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Irène Mestre

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Community-Based Pasture Management in Kyrgyzstan

What impacts on the resilience of local communities?

Pasture User Unions (PUU) were introduced in Kyrgyzstan in 2009. Although Water User Associations already existed, it was the first time community-based management was initiated on pastures for the whole centralasian region. Pastures are at the cross-point of major economical, ecological and social issues for Kyrgyzstan. Based on the theory of the Commons of Ostrom (1990) and work on territorial resilience of Aschan-Leygonie (2001), we investigate how the community-based pasture management affects the resilience of local communities.

Map of Kyrgyzstan (creation: MSRI)



Pasture Users Unions : giving the users responsibility?

All pasture users in one rural municipality are members of the PUU. However, governance is made difficult because of the of the institutions and stakeholders playing different roles : the users, the PUU, the executive body and the rural municipality.

The end of pasture lease

The previous pasture management model based on lease was inefficient in raising funds. Nowadays, pasture user pay a fee per livestock head, defined locally. PUUs also receive funds from international organizations.



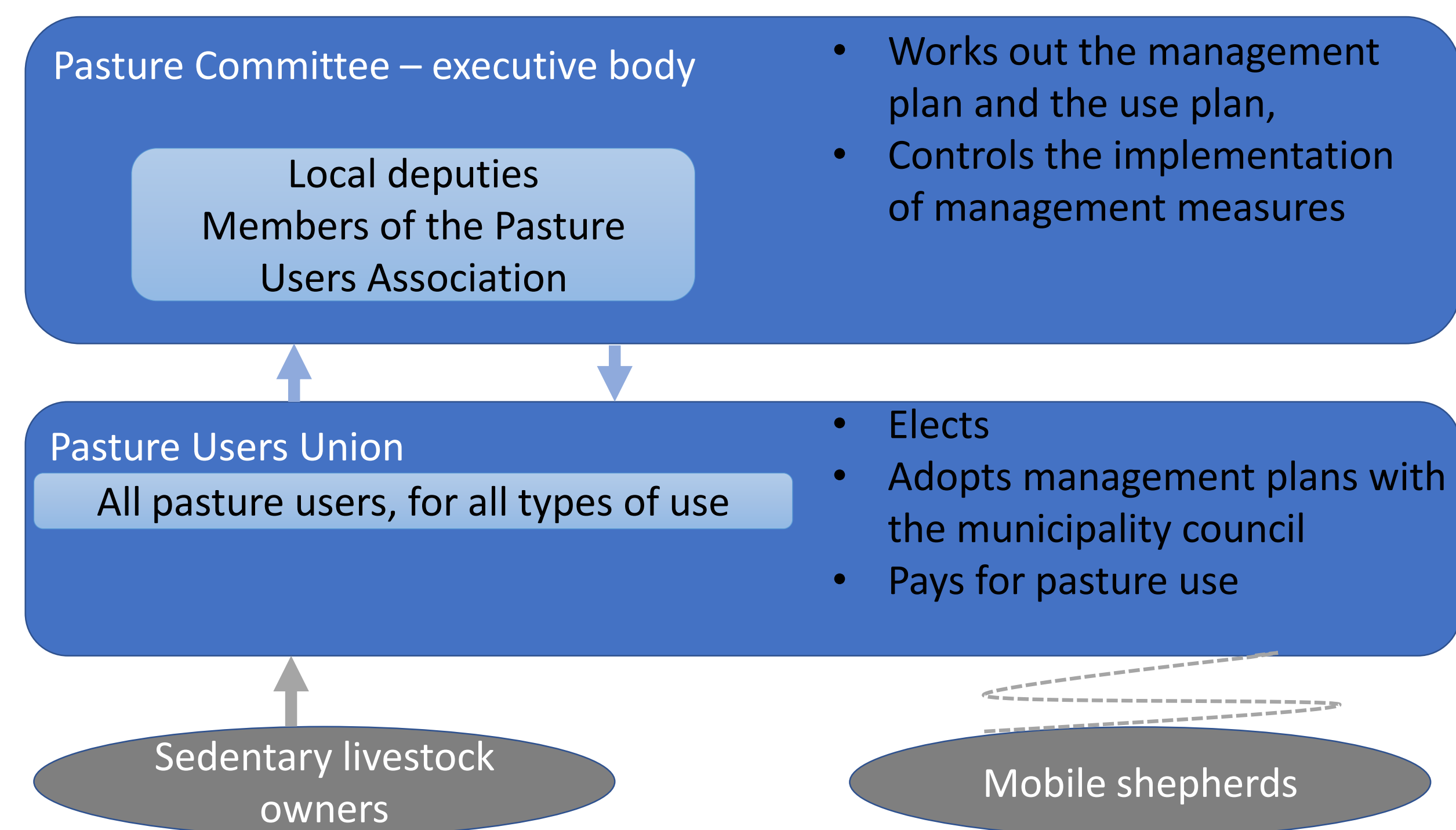
Livestock owners have better access to PUU decision making, as they are based in the villages.



Grass-root decision-making in heterogenous communities

Shepherds are more likely than livestock owners to be excluded from the decision making as they live outside of the villages, are mobile and were not involved in the implementation. However, they are interested in the actions of the PUU and try to influence the management plan.

Decision-making in the PUU according to the legal framework



Pasture Degradation and livestock mobility

The community-based pasture management was partly adopted to fight pasture degradation which occurred because of the reduction of livestock migrations. It was expected that it could be overcome by involving the users, and through financial support of international organizations, PUUs would have the financial capacity to rehabilitate Soviet infrastructure and to develop management plans.

Degradation as the reflect of conflicting concepts

The lack of unified concept of degradation and of methodology to measure it, hinders the capacity of PUU to monitor pasture quality. Pasture management plans according to pasture conditions to regulate the use are not developed.

Coordinating in a scattered management

PUUs administer only 70% of the pastures of the country, the rest being under the management of Forestry Management Units. However, managers need to deal with a seasonal use of pasture which does not always fit to that administrative borders..

Innovative mechanisms for inter-PUUs cooperation

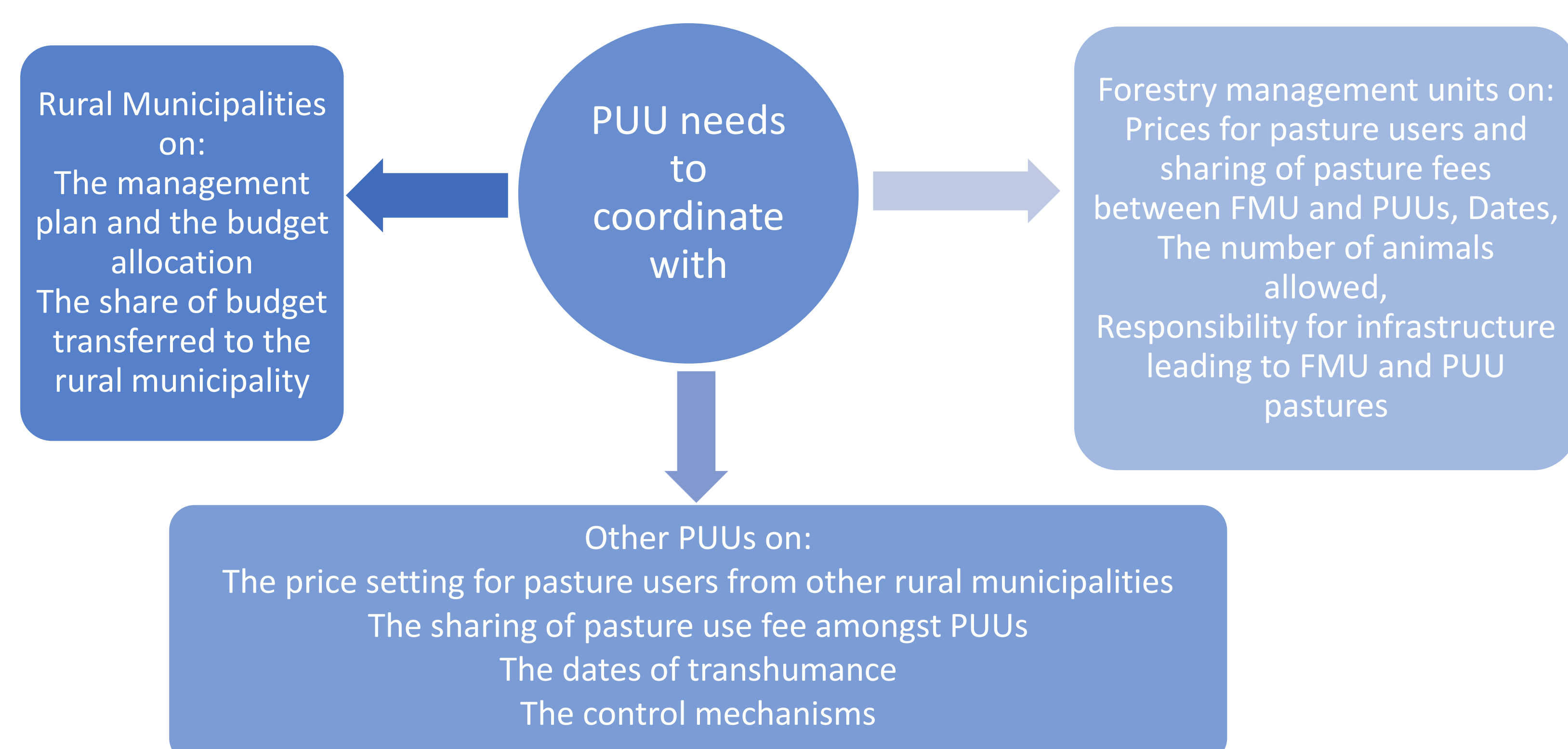
PUUs coordinate their actions regarding the price setting for pasture users from other PUUs, the dates of migration and the number of animals allowed. These issues have potential for conflicts, however, the creation of PUUs associations at district level at their initiative shows positive results.



Shepherds setting up their yurt for the first time on spring pastures. The pasture they use was allocated by other shepherds nearby and not by the PUU

Infrastructure : the core of pasture management?

PUU do not have the capacities nor are legitimate to allocate pastures. PUU focus on the rehabilitation of Soviet infrastructure of access as it encourages longer transhumances, is easy to implement for PUU, and allows to rally support from pasture users.



Forestry Management Units and Pasture User Unions: overcoming conflicting understanding of the environment

The Forestry Management Units function differs from PUUs as their official objective is nature conservation. However, because of lack of fundings, pasture lease is one of their major source of income.

Regarding the impacts on the vegetal cover, as the PUU invest largely in access infrastructure it is more likely that livestock load is more evenly distributed. However, as there is no monitoring outputs are questionable. The PUUs are one of the few user based institutions in a set up where top-down approach dominates which hinders collaboration. The PUUs because of their weak legitimacy rely on pasture users and need to make sure that no stakeholder group is harmed by their measures. In this sense, they strengthen resilience by increasing intercommunity interactions. Community-Based Pasture Management allows the inhabitants to be actively part of the formal management, with their perception and knowledge of the environment.