected from any human influence will be challenged by proposing a dynamic and process based equilibrium approach as the base for human-environment relations.

### **Theorising natural landscapes: How archaeological findings in the Amazon may help improve environmental management in the 'wild' walnut-fruit forests**

Much of the recent year's debate surrounding environmental protection defined nature as being something outside of human societies, a pristine territory not affected by unnatural interference. This view has led to problematic issues. On the one side, the establishment of protected areas (i.e. national parks) can interfere with the local inhabitant's power over their resources. Environmental protection measures may clash with local people's daily needs and societal practices, resulting in the fact that actors living in remote areas who have a low carbon footprint may have to suffer resource depletion in their daily survival. The measures rather serve the well-being of actors in more centralized areas who



are often the very cause for environmental degradation due to their high-footprint lifestyles.

A second problematic issue that arises from the classification of nature as something opposite to humanity is that we often perceive specific areas as being natural when they are in fact not natural in their historic formation. New findings regarding environmental history and especially the history of human-environment relations in areas believed to be biodiversity retreats that supposedly evolved ‘naturally’ without human influence shed a new light on conservational issues. An example for an area often believed to be a pristine, humanly untouched paradise is the Amazonian rainforest. At the time when European colonists first saw this region they found little evidence of human alterations to the landscape and it was therefore assumed that these landscapes had been inhabited by peoples that did not develop the environment. It has been regarded as being ‘mainly natural’ ever since. Newer archaeological findings in this area, however, suggest that there have in fact been massive anthropogenic changes to the Amazonian forest in the past, but the humans that had once lived here and worked these extensive managed areas were gone before the Europeans undertook systematic explorations of this part of South America (Miranda 2007). Many researchers that reflect this new rational of the Amazon rainforest come to the conclusion that it most probably only exists in its current species-rich and spatially extensive form because humans shaped it in a systematic way. It is believed that large societies once inhabited these lands, managed and technically altered the landscape and increased the forest’s spatial extend as well it’s biodiversity richness. For some reason however, they abandoned these environments prior to the arrival of the European explorers. The garden-like landscapes once shaped by these large populations ran wild after their disappearance and transformed into what we now call the Amazonian rainforest (Balée 1994: 117, Balée & Erickson 2006: 5, Denevan 1992: 373-375, Erickson 2008: 160, Heckenberger et. al. 2003, Magalhães 2008: 410-411, Miranda 2007, Neves 1999, Sauer 1958, Scoles 2011, amongst many others). This new perspective shows that nature, understood as being something untouched and unaltered by human influence is a very hard thing to find even in a place like the Amazon. This recognition is bound to have an enormous impact on the design and management of environmental protection areas. Vested approaches to nature conservation will need to be readdressed. What is needed in this light are new, process-based ontologies to the definition of nature in order to recognize landscapes as adaptive, unfolding environments, rather than systems which were once stable and are now harmed by human influence (Jones 2009: 308-309). These new perspectives need to be of relational and processual character, meaning that environments are not seen as being something static that was once a pure and unbroken plane, but as change-based dynamic equilibriums, in which there is never a finished or original state. Newer theoretical approaches such as historical ecology

“reject the idea of nature as an ontologically pure realm that exists outside, and apart from, a separate one of human knowledge, culture, and society.” (Jones 2009: 294).

In a historical ecology perspective, current environments are seen as being the result of very long human-environment interactions, and that humans have never just adapted to landscapes they found, but have always had an active role in evolving them. The idea that

nature is something that is outside of and untouched by humans or culture is already starting to fade. What we are witnessing at the moment when observing conservational debates is the fading of a “binary division” (Jones 2009: 294) between nature and culture that has been dominating environmental discourse. Arguing from a perspective of historical ecology, there is a strong standing for the claim that the protection or conservation of a pure environment is ultimately a futile and inherently paradox idea, as humans have had a long history of co-evolving environments together with natural processes (Böhme 1992:15-24). It is becoming apparent that a variety of current environmental debates were misled by a “Pristine Myth” (Denevan 1992) when it comes to decide what exactly defines a natural landscape. It has thus become necessary to rethink both our perception of nature and the way we politicize the environment, especially with regards to nature protection efforts. The protection of nature as well as nature itself needs to be thought of as a dynamic concept, an environment which has always been shaped by humans for their desired outcomes. Nature protection is what humans make of it (Wendt 1992).

This intense and prolonged human alternation of the landscape suggests that it has become necessary to rethink currently well established frameworks such as for example that of the “Anthropocene” (Crutzen 2006). The notion of the anthropocene has been valuable in helping to recognize the extreme magnitude that human alterations to the landscape can and have reached, especially in the fossil fuel age. Nevertheless, the framework leans towards a perception of nature as something separate from humanity, a view that is starting to show some blurs on the edges. We may have to step back from approaches like that of the anthropocene in order to re-define the extent to which ancient cultures have managed, altered and shaped our current environments.

Another area beside the Amazonian rainforest that is gaining increasing attention as a place where there is (seemingly) untouched nature worthy of preservation are the ecosystems of the former Soviet Union. Especially the mountainous regions in Central Asia have gained popularity with their unique species composition and a biosphere that is adapted to very extreme environmental conditions. In this area, there is a unique ‘natural’ walnut and fruit forest, which is increasingly influenced by global conservational discourse. The walnut forest<sup>1</sup> situated in the Tien Shan mountain range in southern Kyrgyzstan is regarded as being the largest continuous woodland of this type in the world, and is often believed to be of natural origin (TWB 2002a: 8, TWB 2002b: 8-9, FFI 2009). Due to its outstanding species richness, it is also considered as being of global importance for biodiversity conservation (Ashimov 1998, Borhardt et. al. 2010: 225, Fisher et. al. 2004, Venglovsky 1998) and therefore forms part of global conservational efforts (TWB 2002a: 8, TWB 2002b: 8-9, FFI 2009). This forest is certainly a unique ecological feature in Central Asia, which is mainly marked by a treeless landscape in the form of large rangelands or steppes, partially used as pastures. Newer findings however suggest, same as in the Amazonian rainforest, that this forest has been growing rapidly since the arrival of human populations (Beer et. al. 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> The walnut and fruit forest will from here on be referred to as walnut forest for reasons of legibility, the presence of many endemic and rare fruit and herb species is always implied.

The current pressure on these forest resources appears high, as the majority of the local population had to return to subsistence economy relying heavily on forest resources to sustain their livelihoods after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Borchardt et al. 2011: 364). The area has been classified by international conservation agencies as being one of the most urgent ones to protect on the global scale (Conservation International 2014a), as many of the species in the forest were identified as being the ancestors of a great variety of fruits and nuts consumed today, such as apples, prunes or walnuts (Vavilov 1951, FFI 2009, Kolov 1998). The species types and composition are seen as an “important storehouse of wild genetic diversity” (Conservation International 2014b). Global institutions such as the World Bank support long-term projects in this area in order to protect “the unique and sensitive West Tien Shan ecosystem” (TWB 2002b: 8). Some Kyrgyz and international scientists even claim the promotion of the forest to the rank of a world natural heritage site and the establishment of a national park or biosphere reserve. This would require the reduction or complete exclusion of anthropogenic usage (Dörre & Schmidt 2008: 218-220, Schmidt & Dörre 2011: 292, Schmidt 2005a: 99).

This development is desirable and the threat of extinction of the current fruit’s ancestors is serious. It is helpful for the conservation of Central Asian endemic species that this problem is becoming increasingly recognized and that the awareness for it is rising on a global scale. Nevertheless, actions taken should be considered carefully. In regions with long-living species, such as trees, a long temporal scale is crucial for understanding and effective management (Swetnam et al. 1999: 1190). The discourse regarding the woodlands of southern Kyrgyzstan is a prime example for how a certain (mis)conception of nature and environmental history is shaping the local realities of resource utilization and relations of stakeholders and institutions, leading to tension and conflict. In this area, the Kyrgyz government, often supported by the international conservational community, wants to establish protected nature reserves in order to minimize environmental threats such as collection of firewood, cattle grazing or collection of walnuts (Ministry of Environmental Protection 1998). What seems like a good idea at a first glance could have severe negative consequences for local inhabitants, who strongly rely on the forest resources for their daily needs as well as the generation of their income. As the majority of people living near the protected forest areas had to become subsistence farmers due to the worsening economic situation after the independence, the importance of forest resources such as fire wood or timber, walnuts, wild fruits, hay and wild herbs for securing rural livelihoods has increased dramatically (Borchardt et. al. 2010, Borchardt et al 2011: 363, Dörre & Schmidt 2008: 211, Scheuber et al. 2000: 74). If the walnut forest were to be enclosed as a nature retreat then the local population would be faced with severe problems.

Even though the walnut forest had already been denominated as a protected area back in Tsarist times, humans have used the forest resources and managed its survival for a long time (Dörre & Schmidt 2008: 207, Winter et. al. 2009: 531). Same as in the Amazonian rainforests described earlier, humans have had a positive influence on the evolution of the forest. Today researchers argue that the walnut forests were most likely being shaped under human influence, rather than merely ‘surviving’ it (Beer et. al. 2008). Nevertheless researchers do not contest that the area of the forest was once much bigger than it is

today (Gottschling et. al. 2005). This is a very important point, as this leads to the conclusion that the problems the Kyrgyz walnut forests face today are not the immediate consequence of human interference, but are rather indicative of an imbalance in the human-environment-equilibrium. Future management should thus not be oriented towards the exclusion of local inhabitants from the forest resources in order to 'save' them, but rather towards finding measures to re-balance the dynamic between forest usage and forest management. In the end, the most important question is not how to protect nature that is assumed to be wild, but rather what defines a natural landscape in an area with a prolonged history of anthropogenic landscape usage and management. In order to benefit all stakeholders and sustain a 'stable' environment which can provide ecosystem services for current and future generations locally and on a global scale it is important to find appropriate solutions and not to fence off random parts of the landscape. With this in mind, the following section analyzes the case study of the forest reserve of Dashman in Kyrgyzstan in more detail. It will be examined how different definitions and understandings of the term nature can result in different perceptions on how to best utilize and/or protect natural landscapes, leading to both conflict between different stakeholders and degradation of the environment.

### **Contextualizing natural landscapes: the Kyrgyz 'wild' walnut-fruit forest**

As mentioned above, the Kyrgyz government established protected areas in several parts of the walnut-fruit forest in an attempt to reduce environmental threats. A current example of an utilized area which is in transition to becoming a protected area is the natural reserve of Dashman. This example shows the controversies between conservation and the need of utilizing forest products by the local inhabitants: While the state government attempts to implement a forest reserve, the local population lives in and from this part of the forest in order to cover their daily needs and economy. As stated by various residents born in the Dashman settlement before the 1940s (own interviews 2013) forestry officials of the Soviet Union came up with the idea to establish a forest reserve in the Dashman forest district in the 1970s. The forest reserve was finally legally implemented by the Kyrgyz national government in 2012 (GKR 2012).

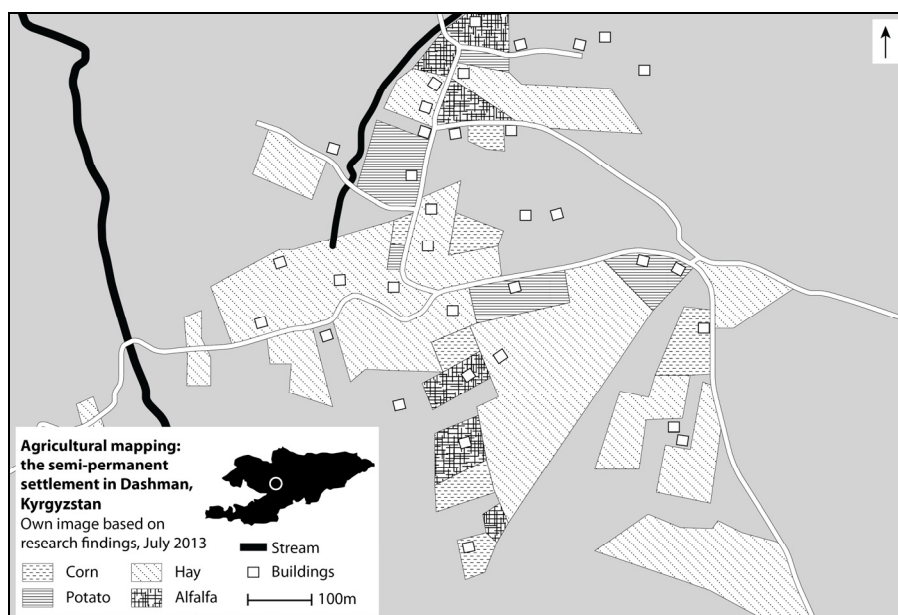
The following research will examine the conflicting situation in light of this new development faced by the local population of the semi-permanent settlement of Dashman, situated in the centre of the forest reserve. The analysis will include the strategies of how and to what extent the different stakeholders conserve and utilize natural resources and in this regard what kind of different understandings of nature the stakeholders have. In this analysis, we argue that the walnut forest is not a natural landscape any more but has become a cultural landscape through the shaping and structuring by the local inhabitants, through the existing institutional regulations as well as certain perceptions of what is and is not nature. This argumentation will be conducted further with the help of the following sections on social economy, institutional regulations and the conservation discourse.

### **Field of study & Methodology**

The Dashman reserve is located in the Bazar Korgon *Rayon* and is surrounded by the settlements of Gumkhana, Arslanbob, Kysyl Unkur and Jaradar. It consists of both a forest

area with walnut and fruit trees and a semi-permanent settlement which is located in the centre of the woodland. The forest district is classified by law as a sanctuary (*koruk*, krg.) since 2012. According to forestry officials on the province (*oblast'*, rus.) level in the region's capital Jalalabad, the semi-permanent settlement does not exist (own interviews 2013). As could be established in this research study however, the semi-permanent settlement of Dashman includes 35 family houses, which are occupied during the summer months for subsistence agriculture as well as in autumn for walnut and fruit collection. This settlement forms the research area for this study.

The research is based on semi-structured qualitative interviews with a variety of stakeholders, reaching from state-level to local actors who have strong ties to the forest and were identified through local networks. It also includes participatory observations and a mapping of the semi-permanent settlement of Dashman (Fig. 5.1).



**Fig. 5.1: Mapping of the settlement of Dashman**

Draft: Fürst & Schulz Blank 2014

The 21 interviews were conducted with residents of the settlement, residents from surrounding villages that rent plots in the forest, local as well as municipal actors of the state forest enterprise (*leskhoz*, rus.) 'Arstanbap-Ata' and members of local as well as regional NGOs (Arslanbob/ Gumkhana: Fauna & Flora International, Community Based Tourism, Jalalabad: Helvetas, Lesik Yuk). Three spheres influencing the question of nature conservation and utilization of natural products in Dashman were identified and subsequently chosen as research domains. These three dimensions include the social economy, institutional regulations and the current conservation discourses in Dashman. These dimensions will help to evaluate the different practices and interests of the various actors in this forest district in the following sections.

### ***Social economy***

As the landscape of the forest is mainly shaped by the practices of local inhabitants the section of social economy focuses on land and forest use strategies of the actors in

Dashman. It is based on the question in what way social arrangements are organized with regards to income generation through resource utilization. For this reason, several aspects were taken into consideration: In what way do people generate an income through the activities in the village and the forest, and how is this income distributed amongst those that take part in the activities? How is the local population organized socially in order to generate income through the usage of natural resources? Are products sold and, if they are, what kinds of marketing strategies are there? Are there any diversification strategies or alternative usage strategies for gaining additional funds? The social economy section was based on a mapping of the semi-permanent settlement of Dashman, as well as observations and qualitative interviews.

As could be established during the research, most of the households in the settlement of Dashman own four to six cows, three to eight chickens and one or two donkeys. They can lease two kinds of lots from the local Gumkhana-based *leskhoz*, usually for a period of five years: one lot is situated within the semi-permanent village boundaries used for a house as well as agricultural activities, and a second lot in the forest, where they are allowed to collect nuts during the harvest period.

The rent is paid in form of 10-20 kg of walnuts gathered by the tenant, paid to the *leskhoz* after the harvest period. Income is generated via a variety of strategies: The main source during the spring and summer months is the selling of dairy products such as *qurut* and butter. While men and boys are responsible for taking care of the cows, women and girls process the dairy products. The main income source for winter is the money gained from selling the collected walnuts, apples and cherries at local markets in autumn. The average yield per hectare of forest plot was stated to be around 1/3 of a ton, which amounts to around 50,000 KGS (800 Euro). The only marketing strategy identified in this research was the conventional strategy of selling them on the nearest markets (one to three hours in distance depending on transport possibility). Additionally, people grow agricultural products, mainly potatoes or corn, either for their own subsistence or for the feeding of their cattle whereby crop rotation practices and fertilizer are used for some products by some households. Hay cut during the summer months (June, July) serves as fodder for the cattle in the winter months. One household stated that they collect herbs like chamomile or pharmaceutical products such as rose-hip. Another household recently established a small shop for vernacular supplies within the semi-permanent settlement. It was stated that the shop had only recently been opened and that the income gained from it could not yet be foreseen. Overall, in each economic strategy the whole household is involved and the income is distributed within the household due to solid family structures. In some households, members gain additional income through working abroad and sending remittances. An interesting finding was that some *leskhoz* officials themselves rent a plot within the reserve-boundaries: two of the 15 households interviewed for this study were headed by a member of the local *leskhoz*.

In almost each economic activity it could be observed that there are different social organizational structures in order to fulfil the activities more effectively: As each household owns at least one cow the inhabitants are organized in a way that each household sends one or two men in a rotation system to take care for all the cows of the

settlement on the nearby pastures. The hay-making process is also a shared community and family work: All men cut, transport and store the hay in small groups while women prepare and cater food and drinks throughout the day. During the collection of the walnuts in autumn the work is also shared between household members. Furthermore, the inhabitants share the available water from the mountain river through a flexible water irrigation system. To build this system, which is basically a digged channel system in the floor and can be led to each field, either a person is paid by each household at the beginning of the season or it is conducted in community work. These organisational structures show that the inhabitants of Dashman have developed strong social structures in order to gain more economic benefits from the natural resources and reduce the work load to each household. They also take precautions to spare the forest from the pressure of grazing cattle by making sure that the transport of cows to pastures is organized and manageable.

The social economy of Dashman is mainly influenced by family structure and a strong supportive neighbourhood. In conclusion, the households in the settlement and the inhabitants from the surrounding villages shape the forest environment for their economic needs and influence huge parts of the reserve district through their socio-economic behaviour, namely through meadow cutting as well as collection of firewood, herbs, fruits and nuts. In the domain of social economy it could be observed that the natural landscape of the forest has become a cultural landscape over time. Today, socio-economic challenges such as poverty make local inhabitants highly dependent on forest resources (Jalilova & Vacik 2012: 210, Schmidt 2005b: 30-31). Also the missing infrastructure forces people to use forest materials such as firewood. Local inhabitants are mostly aware that firewood collection can lead to biodiversity loss (Jalilova & Vacik 2012: 211), but without other ways to generate the energy needed for their daily lives they are left without alternatives.

### ***Institutional regulations***

This part focuses on how institutional regulations shape the cultural landscape of the walnut forest, examining the decision-making processes in the village of Dashman as well as the influence of external actors. The aspects studied here include: How is Dashman organized on an institutional level? What kinds of local networks are there? What role do local forestry officials play? How do they influence the decision-making processes? How does the institutional landscape shape the discourse surrounding the usage/protection of the wild fruit and walnut forests in Dashman and especially the semi-permanent settlement?

Protection concepts have a long history in Central Asia. In 1917, Kyrgyzstan became part of the Soviet Union, which lay a strong focus on nature protection through a well-linked network of protected landscapes of varied classifications (Dörre & Schmidt 2008: 215-216; Schmidt & Dörre 2011: 291-292). After independence in 1991, the Kyrgyz Republic took over most of the Soviet concepts of nature conservation and anchored them within national laws, while at the same time trying to achieve compatibility with international standards. However, the sudden lack of financial and human resources after the end of subsidies from the USSR, the strength of the Kyrgyz government to implement and maintain these protection concepts soon started to fade. The forests are still fully owned

by the Kyrgyz government today and are managed by seven *oblasti*. On the local level, 40 *leskhoz*y are accountable for the forest management and the land distribution (Jalilova et al. 2012: 33).

The decision-making process of the legal institutions in the semi-permanent settlement of Dashman can be regarded as a strict top-down approach in which almost every main decision is regulated by the Dashman forest office of the *leskhoz* in Gumkhana as well as other state institutions like the state agency for environment and forest protection. There is, however, a lacking influence of these institutions in the reality of the forest usage. Most forest protection measures are never implemented, as the control over the territory seems impossible, given the extremely low capacity of the local forestry authorities with regards to human, infrastructural and financial resources (Schmidt 2005b: 35; verified by own observations 2013).

One problem identified in this section is that almost all parts of the forest seem to be rented out by the local *leskhoz* for nut gathering (statement by *leskhoz* officials). As tenants have to pay back part of their harvest for rent, the pressure on the forests is high due to the extensive usage. The nuts that tenants pay as a form of rent for forest plots are managed by the local *leskhoz*. Some officials stated that the biggest part of it is sold (currently to export markets in China and Russia), but some it is also used for the breeding of seed plants for the rejuvenation of the forest.

With regards to rules and regulations a definite top-down institutional structure could be observed. Local actors seem to have no participatory possibilities. New laws are decided on a national and regional level, forest users merely have the possibility to take part in meeting where they are informed about new regulations. It was stated by actors working for the state agency for environment and forest protection and for the Dashman office that laws were not given out in printed form to local inhabitants. This means that they have no possibility to get full disclosure about the details of the regulations, which is surprising.

Even more puzzling was the statement of an official in the Jalalabad-based state agency for environment and forest protection, who claimed that there was no state forest office in Gumkhana, which was odd since we talked to many officials who worked there. In light of these findings, the institution regulations were almost impossible to entangle. Assuming that local forest users are in the same situation, not knowing what to believe or where to find reliable information, it must be assumed that state-institutional regulations have a limited impact when it comes to conservational efforts. The regulations seem to work well with regards to economic enterprises, but were not found to be present in every-day conservation realities. Local people confirmed this when stating that they did not feel like the government was trying to implement any new measures.

This is in congruence with findings from other studies. A study concluded that in the region of Arslanbob, which is a neighbouring town where many of Dashman's inhabitants live during the winter, 76 % of the people questioned (n = 142) were not aware at all of any conservation efforts being carried out in their region (Jalilova & Vacik 2012: 210). In addition to this hardship, there are no NGOs working in the semi-permanent settlement of



Dashman directly. The official institutional landscape is thus concluded to be of very limited character.

### ***Local conservation discourse***

In regard to the third dimension of local conservation discourse, the main focus lay on what kinds of understanding the different stakeholders have, both of the issue of conservation of the forest and of the issue of a perceived level of threat and degradation to the forest. Questions posed in this part of the study include: Who aims to turn the forest into a natural reserve area? Who would gain and who would be disadvantaged if the forest is turned in to a reserve? What kinds of arguments are being presented?

The rationales or ‘micrologics’ of farmers and other resource users are a useful perspective for understanding the current usage of forest resources, as these actors are at the very base of what is happening on the ground (Zimmerer 2006b: 326). They are also often the ones most able to identify small changes in the environment (Zimmerer 1994: 118). A study carried out in the area of the walnut forests showed that local people, regardless of their level of education were very knowledgeable about the causes for environmental degradation, such as biodiversity loss (Jalilova & Vacik 2012: 210). They were found to be able to find appropriate management strategies to overcome these problems (Jalilova & Vacik 2012: 204).

The different stakeholders have a variety of understandings of what the establishment of a reserve would entail and how it should be implemented. While the official of the state agency for environment and forest protection in Jalalabad mentioned that the state government in Bishkek recently passed a law denominating parts of the forest area even as a national park (to which access would be restricted completely), most of the inhabitants of the Dashman semi-permanent settlement envision a very different kind of forest sanctuary, which would still allow the usage of forest resources.

A study concluded that 95 % of local inhabitants of the walnut forest classify the forest resources as being “[...] important for their livelihood, regardless of the accessibility of resources and the ongoing activities in the forest.” (Jalilova & Vacik 2012: 207) They form an important part of their livelihood strategies (Schmidt 2005: p. 36) and are thus the most crucial factor when discussing local conservational discourses and perceptions.

### **Research Results: Inclusive management through local forest users:**

#### **Conservation with development**

In conclusion, while biodiversity and genetic resource conservation concepts are still a priority for the international community and the Kyrgyz government, the importance of forest resource utilization for the local and regional populations and economies remains. So far, the conflict between resource conservation and income generation could not be reduced. Possibilities for alternative strategies include the support of alternative livelihood and income strategies such as for example bee-keeping for honey extraction or tourism. Also advisory services for the diversification of forest usage could be possible. A high availability of herbs like chamomile, lemon balm, peppermint, oregano and sage could be observed (own observation July 2013). What was interesting was that these herbs

mainly grew in areas that were not being used for hay-making; therefore it would seem possible to collect them without interfering with already established practices.

Examples from other mountainous areas show that a sustainable extraction of wild herbs is possible (example: contract-collection of wild *Arnica Montana* for the German company Weleda see Meyer & Straub 2011: 55). International standards and certifications for wild herb collection have been developed (BfN et. al. 2007, Leamann 2006) and could be applied here. The most prominent finding of the here presented study is that a good, context-specific compromise has to be found, eliminating the dichotomy of conservation vs. usage. Cultural landscapes should not be seen as something negative but as a way to maintain the forest through the management by the local people. Problems like the missing rejuvenation can be solved through improving the already existing management instead of prohibiting the use of resources altogether. For example, young walnut trees look very similar to plants used for animal fodder or hay and are easily cut down by accident during hay making. A better protection of saplings (e.g. by fencing) through local management could offer solutions.

If practical solutions can be found then the forest can be conserved while and the local people can still use the forest resources for their daily needs at the same time. It is time to embrace a new concept for this area, where conservation is achieved through the sustainable usage and management of resources, rather than being seen as two opposed concepts. Forests play an increasingly important role for the subsistence livelihoods especially of poor people, who highly depend on them for their daily needs and survival strategies (TWB 2002a: 2). Forbidding them from using their local resources in order to serve some global conservational goal cannot be the solution. These people, more than anyone, have an interest in sustaining their live-supporting forest resources. They need to be given a chance to have the capability to use and protect their resources in a sustainable manner. Today there is an increasing effort to see the conservation of nature and human development as two aspects of the same medal; as two strategies that must be looked after in unison and planned together. This is a desirable development and again shows that our views on our environment are changing. What can be observed is a shift from a pure biodiversity-centred view to a more sustainability (of usage) focused approach, in which it is intended to integrate agriculture and resource utilization with conservational goals (Zimmerer 2006c: 65). The increasing adaptation of the “conservation-with-development” (Zimmerer 1994: 118) perspective highlights the above mentioned need for the inclusion of new, process-based theoretical approaches. Only in a perception where the nature-culture divide is broken up through the application of entanglement- and process-based approaches there can be a possibility in finding solutions that help manifest the two very distinct goals of environmental conservation and human development.

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## **From Communism to Capitalism: The Transition to a Market Economy and the Effects on the Agricultural Land Use System in Karacha, Bazar Korgon Rayon**

### **Transformation of the agricultural sector in Kyrgyzstan**

With the collapse of the Soviet Union (SU) in 1991, the young Republic of Kyrgyzstan was faced - more than the neighbouring countries Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan - with serious problems influencing all aspects of life. Kyrgyzstan used to be one of the poorest republics of the SU that was and still is heavily dependent on its agricultural sector accounting for half of the country's export and one-third of its GDP. Furthermore, 60 % of the population lives in rural areas and approximately 50 % of the active domestic labour force is employed in the agricultural sector. With the collapse of communism and the command economy Kyrgyzstan underwent the 'shock therapy' of a major restructuring programme financed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that introduced free markets, liberalization, privatization and structural adjustment (Bloch & Rasmussen 1998: 111).

The impacts of liberalising the economy were far-reaching. Within the first four years after the breakdown of the Soviet system, that integrated all republics into a uniform economic area, which was characterised by a high and close concentration level, Kyrgyzstan's GDP dropped by 50 %. The economy of each republic was geared towards large-scale production of few specialized goods which provided the whole area of the SU (Rufer & Wälty 2001: 658; Trouchine & Zitzmann 2005: 10).

The narrative justifying these neoliberal reforms alleges to improve agricultural production and performance by facilitating the rational use of rural labour and the efficient use of productive inputs. A more efficient agriculture is said to improve farm incomes, reduce costs and thus modernize society on the long term. Furthermore an advanced agricultural sector can contribute to a country's foreign trade and its integration into world markets (Wegren 1998: xiii). In Kyrgyzstan the shock treatment was conducted with immediate price liberalization and the abolition of the established administration structures (Trouchine & Zitzmann 2005: 9-15). Farm reorganization, land reform, rural institutional changes and especially the transition from state-owned and collective farms to private and individual farming systems are the most obvious changes (Akramov & Omuraliev 2009: 1-3).

This article aims to analyse the changes on the local (i.e. village) level caused by the transition of the economic system. The research focused on socioeconomic structures, irrigation management, privatisation, marketing, land ownership and utilization.

### **Area of research and methods**

The privatisation in all important sectors and the impacts of the transformation still influence the agricultural structures and the livelihood of the population. The agriculture gained even more importance as economic sector since the collapse of the industrial sector. More than 50 % of the population is working in the agricultural sector (Trouchine & Zitzmann 2005: 29). Most difficulties in agriculture due to the transformation can be

located in the southern part of the country. Here living standards diminished and the population had to find new ways to make a living. High unemployment rate, a grave informal economy and a rapidly growing population represent the local situation (Ronsijn 2006: 2, Trouchine & Zitzmann 2005: 5). Since the transformation, the farming households have the option to generate their income by different means.

Research was conducted in July 2013 in the settlement of Karacha. It is a small village in the *rayon* Bazar Korgon in the Jalal-Abad *Oblast'* and has a population of 2,537 people in 572 households (Muzahmad Syrgataeva, *ayil kenesh*<sup>1</sup>). The paper will expose the current situation of local farming and land use systems, the cultivation of plants as well as the sales activity of agricultural goods in Karacha. Thereby, the article will provide a detailed overview of the distribution of land and its usage by quantitative and qualitative data.

At the beginning we identified three main aspects to be investigated: land ownership, land utilization and marketing and income generation. Therefore, we conducted a 49 household survey with a standardized questionnaire and 15 interviews. According to the aspect 'land ownership' we determined the respective field size and the addressed the question of ownership for each interviewed person. During research many different terms were used to describe land ownership. For a better understanding, we used only the two categories 'owned' and 'rented'. Owned describes 99-year-use-agreements, while rent describes short term use rights (e.g. for 5 years). In view of the past and the distinct structures of the SU the influence to the present local situation should be turned out.

The aspect of 'land utilization' focused on cultivation, the main crops and the use and management of the local irrigation system. In addition household structures and compositions were assessed to analyse the domestic division of labour in agriculture. A related focus on animal husbandry aimed to analyse the connections of subsistence agriculture and livestock keeping. This aspect is directly linked to the third component 'marketing and income generation'. To map marketing strategies we recorded the selling activities of agricultural products. Furthermore, we asked about the main and the secondary cash income of the household. With view to this question people were asked whether they earn their income through regular paid jobs or if they derive the income by selling their agricultural products or livestock. To point out a trend of the last years we also asked about a comparison of the current situation to the last few years regarding the yield, prices, financial situation and outlook in the future.

Moreover, we had fifteen expert interviews. Local and community members like the head and the deputy of Karacha, the head of local administration of Beshik Zhon, but also farmers introduced us to the research area and explained the current and past situation and moreover the local structures of the village.

## Land ownership

During the Soviet era all land was state-owned and the agricultural sector was characterized by large-scale farms of thousands of hectares with hundreds of farm-workers. After the breakdown of the SU the structure of the agrarian system changed

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<sup>1</sup> Representative body of local self government



tremendously. Under Soviet rule 450-470 state and collective farms like *sovkhozy* and *kolkhozy*, with an average size of 2,300-3,000 ha, accounted for 96 % of the total land area. In Kyrgyzstan, about 99 % of the arable land and almost all agricultural output in the former Soviet Republic were under state control. These farms were replaced by private-run small-scale farms managed by individuals, families, groups of families and corporate farm enterprises. The 'aim' of the post-Soviet transformation was the liberalization of agricultural markets and prices (Akramov & Omuraliev 2009: 1). According to this, the keywords were land reform and privatization (Bloch et al. 1998: 111, Rufer & Wälty 2001: 661).

The formal process of privatization began on February 15<sup>th</sup> 1991 with the 'Law on Peasant Farms', which authorized local councils of people's deputies to reallocate land and give it to the people who wanted to take advantage of the opportunity. The first effort led to a growing number of peasant farmers: starting with eight in late 1990 the number rose up to 2,000 by the end of 1991. In the same year, another decree was issued. This aimed to establish a fund, named 'Special Land Fund', in which unutilized or under-utilized land in every district was collected. This land, often valuable irrigated land, was accessible for experienced would-be farmers (Bloch et al. 1998: 113-118). In the end of 1994 and the beginning of 1995 the regulation 'On Measures on Promoting Land and Agrarian Reforms in the Kyrgyz Republic' aimed at a replacement of the remaining collective farms and further promotion of land reforms: everyone who used to work or live in the *kolkhoz* could apply for a free of charge share of the land (pastures were excluded) (Oroshbekovna 2006: 63, Kirsch 1997: 4). This land composed 75 % of the total area of the *kolkhozy*. Non-collective-farm workers could get land from the 'Special Land Fund', which received the remaining 25 %. Boosted by these acts, the number of small-scale farmer increased to 16,400 in 1994 and more than 38,000 in 1996 (Bloch et al. 1998: 126).

Local committees assigned how much each family member could receive, in accordance with the total land available for distribution. This resulted in fewer land per capita in the more densely populated south of the country than in the north. Dekker (2003: 125) describes the typical distribution: 1.5 ha for the head of the family, 1 ha for the spouse, and 0.75 ha for each child in the family. In the densely populated *oblast'* Osh every member - without any distinction between men and women or grown-up and child - of the almost 200,000 applicable families received 0.249 ha (Kirsch 1997: 7). Comparable to Osh, in Karacha every family member of a would-be peasant farmer received the same share of 10 *sotik*<sup>2</sup> or 0.1 ha (Burkanov, head of local administration). At this time, 1,800 people were living in Karacha and 600 ha of agricultural land were available. This matches with our surveys well: based on these (n=49), an average household in Karacha consists of six persons and owns 1.04 ha. Officially, there are no landless persons - and in fact we did not encounter one. The biggest farmer has a total of 7.0 ha (2 ha owned, 5 ha rented), the smallest farmer 0.2 ha (all owned).

The land transferring process in Karacha cannot be termed a smooth transition. The deputy of Karacha reported that collective farming was continued until 1994 when non-violent

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<sup>2</sup> 1 *sotik* = 0.01 ha

conflict among the farmers in the former *kolkhoz*, named '22<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Party', occurred about products and farming systems. As a result, and supported by the decrees mentioned above, the collective was dissolved in 1995 and the land was transferred to single peasant farmer households. This issue is a reason why until today the re-establishment of cooperatives is rejected (for further details see 'land utilization').

In the context of privatisation, private ownership and land rights it is critical to consider that the term ownership is not used clearly. In our field study some participants of our survey indicated that the land possessed by the state is their own. Other informants stated it is a long term lease for 49 years. This issue reflects two problems. Firstly, there is uncertainty about the legal status of land - not only among locals but also among scholars this question is discussed. Article 4 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, tends to allow private ownership of land (and not only rights to use them), but in the end it remains state property (Dekker 2003: 120, Kyrgyz Republic 1998):

1. Property in the Kyrgyz Republic may belong to the state or may be private. The Kyrgyz Republic guarantees the diversity of form of ownership and their equal legal protection.
2. In the Kyrgyz Republic the land, its underground resources, water, air space, forests, flora and fauna, and all natural wealth is the property of the State.
3. Under the circumstances and within the limits established by law of the Kyrgyz Republic, the use of land parcels may be transferred to individual citizens and their associates. The purchase and sale of land is not permitted.
4. The Kyrgyz Republic shall protect the rights of ownership of its citizens and juridical persons to property, and also their property and ownership located within territories of governments.

In November 1998 an amendment of article 4 came into power, which is another indicator for strengthening private ownership:

1. In the Kyrgyz Republic, state, communal, private, and other forms of property shall be recognised and protected. The Kyrgyz Republic guarantees diversity of forms of property and their equal legal protection.
2. The land, its underlying resources, air space, forests, flora and fauna, and other natural resources in the Kyrgyz Republic shall be used as the basis of life and activity of people of Kyrgyzstan and shall have special protection of the state.
3. The land may be in state, communal, private, or other type of property. Limits to and procedure for execution of rights by land owners and guarantees of their protection shall be set forth in law.

Nevertheless, the law tolerates and respects different forms of property. It is however not tolerated by the state to leave privately-owned fields uncultivated for a long time period or not put to proper use. Otherwise the owner can be dispossessed by the authorities. Further limitations for selling land property and utilization exist; it is not possible to sell farmland to foreigners (non-Kyrgyz citizen) or build houses on arable farm land. To that effect it is questionable whether it is valid to speak about ownership. Secondly, we

observed an ignorance of law. When we interviewed common farmers or officials what will happen when the 49-year-tenures expire, nobody could state details. In fact, the families currently leasing the land have priority when it comes to a renewal. Also many, even the deputy of the village as a part of the enforcement of land transfer, did not seem to be aware, that the granted 49-year lease was extended to 99 years in the 1995 Presidential Decree (Bloch et al. 1998: 116-119, Dekker 2003: 123-126, Kirsch 1997: 4). This ignorance respective lack of information may result from a plurality of regulations like 'Property Law', 'Law on Land', 'Lease Law', 'Cooperation Law' and many others. In total more than 100 resolutions became effective over the last 20 years (Dekker 2003: 122, Oroshbekovna 2006: 65).

Due to the missing water supply for the non-irrigated land, those fields cannot be cultivated and this is the reason why no more people can move into the village. Moreover, a lot of habitants are forced to move to urban centres. This contradicts trends of increasing population and steady field sizes. Relating to the stable population-land-ratio it is to assume, that in Karacha no vital land market has developed yet. Additional land can be bought from other farmers or rented from the local authorities for up to five years (annual fee 3,500 to 6,000 KGS/ha, depending on soil quality). Regardless of the fact whether the land is owned or rented, everyone has a certificate for the utilized land. One respondent showed us the official document for his land. In form of a book it gives details about the owner and illustrates the field on a sketched map (1:10,000).

As mentioned above, local authorities play an important role in questions regarding the land rights. The deputy of Karacha is in charge of land allocation to interested persons. Due to the unavailability of land for 99-year tenure, the only possibility to extend land access is the rent of state-owned fields. At the moment of research, there no land register existed. According to the head of administration in Beshik Zhon, it was destroyed in the 2010 riots. But he assured that a new cataster is going to be generated in the near future.

The agricultural sector has changed extremely in the last years since the dissolution of the SU. The structural change, as a consequence of the transformation, has led on the one hand to an individualization of the agriculture, but on the other the mentioned drop in GDP (Rufer & Wälty 2001: 684). With the land reforms huge collective farms disappeared and small-scale farm were founded. These changes in ownership and structure also had impact on land utilization and marketing, which are described in the following sections.

### **Agricultural land utilization**

After Kyrgyzstan became independent in 1991, the agricultural production declined, reaching its lowest level in 1995, just half of the level in 1990 was produced. And until today, the yield in Karacha is estimated to be still 50-80 % lower than during Soviet times (Muzahmad Syrgataeva, deputy of Karacha's *aiyl okmoty*). Referring to our interview partners, the reasons are as follows:

1. Collapse of the soviet economic system: Without the integration in the SU, the demand for agricultural goods from the export market collapsed. At the same time, domestic demand and purchasing power is low.

2. Missing financial support: The respondents criticised missing (a broad) access to loans, to invest in seeds, fertilizers and pesticides.

3. Inputs: At time of research, seeds, fertilizers and pesticides were expensive and prices were expected to rise. As a strategy, seeds are exchanged and mixed between neighbouring settlements. Without pesticides, pest plants stretched across - especially along the small sub-channels.

4. Knowledge: With the dissolution of the large-scale farm, knowledge in form of persons or documents disappeared or was not accessible to the majority. During the Soviet times a special map showing the appropriate fertilizer for each type of soil and crop was marked. In the course of the post-socialist transition and the riots in 2010, these maps disappeared and the knowledge was lost. Former employees from all sectors, e.g. doctors, nurses, teachers or other, were affected by the government budget cuts and were forced to become unskilled farmers, because their jobs were discarded and they had to make their own decisions what and how to grow on their - compared with previous field sizes - small shares of land.

5. Agricultural machinery: Given that in Karacha only a small and obsolete number of tractors (around ten), harvesters etc. exist, people demand new machinery. About 90 % of the agricultural machinery is obsolete, which directly effects the crop yield. The government reacted to this drawback by acquiring new machinery in 2012. To a certain degree, machines were replaced by animals (horses, donkeys, cattle). Some farmers are service provider and offer their tractors for rent. As a result of the limited access to machinery, 50 % of the farmers work manually.<sup>3</sup>

Karacha is a good region for agriculture because of sufficient water supply, clay soils, climate and flat terrain. And so far, agriculture is - beside rent-seeking - the most important economic activity. According to information of the head of the village, Bolot Zhudomushov, the total area of the irrigated land is about 290 ha, mainly located in the west of Karacha between the village and the river. On the opposite side and in the south, there is mostly rangeland due to higher altitude (hilly area) and missing opportunities, e.g. a water pump, to irrigate. In total these are 267 ha which cannot be irrigated. This land is used as rangeland (Fig. 6.1).

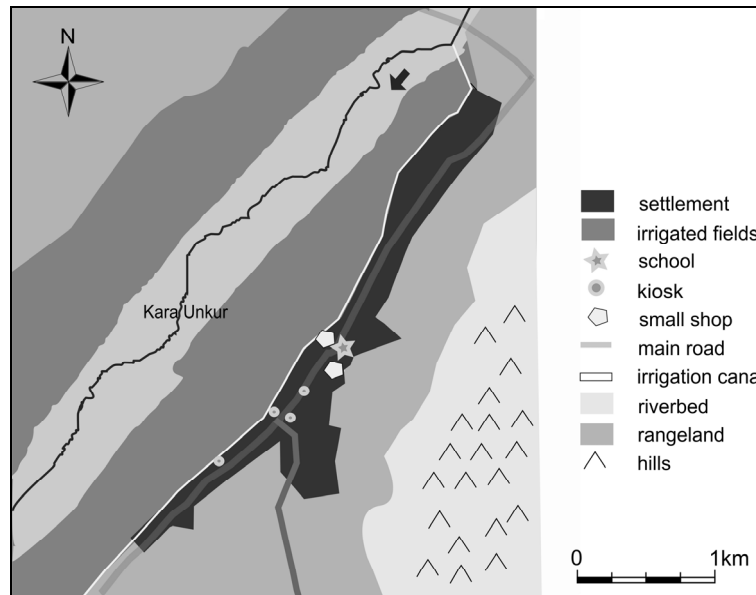
Following this distinction, they are separated in 'good/productive fields', which cost annually about 6,000 KGS<sup>4</sup>/ ha and 267 ha of 'bad/non-productive fields' for about 2,000-3,000 KGS/ha. As mentioned in the first section, every household has its own field(s). Depending on its decision either to produce for markets or for self consumption, differences in land utilization can be observed: market producers have a higher demand for land. This is also a result of our survey. Round about one-third (16 out of 49) of the farmers indicated the need of additional land. Nine out of these 16 were market-producers. And six out of the top ten land owners (owned and rented) are cash croppers.

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<sup>3</sup> Besides it should be mentioned that many fields are subdivided into little lots of land and therefore are too small for using a tractor for cultivation.

<sup>4</sup> 1,000 KGS = EUR 14.00

As a result, this group of farmers cultivated 1,39 ha on average compared to 0,8 ha utilized by subsistence farmers. But at the same time, there are commonalities. The products cultivated are largely the same: lucernes, corn, sunflowers, rice, vegetables, potatoes and onions.



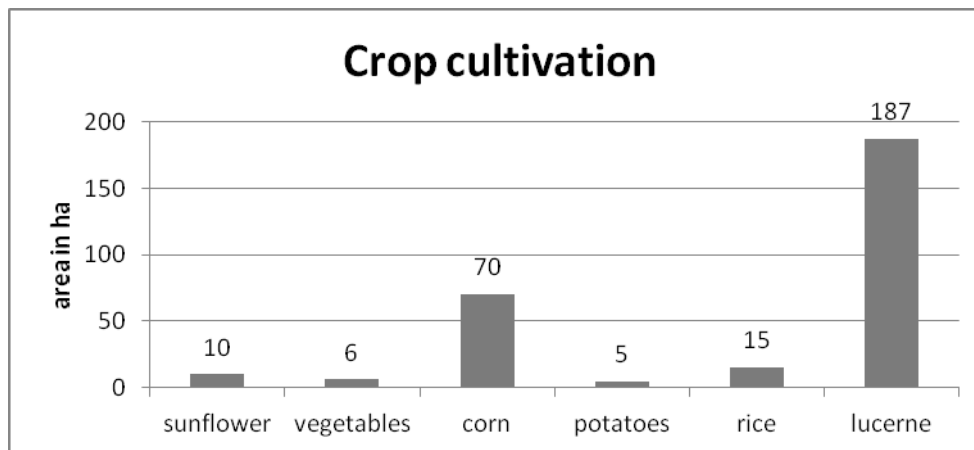
**Fig. 6.1: Map of Karacha**

Draft: Wagenhäuser & Türk 2014

The cultivation of fodder plants, like lucerne and corn, is predominant. This trend is underlined by various statements, that livestock, which is said to be a good investment, is becoming more and more important. The output of cultivated agricultural goods is low and supply from other regions is on the rise, which has an impact on prices for e.g. rice or vegetables. The fact that livestock will become more important means that agriculture will gain further importance, because fodder for the livestock will be needed. The predominant crop is lucernes, a grass which is used as fodder for animals, especially in winter times when rangeland is snow-covered and the livestock returned from the summer pastures (Fig. 6.2).

As a local speciality, it can be harvested five times a year due to the good conditions in Karacha (it is only four times in the neighbouring village of Akman). On the one hand it is used as fodder for the livestock, on the other hand to fertilize the soil. This is a common practice as chemical fertilizers are not affordable for the majority of the population - a fact that was identified by many interview partners as a main obstacle.

At the time of reserach, animal husbandry in large scales was almost nonexistent. Only one farmer was noticeable with a high count of 200 sheep. One-third of the 49 households had no sheep, another third a small number (around five to ten) and the last third had 10 to 30. Goats did not play a role at all. Ownership of one to two horses or donkeys (as means of transportation or instead of machinery) was indicated in a small number of households. The average number of cattle is three, with six farmers having eight to fifteen. Chicken are regarded as common livestock and were not covered in detail.



**Fig. 6.2: Crop cultivation in Karacha**

Draft: Wagenhäuser & Türk 2014

Today, the know-how about fertilization and especially efficient and productive cultivation is missing. Many of our interview partners stated the importance of starting an analysis of the special needs of the different soil types. Besides we noted contradicting statements about crop rotation, which was also generally used during the Soviet Union. Most of the people underlined the importance of this procedure. In contrast, most of them indicated not using crop rotation. They stated that the decision what to grow depends mostly on the price they expect and not on the sustainability of the chosen solution. Two men opposed this result and stated that everybody in the village used this method to improve the quality of the soils. Another problem is the soil degradation. Most of the soils are in bad conditions and the professional knowledge of the farmers is insufficient. All these mentioned facts lead to a decline in the agricultural production and its share in the GDP.

### Irrigation system

Agricultural farming in Karacha is only possible due to good water supply. Northwest of the village a river named *Kara Unkur* (historical name: *Tenktek*) is subdivided in two channels. One of the channels flows through Karacha and provides the whole Bazar Korgon District with water. The other channel supplies the region Nooken on the orographic right side. The concreted channel (approximately 5 m broad and 2 m deep) was built in 1957/58 and divides the village in two parts: on the left hand side the residential area and on the other side the cultivated fields (Fig. 6.1). The channel supplies the fields with water. Therefore little branches, which are not cemented, run through the fields. These channels can be enlarged or reduced manually. A farmer does not have to arrange the terms of changes with its neighbour. In autumn there is less water in the channel. Depending on the water level in the channel the water will be directed in the little channels. A special administrator of the water commission checks the water-level every two hours. The government of Jalal-Abad is responsible for the condition of the channel (Abdilla Madumarov, authorised representative of water affairs).

The high dependency of Karacha on the canal was illustrated by our survey: Everyone of the people we asked indicated that they use the channel to irrigate their fields. As a lot of our interview partners confirmed, there are no problems with irrigation in general and

neither in the downstream communities (e.g. water quantity and quality). Our impression was that there is enough water streaming towards the other villages. No statements can be made about the water quality.

Nevertheless water is a common good and not rare, the consumption has to be paid. The amount depends on the kind of plants per field: for water-intensive plants (e.g. onions or rice) a family has to pay 1,000 KGS/ha a year (max. 3,000 KGS, there is no limit for the water use). Less water-intensive plants cost 400 KGS/ha/year minimum. According to a statement of the head of local administration, further expansion of Karacha is limited. For drinking water people have to pay 250 KGS/household/year per household per year. Special water taps are situated on the streets, which are open two hours a day and the population has to bring home their water with the help of canisters.

### **Building of cooperatives**

After the abolition of the SU the first cooperation in Karacha was founded in 1994. Just one year ago it was dissolved due to discrepancies amongst the members concerning different ideas of cultivation practices. In the past there were also different attempts to work in cooperatives. They failed due to the missing participation and the distrust of the local population. Another reason is the negative experience in the past during the SU. Kirsch (1997: 15) concludes from his research in Naryn *Oblast'* that people are tired of working in cooperatives because they associate the old commanding structure and top-down processes with the concept of a cooperative. It is not understood as a democratic, member orientated operation.

Indeed, asked for building new cooperatives, many farmers answered “these times are over”, “that was the past, now we have capitalism”. These statements may indicate a link between communism and cooperatives, which still bears a bad connotation.

Moreover, the population is faced with the challenge of managing their own field work, entrepreneurial self-employment and selling activities. This kind of earning a living is still new in Kyrgyzstan. An incitation for building cooperations could be to advance (oneself) and be successful with ones own work (Rufer & Wälty 2001: 684).

The head of Karacha is a proponent of cooperatives. In his opinion people should merge their small or medium-sized fields, act as one group and form common concepts to realize economies of scale. That way purchase of fertilizers, harvesting and marketing of agricultural goods could be arranged better. Another factor is a new law, which promotes the building of new cooperatives in the near future. The law is supported by foreign organisations e.g. GIZ and Raiffeisen. Together with the government three million KGS will be invested. One cooperative is planned in each village. A certain number of farmers has to participate in the collective. But, when the law was introduced to the local people the feedback was sparse. Referring to an official of the administration in Beshik Zhon, Karacha will fail the requirements and no cooperative will be founded in the near future.

### **Marketing and income generation**

The Soviet agriculture was extremely subsidized and an estimated 20 % of the national budget was spent on financing low prices for bread, meat, milk etc.. The abolition of the

subventions and the supply and marketing system of the state represent the most important reasons for the collapse of the highly specialised export orientated agricultural production during the process of transformation (Trouchine & Zitzmann 2005: 4). Nowadays, the former markets are out of reach for two reasons. First, neighbouring Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have competitive advantages (location, terms of cropping, etc.) in the production of cash crops e.g. cotton, tobacco and wheat. Second, in contrast to Kazakhstan or Belarus, Kyrgyzstan is not a part of a customs union with Russia as most attractive export market.

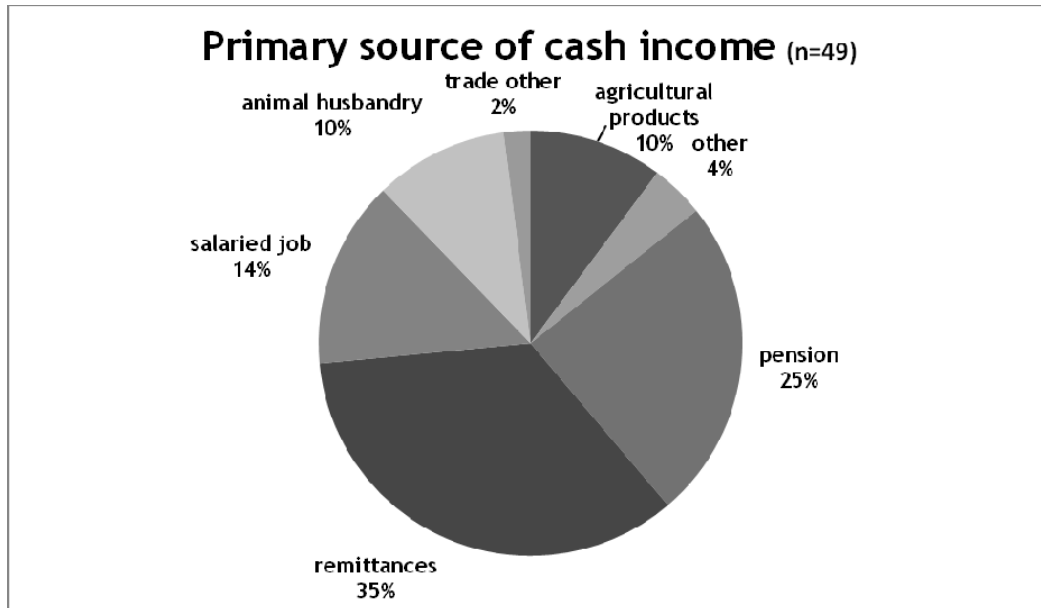
Given the fact that about 50 % of the employees worked (and still work) in the primary sector, one demanding household equals one producing household. Thus domestic demand is limited on a low level a local market-orientation seems difficult (Rufer & Wälty 2001: 664). Agriculture is the main income, but it is not enough to make a living. Therefore, people have to generate extra income sources. Due to the fact that jobs are missing, the consequence is that 60 % of the population lives below the national poverty line (Ronsijn 2006: 9).

Due to a lack of salaried jobs and other job opportunities, subsistence agriculture, labour migration and remittances seem to be promising options to make a living. This is also underlined by our surveys. More than half (59 %) of the respondents answered, they primarily produce for their subsistence, but in case of spillovers they (try to) sell them. Around 41 % of the households are primarily producing for markets. In various interviews we figured out, that the decision where to sell goods depends mostly on prices. Although the bazaar in Bazar Korgon is only a 15 minutes drive away, many farmers prefer to go to Jalal-Abad (30 minutes) or Osh (90 minutes) because prices in the urban centres tend to be higher. To save some extra money, the goods are often sold out of the trunk parking next to the bazaar, so no fees have to be paid for using the bazaar infrastructure.

Another form of direct-marketing without any middlemen was observed: In Karacha there are at least five family-run selling points for goods. Three kiosks (around 4 m<sup>2</sup>) sell beverages, sweets and cell-phone balance while two bigger shops (20 m<sup>2</sup>) selling additional local products like rice, potatoes or water melons. The prices for these kinds of products are 10-20 % higher than on the bazaar. This seems to be a relatively profitable source of income. We were told that within six months earnings can be around 35,000 KGS. Compared to the salary of a teacher, working in the local school of Karacha, this is two times higher. Many customers are children attending the school right next to or opposite the shops (Fig. 6.1). Speaking about the main sources of cash income for the different households in Karacha, remittances from family members in (temporary) migration and also pensions were mostly mentioned (Fig. 6.3).

35 % of the interviewed household-representatives called remittances as the biggest contributor for cash incomes. 34 out 49 households have at least one person who is working abroad. Russia was most frequently stated as destination of the family members. The second biggest cash incomes were pensions (24 % of the households). According to information from the head of the local administration of Beshik Zhon, about 1,100 people receive pension.



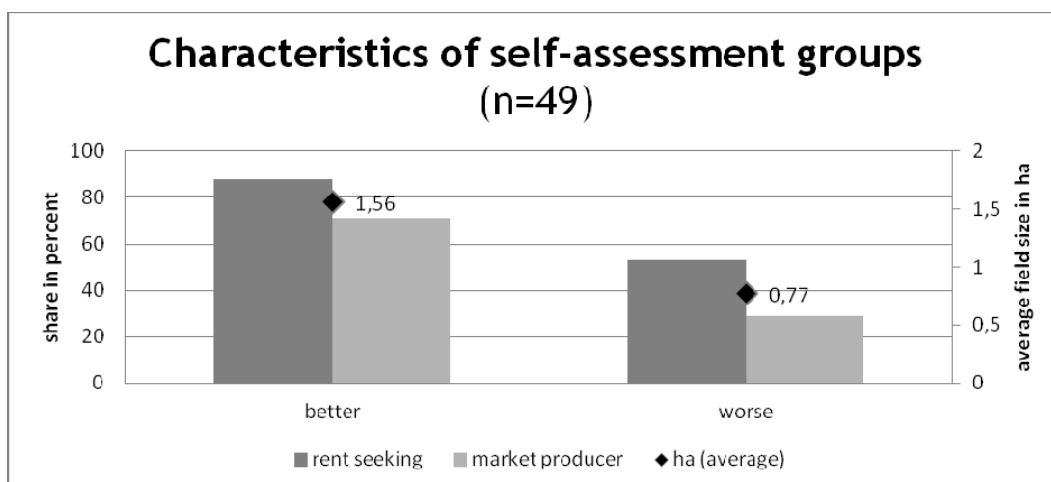


**Fig. 6.3: Primary source of cash income in Karacha**

Draft: Wagenhäuser & Türk 2014

With 10 % each, sales of agricultural goods, e.g. lucernes, corn and animal husbandry are marginal. These sectors especially gain importance as a secondary source of cash incomes: With 20 % the sale of agricultural products is the biggest contributor, followed by remittances (18 %), pensions (16 %), animal husbandry (12 %), salaried job (8 %) and other (10 %). 14 % of the households had no second cash income. These data underline the minor relevance of cash crops, animal husbandry and market production. Furthermore, only 24 % of the market producers indicated their revenues from these activities as main source of cash income. Including the secondary source, the share rises to 66 %.

To get an impression of the self-assessment of the local population we asked for the financial situation compared with other households. 17 households assessed their situation better than the 32 others (Fig. 6.4).



**Fig. 6.4: Households in Karacha: self-assessment of their financial situation**

Draft: Wagenhäuser & Türk 2014

The characteristics of these households were a higher average size of fields (1.56 ha) and a higher share of rent-seekers (pension and remittances) (88 %). More than half (53 %) of these 17 households were market producers. Ten households estimated their financial situation worse than others. For this group the share of market producers is only 29 %, the average size of fields in 0.77 ha and the rent-seekers are accounting for 71 %.

Asked for their personal outlook in the future 33 of 49 households estimated it as 'good'. Six of these 33 interview partners stated, that the yield of the agricultural products in 2013 is better compared to previous years. A reason which was frequently mentioned in this regard was the fall of rain, which was missing last year. This is directly associated with the better financial situation. At the same time, it reveals the dependency on environmental influences and the vulnerability of the local population.

## **Conclusion**

The existing agricultural sector evolved from the command system to a market-oriented production and self-employment. In transition economies the individualization of agriculture theoretically can lead to an increase of subsistence farming, which is often associated with a low productivity rate and a high number of employees in the agricultural sector (Akramov & Omuraliev 2009: 1). Karacha is no exception. Subsistence farming is one of the most important factors in rural Kyrgyzstan. But, this is not a decision by choice. The lack of other employment opportunities forces people to be subsistence farmers.

Practicing agriculture and farming is often only possible with the financial input of the remittances. Thereby, fertilizer can be bought and as required a tractor can be rented. Without working household members abroad, the situation would be even worse. Relying on pensions also does not represent a sustainable source of cash income. Given the fact that Karacha is faced with emigration and movement of the local population to other regions of the country due to missing agricultural land for cultivation, this can strengthen the effect. Sufficient land is arable and thus there is a big potential for expansion. Water is also available in great quantities. But, the adequate needed machinery and techniques are missing. By founding a cooperative it might be conceivable to achieve improvements regarding the missing water pumps. Another opportunity which is already in the making is the implementation of cooperatives with the help of foreign investors and organisations. This could be performed with the recent law on building new cooperatives. Also for the improvement of agricultural land and soil the significance of building cooperatives to share the knowledge and to promote crop rotation is noted by various interview partners. For this and other purposes, two or three meetings are held during non-labour-intensive winter times in Karacha. Productivity gain, improved agricultural and technical know-how and development of marketing strategies to increase the turnovers and opening up of new markets in other regions could be a part and parcel of working in cooperatives. Hitherto it remains unsettled if the local population is willing to build them up by own choice.

Generally there is a need for establishing a set of rules e.g. for managing land ownership, since it is still unsettled what is going to happen with the land of the inhabitants of Karacha when the term of expiration is over. For the future, it will be essential to create new jobs in different sectors, e.g. trade or industry. In view of the fact that the

unemployment rate is about 40 % it might be a key factor to prevent emigration. One opportunity is the gravel quarry right next to the village, which was already sold to foreign investors. The expansion of production will create 15 full-time jobs. In the case of Karacha, maybe the gravel quarry will kick off modernisation and development. With the estimated new jobs, these households are more likely to modify their income generation and to convert from subsistence farming to other employment opportunities. This might also lead to economic growth in other branches, creating more demand and hence salaried-non agricultural jobs.

Given the fact that there is a low domestic demand for agricultural products because almost every household produces for its own needs, it is hard to establish a business for market producers. As long as cash money incomes from migrants or pensions provide the families and the yields are sufficient to fulfil basic needs, the pressure to verify the income generation and improve productivity is low.

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## **About Livestock Trade and Middlemen: Understanding Socio-Economic Practices of the Livestock Market in Bazar Korgon**

### **The relevance of institutions in livestock trade**

Market institutions are essential for the exchange of livestock products, but the fiction of perfect markets is rarely met in reality (Upton 2004: 34). Real-life markets are embedded in social structures, which cannot be explained by the market model celebrated by neoclassical economists. In reality, individual and collective actors are embedded in structures of social relations that influence their decisions and actions (Bathelt & Glückler 2012: 4).

After the institutional shift in the social sciences, economic geographers took up societal developments from the early 1990s onwards as a key element for the study of location, distribution and spatial organization of economic activities.<sup>1</sup> To understand socio-economic patterns in development processes, for geographical development research arises the need to focus on analysis of the empirical functioning of markets and its institutional preconditions instead of a mathematical proof of simplifying postulates (Beckert 2009: 246, Furubotn & Richter 2010: 1-4). Considering the societal presumptions, it is increasingly recognized that economic behaviour is strongly influenced by institutions, which frame the structure of human interaction through formal and informal constraints.<sup>2</sup> Insofar, we argue that the core issue of investigating livestock trading is to explain its socio-economic order. The article integrates regional and local characteristics such as formal and informal institutions in the study of real markets. We examine how economic decisions are made that determine the course of action for livestock trade participants in rural Kyrgyzstan. Thus, the analysis focuses on the heterogeneous, partly antagonistic motives and interests at the micro level. It is assumed that social institutions influence the behaviour of actors and forge the success or failure of any market system in the sense of accepted patterns of interaction on the actor level (Bathelt & Glückler 2012: 1). Such coordination is the precondition to what we call the socio-economic order of markets.

Much analysis of institutions is based on the concepts and approaches of the New Institutional Economics (NIE). NIE is one of the recent approaches that tries to overcome the dualism of micro and macro-theory and has been increasingly adapted in recent years into development research.<sup>3</sup> A closer look through the literature reveals that institutions are often nebulously defined. According to the importance of institutional settings, the methodological approach concentrates on the analysis of the socio-economic arrangements for the livestock market logic in rural Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>1</sup> For further discussion about the adoption of institutional aspects in economic geography, see Cumbers et al. 2003, Martin 2005.

<sup>2</sup> For deeper discussion of the issues surrounding institutions in economic processes, see North 1990, Durth et al. 2002, Acemoglu & Robinson 2012. In this regard, Upton 2004 emphasizes institutional aspects in agricultural development.

<sup>3</sup> Furubotn & Richter 1991, Ahrens 2002, and the *Geographica Helvetica's* special issue 56 (1) present a good overview of institutionalist approaches in development research.

Insofar, the empirical study turns to a long-neglected object of development geography: the concrete market in which economic activities take place. It is argued that spatial aspects of real markets are particularly important to understand specific constraints and opportunities of market actors in developing countries and to derive subsequent context-oriented development measures.

Livestock markets in rural areas, where 64 % of the population in Kyrgyzstan live, have been recognized as a major issue in the context of economic development (International Fund for Agricultural Development 2012: 1). Due to small incomes and rising rates of unemployment in rural Kyrgyzstan, livestock trade is a major income source and the valuation of livestock has strong effects on livelihoods in rural Kyrgyzstan (Martinière 2012: 337). However, many scholars continue to focus on a macroeconomic perspective and analyse the livestock sector by using national and regional statistical data.<sup>4</sup> The wide absence of grounded data on institutional constraints for the functioning of livestock markets in Central Asia formed the motivation for our research project.

The weekly livestock market in Bazar Korgon presents itself as an unfolding social and economic process, and provides the venue where participants exchange their livestock for income generation. From an institutional perspective, the livestock market can be seen as a network of price mechanisms developed through a set of specific rules and practices that coordinate the interactions of demand and supply. The paper attempts to understand these interactions. In order to do so, the main institutional categories need to be defined and examined empirically. Thus, the factors that determine how economic abilities are distributed in the livestock market system are considered, particularly the ability of different actors to pursue their objectives or to stop other people from pursuing their own.

The paper provides first findings about the conditions, interconnected function and benefits among which the different actors contribute to the livestock market network in Bazar Korgon. The empirical material for analysis consists of personal observations on the performance of market functions and interviews that were conducted during fieldwork with different market actors.

The paper is organized as follows. In the second part of the paper, a brief definition of the key concepts and ideas of the conceptual approach are presented. After that, the paper turns to the empirical evidence in order to specify the real-life implications of the theoretical assumptions. Finally, the findings are summarised and discussed in light of questions regarding the applicability of an institutional perspective in applied development research.

## **Methodology and conceptual approach**

Institutions are the key theoretical element in the institutional approach. To understand the role of institutions in development geography a methodological approach was adopted that focuses on economic and social aspects in an equal measure. Ideas and concept of NIE provides the basis for the analysis of the nexus of interconnected functions, operations and transactions channelled through the livestock market. The focus on institutions is applied

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<sup>4</sup> For a macroeconomic perspective, see Light 2007, World Bank 2007 and Favre et al. 2010.

to develop a better understanding of socio-economic structures in livestock trade, although the academic debate on institutions in the development context is not new (Müller-Böker 2001: 2). However, the confusing use of the term institution needs some clarification as in economic geography institutions are often not explicitly defined (Bathelt & Glückler 2013: 2).

When conceptualizing the characters of institutions in economic geography, a starting point is to think about the subsequent constraints and incentives that impact economic interaction. Focusing on institutions, modern economic activities can be understood as a process of increasing specialization, in which individuals or groups concentrate on specific activities. This process requires accepted and enforceable regulations that ensure transactions for an adequate distribution of all necessary goods in a way that the specialized actors can perceive their individual scope of action. Therefore: “Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction” (North 1990: 3). The prominent institutional theorist Douglass North (1990) identifies formal institutions with enforced rules such as political rules, economic rules and contracts, while informal institutions are restricted to societal rules such as routines, customs, traditions and conventions that have the purpose to guide individual behaviour in a designated direction (ibid.: 83). Both perspectives tend to recognize institutions as structures that shape individual and collective action. When formal institutions no longer reflect reality, informal institutions emerge to manage changing conditions. Institutions are initially good when they generate economic benefit through the best possible coordination of individual activities. Furthermore, they have also to be judged in terms of the quality of their processes. Thus, they are good if they secure all actors fair share in the efficiency gains (Durth et al. 2002: 215). In terms of these characteristics, institutions are defined as “forms of ongoing and relatively stable patterns of social practice based on mutual expectations” (Bathelt & Glückler 2012: 7). The focus on institutional aspects makes it possible to release economic activities from the narrow context of production factor combinations and to zoom into the importance of social institutions and organizations for this process.

The question how the economic and social spheres act onto the institutional sphere remains often unanswered. However, relating to a concrete design of institutional regulations, there is no panacea. Rather, it is argued that institutional settings of livestock markets form in an evolutionary process on behalf of specific social, economic and physical conditions of the participants. In this regard, it is examined how existing institutions shape economic interaction in space and how this leads to economic decisions for present livestock trade in Bazar Korgon.

The empirical investigation was conducted in July 2013. Initially, two open interviews were conducted with one veterinarian and one of the market officials, in order to understand the past and current socioeconomic dynamics of the livestock market and frame appropriate categories for further data collection. Subsequently, the main survey was carried out, consisting of eleven structured interviews with traders, pastoralists, consumers, meat processors, and retail salespeople.

The methodological approach was made possible through the facilitation of a local research assistant. Without the socio-economic position of the assistant such as ethnicity, religion and gender, various contacts would not have been incurred.

### **Socio-economic characteristics of the livestock market**

This chapter exemplifies empirical findings and is divided into five subsections. The first section discusses the general structure of the livestock market, the *mal bazaar* (krg.). It is followed by a typology of market actors operating in Bazar Korgon. The third section presents an analysis of the market strategies of the identified actors. Subsequently, distinctive negotiation patterns as well as current livestock prices are illustrated. The elaboration of a schematic model of an institution and livestock market system is presented in the last part of the section.

#### ***Characteristics of the livestock market in Bazar Korgon***

Every Saturday and Sunday, an empty space on the brink of the settlement Bazar Korgon transforms into a bustling livestock bazaar. By 5.00 am, the bazaar area fills with the first traders who display their livestock across the ground. At 7.00 am, the market area is already filled with large numbers of people and animals who deal with livestock until the early afternoon when the bazaar gradually empties (Fig. 7.1).



**Fig. 7.1: Impressions from the livestock market in Bazar Korgon**

Photographs: Degenhardt 2014

The livestock market is like any other market an arena of social interaction. Market actors have partly similar and partly conflicting motives and interests. While all of the active participants are interested in the exchange of livestock, they have conflicting interests regarding the price and other contract specifications (Beckert 2009: 248). Most of the people in the district buy and sell livestock products at the livestock market in the settlement Bazar Korgon. Another livestock market is located in Arslanbob (approximately 50 km distance), but has only a slight significance for the marketing of livestock products in the Bazar Korgon District.

Insofar, the *mal bazaar* constitutes the most important livestock market in the Bazar Korgon District. Other major livestock markets in southwestern Kyrgyzstan are located in the provincial capital Jalal-Abad (approximately 30 km distance) as well as in the major



city Osh (approximately 130 km distance). The actors trade a whole range of livestock products at the weekly market. Fig. 7.2 shows the spatial segmentation of traded livestock at the *mal bazaar*.

Overall, the bazaar area consists of two immured divisions. The major part extends over an area of circa 7,350 m<sup>2</sup> and is used for the trade of cattle, horses and donkeys. The adjacent part constitutes an area of about 2,700 m<sup>2</sup> as the smaller trading area for sheep and goats. On the days of fieldwork on the bazaar, the livestock flow accounts approximately for 200 cows/bulls, 25 horses, 20 donkeys, 500 sheep and 75 goats.<sup>5</sup> The trading focuses on cattle and sheep due to their major importance for food supply in Kyrgyzstan.

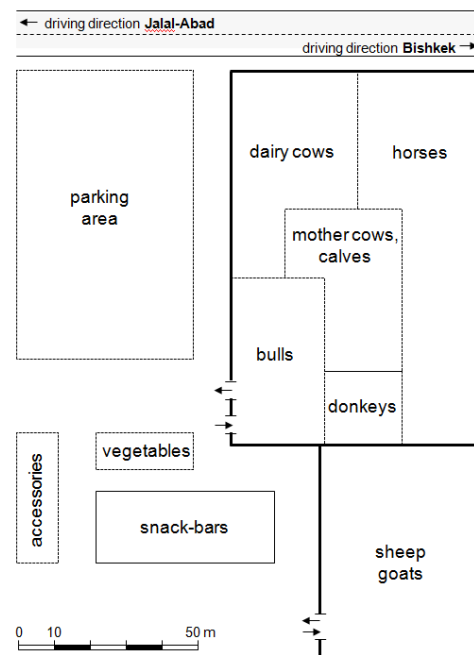


Fig. 7.2: The spatial structure of the *mal bazaar*

Draft: Marx & Degenhardt 2014

Other minor shopping facilities for food, snacks and other goods also exist next to the trading ground. Apart from the two trading areas, the *mal bazaar* consists of a roofed area for a multiplicity of local snack facilities and kiosks, which offers a limited range of lunch opportunities, beverages and common goods like tobacco, toilet paper and *qurut*<sup>6</sup>. Next to the lunch hall, there are open areas where people sell vegetables and other staple foods as well as clothes. For the loading and unloading of livestock exists a special parking lot.

The weekly market has only a few formal market regulations. However, it enables a structured interaction of potential trading partners. For the appropriation of physical infrastructure, the livestock keeper has to pay a fee when leaving the *mal bazaar* (20 KGS per sheep/goat and 50 KGS per horse/donkey/cow/bull). In addition, some veterinary services have a financial impact on the livestock marketing system. Routine disease controls add to the cost of the physical infrastructure (10 KGS per sheep/goat and 20 KGS per horse/donkey/cow/bull).<sup>7</sup> In theory, traders should take their veterinarian documents from their local veterinarian or get new ones when they buy livestock on the *mal bazaar*.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, in practice nothing of this belongs to the daily routine in livestock trade. Most of the livestock deals work without any documents and formal regulations. Regarding potential health problems, the *mal bazaar* seems to be a self-regulating system, in which all actors know about unprofitable consequences of selling ill animals.

<sup>5</sup> Due to the large quantity of animals, we are talking about estimated numbers.

<sup>6</sup> *Qurut* is a final dairy commodity, which is gained by adding *ayran* as well as salt to the skimmed milk. It is an important dairy food for local people in Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Talant (*mal bazaar* supervisor), July 13<sup>th</sup> 2013

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Achim (head of the local veterinary service), July 19<sup>th</sup> 2013

### ***Typology of market participants***

For a structured overview, this section introduces the market system through the type of actors operating at the bazaar. Most important actors in the marketing of sheep, goats, horses, donkeys, cows and bulls are middlemen and businessmen, pastoralists, local households and meat factories.

The bazaar also induces a range of indirect employment for food and transportation services as well as for livestock breeding outside the bazaar boundaries. Other service providers next to the central trading space try to make business along the *mal bazaar*. In front of the bazaar, families sell fruits and vegetables (melons, potatoes, tomatoes etc.) and a various selection of daily requirements like oil, tobacco and noodles. Furthermore, you can buy all equipment needed for livestock, as saddles, spurs and horseshoes. In the immured trading areas, women are selling ropes for new acquired animals. Everyone who is selling groceries or supplies has to pay a 50 KGS fee per day for using the market infrastructure.<sup>9</sup>

There are also employees such as security and cleaning workers in the privately owned bazaar.<sup>10</sup> Public and private security surveillance is made necessary through the money storage of traders at the market. Almost all merchants have a stashed wallet due to the fear of thievery.

Additionally there are veterinarians on each entrance checking randomly the state of health of the animals. The formally licensed veterinarians have been trained in the basis of animal health care and are provided by the public sector.<sup>11</sup> Together, the non-dealing actors ensure the smooth running of the market.

### ***Marketing strategies of livestock traders***

From the above explanations, it is clear that many actors are involved in the livestock trade in Bazar Korgon (Table 7.1). In terms of livestock trading, certain issues are worth noting. Due to a high unemployment rate and the possibility of fast money, plenty of middlemen with up to hundreds of animals try to make profit at the *mal bazaar*. They are the central actor group for animal trade in Bazar Korgon. The marketing practices can be centralised in three different business models. Some middlemen pursue all of the strategies, depending on their financial and infrastructural capacities.

The first and most used strategy is to purchase livestock with their own capital on the bazaar and resell it with a time lag for a profitable price. To accumulate money for common business, sometimes they extend funds based on personal trust. Cooperating middlemen also put social pressure on potential sellers or buyers to achieve better prices. The cooperation under the slogan “scratch your back, and you scratch my back” shifts significant advantages to their bargaining position and creates trust between them. If they

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Talant (*mal bazaar* supervisor), July 13<sup>th</sup> 2013

<sup>10</sup> A man called Aibek owns the ground and runs the weekly bazaar. Because he lives in Bishkek, it was not possible to interview him during our fieldwork.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Achim (head of the local veterinary service), July 19<sup>th</sup> 2013

cannot sell the livestock on the same day, there are special caretakers, which guard and feed the animals for a little fee until the next trading day.

In the context of the second strategy, middlemen get an order of other market participants for the purchase and sale of an agreed amount of livestock. Therefore, the client uses the knowledge of the middlemen to acquire the best conditions for the livestock. In return, the client obligates to pay a fix amount for the service.

Finally, some middlemen try to use the price differentiation between single livestock markets in south-western Kyrgyzstan. They purchase livestock for a low price in one district, transport the animals and resell them with profit on another livestock market. The arbitrage practice of taking advantage of the price differences between livestock markets is used only by a few middlemen. This is due to the fact that this method needs the most knowledge of prize conditions on different livestock markets and accrues extra transport charges.<sup>12</sup> In the past, it was common, that some middlemen fetched livestock directly from pastoralists. This strategy is nowadays no longer used. Occasionally, there are middlemen, who trade livestock illegally over the close border to Uzbekistan, because of high prices for livestock in the neighbouring country.

None of the big or small traders has permanent buyers. Besides the constant collaboration between some middlemen, personal or familiar relations do not play a crucial role through the livestock trade. The main advantage of middlemen comparing to other actors on the *mal bazaar* are the knowledge bias concerning current prices and quality of livestock as well as the specified cooperation patterns.

Households are a second important part of livestock trading. In rural areas of Kyrgyzstan, local households keep and use livestock for purposes that extend far beyond income generation. Mostly, all households own livestock as a coping strategy to reduce their socio-economic vulnerabilities. Insofar, the marketing behaviour of local households is characterised by generating extra income. If households require money for a special event (e.g. marriage or birthday) or because of crop failure, livestock is used as a capital reserve. On the other hand, if the household generates monetary surplus, it can be invested into the expansion of their livestock. As a result, a high number of household members affect the local demand and supply on the *mal bazaar*.

In addition, pastoral households sell animals for the same reasons. Therefore, most local households and pastoralists stay under social pressure when they sell livestock on the market. Marketing information for them is very scarce. Especially pastoralists have insufficient information, because they spend large amounts of time on remote pastures where they have rarely access to information about marketing conditions.<sup>13</sup> Both actor groups have significant less information and marketing skills when compared to middlemen. In Bazar Korgon, trading cooperatives across the family do not exist. The basic producers rarely pool their livestock and their financial resources based on individual agreements.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Turatbek (middleman), July 11<sup>th</sup> 2013

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Turatbek (middleman), July 11<sup>th</sup> 2013

Another group of important actors on the *mal bazaar* are professional businessmen. Some of them delegate the trading process to middlemen, other sell their livestock by themselves. Businessmen often sell up to 20 or 30 sheep on the *mal bazaar*. A common strategy is to buy livestock in spring, delegate breeding to paid pastoralists over summer and sell the grown livestock in autumn.<sup>14</sup>

There are also butchers and a few slaughterhouses purchasing mostly a small amount of livestock for selling the meat on local markets as well as several professional fattening farms, buying from time to time a substantial quantity of livestock.

**Table 7.1: Actor groups in the livestock marketing system**

Actor groups	Role	Sex
middlemen	purchase & resale of any stock numbers	all male
businessmen	purchase & resale of large stock numbers	all male
pastoralists	purchase & sale of single animals	all male
local households	purchase & sale of single animals	mostly men
local butchers	purchase of single animals	all male
slaughterhouses	purchase of several animals	all male
fattening farms	purchase of large stock numbers	all male
veterinarians	supervise the health of animals	all male
suppliers	provide all kind of accessories	mostly women
other sellers	sell food, snacks, tobacco & beverages	mostly women
conveyers	provide transport logistic	all male
caretakers	guard & feed the animals	all male
police	supervise the security	all male
employee	security service & cleaning	all male
collectors	collect market fee	all male

### ***Negotiation patterns and livestock prices***

The average price of livestock depends on health, weight, colour and sex. A sheep mostly costs about 5,000 KGS. In single cases, a vigorous grown male sheep can cost up to more than 20,000 KGS. The average price of a cow or a bull is 25,000 KGS, but it can vary from 15,000 up to 70,000 KGS. Hence, not only in bull and in cow trading the weight of animals play a crucial role. Therefore, seller and buyer estimate the weight of the animal and adjust their target price.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Mirlan (middleman), July 12<sup>th</sup> 2013

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Sakir (middleman), July 20<sup>th</sup> 2013

The highest price can reach an adult horse. The price fluctuates between 55,000 KGS up to 90,000 KGS. A donkey costs between 2,000 and 5,000 Som. Because of religious aspects, the consumption of donkeys in Kyrgyzstan is not popular, so they achieve lower prices than other animals. The average price for goats ranges between 2,000 and 5,000 KGS, because usually they are not used for meat or milk production.

All contracts work without any formal regulations. The different traders agree by handshake on a livestock deal, that usually contains an informal guarantee for one week about the given facts and health of the animal.

Conspicuous were two behaviours during the negotiation process. First, we detected a group formation during most negotiations. Thereby, the seller and the buyer stand in the middle, shaking hands and next to them gathers a crowd of interested people and other livestock traders. These gatherings can grow up to over 20 people. The intervention of individuals in the negotiation process often constitutes a vibrant element of social pressure at the *mal bazaar*. The manipulation of individual bargaining power through the enforcement of a common contract conclusion deforms the provision in favour of team working traders. Due to the close collaboration of middlemen, in the majority of cases they benefit from the distortion of competition.

The second conspicuity is the clear gender segregation regarding the trading of livestock (Table 7.1). Women are mostly absent in the negotiation processes. Women are working on the snack bars, selling vegetables and accessories. On the contrary, men are trading livestock and working on the surveillance of the market system. If a single woman wants to sell livestock, she brings a male representative to enforce the physical negotiation process. Thus, we even could observe in one case, how a mother brought her eight year old son for the handshake, but was doing the whole negotiation process.

Next to the economic importance, the *mal bazaar* is also a social network for local people. Insofar, hundreds of local residents, who are not actively involved in the purchase or sale of livestock, contribute to the marketing system by using the market days for gatherings.

### ***Livestock market system model***

Abstracting from the empirical data, this section provides a model of market institutions as well as a schematic framework of market typologies. Social and economic life on the *mal bazaar* is filled with repeated action where the different actors adhere to perpetual customs. From the foregoing exemplifications, it is evident that both formal and informal institutions operate within the *mal bazaar*. Table 7.2 presents a simplified model of formal and informal institutions that influence the livestock marketing system in Bazar Korgon.

Three formal institutions provide the basic infrastructure for livestock trade. The private owner of the area is responsible for the physical infrastructural appropriation and has to deliver a share of his revenue to the local government authority. Thereby, the public sector is responsible for providing veterinarians who monitor the health of livestock. Further, the local government provides police officers who maintain security around the *mal bazaar*. In addition, a private security agency operates within the defined market ground.

The most important informal institution is the intermediate trading pattern of middlemen. According to almost all interviews, it is difficult, almost impossible to sell livestock in the market without using a middleman. All livestock brought into the *mal bazaar* either by pastoralists or local residents is handed over to a middleman for resale. The buyers range from local households, other merchants and butchers. As already mentioned, some-times middlemen even sell commissioned livestock and get a fee for each animal sold.

Central to the trading system is the issue of trust, which is built through economic reciprocity. All trading exists without any formal agreements. The effectiveness of trust lies in the permanency of the market system. Despite the multiplicity of actors and livestock, the regular use of the well-established market infrastructure induces honesty concerning common trading patterns. Word about sellers who make business on the basis of false information spreads through the social arena very quickly and has a negative impact on their future sales.

The exercised social pressure by the cartelisation and information monopolisation of middlemen forms relatively stable patterns of the economic practice at the *mal bazaar*. Vulnerability characterises the selling-motives for local households and pastoralists. As a result, they have a bad negotiation position at the livestock market in Bazar Korgon where supply overtakes demand. In terms of gender allocation, we could identify a clear role ascription. Men exclusively determine the economic trading while women providing legwork at the livestock marketing system.

Next to the indicated institutions, the *mal bazaar* can be differentiated by the purpose for which livestock is traded. Table 7.3 summarises the trading-structure in terms of three different market types. The table shows the observed market typologies and the flow of livestock from sellers to buyers.

There are three specific types of the livestock marketing system. First, the *mal bazaar* serves as a collection market, where animals are put in the livestock trade for the first time. The main actors are pastoralists, other households and some businessmen, who bring in each case own livestock into the market system. Notably, for the final consumption the collected livestock is used just in exceptional cases.

Middlemen and businessmen purchase most livestock in favour of further market utilization. In this regard, the main interactions at the *mal bazaar* follow the logic of a distribution market, in which the livestock trade serves for collection and following resale.

**Table 7.2: Institutions in livestock trade**

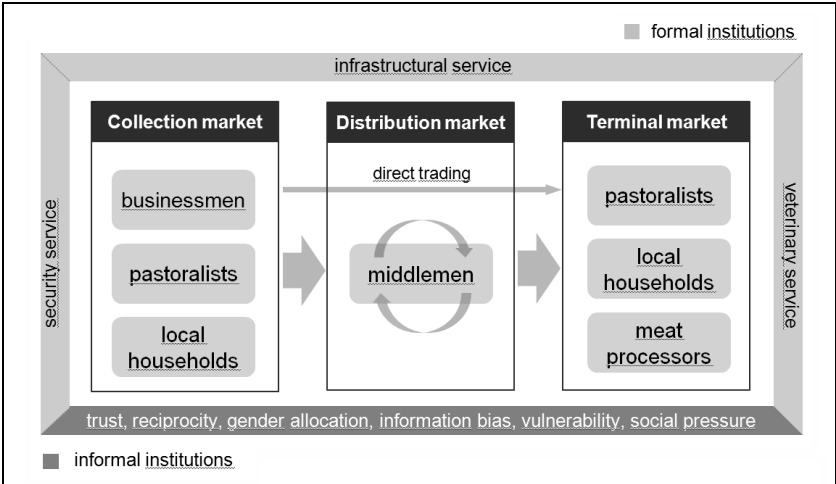
formal institutions	informal institutions
veterinary service	intermediate trade
security service	trust
infrastructural service	gender allocation
	social pressure
	economic reciprocity
	vulnerability
	information bias

**Table 7.3: Schematic typologies of the *mal bazaar***

Type of market	Main seller	Main purchaser	Purpose of purchase
Collection market	pastoralists local households businessmen	middlemen other buyers	profitable resale fattening
Distribution market	middlemen businessmen	middlemen businessmen	profitable resale profitable resale
Terminal market	middlemen businessmen	local households butchers	consumption, livelihood asset meat production

Finally, livestock at the *mal bazaar* is traded for the final consumption of local households and butchers. Within the scope of the terminal market, actors detract livestock from the marketing system. However, there is growing evidence that distribution of livestock without final consumption raises the prices of livestock through intermediary trade. In the end, the patterns of the socio-economic practice lead to a livestock market system, in which the local collection market is characterised by the attributes of a buyer’s market, giving middlemen as main purchasers an advantage over individual sellers in price negotiations. The intermediate trading patterns at the distribution market induce an artificial supply shortage that exploits the market logic of local end consumers. At the terminal market, high livestock prices result from this excess of demand over supply. Finally, the individual rationalities, which are influenced by a range of informal institutions, transform the local livestock trading system to a seller’s market.

Fig. 7.3 presents a simplified model of the livestock market system for livestock trade at the *mal bazaar*. It illustrates the major trading actors in the different market typologies as well as the formal and informal institutions that influence the market behaviour of all participants.



**Fig. 7.3: Livestock market system model**

Draft: Marx & Degenhardt 2014

## Conclusion

The general aim of this study was to examine the role of formal and informal institutions within the livestock trading system. The results can be summarized in terms of the following points. In the context of livestock trade in Bazar Korgon, the analysis shows that almost every household is embedded in the marketing of livestock. Today, livestock production is almost entirely market-oriented. Especially, the asymmetrical distribution of information among the market actors characterizes the general trading framework.

Overall, it is very clear that livestock trading in Bazar Korgon operates within the informal sector. Besides the private and public appropriation of infrastructural services, there is little evidence of official formalities. Evidence suggests that institutions promoting livestock trade are not necessarily based on formal rules and constraints. Informal institutions form more important and relatively stable patterns of the indicated market actions. The individual rationalities influenced by a range of informal institutions have to be understood as marketing limitations. Institutional arrangements that could reduce these limitations, such as minimum prices and price information systems do not exist in Bazar Korgon. Likewise, regulations that could expand the individual scope of action, such as common marketing strategies do not exist. The advantages of local institutions, as well as the diversity of sellers and purchasers, mainly benefit middlemen.

If one views actions on a real-life market from the institutional perspective, it becomes clear that the economic realities in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan cannot be limited to quantifiable economic indicators alone. Economic geography benefits from this well-known consensus in social science. Improvement in livestock trading cannot be achieved without understanding the social context within the trading practices operate. Thus, the institutional dimension provides development research a methodological tool that allows precise statements about the relationship of socio-economic arrangements and spatial developments. Despite the effectiveness of the informal institutions in Bazar Korgon, the unequal distribution of power among the market actors and a potential insecurity in the transportation of livestock and money makes the integration of formal institutions reasonable. Focusing on the livestock sector it became clear that development of rural economies is only possible if appropriate institutions exist, which bring out an efficient and equitable coordination of individual economic activities.<sup>16</sup> Thus, further studies of socio-economic patterns of livestock trade in Kyrgyzstan are essential for context-oriented policy implementations.

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<sup>16</sup> For a further discussion, see Upton 2004: 48-50



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## **Migration strategies and the role of remittances in rural Kyrgyzstan**

### **The state of migration in Kyrgyzstan**

In 2013, three percent of the world's population or - in other words around 232 million - people lived outside of their homeland (United Nations 2013). Although Central Asia contributes only a small fraction to the world's total migrant population, migration as a livelihood strategy plays an even more crucial role in this region. Kyrgyzstan is a demonstrative example from the region.

Today, in Kyrgyzstan, migration and remittances are essential features of income diversification and function as an insurance to protect people from income shocks, such as unemployment or crop failure. Contemporary migratory currents in Kyrgyzstan can be interpreted as a response to the economic downturn in the initial years of the independence in 1991 (Isabaeva 2011: 542). The radical reforms after the independence were accompanied by rising poverty due to unemployment and a decline in agricultural and industrial output. When it became clear that the economy of Kyrgyzstan only improved slightly and the deteriorating living conditions still remained at the end of the 1990s, migration among the Kyrgyz' population to Russia and Kazakhstan gained momentum. Especially in rural areas, the population reacted to unemployment and the inability to provide for family and community needs with mass migration, both internal and international. Although the real number of migrants is difficult to ascertain, statistics state that more than 15,700 Kyrgyz people emigrated in 1998. Since then migration increased annually; in 2007 the number of emigrants has more than tripled. Official sources suggest that between 2004 and 2008 more than 800,000 Kyrgyz people left Kyrgyzstan for Russia or Kazakhstan (International Crisis Group 2010).

In light of this development the present paper analyses migration processes and the role of remittances for rural livelihood strategies in southern Kyrgyzstan. To explore present labour migration a survey was conducted in Gumkhana, Jaradar and Bel Terek - three settlements in the Bazar Korgon *Rayon*. The objective of the research was to analyse types and means of recent labour migration phenomena as well as the socio-economic impacts of remittances.

The recent appearance and growing dimension of labour migration in Kyrgyzstan has been widely discussed in literature (Thieme 2008, 2012, Schmidt & Sagynbekova 2008; Rohner 2007 etc.). In the current debate on migration and remittances, the focus was often on direct economic consequences for individuals and for specific regions. Our research however tries to shed light on social networks contributing to migration and socio-economic consequences of migration and remittances for families, households and communities in the research area. For this purpose we have been guided by the scientific approach called the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM), which gives priority to families and households as units of analysis rather than individual migrants. Additionally, we focused on network analysis approaches which emphasis on social emigration networks

that significantly contribute to increasing migration processes in rural areas (Haug 2000: 16).

The first section of this paper gives an outline of the theoretical framework and hypotheses underlying the case study. The following section is the empirical part, which focuses on the one hand on migration networks and their contribution to migration processes. On the other hand, an analysis of investment strategies on the basis of remittances provides insights into economic and social impacts for the local population in the research area. The following discussion section debates main findings of the research, the meaning of migration for the Bazar Korgon *Rayon* and raises new issues for upcoming case studies concerning migration in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. The final section contains the conclusion and an outlook for the future.

To gain deeper insights into migration processes, ten semi-structured qualitative interviews have been conducted in the villages. The thematic priority of the survey was set on biographical details and personal experiences of the interviewed. Additionally, 123 quantitative interviews have been carried out - 73 in Gumkhana, 25 in Jaradar and 25 in Bel Terek. To illustrate the impact of remittances on the village landscape, we used the gathered quantitative data to create maps, which show house building- and renovation activities financed by remittances.

### **Recent migration theories**

As a response to neoclassical microeconomic views on migration, the NELM emerged in the 1980s and 1990s (Haug 2000: 6). The approach, further developed by Taylor (1999), renewed the academic thinking on migration by placing the behaviour of individual migrants within a wider societal context. It considers the household - rather than the individual - as the most appropriate decision-making unit concerning migration issues. The approach sees migration decisions as a part of family strategies to raise income, obtain funds to invest in new activities and insure against income and production risks (Taylor 1999: 64-65). Former migration theories seemed to be too rigid and determinist to deal with the complex realities of migration, since they viewed migrants in isolation from family and community contexts. Moreover, up to that time most migration impact studies dealt with direct economic effects for the individual migrant. NELM, however, focuses not only on broader family and community contexts but also on indirect impacts of migration on non-migrant sending or non-remittances receiving households in a region characterised by migration processes (de Haas 2008: 6, Taylor 1999: 65).

Besides the NELM approach which offers a profound view on migration by linking causes and consequences of migration with each other (de Haas 2008: 6; Haug 2000: 7), we applied the network approach, since it might assist in explaining why international labour migration increased heavily in the past 25 years in southern Kyrgyzstan. Social networks and kin relations play an important role regarding international migration and chain migration procedures (Haug 2000: 19). People, who take permanently or temporarily migration into consideration often make use of prevailing social contacts, which provide assistance to put that idea into practice. The entire set of social connections with migration-relevant knowledge constitutes the migrant's social network or the migrant

network. Social networks can be comprised of family members, friends and acquaintances as well as of contacts to persons working in organizations or just useful strangers. Networks often characterise essentially the modalities of migration such as the destination, the chosen route, the duration, the practiced profession as well as living conditions at the destination and adjustment methods in the new environment (Elick 2008: 1).

Based on the theoretical background we hypothesize: 1) Migration and remittances are essential characteristics for households in order to secure basic needs for short term consumption (e.g. food and clothes) and long term investments such as houses or education. They might be moreover useful to stimulate developments in the communities and can have also positive effects for non-migrant households. 2) Social networks play an important role in facilitating and animating migration processes. Moreover the perception of successful migrant returnees is an important feature of increasing migration processes in the research area. 3) Migration is also connected with social consequences since it contributes significantly to changing gender - age structures in the research area.

### **Patterns of migration in the district of Bazar Korgon and their socio-economic impacts**

Migration in the 'walnut-fruit forest region' in the Bazar Korgon District has become something like a norm. For many households it is a livelihood strategy which helps to meet immediate needs and also to accumulate capital for future projects. In Gumkhana - the biggest of the three surveyed villages with approximately 1,940 inhabitants and 474 households (Kyrgyz Republic 2013) - 67 % of the sampled households have or had labour migrants abroad. In Bel Terek with 1,170 inhabitants and 233 households (ibid.) 84 % of the questioned households utilised or still use migration as a livelihood strategy. In Jaradar - the smallest of the three surveyed settlements with 590 inhabitants and 126 households (ibid.) - 86 % of all interviewed households have or had migrants abroad.

Migration processes as a widespread phenomenon started in the research area in the early years of 2000. After the first migrants returned home successfully, others got motivated to migrate. By evaluating quantitative data it appears that especially during the years 2005 and 2009 the number of migrants increased significantly.

Almost all interviewed households are dependent on walnut business (84 % in Jaradar, 97 % in Gumkhana and 100 % in Bel Terek) to sustain their livelihoods. Other important income resources are the selling of vegetables on local markets and the receipt of a pension. It is important to note that most households are traditional multi-generational-households, in which grandparents live together with married children and grandchildren and hence contribute their pensions to the household's income (Isabaeva 2011: 547). Main employment fields in the three surveyed villages are taxi- and private businesses such as the selling of groceries in small shops. A minority mentioned formal employment at the lokal forestry enterprises - the *leskhozy*, the village administration and local schools. Qualitative interviews revealed that the lack of job opportunities, low salaries and insufficient income from agriculture are the main reasons for migration.

Although large differences in levels of education (university degree, 11th grade, 8th grade) exist among the interviewed migrants, all mentioned that finding a regular employment is almost impossible. Abroad they hope to find a job, with which they can improve their material situation. Other push factors are the deteriorating living conditions in the villages, debts due to a bad harvest and insufficient educational facilities.

### ***Migration patterns determined by migrant networks***

To implement migration plans, migrant networks are of special importance. Especially less qualified migrants are dependent on this kind of assistance. Particularly during the first stage of migration social networks are extremely helpful and contribute to the “triggering of chain migration” and thereby “perpetuating migration flows” (Elrick 2008: 1-2).

In the research area, the majority of labour migrants decided in favour of external migration destinations, whereas only a small number choose migration within Kyrgyzstan. 90 % of the interviewed migrants stated that the Russian cities Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, and Krasnoyarsk are the most popular destinations. Further, but less often mentioned are the cities Ekaterinburg, Yakutsk and Tomsk. For a little number of migrants the neighbouring country Kazakhstan especially the city Almaty, is also an optional destination. When asked why these cities were chosen, almost all interviewees mentioned better job opportunities and higher salaries compared to Kyrgyzstan. Others also indicated the presence of relatives or acquaintances in the target region as reasons for migration. In many cases the availability of useful contacts and also the success stories of former migrants influence the decision-process in favour of migration to these destinations (Schmidt & Sagynbekova 2008: 119). The networks between the sending communities and destinations support would-be migrants with assistance and information about cheapest travel options, where to find reasonable priced accommodation or available jobs at the target destination.

In almost half of the cases, family members or close relatives who are already living in the destination region, provided interim financial aid until the newly arrived migrant get his or her first wage. This support in the early days of the mobility notable reduces costs and risks of migration (Haug 2000: 20). Others, who had no contacts abroad told that they had to sell their livestock or take credit from relatives in Kyrgyzstan to finance the migration process.

Compared to the past, more and more migrants choose to travel by plane than by train, due to the much shorter duration of the journey and cheaper ticket prices. Interviewees reported that the journey from Bishkek to Moscow by train lasts more than four days and a one way ticket costs around 12,000 KGS (ca. 160 €). The trip by plane lasts less than four hours and a ticket from Bishkek to Moscow and back costs approximately the same.

### ***Working and living conditions abroad***

The majority of the migrants (81 %) in the surveyed households worked only temporarily abroad: surveyed migrants spent on average three years abroad. Some also reported that they returned after a few weeks due to bad luck. For migrants who are working abroad, the duration of the stay is not fixed a priori. The duration of the stay is usually dependent

on successful job-hunting and on reasonable living conditions at the place. In three cases of the survey, the entire household migrated permanently to Russia.

Some of the interviewed migrants expressed their wish to migrate again, although they complained about the tough living conditions in Russia at the same time. Especially young people feel attracted to the large Russian cities and are interested in repeating their migration.

Almost all (98 %) of the interviewees declared, that they only found jobs in the low-paid labour market and worked for instance as waiter/waitress, construction worker, factory worker, sweeper, porter or housemaid. Those who went to Kazakhstan stated they often found jobs on the textile markets in Almaty.

Due to the low-income, typically associated with such work, migrants are often forced to live together with other migrants in shared flats. Informants explained that it is not unusual to live with up to eight persons in a two-room flat. They accept these hard living conditions since this is often the only way to save some money, which will be sent home later on.

Labour migrants, who worked in Russia, reported about occasional harassments by Russian policemen and other office bearers. Many migrants do not possess an employment permit and hence reside illegally in Russia (Schmidt 2006: 31). With the assistance of their social networks, migrants are able to buy forged documents, which is generally known by the official authorities. Some reported about corrupt policemen, who threatened migrants to pay a certain amount of money so that they can further stay illegally in Russia.

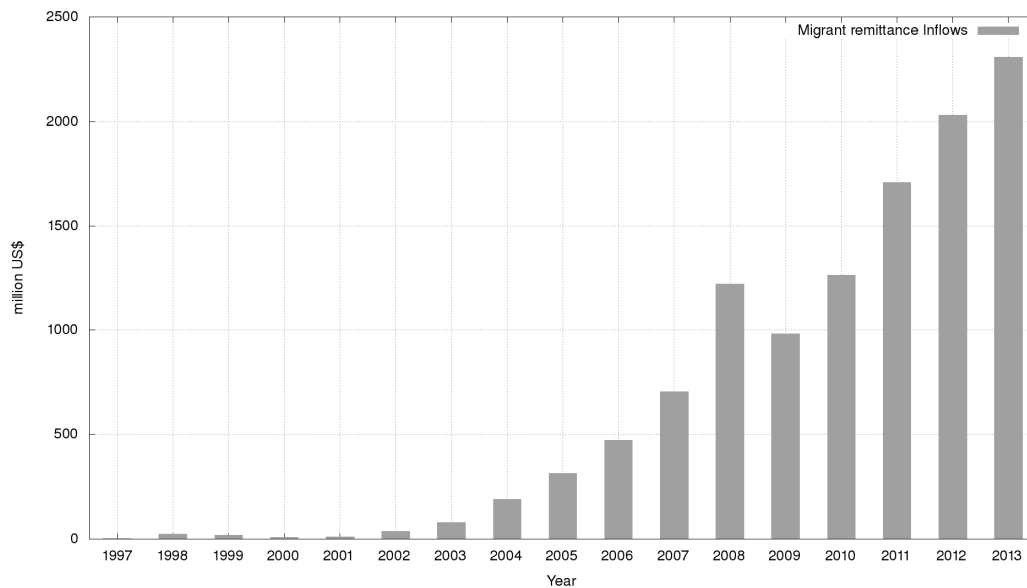
Three former male migrants narrated their experiences of racism in Moscow and Novosibirsk. According to their reports, on a certain day in the year, a racist organization called “White Wolves” marches through the cities and acts aggressively towards migrants, especially towards migrants from Central Asia. The interviewees stated that they avoided the metro or public taxis in Moscow. They always tried to ride with friends in their cars, since they had perpetual fears of being attacked or offended, especially by young male Russians<sup>1</sup>. Due to that recent development in Russian cities people told that internal migration within Kyrgyzstan is taken more and more into account.

### ***Economic impacts***

The economic impacts of migration are significant for Kyrgyzstan: in 2013 Kyrgyz migrants transferred more than US\$ 2.3 billion to the country, which constituted 31.4 % of Kyrgyzstan’s GDP in 2013 (World Bank 2013). In 2009, a decrease of remittance inflows could be observed. This is mostly due to the global economic crisis by which Russia was heavily affected (Marat 2007: 41). Since 2009 the remittance flows to Kyrgyzstan increased again annually (Fig. 8.1). Moreover these numbers are expected to be higher, since many remittances are sent through informal channels. Hence, the actual importance of remittance is even greater than official figures show (de Haas 2008: 9).

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<sup>1</sup> A Russian NGO based in Moscow reports that the number of killings in 2008 motivated by racial hatred doubled in 2008, reaching 113 dead and 340 wounded migrants (*The Economist*, 15 January 2009). Marat (2009) sees reasons for this development in Russia in declining population numbers and increasing migration inflows - not only from Central Asian countries (Marat 2009: 21-22)



**Fig. 8.1: Remittance inflows in Kyrgyzstan**

Draft: Atam & Göpel 2014, based on data of World Bank 2013

Apart from the financial aspect, not only remittances, but also knowledge, ideas, material goods and skills flow back to the sending communities (Isabeava 2011: 543).

Nonetheless, those interviewed affirmed that the transfer of remittances is the most important benefit of migration for them. In the literature remittances were also acknowledged as more stable, reliable and less-volatile compared with other types of financial inflows such as foreign direct investments (Marat 2009: 40, de Haas 2008: 8).

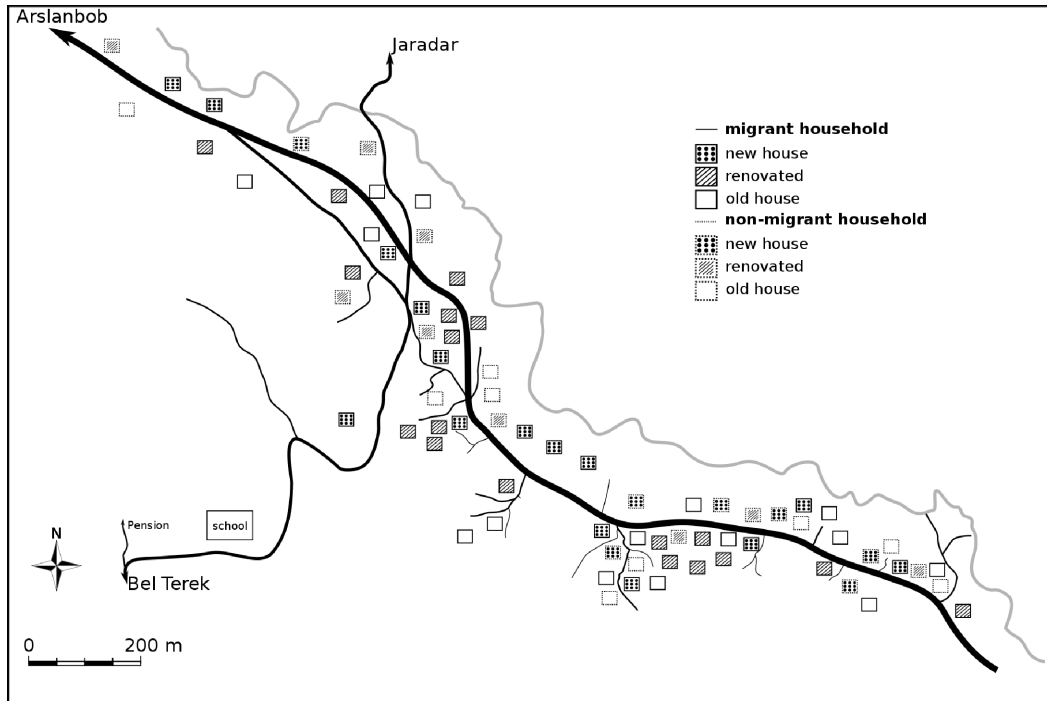
In all three surveyed villages more than 67 % of the interviewed households with migrants abroad told that they received remittances at least once. Most households confirmed they receive remittances on a regular basis. Out of concrete answers concerning the amount of remittances it was possible to get an idea of average sums, which were sent back monthly to households: In Gumkhana and Bel Terek the average amount of remittances is around 11,000 KGS per month (ca. 146 €). In Jaradar the remittances are not as high namely around 7,700 KGS per month (ca. 102 €). These differences are mostly due to the fact, that in Jaradar some of the interview partners explained they had difficulties in finding a job abroad or had to change their employers several times.

### *Investments based on remittances*

The investments of remittances differ: All interviewed remittances receiving households told, that they use either parts or the whole sum of the sent money for consumption purposes such as food and clothes. Apart from this, it is obvious that many households invest a share of the received money in construction or renovation works of houses in the research area. From a walk through the villages it is already visible to the unaided eye that many houses are of recent date or have been renovated lately. The renovated houses often have new roofs and gates or were repainted. As the quantitative survey shows, most house building and renovating activities in the research area started in the years between 2008 and 2010. This is around three years after the aforementioned rise in migration activities in the research area began. Many migrants returned home and invested their earned



money directly in construction or renovation activities. Others managed to establish themselves on the job markets abroad and hence were able to send back remittances - which have been used for that purpose - on a regular basis. In Gumkhana 66 % of the sampled migrants households were renovated or newly built with the help of remittances (Fig. 8.2). In Jaradar it is 40 % and in Bel Terek even 72 % (Fig. 8.3 and 8.4).



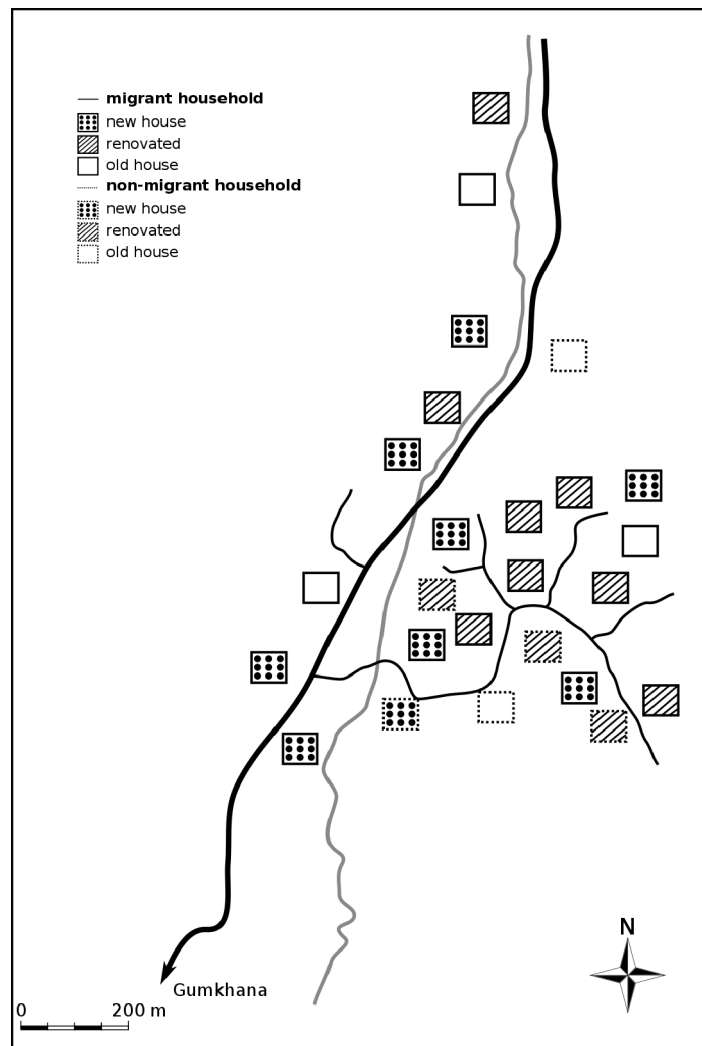
**Fig. 8.2: Gumkhana: Distribution of sampled migrant and non-migrant households with corresponding house building and renovation activities**

Draft: Atam & Göpel 2014

On the other hand investments in private businesses occur rarely. The survey revealed that only two out of six grocery shops in Gumkhana were financed with the help of remittances, although five out of six shop owners confirmed that there are migrants in the households. Three migrants told that they used their investment to buy a car which is used to provide taxi services from time to time.

This investment behaviour which focuses on spending for consumption and essential goods had also been recognised in several other migration impact studies (for instance de Haas 2003). It is therefore not surprising that the most common reason for scepticism on migration is the widespread belief that migrants rarely invest their money productively for example in private enterprises, but instead spend it on consumption and non-productive investments such as houses (de Haas 2008: 14).

However, remittances and the perceived non-productive investments can also have significant impacts on non-migrants households (Taylor 1999: 65; de Haas 2008: 16). Some interview partners mentioned that more house construction jobs have been offered recently in the research area. Hence, consumptive and house building expenses can have positive effects for the communities by providing non-migrants with labour and income.



**Fig. 8.3: Jaradar: Distribution of sampled migrant and non-migrant households with corresponding house building and renovation activities**

Draft: Atam & Göpel 2014

Apart from consumption purposes, other mentioned investments are cars, livestock, savings for the family and education as well as spending on lifecycle events like weddings or funerals. Schoch et al. revealed in their research on coherences between livestock and migration in Kyrgyzstan, that livestock has significantly increased with growing migration processes in the region (2010: 216). In our survey at least one third of those interviewed migrants confirmed they already invested or will soon invest in livestock in order to diversify income resources and to provide a safety net for a later retirement. It was also mentioned that livestock is alongside houses and cars a sign of successful migration and still remains as a symbol of wealth. Additionally, it represents stability and Kyrgyz tradition and hence strengthens the relation between the individual and his home (ibid.: 215). However, negative effects of increasing livestock amounts in the communities are signs of severe overuse of pastures nearby the villages and the summer pastures as well as challenges in the pasture management.

Nearly no investments have been made to promote community development in the three settlements. Only in Jaradar there was an initiative of the population to renew the road, which had been destroyed due to heavy rains. This project was realised partly on the basis of remittances. Moreover one inhabitant told that there is a plan to build a school in Jaradar. People are willing to support this idea financially, but only if the government brings the project forward. The state is still seen as the main provider of infrastructure and services and is therefore hold responsible to realise such projects. Remittances are mostly used to cover private needs.

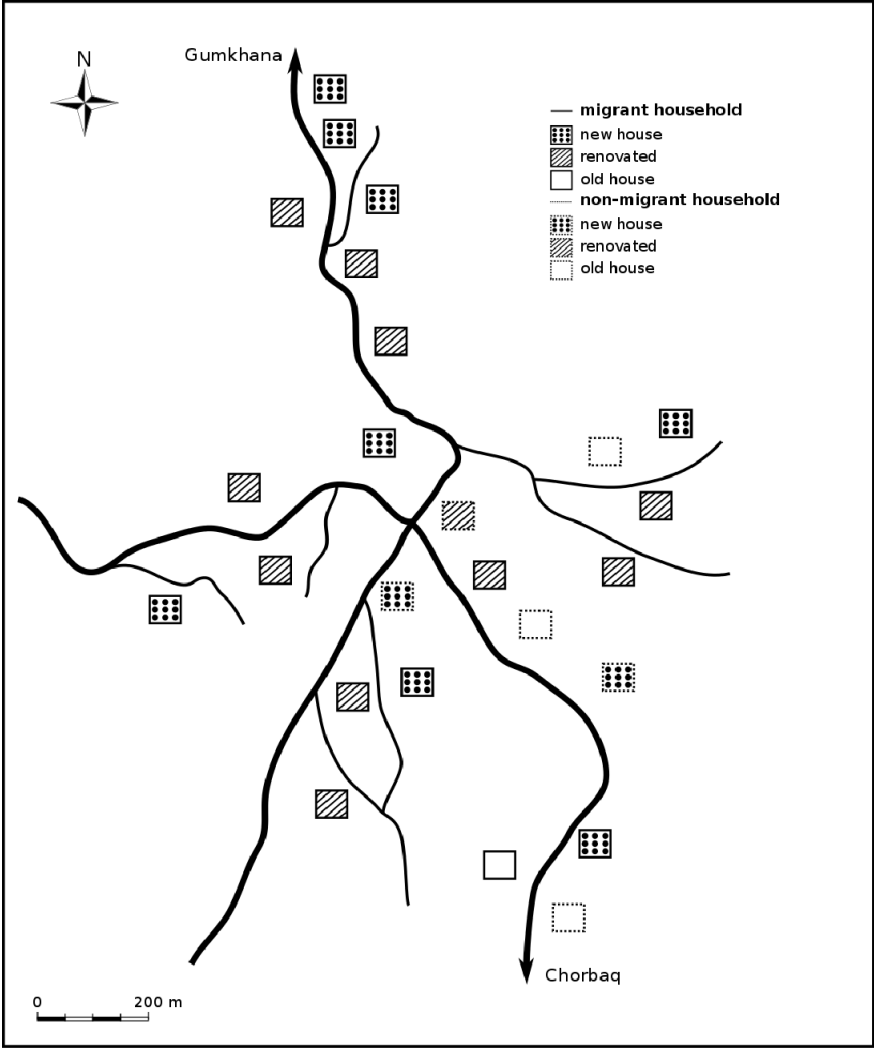


Fig. 8.4: Bel Terek: Distribution of sampled migrant and non-migrant households with corresponding house building and renovation activities

Draft: Atam & Göpel 2014

**Social Impacts**

Besides economic impacts of migration, social and everyday effects on the sending communities were of particular interest of the research: Although some interviewed argue welfare and living conditions increased in the villages due to migration processes, many expressed criticism on changing social structures in the communities.

### *Changing age structures*

One important feature is the changing profile of the villages. The mobility involves in most cases only parts of the family. The reason behind this selective migration is mostly due to social embedded patterns and power imbalances related to gender and age (Thieme 2008: 327).

The survey revealed that people aged between 20 and 45 years migrate most commonly. Informants reported that only the youngest and people older than 50 years remain in the villages. Many interviewed people hold migration accountable for this trend. Changing age structures and depriving valuable human resources were frequently used arguments against migration. Most of all mentioned was the fact that labour migrants usually live abroad without their families, which causes deteriorating family relations. “Irregular migration regimes” (Thieme 2012: 12) make it for instance hard for parents to stay in contact with their children, who were often left behind in the villages. Many interviewed told that these parentless children are one major disadvantage of migration in the research area. Children in the age from two to seven years live together with their grandparents, when both parents are working abroad. It is not unusual that children at the age of seven or eight stay alone in their parents’ house and were supervised from time to time by grandparents or neighbours. It is not surprising that education and nurture of the children suffer from this insufficient care. Although it is not a new phenomenon that the youngest grew up in Kyrgyzstan with their grandparents, while the parents are busy working or studying, the grandparents are often over-challenged and not capable to prevail over the youth (Isabaeva 2011: 547; Schoch et al. 2010: 55).

Although especially young migrants stated that they would go back to Russia or Kazakhstan if it is necessary, the study revealed that most migrants return home to their communities. Nonetheless some informants told that they tend to build new houses in urban centres of Kyrgyzstan like Bishkek, Osh and Jalal-Abad. It is getting more common that young returning migrants take their left behind children and spouses with them and situate their future prospects in urban areas of Kyrgyzstan. Reasons for this behaviour are prevailing poorer economic opportunities in the countryside and a lack of service and infrastructure especially concerning education facilities. Some returned migrants told they want to live in urban areas in their new homes until retirement and then return to their places of origin.

### *Impacts on education*

Positive impacts of remittances on the children’s education are often emphasised, since they enable children to attend school. Expenses on the education of children count as long term investments and as an income assurance strategy for households and families (de Haas 2008: 23). In the research area more than half of the interviewed migrants’ households affirmed that they save money for the education of the children in the family. On the other, hand there is evidence that migration also creates negative incentives for education: Being inspired by success stories of returning migrants most graduates wanted to start migration immediately after finishing school and do not think about other possibilities like attending university. Furthermore, young people tend to drop out of school because their motivation is diluted, with the greatest effort directed towards moving abroad. A disappointed school teacher explained that once parents start sending

money home or children get the possibility to visit their parents abroad, they become spoiled and tend not to care anymore about family, home or their education.

### *Gender Aspects*

In around 60 % of the cases young men migrated alone or together with other male migrants, leaving their wives and children behind. Some interviewees told that in recent years the amount of migrating women increased in the research area.<sup>2</sup> In Gumkhana, the share of migrating women is the highest with 32 %. This trend is mostly due to the fact that women are also expected to support their families in any possible financial way. Especially for younger men who remain at home while their wives are working abroad it is challenging to accept that they are no longer the main provider of the household's income. During the research we came across two cases of divorced women who had no other alternatives but to go abroad and work as labour migrants to meet the needs of their children. A father of a recently divorced woman explained that he and his wife take care of their daughter's children while she is working in Russia in order to earn enough money to build a house of her own.

Despite this recent development, changing gender structures in the three villages are undeniable, because women predominantly characterise the daily scenes on the streets of Gumkhana, Jaradar and Bel Terek. The lives of the wives change drastically when the husband leaves the household, since they have to carry the entire workload at home. If men don't return for harvest, women have to take on additional agricultural work. Being responsible for health and childcare in the households, women are moreover heavily depending on remittances of their husbands (Schmidt & Sagynbekova 2008: 121, Thieme 2008: 335). Although women told, they were gaining more influence over the use of their husband's earnings and child rearing, they do not necessarily like the sudden increase in responsibilities and tasks which were not theirs within the normative contexts of traditional societies in Kyrgyzstan.

Another problem, which had been told quite often, is that men sometimes marry new wives when they migrate to Russia or Kazakhstan. The wife back home in Kyrgyzstan is still financially dependent, waiting for remittances and moreover often has to deal with loans which were for example taken to pay the ticket for the departure of the husband. Therefore, it is not surprising that five to ten percent of the migrants in the research area are couples. Thieme (2008) argues women want to join their husbands being out of concern that their husbands might fancy alcohol or get married a second time abroad (Thieme 2008: 333).

### **The meaning of migration for the Bazar Korgon Rayon**

The phenomenon of migration is full of ambivalences and contradictions, since it is simultaneously celebrated and criticised by the informants in the research area.

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<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, in Arslanbob, where 2008 a research on migration strategies has been conducted (see Schmidt & Sagynbekova 2008), women migrate significantly much less than men. One informant told that this is due to the fact that more Uzbeks live in Arslanbob. The informant explained Uzbeks are perceived as being more concerned about traditional (gender) structures than Kyrgyz people, who constitute the majority of the population in the villages nearby such as Gumkhana, Jaradar and Bel Terek.

It could be observed that people, who are in contact with former or current migrants, consider migration rather positive and as a possible option to diversify the household's income than others without these kind of connections. Also in literature, authors come to a consensus about the effects of migration networks concerning the promotion of migration processes (Haug 2000: 19, Elrick 2008: 2-3). However, some returned migrants characterise their time abroad as unsuccessful. As these migrants say, they were initially motivated to migrate by the perception of other migrants' success abroad and the existence of the migrant networks. But against their expectations, they had bad experiences and faced many difficulties. Due to that they do not consider repeated migration as an option. Therefore the question arises to what extent former migrant's failures abroad and also experiences with racism are inhibiting effects for future migration processes to Russia. Could it be possible that internal migration to bigger cities in Kyrgyzstan like Bishkek and Osh will gain momentum in the future? What would this trend mean for the existing migrant networks, will they also develop within Kyrgyzstan?

Furthermore in literature there are discrepancies concerning positive and negative effects of migration. There is a huge disagreement to what extent migration and remittances contribute positively to rural livelihoods or not: Especially in the current debate on migration and the investment of remittances, different opinions exist. Frequently migrants are criticised as being unproductive due to their irrational expenditure behaviour when investing remittances in house building activities. However, by applying this argument difficult social, economic, legal and political conditions which often prevail in migrant sending countries like Kyrgyzstan are not taken into account. In uncertain environments, expenses on relatively safe assets like houses can be a choice for securing, diversifying and improving livelihoods (de Haas 2008: 17). The quest to have a clean, safe and spacious place to live is moreover a universal aspect of human being. Furthermore, as we stated earlier, construction activities for new houses can have positive impacts on the local job market and hence further support the development in the communities. Marat, however, remarks that investments in houses can lead to land scarcity and therefore eventually to increasing real estate prices (2009: 18). This trend is already partly true for Gumkhana, Jaradar and Bel Terek.

Another commonly criticised aspect of investment practices is the purchase of new livestock. Connected with this trend are negative effects of growing land scarcity and pasture overuse in the research area.

It is evident that migration and remittances change social conditions and structures. On the one hand informants explained that with the help of migration poverty has been pushed back in recent years. On the other hand, changing social structures such as the emigration of the young working population can harm the communities severely in the long run. Today, most migrants in the research area return to live and work in their homes in the sending communities. The trend, however, follows a different track: the aforementioned wish of some migrants to repeat the migration process or to build new houses in urban areas can possibly lead to a long term loss of human capital.

In connection with this trend following questions arise: First, how can this process and its associated negative effects be ceased, if not even returning migrants want to stay in their

home settlements? What kind of incentives have to be created so that either the youth *and* returning migrants see positive future prospects in their homes in rural areas? Another question originates from the fact of changing care arrangements in the sending communities: Who will take care for little children and elderly people in the long run in rural areas? It can be assumed that migration processes contribute to declining traditional set-ups in the research area. The consequences for childcare and the care for the elderly population in the research area cannot be foreseen and need to be further investigated.

## Conclusion

As a response to economic uncertainty and unemployment many households in Gumkhana, Jaradar and Bel Terek reacted with international labour migration especially to Russia and Kazakhstan. Overall, migration is generally well received, since remittances have significantly improved the economic situation of the migrating, as well as non-migrating members of the households. Moreover, there are signs that also non-migrants in the sending communities benefit from this mobility. Through their transfers, migrants make essential contributions to their families and to a smaller extend to the communities: in the short run lives are sustained, relative wealth is generated in the families and non-migrants can partly profit from the increasing consumption behaviour. This research therefore supports the NELM approach since it clarifies the importance of migration for both migrant and non-migrants households and not alone consequences of the individual migrant.

Additionally the findings show that there is a need to treat remittances - even when they are for non-productive purposes - as a significant contribution toward human development by countering deprivation and by facilitating the access to goods and education. However, there are several critical side effects of migration: Labour migration to Russia and Kazakhstan and the failure of migrants to return to rural areas, exacerbates the lack of qualified personnel especially in the service sectors and may change the already declining care arrangements for children and the elderly population. Also the enlarged social networks eventually support people's decision in favour of migration or in not returning home. The examples of Gumkhana, Jaradar and Bel Terek show that migrant networks play an important role. Provided assistance and useful information by migration networks regarding accommodation and job-hunting in an unknown country have positive effects on migration. With the help of these networks costs and risks of the migration procedure can be reduced notably. Also the economic factor concerning significant income differences between Kyrgyzstan and Russia or Kazakhstan further encourages especially young people to migrate. If migration continues to exist on this scale in the research area, negative social impacts like the disruption of traditional care arrangements will be a challenging process in the future.

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## **Facilitating Development in Rural Kyrgyzstan. The Example of the Arslanbob Local Authority**

### **Introduction and rationale**

During the Soviet era, most people in Kyrgyzstan had secured state paid employment and officially, there was no unemployment. A focus on education improved literacy rates, access to basic health services was guaranteed and a system of pension insurance was in place that sufficed for a reasonable subsistence (Schmidt 2006: 13). Inquiries show that most of the elderly population of the Arslanbob local authority, comprised of the head village Arslanbob and 4 other settlements, namely Gumkhana, Bel Terek, Jaiterek and Jaradar, associate Soviet times with very positively connoted memories of security and continuity (ibid: 36). With the end of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the socialist system, the development of Kyrgyzstan experienced a harsh set-back. Becoming an independent country in 1991, Kyrgyzstan underwent radical changes which revoked much of the progress made during the Soviet years. Poverty and unemployment escalated during the first decade of independence. Medical assistance had to be paid for and public welfare services such as social welfare and unemployment assistance were scaled down. The economic recession was the consequence of the disintegration of the system that for decades had set a very strict (but socially very safe) frame. The resulting disorder was increased by people's lack of experience, since for many decades they had been taught not to act on their own responsibility (ibid: 18, 37).

The research area also saw an economic recession in the early years of independence which seriously affected people's lives. Most wage labour jobs dropped away or the wages no longer sufficed for essential expenditures such as groceries (Schmidt 2013: 315). This tense economic situation of households in Arslanbob was, and continues to be, aggravated by a rising population since 1991. As a consequence, the exploitation of natural resources in the region intensified, as most people gain a large part of their livelihood from the utilization of the local natural resources, namely wood, fruits and nuts from the forests as well as agrarian land. Furthermore, unequal access regulations within unbalanced power structures can play a role in the context of rising pressure on natural resources.

In a publication about Kyrgyzstani development employees and volunteers, Féaux de la Croix (2013: 448-449) states that literature about development in Central Asia generally turns on questions of the impact of development programs on people's lives, about the relationship between civil society, the market and the state, etc. In the context of rural development, questions about sustainable development processes that encompass economic, social and environmental aspects are being discussed.

This paper aims to contribute to the discussion about facilitators of rural development using the example of the Arslanbob local authority. The main research objective was to create an overview of the different actors that have been contributing to the development process of the Arslanbob local authority since the independence of Kyrgyzstan until today. Furthermore, it was intended to outline the different spheres of activity of the

development actors. A classification of development spheres was created in order to analyse the perceived deficits which induced the actors to become engaged.

The qualitative data of the research was gained from 18 expert interviews conducted in Arslanbob, the administrative centre of the Arslanbob local authority, Gumkhana, one of the four other settlements of the local authority, Bazar Korgon, the capital of the same-named *rayon* (district) and Jalal-Abad, the capital of the Jalal-Abad Province. With the help of resource persons who maintain long lasting relations to our university, it was possible to arrange contacts to more interviewees. The expert interviews were conducted with representatives of all groups of stakeholders potentially contributing to the development process: governmental and non-governmental actors, international, national and local organizations, private businesses, private individuals and the local community. The interlocutors were from the service provider or donor as well as from the recipients' side. Conversations with the local population were also crucial to get a more general understanding of the development process, the perceived problems and the community's solution to them.

### **Discussing the term 'development'**

Depending on the position and the point of view of the interlocutor, a very different understanding of the term and the concept of 'development' could be observed during the research. Not only do the perceptions of what kind of development process is desired or required vary, but also the ideas on how to put these aspirations into practice. One can discern three different notions of development: the use of the term in the political and public sphere, its appreciation in the academic world and its application by development organizations.

The term development is widely attributed to definitions that match Chambers' notion of 'good change' (Chambers 2004: iii). However, this definition requires the determination of what is good and what kind of change matters. The idea of development as a process, going from an inferior to a superior condition, as illustrated for example in Rostow's historical model of the stages of economic growth (1960), remains valid, despite severe criticism of this doctrine. Most people continue to use industrial production and economic growth as a benchmark for development and equate the level of civilization with the level of production. This idea has been marked by President Truman's inaugural speech in 1949 when he said:

"We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas"  
(cited in Esteva 2010: 1).

Since then underdevelopment has been equated with economic backwardness, the lack of science and industry. The industrial mode of production became the definition of the terminal stage of a uni-linear way of socio-economic evolution (ibid.: 4).

There are several other approaches to development that resulted from the criticism of measurements that only use one criterion e.g. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as an indicator for development. The Human Development Index (HDI) developed by Mahbub ul

Haq and Amartya Sen in the 1990 is applied to measure development for the annual United Nations Human Development Report. The HDI acknowledges the importance of not merely assessing economic development but human development, by taking into account the three dimensions of education, a long and healthy life and a decent standard of living.<sup>1</sup>

The sustainable development approach also considers the natural dimension. The term is famously defined by the Brundtland Report (1987: 54) as meeting “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”. Even though the term sustainable development recognizes that the conservation and protection of nature is necessary, the ulterior motive is anthropogenic. It is doubtful, however, whether these concepts of development contribute more than a simplified instrument of measurement or a theoretical framework to understanding how sustainable development works in practice.

Practitioners of the development community like to work with instrumental approaches. They use clearly defined development indicators which can be matched with previously determined development outcomes e.g. the attainment of a 90 % literacy rate. Thus the achievement of development can be quantified. However, these bureaucratic objectives may not always correspond to the interests of the ‘development’ beneficiaries. It can therefore be argued that this is a rather paternalistic approach, which assumes to know what is good for people’s well-being based on a set of universal values and characteristics (Sumner & Tribe 2008: 13). Supporters of the critical development approach argue that the development discourse itself has been constructed in the global North (the idea that economic progress signifies development) and this value system has been imposed on the global South. Since those who construct the discourse are also in the position to define the notions of inferiority and superiority, the power structures are obvious. One of the leading post-development theorists, Arturo Escobar, even views development as a mechanism for the production and management of the Third World and believes that the discourse of development actually constitutes the problems that it purports to analyse and solve (1992: 157). In this context it is interesting to analyse the actors that are part of and contribute to the process called ‘development’.

### **Actors facilitating development in the Arslanbob local authority**

The identified actors that have been contributing to the development process in the Arslanbob local authority since independence in 1991 until today can be classified according to two main criteria: whether they are governmental or non-governmental and whether they are national or international (Table 9.1).

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<sup>1</sup> The HDI is calculated using the following indicators: Life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling and the GNI per capita (Purchase Power Parity US\$). However, according to the 2010 Human Development Report, the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) represents the actual human development more accurately (UNDP 2014).

**Table 9.1: Actors facilitating development in the Arslanbob local authority**

Actors	Governmental	Non-governmental
National	Government on different administrative levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National</li> <li>• Region (<i>oblast'</i>)</li> <li>• District (<i>rayon</i>)</li> <li>• Village (<i>aiyl</i>)</li> </ul>	NGOs, individuals, community, private enterprises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Based Tourism Association (CBT)</li> <li>• Lesic Yuk (Forest sector)</li> <li>• Arskok (Agricultural cooperative)</li> <li>• Rural Advisory Service (RAS)</li> </ul>
	International	Governments and embassies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USA</li> <li>• Germany</li> <li>• Switzerland</li> <li>• Japan</li> </ul>

### ***The role of governmental actors in the development process***

The state in Kyrgyzstan as a facilitator of development has a relatively weak position. After independence, Kyrgyzstan succumbed to the neo-liberal economic guidelines of international organizations in order to secure financial assistance of Western states. The ‘shock therapy’ meant that certain directives had to be put into practice, such as the retreat of the state from several sectors and a wave of privatization, for instance in the educational- and the health care sector. This roll back of the welfare state encouraged by international interference brought a loss of trust in the state. Pétric (2005) introduces the term of a “globalized protectorate” to speak about the particularity of Kyrgyzstan being an independent state in which many prerogatives of the state are ensured by foreign actors.<sup>2</sup> The subordination to Moscow in Soviet times was converted into dependence on the international community, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank having a huge influence on Kyrgyzstan’s economic policy (Pétric 2005: 322-323).

The development process of Arslanbob is shaped by the state at four different governmental levels: the national, the *oblast'* (region), the *rayon* (district) and the *aiyl* (village). Since the adoption of a new version of the law on local self government in 2008, more rights and duties were transferred to the local level. Since then, decisions on the local budget are made locally and public services are provided by the *aiyl okmotu* (municipal administration) and *aiyl kenesh* (municipal council). The local budget being extremely restricted due to low tax income, the Arslanbob local authority receives subsidies from the national central budget (Schmidt 2013: 278-279). However, corruption and misallocation of funds remain a big problem within the country. The low wages paid by governmental employers induce employees to misuse their power. State employees are

<sup>2</sup> The term “global protectorate” denominates a new form of political space that is not comparable to a post-colonial model of predominance of the colonial power but with multiple international actors (states, NGOs) assuming preponderant roles (Pétric 2005: 322).

often involved in informal processes of land allocation or firewood concessions. In addition, they grant themselves extra agricultural and forestry resources in order to diversify their own source of income.<sup>3</sup>

International governmental actors are mostly foreign governments represented by their embassies. Their contribution to the development process is mainly in form of financial assistance in smaller or larger infrastructural projects such as building new roads, electrification of a certain area or renovating public buildings (e.g. the roof of a school or a hospital). Governmental development agencies, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) or HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation are often partners for projects with national NGOs. The GIZ is the only of them running a project during the research period. In cooperation with Arskok, they are running a research project to determine the best suited potato varieties for the climate and soil composition of the area.<sup>4</sup> Representatives of the GIZ are regularly on site for evaluation meetings and to supervise the project. The Textbox 9.1 presents ARIS, a national stakeholder involved in the state's efforts to facilitate development in rural Kyrgyzstan.

**Box 9.1: Example of a national governmental development actor: ARIS - The Kyrgyz agency for rural development**

ARIS was founded in 2003. It has its head office in Bishkek and an office in every *oblast'*. The overarching aim of ARIS is to contribute to the alleviation of rural poverty. This is done by facilitating income and improving the infrastructure. Projects in the following areas are funded: 1) Economy and infrastructure, 2) Ecology, 3) Social infrastructure (hospitals, schools), and 4) Micro projects (loans to shop owners). ARIS supported 50 projects in the Arslanbob local authority between 2006 and 2010, working together with local representatives, elected in every village. Groups of different stakeholder were formed (e.g. women, elders, youth) to identify the specific needs and the most urgent problems. ARIS provided 75 % of the costs of the projects conducted (coming from the World Bank Group, the KfW Entwicklungsbank or certain governments (USA, European countries, Japan)) while 25 % had to be contributed by the local population (often done in the form of manpower).

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<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon seems to confirm T. Rauch's assessment, that decentralisation is not a magic bullet for peace and democracy but instead needs to be closely related to the specific social and economic conditions of a country and a society. Kyrgyzstan is a relatively young nation state which has been encouraged to introduce the democratic political model by international donor organizations, namely the WB and the IMF, which have also prescribed the policy of decentralization of power. Regarding that previously the country was a communist state, with no independent decision making power, and the extreme decline of well-being in the ex-Soviet states in the years after independence, decentralization might have been an inadequate, expeditious policy (2001).

<sup>4</sup> This project is part of the activities in the context of the GIZ Program "Promoting stability and conflict transformation in south Kyrgyzstan" (project phase 2011-2014) aiming to address the humanitarian crisis after violent clashes in 2010. This is done with a main focus on the promotion of agricultural production to stabilize the livelihood of the rural population (interview).

### *The role of civil society and NGOs in the development process*

The discourse about civil society in Kyrgyzstan arose during the democratic transition period in post-Soviet times. The ‘shock therapy’ adopted by Kyrgyzstan after the break down of the Soviet Union aimed at transforming the country into a democracy and a free market economy in the sense of Western governments (Pétric 2005: 319). The major challenge and the biggest learning process for the Kyrgyz society were to create an awareness of autonomous and self-responsible decision making and acting (Schmidt 2006: 38). The strengthening of the civil society facilitated in order to restore its competence after decades of centralized state rule was a key interest of the multitude of international organizations that became active in Kyrgyzstan after independence. Similar phenomena have been observed in many parts of the world, where in specific moments of historical transition (e.g. after the end of a long lasting dictatorship) international organizations, foundations and NGOs suddenly mushroom, believing in their contribution to the process of democratization. The idea is questionable, however, that the number of NGOs is a direct evidence for the strength of civil society and that NGOs are automatically autonomous from the state and do not reproduce power structures (Pétric 2005: 319). There are several reasons not to see the ‘NGOisation’ in such a positive light. In the transition time after independence, the phenomenon of ‘internal brain-drain’ was observed. Due to higher wages, many of the educated elite working in state structures sought employment in the emerging field of international and national NGOs, thus leaving a gap of labour force and expertise in the public sector. The fact that most of the organizations were financed by international sources furthermore led to a dependency on foreign funds. As such, NGOs are not accountable to the Kyrgyz state or its citizens, but to their foreign donors (Pétric 2005: 326).

Everywhere in Arslanbob there are signboards installed by a multitude of development projects funded and organized by national and international NGOs. All over the country the effects of the ‘grant rain’ of numerous donors can be observed.<sup>5</sup> Two national NGOs with a permanent office in Arslanbob could be identified: The local branch of the national Community Based Tourism Association (CBT) and the association of Arslanbob’s potato peasants (Arskok). Other national NGOs coordinate their work from their headquarters in different parts of the country - the environmental organization Lesic Yuk and the Rural Advisory Service (RAS) with seats in Jalal-Abad. The only international NGO that was visibly settled on site, with a small office and a common accommodation for their volunteers, is Cross Link Development International (CDI). All the other international organizations have only been coordinating their work in the region from either the national office in Bishkek or from the home country of the NGO. Since most of them only give financial or advisory support, they don’t need a permanent presence on site. Save the Children, Mercy Corps and the German Agro Action have been running projects in Arslanbob in the past, but are currently not active.

The direct influence of the community on the development process of the village can be seen through the contribution of communally organized work, called *hashar* (usb./krg.).

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<sup>5</sup> There are currently over 10,000 civil society organizations registered in Kyrgyzstan, and only around 3,500 of them are operational (ICNL 2014).

The tradition of community work comes from the Muslim custom of granting one day in the week to work for the community's wealth. The *aksakal* council consisting of the elders of every major street in Arslanbob agree on a working day and communicate it to the households living in their neighbourhood -the *mahallah* (usb.). Each household is expected to send one person. The common working force is mostly mobilized for short term interventions mainly in two instances: (1) In cases where the local government fails to provide basic public services such as for example repairing a broken bridge after a strong rainfall. The local government often lacks financial means to deal with such incidents and the bureaucratic mechanisms are relatively slow. (2) Furthermore, the community organizes its work force in cases where an international donor organization promises financial support to a project and expects a contribution of the population. Depending on the project proposal, this contribution is usually calculated in a certain percentage of the total project budget and is mostly conducted through manpower instead of monetary payment.

**Box 9.2: Example of a national non-governmental development actor: The Kyrgyz Community Based Tourism Association**

The Kyrgyz Community Based Tourism Association (CBT) 'Hospitality Kyrgyzstan' was created in 2001 with the endorsement of the Swiss development agency HELVETAS who primarily helped to establish CBT by providing marketing-, training- and organizational development support. The support included business trainings, calculating prices and advice on minimum standards to be met in order to host international tourists. There are 16 CBT offices all over Kyrgyzstan which are independent of each other but work closely together under the common principles: 1) CBT relies on participation of local stakeholders. 2) CBT has to contribute to the local economic development through increasing tourism revenues. 3) CBT has to develop socially and economically sustainable tourism.

CBT Arslanbob started in 2003 with five home-stays, one coordinator and one guide for mountain tours. Today it offers accommodation in 18 home-stays and employs 20 local guides for its hiking, biking, horseback and winter tours. The credo of CBT, according to their web page, is that it must support products, services, knowledge and practices found in local communities and offered by local stakeholders. CBT requires that the majority of revenues gained through accommodation (usually 80-90 %) can be retained by the families, while the remaining amount generally supports the shared community office and the national association.

**The main development spheres: environment, income generation and basic public services**

The previously mentioned actors contribute to different development spheres. Every institutionalized actor and every individual perceives the development situation differently depending on the actors' circumstances. Different factors such as the social, political and financial position of the actors as well as internal and external power structures influence

the possibilities of the actors to become active and the degree of impact on the development situation. These differing conceptions of existing deficits lead to diverging opinions on what should be done to improve a given situation and how it should be done.

A needs and resources assessment<sup>6</sup> conducted by CDI in 2012 in Arslanbob surveyed the perception of the development situation amongst the local population. The greatest perceived development deficits mentioned were the lack of employment for both men and women, environmental degradation, insufficient infrastructure and a low primary health education (CDI Report 2012). These main perceived deficits correspond to the three discerned development spheres: environment, income generation and basic public services (infrastructure, health and education). The following parts will give an overview of the actors which facilitate development in Arslanbob, categorized by the development spheres in which they are active.

### ***Improving environmental protection through sustainable management of natural resources***

Since the population of Arslanbob has risen substantially in the last decade, from about 1,800 inhabitants in 1939 to 11,100 in 2008, natural resources are suffering from growing stress (Schmidt 2013: 287). Due to population growth, there is an increased need for firewood as well as arable and grazing land for the growing number of livestock.<sup>7</sup> The unique fruit and walnut forests in Arslanbob are an important economic factor in the region. For almost every household of Arslanbob the forest utilization is of great importance to their livelihood: collecting and selling walnuts, extracting firewood and letting their animals graze in the forest. Due to the rise in unemployment after independence, natural resources in general have gained importance for households to generate income and for self-supply. The utilization of the forest is regulated by the state forest enterprise - the *leskhoz* - ever since the end of Soviet rule. However the regulation and protection measures are not being implemented appropriately, partly due to lack of personnel and to corruption. The forest is often treated like an 'open access' resource and therefore overexploited (Dörre & Schmidt 2008: 221). Since a major part of Arslanbob's population directly or indirectly relies on the natural resources as a major livelihood ingredient, most people are aware of the environmental degradation that threatens their living environment.

The activities of development actors in the environmental sphere can be divided into three types of activities: there are measures implementing pure adaptation and coping strategies such as fixing erosion-prone slopes or to free rivers from riverine sediment. The local population has to cope with the direct consequences of environmental degradation in their daily life and have few possibilities to implement strategic large scale projects. Therefore the community is often the main actor implementing adaptation strategies. Secondly,

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<sup>6</sup> Volunteers of the international NGO conducted this survey before starting their work in Arslanbob in order to get to know the perceived needs and the existing resources and potentials.

<sup>7</sup> During Soviet times, the number of livestock in private property was strictly regulated but in the last decades the livestock has considerably risen as animals serve as important capital investment for households which can be sold in situations of need. Officially, the number of cows and sheep doubled between 1979 and 2003 but informal information quote that it has even increased fourfold. Moreover, there are held approximately 1,600 goats which were forbidden in Soviet times due to their aggressive eating behavior (Schmidt 2006: 23).



there are measures operating directly against environmental degradation, for example through the implementation of ecologically adapted methods in agricultural practices. Thirdly, there are measures trying to counteract environmental degradation indirectly and pre-emptively through awareness raising campaigns among the population. CBT is one of the driving forces in the educational projects. They conduct workshops with pupils and other target groups, e.g. at the mosque.

In Arslanbob most of the households are Uzbeks, and in their bread is the most important staple food. It is common for each family to bake their own bread. The bread baking oven, the *tandoor*, is not very energy efficient as it is usually situated outside of the house and not contributing to the heating of the living space. As the main part of domestic energy is coming from firewood, the consumption of firewood in Arslanbob is very high. CDI is conducting an energy efficiency project in order to reduce fuel consumption. Energy efficient ovens that combine the different customary usages were developed, taking into consideration that the households' habits vary strongly depending on the seasons. The developed ovens are used particularly in wintertime for baking bread several times a week, heating the house and providing the households constantly with hot water for *chai* (green and black tea that is consumed throughout the day). So far, two of these ovens have been built by an international CDI volunteer in Arslanbob. As capacity building is a main objective of CDI's development approach, two men from the local population are being taught how to build these specialized ovens. The aim is to diversify the income generation of households through the development of an independent business.<sup>8</sup>

A predominant issue is the management of natural resources in Arslanbob, most importantly forest and pasture management. There are several actors involved in the process of improving the management system in order to reduce the stress on natural resources. The Kyrgyz NGO Lesic Yuk<sup>9</sup> with an office in Jalal-Abad was founded in 1996 with the financial assistance of the Swiss Agency of Development and Cooperation (SDC) and is dealing with the implementation of a community based integrative forest management system (CFM). Between 2000 and 2012 they were very active on site. Several Swiss and one Kyrgyz employees organized open seminars to inform the local population about changes in mechanisms and allocation practices in forest management, thereby promoting transparency. Since 2012, the NGO continues to contribute to a more participative and democratic management system by organizing elections for the allocation of positions with a degree of responsibility, such as the director of the local forest enterprise. It also carries out educational work in Arslanbob's schools and mosques in order to raise ecological awareness in the villages of the Arslanbob local authority. Lesic Yuk educates people, for instance certain pupils and imams, to act as multipliers of

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<sup>8</sup> In the course of - unverified - rumours about proselytization efforts pursued by CDI representatives in the community of Arslanbob, the NGO felt to impelled to stop its activities and left the settlement in autumn 2013 (editor AD).

<sup>9</sup> Lesic Yuk, initially called Lesic Intercooperation, was founded as a cooperation between Kyrgyz experts and the Swiss development organization Intercooperation (today HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation). In 2010 Intercooperation ended their project period and since then Lesic Yuk is financed by the non-profit American NGO Christensen Fund, which is focused on biological and cultural diversity. The project period of the Christensen Fund will end in 2015.

knowledge. The mosque is a convenient institution to raise ecological issues, since the Imams have a very high social position and have regular contact with the population.

Since its initiation, the organization supporting sustainable tourism in the area, CBT, has conducted small environmental projects such as organizing collective rubbish collection days or doing ecological tours for Arslanbob's pupils. CBT has also installed rubbish bins and put up signs to request their usage. The NGO aims at increasing peoples' consciousness for the beauty of nature and the need to preserve it.

### ***Diversification of income sources and promotion of sustainable tourism***

Unemployment was mentioned as the biggest perceived problem by 70 % of those surveyed by CDI in 2012. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, most people in Arslanbob formerly employed by the state lost their jobs. There are virtually no industries and apart from some agricultural products, and there is relatively little business activity. While employment opportunities have declined, the overall population has greatly increased. The basic livelihood for most households is a combination of agriculture, forestry and livestock<sup>10</sup>, but these sources of income are not sufficient to nourish the growing population. Due to its picturesque mountainous surrounding with two waterfalls close by and diverse outdoor opportunities, Arslanbob has great potential to benefit from tourism. Since the 1960s, Arslanbob has been a major touristic attraction for tourists from within the USSR. Several boarding houses - *pensionaty* (rus.) - and guesthouse style accommodations provided the opportunity for recreation. Since independence, most of the recreational centres for groups have been closed or privatized and the number of visitors in Arslanbob has declined (Schmidt 2006: 30; Schmidt 2013: 323). Although international tourism and the total number of tourists visiting Arslanbob has been increasing again in the last years, only seven percent of the people surveyed by CDI in 2012 mentioned tourism as representing a part of their income. After having conducted the survey in 2012, CDI started a number of activities to meet the biggest perceived deficit of the population in Arslanbob - unemployment. Besides the oven-building training that is already in progress, CDI is initiating wood carving and sewing projects to train young men and women in the production of high quality souvenirs for tourists. For this, assistance in the marketing of products is an issue to be addressed.

CBT is mainly engaged in the sector of sustainable tourism and an example of an NGO active in a range of activities. Its focus has been changing and broadened over time. CBT has been successful in diversifying the sources of income for a remarkable number of households and the amount of individuals profiting from an income generated by the touristic offer of the NGO is constantly growing. CBT home-stays primarily benefit from accommodating and serving meals for tourists from Europe, the USA and Japan, while tourists from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia (representing the majority of tourists) more commonly stay in private home-stays and provide themselves with own food supplies. Another range of people benefit from the work of CBT indirectly, such as market vendors

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<sup>10</sup> Over 40 % of the masculine population work in the forestry sector and another 30 % in the agricultural and livestock sector (Schmidt 2013: 316).

or taxi drivers, and directly, such as porters for mountain tours and horse owners, lending their horses for tours.

Since Arslanbob is a rather remote village with limited access to other markets, creating access to various markets as well as the branding of products is crucial to increase sales and thereby improve the economy of the village. Improved marketing is not only necessary for touristic commodities but also for agricultural products such as potatoes as the most important sales product in Arslanbob. Ever since the cessation of centralized storage and selling of agricultural products during Soviet times, the storage of potatoes has been a major concern to peasants in Arslanbob. After independence, peasants either stored privately or rented common storage rooms in loose and changing groups. This procedure was costly and inefficient. Another problem was that the farmers were inexperienced in marketing their products as during the Soviet era there was only one, guaranteed recipient of their products (the Soviet administration). Thus for the single farmer it was difficult to make a profit after the end of the Soviet Union. In 1996, the Arslanbob potato peasants founded *Arskok (Arslanbob Kartoschka Onduuruyu Kooperati)* to better organize and articulate common interests. The German Agro Action gave advisory and technical support in the organization's beginnings. There has also been advisory support by the Rural Advisory Service (RAS)<sup>11</sup> through an international expert sent by the German Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM). In 2007, a common potato storehouse was built with the financial support of the GTZ. Co-financed by the GIZ, the building was renovated in 2013. As it is often the case for donor funded projects the community had to contribute a certain percentage (in this case 60 %) to the construction costs. For this purpose the inhabitants organize themselves to fulfil the community duty, in the tradition of *hashar*.

Further actors worth mentioning in relation to income diversification are two microcredit institutions in Arslanbob: *Mol Bulak* and *Companion*. They promote the expansion of revenues by awarding individuals with microcredits to enable them to start small businesses.

### ***Investments to improve the basic public services***

The budget of the Arslanbob local government is relatively low because the most important sources of tax revenue - arable land and forest area - are under the control of the respective *leskhoz*. Tax revenues can only be derived from the real estate tax from private land and a business tax from businesses, touristic institutions and commercial deals. These revenues are however not sufficient to finance all expenditures to be covered by the local government (infrastructure, educational- and health institutes and wages of civil servants), and the municipality receives a subsidy from the national budget (Schmidt 2013: 278). As the local budget is hardly sufficient to pay for the running charges of basic public services or for unexpected bigger expenses, such as repairs of the infrastructure or public buildings, other actors step in to fill the financial gap. The main actor is the Kyrgyz development

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<sup>11</sup> RAS is financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SCD) implemented by HELVETAS through the Kyrgyz-Swiss Agricultural Program (KSAP) through credits by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). RAS has independent offices in each *oblast'* that apply for the funding of their projects to donors. There are twelve local employees in Jalal-Abad and one international advisor (own data).

organisation ARIS. Through international funds 41 social infrastructure projects have been accomplished in Arslanbob. Apart from the biggest project, the construction of the hospital in 2006, smaller projects such as building a kitchen and toilets for the kindergarten were implemented. Nine micro projects, supporting small private businesses were carried out (e.g. acquisition of a refrigerator for a shop or mountain equipment for the local CBT group). The second very important infrastructure project, the construction of the polyclinic, was realized with the support of USAID in 2005. Smaller one-time contributions, such as providing the nursery and two different schools with equipment and furniture, were performed by Mercy Corps between 2003 and 2006.

To promote health education, CDI is developing a pregnancy calendar. This appears to be particularly important considering the fact that the abortion rate amongst women in Kyrgyzstan is extremely high, which is connected to numerous health risks. Furthermore, Mercy Corps supports the local nursery by organizing seminars for nursery workers on hygiene issues and healthy nutrition since 2006. They also sponsor annual food consignments of vegetables and staple food.

After the violent clashes between Uzbek and Kyrgyz ethnic groups in 2010 in the cities of Jalal-Abad and Osh peace work to foster intercultural understanding between the ethnic groups has been important. Save the children carried out integration workshops for school children in 2010, also sending some traumatized children to Arslanbob for recovery.

As seen, in Arslanbob there are activities and projects running in all three different development spheres: environment, income generation and basic public services. They are all promoted by different actors.

## **Conclusion**

The overview of the actors engaging in development in the Arslanbob local authority since 1991 reveals a broad landscape of different actors that can be distinguished according to their nature: from international governmental organizations to local non-governmental and private actors. The primary reason for the commitment of these development actors is to complement or substitute the state, where it is unable to perform its duties or cannot satisfy the needs of the local population. Therefore the different actors become active in an attempt to fill a capacity gap.

The spheres of activities in which the actors are engaged revolve around the three axes of environment, income generation and public services. These areas appear to be a direct response to the most urgent deficits perceived by the local population. Financial assistance by international actors plays an important part in the accomplishment of larger infrastructure projects, while the national actors are mostly engaged in direct project implementation (e.g. CBT, *Arskok* and *Lesik Yuk*). The international actors can be sub-classified into pure donors (e.g. World Bank) and those who implement projects but often also contribute with funding (e.g. Mercy Corps, GIZ, and USAID).

A key issue which emerged during the research relates to the factors that contribute to the failure or success of development activities. This question is difficult to analyse, since there is no common agreement on what the multitude of development activities are

expected to contribute to. As the research has shown, there are, however, in particular three factors which contribute to successful development activities:

1) It is important to carefully take the local resources as well as the populations' abilities into account before introducing a development initiative (e.g. the failed cheese making training).<sup>12</sup>

(2) Strong, imaginative personalities, who can maintain a conscious link between the donor and the community, above all in terms of objectives and communication, can greatly contribute to the success of development initiatives (e.g. the CBT Arslanbob).

(3) Conferring ownership<sup>13</sup> on the local population enhances the efficiency and sustainability of development. People who are directly involved in the accomplishment of development initiatives are more likely to take charge of their own development process. This can be viewed as an ultimate aim of development - that it becomes independent from outside assistance and can be self-contained by the local actors.

As shown by the example of Arslanbob, development is a multifaceted process to which a wide range of actors contribute. Development can be understood in different ways, but in order to make it efficient and sustainable in the long-run, it is crucial to consider the needs of the local population. These shape their personal understanding of development and are crucial for their commitment. The population of Arslanbob appears to agree on the necessity to create job opportunities, to improve the regions' infrastructure and the need to preserve the natural resources. The development actors which have been and currently are active in Arslanbob seem to be responsive to these demands albeit with different degrees of success, depending on the factors set out above.

According to the Human Development Report 2013, with an HDI of 0,622 in 2012, Kyrgyzstan remains among the low human development country group (UNDP 2013). Objectively this classification would likely be approved of regarding the region of Arslanbob. However, we would like to acknowledge another aspect of human development, which is not recognised by the development indicators previously mentioned - namely the significance of the community. In our opinion this is a very valuable asset which Arslanbob features. Our experience confirms that Arslanbob is a place where social networks, such as kinship and community, are of great importance as safety nets and the preservation of the traditional community work *hashar* keeps a solidarity spirit alive. It is a factor which in our opinion greatly contributes, on the one hand, to the classical development of Arslanbob but also provides for a kind of social well-being and an unofficial insurance which should not be underestimated in the investigation of development processes. The degree of

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<sup>12</sup> In an attempt to diversify income opportunities, a Swiss expert came to Arslanbob in 2012 in order to teach four women the making of goat and cow cheese. Since the livestock gave too little milk to produce extra cheese, the women did not continue the making of cheese after the expert left.

<sup>13</sup> According to Cedric de Coning (2013), when people from within the international development sector use the term 'ownership', they actually mean that the representatives of a given society should be encouraged to voluntarily choose to adopt the neoliberal norms and institutions that the international community has designed for them. What we mean is that the local population should actively participate and contribute to the construction of development processes in order to develop a sense of 'ownership' for the project introduced. Ideally this would allow them to take over 'ownership' of the processes after the development partner has ceased to take part.

solidarity cannot be measured by any development indicator, nor can its importance be integrated in the traditional development model.

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