

Decentralisation and Participatory Development in Kyrgyzstan

*The Dual Role of Continued and
Reconfigured Institutions*

Guro Gjørven



Master Thesis
European and American Studies
Faculty of Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Spring 2013

Decentralisation and Participatory Development in Kyrgyzstan

*The Dual Role of Continued and
Reconfigured Institutions*

Guro Gjørven

© Guro Gjørven

2013

Decentralisation and Participatory Development in Kyrgyzstan. The Dual Role of Continued and Reconfigured Institutions.

Guro Gjørven

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

IV

Abstract

From its independence from the Soviet Union 22 years ago, Kyrgyzstan has engaged in profound governance changes. The word ‘governance’ implies the rules that govern the public arena. In the Kyrgyz setting, this translates to administrative-political institutions at local, district, provincial and central levels, organising and governing the public arena and public resources. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan lost Moscow as its political-administrative centre. Kyrgyzstan was cut off from not only economical support, but also knowledge and social and technical skills on how to govern their society. Kyrgyzstan started out as a relatively open system being the only Central Asian state opting for parliamentary democracy. The republic quickly turned to international donors, especially the World Bank, and aid agencies. Donors and aid agencies have pushed decentralisation of political decision-making and participative measures in Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz government, with support from donors and aid agencies, has created mechanisms for local self-governments and people’s participation in these.

This thesis will analyse how decentralisation and participatory development have unfolded in Kyrgyzstan, as these agendas have been criticised for not taking account of power structures in the society at the local level, and between local societies and powerful policy-makers and aid agencies. As the Kyrgyz government has implemented traditional and informal elements in modern, democratic governance structures, this sets the stage for a range of institutional sites to use or abuse to gain political power. Water governance has become particularly precarious in Kyrgyzstan, as operation, governance and maintenance disintegrated after Soviet collapse. This has created conflicts and poverty both locally and regionally.

Decentralisation and participative efforts have to a large part been implemented by aid agencies and the Kyrgyz government in water governance as well. Local water associations, governance by local governments and collective volunteer work for digging canals are some of these measures. This thesis will study a village case where an irrigation project is supported by the Aga Khan Foundation with a focus to improve local participation and governance in water irrigation, develop agriculture and create possibilities for youth. This thesis will, through a ‘politics of scale’ and ‘institutional bricolage’ analysis, explore the possibilities and obstacles for different actors to move and use the reformed institutions of water governance. In particular, it seeks to answer how different villagers participate in the governance system, and if they gain decision-making power through local self-governance reforms.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I want to express gratitude to all my informants who have entrusted me with their information and given me their time. My thoughts and gratitude are with the people of Kun Elek, my 'extra family' in Gulche and my always supportive interpreter Aigerim and her family. Thanks to the staff at the Aga Khan Foundation and at the MSDSP who has been extremely helpful. I want to thank my supervisors Pål Kolstø and Marianne Millstein for much appreciated advice and guidance. I am very grateful for Marianne Millstein and Kristin Fjæstad for being such great sources of inspiration. Thank you Per Byrkjeland and Kristin Fjæstad for editorial support.

I wish to thank my family and friends; mom, dad, Eli, my neighbours Per and Thea and all other friends and family that have supported me through the writing of this thesis. A great support throughout this period has come from the other master students at the Institute of Literature, Area Studies and Language; thank you! A special thanks to Marcus for kindness and support.

I am fully responsible for any inaccuracies or mistakes in this thesis.

Oslo, May 2013

Guro Gjørven

Abbreviations

AKDN: Aga Khan Development Network

AKF: Aga Khan Foundation

AO: Ayil Okhmotu

CBO: Community-based organisation

ICG: International Crisis Group

INGO: International non-governmental organisation

MSDSP: Mountain Societies Development Support Programme

NAMSU: National Agency of the Kyrgyz Republic on Local-Self-Governance Affairs

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal

WRMD: Water Resources Management Department

Glossary, organised thematically

Ayil Okhmotu: a) Group of villages or loose settlements subsumed under one administrative jurisdiction.

b) The executive administration committee of this juridical-administrative unification of villages. Functions like a government versus the parliament at the local level.

Ayil Kenesh: Representative council of the a) Ayil Okhmotu at the local level. Functions like a local parliament in the two-tier village administrative jurisdiction. Performs checks and balances on the administration b) Ayil Okhmotu.

Kenesh: Elected council bodies that are the administration bodies' checks and balances at all levels- Oblast, Raion and Okrug/ Ayil Okhmotu.

Oblast: Province/ region. First layer of sub-national territorial-administrative units below the central level.

Raion: District. Layer of sub-national territorial-administrative units below oblast level.

Okrug: Overlapping with the meaning of a) of Ayil Okhmotu. Territorial-administrative level below Raion layer.

Akim: Head of state administration at raion level.

Governor: Head of state administration at oblast level.

Head of Ayil

Okhmotu: Head of both Ayil Okhmotu and Ayil Kenesh.

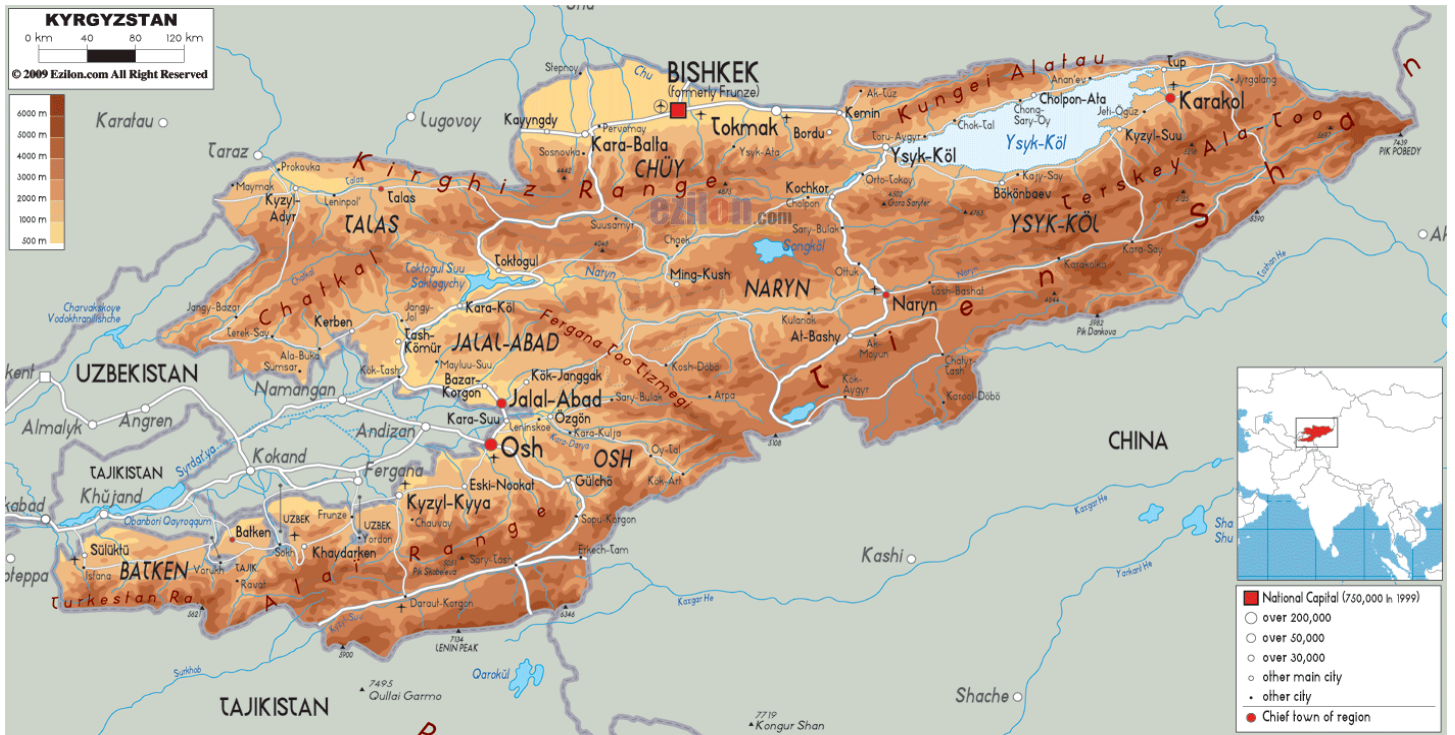
Aksakal: Elder, male member of the community. Enjoys respect and holds a specific position in Kyrgyz society. Can also denote knowledgeable and skilful, which includes middle-aged men as well.

Ashar: Collective voluntary work.

Tooganchilik: The norm of traditional village or community solidarity, the basis for the performance of ashar and patronage network support systems.

Kurultai: Village/people's assembly or congress. Kurultais can be arranged by villagers, village leaders and aksakals, but also by national leaders. Used for encouraging collective decisions on local, regional or national matters, depending on the Kurultai is held at local, regional or national level.

Map of Kyrgyzstan¹



¹ Available at <http://www.ezilon.com/maps/asia/kyrgyzstan-physical-maps.html>, accessed 12.05.2013

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Research questions	3
1.2	Relevance of the research questions.....	5
1.3	Limitations	8
1.4	Clarifications	9
1.5	Structure of thesis.....	9
1.6	The case study. An integrated irrigation project in Kun Elek.....	10
2	Methodology	13
2.1	Qualitative methods.....	13
2.2	Case-study as method.....	13
2.3	Stages of the research process	14
2.4	Data-gathering: Interviews as method.....	15
2.5	Doing interviews. Where, when and how	16
2.6	Positionality and gate-keeping	18
3	Theoretical departures	20
3.1	Good governance reforms	20
3.2	Decentralisation.....	21
3.2.1	Governance and politics of scale.....	23
3.2.2	Participation as democratic decentralisation and good governance.....	25
3.3	Participation – the new tyranny?.....	27
3.3.1	The tyranny of the group, the local and wider power relations.....	28
3.3.2	The tyranny of the method	30
3.3.3	What kind of participation?.....	31
3.4	Participation as citizenship; a political project.....	32
3.4.1	Spaces for citizenship claiming.....	33
3.5	Institutional bricolage.....	36
4	Political dividing lines and informal mechanisms	38
4.1	Dynamics of conflict, power structures and political dividing lines.....	38
4.2	Informal politics, institutions and structures of power.....	39
4.3	‘Clan’ as an exhausted term?	41
4.4	Political participation in Kyrgyzstan.....	43

5	Good governance reforms in Kyrgyzstan.....	46
5.1	Good governance and decentralisation reforms	46
5.1.1	The political-administrative levels of governance and their interconnectedness 48	
5.1.2	Governance within the water sector	50
5.1.3	Donors in the governance system.....	51
5.1.4	Decentralisation and local self-government	53
5.1.5	The executive local governance level - enabling and disabling participation..	55
5.1.6	Checks and balances on Ayil Okhmotu	57
5.1.7	The Ayil Kenesh. Dependence on the Ayil Okhmotu.....	58
5.1.8	Jamaats and other bodies of public self-governance	59
5.2	Formalising informal practices in governance structures.	60
5.2.1	Traditional community solidarity and volunteer labour reconfigured for development efforts.....	63
5.2.2	Social control functions in local governance	64
5.2.3	External aid agencies meeting old practices in resource governance	65
5.3	Concluding remarks	68
6	Village project in Kun Elek. The NGO between government, village, informal structures - and participation.....	69
6.1	The case study: Kun Elek village.....	69
6.2	The INGOs' position and role in a complex political field. Between Western policies and local politics.	71
6.3	INGOs and development agencies play an enabling and a disabling role at the same time	73
6.3.1	Knowledge transfers from the INGO	74
6.4	Village norms and mechanisms: Local leaders and their network, knowledge, social control and checks and balances.	77
6.5	Village participation. What kind of participation, and who participates in what?... 81	
6.5.1	Ashar – participation as labour and resources.....	81
6.5.2	Participation in decision making or participation as information?	82
6.5.3	Women in the village. Women falling outside of participation – but not all women	83
6.5.4	Spaces for women - transformative spaces or empty spaces?.....	89
6.5.5	Participation of other vulnerable groups.	90
6.5.6	Who benefits? Differences in benefits from the project for different groups ..	92

6.5.7	Leaders and authority persons – legitimate or illegitimate power?	93
6.5.8	Community solidarity and social control	94
6.6	Concluding remarks	96
7	Conclusion.....	97
	Literature.....	101
	Interviews	116

1 Introduction

Donor driven efforts for democratic development have profoundly changed the relationship between the people and the state. From the late 1980s, donors and aid agencies have pushed policies of good governance and decentralisation in receiving countries to create effective government institutions and boost democratisation. Governance can broadly be defined as the formal and informal rules that govern society or the public realm (Batterbury and Fernando 2006). So, when one talks of good or democratic governance reforms, this entails changes at different levels and organs of government ensuring accountability, efficiency, transparency and democratic and participative decision-making (Batterbury and Fernando 2006; Sehring 2009). Good governance and decentralisation reform policies have entailed a diffusion of decision-making power to different state, market and civil society actors at local, regional, state and global levels. Much decentralisation efforts involve pushing decision-making power to lower levels of government and local institutions at the cost of central state power. This has created changes in the way central government, regional authorities, local powers and citizens relate to each other (Doornbos 2001; Batterbury and Fernando 2006; Grindle 2011). I will come back to the definition and different relevant aspects of governance in the chapter on theoretical departures.

In Kyrgyzstan, decentralisation and participation by the people in decision-making is now central policies in most governance spheres and institutions. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Kyrgyzstan was cut off from its earlier central decision-making level; Moscow. Kyrgyzstan inherited a strongly centralised political-administrative system, wretched with inefficiencies and corruption. Much knowledge on how to govern society was lost, as policies, technical plans and knowledge were created or situated in Moscow. Experts fled from the newly independent state to the Russian capital, and Kyrgyzstan experienced a severe economic crisis as subsidies from Moscow were cut. The economical crisis escalated as the whole economic-political system of the Soviet states disintegrated (Adamson 2002; Sehring 2009; Baimyrzaeva 2012). Kyrgyzstan quickly turned to international donors, particularly the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, institutions which instigated privatisation and economical liberalisation of many state institutions. When entering the late nineties, donor discourse changed, also for Kyrgyzstan. Now, the focus was on democratic governance, institution building and people's participation. People's participation at local levels, in local development projects and local governments, has become part of the good governance

agenda, as local populations should participate in governance to enhance democracy and development (White 1996; Batterbury and Fernando 2006; Baimyrzaeva 2012).

In this respect, I wanted to look at Kyrgyzstan in the light of its overlapping decentralisation process and participative development process. While there are examples from developing countries where local voices have been heard (Florisbelo and Guijt 2004; Waddington and Mohan 2004; Kulipossa 2004), these good governance reforms have just as often lead to the further neglect of local excluded voices by strong local or other political elites or wider global political-economic processes (Doornbos 2001; Batterbury and Fernando 2006; Grindle 2011). As these processes have been challenging in many parts of the world, how are they unfolding in Kyrgyzstan?

In many development projects run by international aid agencies in Kyrgyzstan, local self-government and people's participation are meant to ensure sustainable public services and sustainable governance of common resources. Decentralisation and participation, pushed by donors, aid agencies as well as other state and non-state actors, are to ensure that institutions governing common resources 'work properly' (Earle 2005; Adamson 2002). Much development support of this kind has been given to institutions governing the agricultural sector in Kyrgyzstan, such as the management of forests, water and irrigation infrastructure. Agriculture accounts for 27% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but 60% of employment in Kyrgyzstan, and plays a leading role in the economy².

Agricultural institutions waned after the Soviet Union disintegrated. Within water management for agriculture, energy and household use, the unified *Central Asian* water-energy system collapsed. Operation and maintenance of infrastructure, already crumbling in late Soviet times, disintegrated further due to the mentioned cut-off from and brain drain to Moscow. The economic crisis led to a decline in financial allotment to the country's water sector to less than 15% of that of the late 1980s (Iskender Dzholdoshjaliev, head of Water Resources Management Department under the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources Management and Processing Industry, 10.06.11; Sehring 2009; Kouplevatskaya-Buttoud 2009; Baimyrzaeva 2012). Today, the need for canal and irrigation infrastructure rehabilitation in the countryside is severe. Many villages lack water for subsistence farming and sanitation. High mountain glaciers in Kyrgyzstan contain considerably important water

² [AKF UCA Application Form Norwegian MFA 30.11.10..DOC](#), accessed 12.05.2013.

sources for the whole Central Asian region. Climate changes are affecting and continue to affect common natural resources in a severe way, which also affects its neighbouring countries lacking mountainous water-holdings (Jansky and Pachova 2006; Granit et al. 2012). This adds to the difficulties in and importance of resource governance. There are also security considerations to the governance reforms, as water and other resource conflicts across and within land-borders in Central Asia are a challenge (Olsson et al. 2010).

Donors' and the government's good governance and participation efforts entailed governance changes within the agricultural sector institutions. But these efforts also entailed changes in the vertical political-administrative system – that is, the national, provincial and local decision-making institutions' role relative to one another. When reforms are made for stronger local governance, the relationship between higher levels of government and local government often change. More decision-making power is being placed at the local government. Participation reforms are in addition created to make the local government represent the people at the local level and create a 'democratic chain' from the people to the state (Sehring 2009). In Kyrgyzstan, these changes have created a complex political-institutional field, a mix of old and new, formal and informal institutions. Within this institutional field, international NGOs and aid agencies are implementing their projects. In this thesis, I want to explore this political-institutional field and how it affects the development efforts of an aid agency or INGO. I want to analyse which actors are involved in a development project, and what role and position of power these actors have – from the national to the local level - in the implementation of a development project. I also want to look at how villagers are involved and participate in these development projects, which are designed to have an effect on the participation of the people in their own development. I want to shed light on what kind of 'participation' is actually taking place, and if excluded groups such as women and young people are taking part in participatory measures. What is, in practice, meant by good governance, decentralisation and participation by the people in development efforts in the Kyrgyz context?

1.1 Research questions

Governance reforms means that a range of different actors and institutions, from different levels of government to villagers and their local leaders, are involved in decision-making to different degrees. In addition, aid agencies or INGOs are often included in the process, giving

them a role within the Kyrgyz governance system. So, the first bulk of my research questions is as follows,

1a) *how have institutional decentralisation and participation influenced different actors' and institutions' roles in governance processes?* To support this main question, a second question is, 1b) *How has this affected development in Kyrgyzstan?*

My second bulk of research questions is as follows,

2a) *what is the role of an International Non-Governmental Organisation and other different actors involved in a participative project at the local level?* The supportive question here, helping to elaborate and deepen the main question is 2b) *How do different villagers participate in village development projects where issues of governance and participation are involved?* This question seeks to shed light on how villagers participate in governance structures and their own development, and to what extent more excluded individuals and groups, such as youth and in particular women, gain in decision-making power through representation in their local government.

As mentioned, reforms in water and irrigation governance have been particularly in focus in development projects in Kyrgyzstan. Hence, in my thesis I have chosen to analyse an integrated irrigation project in a Kyrgyz village, Kun Elek, and the governance and participative elements in this project. The project has many goals that cross different sectors - agricultural development, job creation, villagers' participation, youth development and halting out-migration³. I have divided the analysis into two chapters, representing the two bulks of research questions. In the first analytical chapter I analyse how Kyrgyz good governance and decentralisation reforms have affected different government levels. These reforms entail a mixing of traditional and new institutional traits, which affects participation and governance mechanisms in function at the local village level. I also analyse the role of donors and INGOs role in this governance system. In the next analysis chapter I then analyse an INGO project in the South Kyrgyz village mentioned, Kun Elek, and the participation and governance process in this village as a single-case study. The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), and its sister organisation Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) are the leading implementing forces in the project. The thesis will examine AKF's/MSDSP's role in the village, and whether the project is creating participation by or empowerment for villagers. I

³ [AKF UCA Application Form Norwegian MFA 30.11.10..DOC](#), accessed 12.05.2013.

particularly look at women in village participation, as they constitute a vulnerable group in the Kyrgyz society. The thesis will look at villagers' role in decision-making in development issues, and how villagers are connected to decision-making organs, institutions and actors, both formal and informal. Non-structural interviews of villagers are an important component of the case-study.

1.2 Relevance of the research questions

Mosse (2005), ethnographer and a practitioner in rural participative projects for decades, argues that reform policy models, like a project's pledge to engage in 'participation of villagers', function well to legitimise a project and mobilise political support, among state actors, villagers and other donors or agencies involved in the project. However, policies 'do not provide a good guide to action, nor can they easily be turned in to practice,' (Mosse 2005, 16). As development projects involve different actors with completely different agendas and power statuses, and who lead power-struggles with other actors over limited resources, the policy and reforms agreed upon when deciding on implementing a programme will most likely not be turned into practice. Practice and outcomes are completely different from, although hiding behind, policies (Ferguson 1994; Mosse 2005). The policy of reforms such as participatory governance will be upheld also after the project is finished, as this continues a support for a policy behind which lies the best intentions, but also a range of practices and outcomes that might even go against the idea of 'participation'. As Mosse (2005) explains,

"Ideas have to be understood in terms of the institutions and social relationships through which they are articulated, *and* (...) relationships have to be understood in terms of ideas." (Mosse 2005,11).

The development agenda has been pushing decentralisation and participation for many decades, whilst continuously learning about its shortcomings and failures (Apthorpe 18.09.2012, seminar, Norwegian Foreign Policy Institute, Oslo). It is therefore I find my topic highly relevant and urgent. As aid agencies and governments are implementing decentralisation and participatory reforms, I argue like Mosse that there needs to be more focus on 'the institutions and social relationships through which they are articulated,'. As reform policies directed to implement decentralisation and participation are connected to formal institutions and still built on Western models of government, their should be more analysis of how these formal institutions, both INGOs and forms of government, meet

underlying informal institutions and practices in different ways. I agree with Mosse (2005), following his argumentation that it is not the objectives and policies *per se*, the written statements and motivations for decentralisation and participation that are important for outcomes of development projects. It is the actors involved and what they actually do with the stated idea of decentralisation and participatory reforms - through a myriad of different institutions - that ought to be the starting point of analysis. This will illuminate complex, surprising and perhaps unexpected and confusing outcomes, both positive and negative ones, of participatory development (Institute of Development Studies 2010). This is why I believe my topic of institutions and actors in village participatory projects are important. I believe this method of analysis is important, because analysing projects based only or mainly on motivations and stated and written policies, project proposals and reports from development agencies will narrow the complexity of your answers, not to mention exclude many complex answers on what participatory projects really do in a community.

I was very inspired by the report “An upside down view of governance” (Institute of Development Studies 2010), which encourages everyone that is working within the development field to forget the mental models on governance and development that are rooted in OECD experience. “Instead of prioritising reform of formal institutions, they should look at the structures, relationships, interests and incentives that underpin them”, (Institute of Development Studies 2010). On the one hand, these researchers acknowledge a positive trend where more aid agencies and donors, including the World Bank, are now more focused on the need to understand country context, the interests of actors and the factors shaping these. But on the other hand,

“The core objective of the analysis is usually to improve the effectiveness of aid operations. The aim is to find practical solutions – often to development problems identified by donors. There is a tendency to attach labels to problems, and to see political patronage, rent seeking, and vested interests as ‘pathologies’ to be addressed through reforms that promote accountability, transparency and rules-based behaviour (World Bank 2008c). This risks oversimplifying a very complex reality, and can induce unwarranted optimism about the ability of donors to facilitate and support reform coalitions.” (IDS 2010, 6).

I believe my research questions to be highly relevant, as they seek to analyse and understand the informal institutions through which actors operate in Kyrgyzstan. I will explore the meeting of both development institutions and practices and formal and informal Kyrgyz institutions and practices and *how* they work together, without labelling any of them automatically negative or positive.

Some research has already been done on decentralisation, participation and governance of water and other resources in Kyrgyzstan. Baimyrzaeva (2012) explains how donors focused on formal national-level institutional changes, but had little extensive knowledge of the context in which they were implementing the changes. In Kyrgyzstan, formal reforms were not followed as informal ties secure resources and employment for many. Outcomes were further corruption, strengthening of elites, economical deterioration and the creation and further sustaining of ill-functioning institutions. Sehring (2009) claims that conflicts and competition for power and resources between and within different institutions, both formal and informal, created problems for functioning water governance in four institutional spheres; the decision-making process, the agricultural sector, the local governance institutions and the internal water-institutional linkages. In addition, Mosello (2011) identifies financial constraints as one of the main obstacles for water governance cooperation. He adds three other obstacles – political volatility, corruption and excessive presence of external donors. Mosello believes that donors still maintain primary initiative and control over projects. This hampers Kyrgyz actors to devise their own sustainable strategies. Jailobaeva (2011) argue in contrast that when aid agencies started to move away from supporting NGOs directly from the mid-2000s, they enabled mutual cooperation and support between the state and the Kyrgyz NGOs.

Nonetheless, Earle, Bichsel, Sehring and Baimyrzaeva also argue that the excessive presence of external donors is a problem. They assert that useful informal institutions of society are being misunderstood and thus rendered dysfunctional, by INGOs (Earle 2005; Bichsel 2009; Sehring 2009; Baimyrzaeva 2012). Babajanian (2011) mentions how participative measures in World Bank-supported irrigation projects in Kyrgyzstan did not always generate participation from the most vulnerable. Many of the more underprivileged villagers, especially in the poor North, disagreed with the payment methods that were forced upon them by village elites, project managers and project policies. Basing projects on village traditional norms, although mobilising needed local resources, reinforced top-down control mechanisms.

Messerli (2008) and Ibraimova (2009) contend that participation from all levels of decision-making is unrealistic, as participative measures threaten the hierarchical methods of state structures in Kyrgyzstan. The executive branches of government have too much power, knowledge and influence in comparison to the representative branches. Also, the conditions

required to secure public interests are not present, as decentralisation was initiated from the top in a *pro forma* way.

I actively use these contributions in my thesis, but wish to use them as background material for the analysis of the roles of different actors in the governance system and how they influence participation in my single-case study. I include an analysis of politics, power, knowledge and coping mechanisms at all governance levels and how these structures have an effect on each other. My contribution is that I analyse these aspects from the viewpoint of a 'politics of scale'. As an analytical framework, this suggests that scales of politics, from the local to the global, have an effect on each other, though often in a non-hierarchical and complex way (Görg 2007). I look at how politics at different governance levels together have an effect on my single-case participative project. Another contribution is that I also draw the analysis of decentralisation and participation much closer to the theoretical framework of space claiming or potential for space claiming, citizenship claiming and institutional bricolage. Some scholars (Hickey and Mohan 2004; Gaventa 2004) believe that creating a transformative, political space based on your rights and duties as a citizen will be the only way to create empowerment for excluded groups through participative measures. *Empty spaces* or *invited spaces* are still controlled by elites. What is needed for an empowering form of participation are spaces that are entirely formed or claimed by excluded groups. At the same time, Henry (2004) asserts that informal local coping mechanisms, highly important to secure resources for small and excluded communities, are often based on strict social control of some by local elites. It is naïve to try and implement space claiming and empowerment of the excluded in these settings. Cleaver's (2012) theory on 'institutional bricolage' is relevant here (*ibid.*). She thinks that people continuously recombine elements of different institutional logics and by this change their meaning. They use the different institutional traits there are. She argues that both new and old institutions are institutional tools which can be used by actors to gain empowerment, but that actors have very different opportunities to take advantage of them. I will elaborate on 'institutional bricolage' and analyse how the processes of politics of scale and institutional bricolage are sometimes intertwined, which gives a scaled expression of institutional bricolage.

1.3 Limitations

In Kyrgyzstan, clans and corruption are also important informal aspects in Kyrgyz politics and for development. I have chosen to focus on informal institutions rather than corruption *per se*, as I think this is beside the scope of this thesis. Clan ties and corruption are interconnected, but the word ‘clan’ in the Kyrgyz context is, some argue (Gulette 2010; Radnitz 2005), quite exhausted. For this reason, I analyse different forms of informal social organisations and relationships. In addition, formal parties in Kyrgyzstan are also based on informal mechanisms and networks. I do not include them to a large degree in my analysis as this too is beside the scope of this thesis, although they will be mentioned when relevant.

My case study is an ethnically Kyrgyz village, which has implications for societal norms and village participation. Babajanian (2011) believes that ethnically pure Kyrgyz cities have a stronger sense of village solidarity. This makes the thesis less generalisable for Kyrgyzstan, but still adds empirical evidence to theory and other research on ethnically pure villages.

1.4 Clarifications

I use the terms ‘INGO’ and ‘aid agencies’ interchangeably. These words bear the same meaning in the context of this thesis, and if they at some point do not the differences will be explained. In addition, I use the term ‘institution’ regarding many informal mechanisms that some might refer to as traditions. Nonetheless, these mechanisms function as important informal institutions in Kyrgyzstan today, as these informal traits are ‘important patterns of recurrent transactions’ and behaviour over time, and have social consequences (Kuehnast and Dudwick 2002).

1.5 Structure of thesis

This introductory chapter will be followed by a chapter on my theoretical framework. Chapter 3 will be focused on methodology. In the next chapter, chapter 4, I present some essential background knowledge about Kyrgyzstan and historical-political dividing lines. In addition, I set the stage for the analysis chapters by contextualising important concepts of the thesis. I focus on institutional changes and the challenges and developments in the economical, political, cultural and social spheres from Kyrgyz dependency in 1991 up until today. This will be a framework to understand Kyrgyzstan today, as well as the following analytical chapters. In chapter 5 I present Kyrgyz good governance and decentralisation reforms. I

present the Kyrgyz administrative-political governance system as different layers from the national to the local. I analyse the result of these reforms, and how these reforms have shaped the different layers of government. I also analyse how Western agencies and policies are part of Kyrgyz governance reforms, and what role they have. In the next analytical chapter, chapter 6, I analyse an aid agency/INGO's role locally as a strong governance actor. In this case, it is the AKF/MSDSP's role in decision-making and participation at village level. I analyse local participation in view of local power relations, other governance levels' politics and other wider structural processes. I look at how and to what extent different villagers are participating in their own development and governance organs. In chapter 7, I conclude and return to the research questions.

1.6 The case study. An integrated irrigation project in Kun Elek.

As mentioned, my case is an integrated irrigation project in the village of Kun Elek in the Alai valley in the Osh province in Southern Kyrgyzstan. The project was planned by the Aga Khan Foundation's main office in Bishkek, and was operated and managed by its local sister organisation in Osh, the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP). It was financially supported by the Norwegian government, the Sustainable Land Management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai programme under United Nations Development Programme and the local government under which Kun Elek villagers are constituents. Also, villagers and private contributors donated 55 841USD. The whole cost was 93 897 USD⁴. This irrigation project is integrated as the MSDSP's approach is to always include the involvement of the population and vulnerable groups in governance and development questions. In addition, they promote the creation of sustainable and market oriented agriculture in the village. This again will create opportunities for the youth of the village, and halt the massive migration tendencies of the village. Migration is a challenge for Kyrgyzstan as a whole⁵ (Saparova 15.11.11; Saparova (email), 07.02.2013).

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a wide and diverse group of development and business agencies. The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) is their development branch. AKF focuses on a small number of specific development problems – education, health, rural

⁴ [Infrastructure 2011 report August Norway.xls](#)

⁵ [AKF UCA Application Form Norwegian MFA 30.11.10..DOC](#)

development, the environment and the strengthening of civil society⁶. AKF has a larger programme in the Kyrgyz republic called Promoting Stability and Economic Opportunity in Kyrgyzstan. This is not one project, but in fact AKFs overall goal for their projects in Kyrgyzstan. AKF wants to promote stability and economic opportunity by focusing on the poorest province⁷, Naryn, and the Southern province, Osh. In this way, the AKF implements projects in both the South and the North. Ethnic tensions are exacerbated by harsh living conditions and land scarcity in Osh oblast (Kipping 2008, 311). The Alai valley areas in Osh oblast have poor water and land conditions, scarce and arid mountaineous landscapes. The valley and its mountainous areas has a larger amount of emigrating and unemployed youth than the rest of Osh oblast, but the whole Southern part of Kyrgyzstan has larger amounts of emigrating or internally migrating populations (Olimov and Omlimova, 2007; Nasritidinov et al. 2010) . Because of these conditions, and arguably especially because of a volatile security situation being a neighbouring country to Afghanistan⁸, many development agencies and donors focus on South Kyrgyzstan.⁹

AKF and its partner University of Central Asia, also an agency under AKDN, aim to promote economic opportunities and stability by training civil servants to improve governance at regional and local level, train and employ youth, support entrepreneurship and rehabilitate or build infrastructure. Emigration, youth employment, development of sustainable agriculture, land and water security, governance issues, market developments and ethnic conflicts are tightly interconnected challenges and processes in Osh province. Nearly 40% of employed youth are working within the agricultural sector, which is characterised by seasonal work and low salaries (around 48 USD a month). Rural economic development is restrained by dilapidated infrastructure, weak agricultural markets and a constraining policy environment. As a consequence, the people are outmigrating in an unprecedented fashion. Nearly 20% of the country's population is living abroad, mostly younger men, although the number of women are also on the rise. Many others have fled to urban areas¹⁰.

Kyrgyzstan has a young population. Demographic data from 2008 show that 39% of the 5,2 million that constitutes the population are between the ages of 14 and 34. Two thirds of all

⁶ <http://www.akdn.org/AKF>, accessed 16.03.2013.

⁷ In Kyrgyzstan and many post-soviet countries, provinces are usually called oblasts. I will refer to both oblasts and provinces in this thesis.

⁸ http://www.rferl.org/content/EU_Envoy_Warns_Of_Regional_Risk_From_Kyrgyz_Instability/2080537.html, accessed 07.02.2013.

⁹ [AKF UCA Application Form Norwegian MFA 30.11.10..DOC](#), accessed 12.05.2013.

¹⁰ [AKF UCA Application Form Norwegian MFA 30.11.10..DOC](#), accessed 12.05.2013.

young people live in rural areas and 43% of the residents in Osh City are youths. The anti-government protests leading to president Bakiev's ousting in 2010, and the ethnic violence in the aftermath of the ousting, is to a certain extent consequences of the rural deprivation experienced by the unemployed youth. Therefore, the overall programme, Promoting Stability and Economic Opportunity in Kyrgyzstan, has an integrated approach. With this approach, irrigation projects are followed up by integrating local governance organs and villagers in decision-making. Employment of young men is also something that AKF wants to integrate in agricultural projects.¹¹

The project was instigated by local actors, not the AKF. 'Niva', who is the head of the Ayil Okhmotu, the local self-governance administrative unit of several villages to which Kun Elek belongs, together with other leading figures of the village, proposed the irrigation development plan to the MSDSP. The proposal shared some of the same goals as the AKF overall program for Kyrgyzstan mentioned above - Promoting Stability and Economic Opportunity. The project proposed by the village to AKF is about halting the youth emigration process and bringing development to the village by building a canal for irrigation of non-populated land in the village. It has been decided by the librarian, Niva and the villagers at a village community meeting that the new, irrigated land would be given to young families. The canal will also irrigate the lower part of the village, as there is no water in this part of Kun Elek. As mentioned, there is an extreme lack of jobs all over Kyrgyzstan and especially in Osh oblast. It is also considered to be vital for the country to improve its food security situation^{12,13}. According to the head of AO, the village suffers because of its lack of water (Niva, 29.11.11). If young people were able to grow crops to sell on the market and feed their animals, the hope uttered from village leading figures and villagers is that young people would to a larger extent stay and not go to Russia or Kazakhstan. At the same time they would develop their own country, create better economic opportunities and thereby halt ethnic tensions. This is also to halt emigration and develop land for agriculture (Baatyrbek, Manager of Infrastructure Department MSDSP, 16.11.11; Suleimanova, Manager of Natural Resource Management MSDSP, 16.11.11; Niva, 30.11.11; Dardarin the librarian and his group of workers, 17.11.11).

¹¹ [AKF UCA Application Form Norwegian MFA 30.11.10.DOC](#), accessed 12.05.2013.

¹² <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65314>, accessed 01.03.2013

¹³ <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp248503.pdf>, accessed 01.03.2013

2 Methodology

In this chapter, I will present methodological approaches, the qualitative methods of a single case-study based on interview techniques and gathering of other materials. I will explain how, when and why I approached my case the way I did. I will elaborate on the researcher's positionality and the stages of the research processes. I will also outline the challenges with the case and the methodological approaches.

2.1 Qualitative methods

Qualitative approaches are concerned with interpreting the social world or social phenomena to be able to understand how these are experienced, constituted or produced (Mason 2002, 3; Thagaard 2009). Qualitative methods are relevant if the aim is to understand the processes, actors, networks and power relations underpinning development issues, governance and decision-making in Kyrgyzstan. They are relevant as they show social phenomena's contextual meanings and complexities that do not surface through strict use of quantitative approaches; they give a hermeneutic perspective (Thagaard 2009). Politics and governance issues are complex social phenomena that need to be analysed and interpreted in a way that seeks explanations for and meaning behind social action (Mason 2002).

2.2 Case-study as method.

Yin (2003) describes and defines the case study method as an empirical inquiry for capturing a complex process that is explicitly bound, even blurring with, its context. In addition, the case study "benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis," (Yin 2003, 18). A case study seemed very relevant for my thesis as it provides the opportunity to explore and analyse how villagers and especially vulnerable groups and individuals are affected by their context when it comes to citizenship rights and participating in political spaces. As mentioned by Emmel and Hughes (2009, 322), the case study is particularly prevalent in the rich descriptions of methods to access hard-to-reach groups or excluded individuals.

Ragin and Becker (1992) describe cases as complex systems that are influenced by, as well as part of, a large number of processes and systems involved. This blurs the case with its

context. I found that my case was really not possible to separate from its context of other types of participation within the village, local politics and different structures of governance at different scales, from the local to the global. I look at how actors are working at and across various scales and how they influence each other (Lebel et al. 2005). The politics of scale approach is introduced in my theory chapter and followed up in the analysis chapter where I try to illuminate different meanings and practices at the different scales. This has methodological implications. I have tried to interview different actors at different political scales, juxtaposing their opinions.

The case study method has been criticised for providing little basis for scientific generalization. However, in the case study, the goal will be to expand and generalise theories (Yin 2003; Thagaard 2009). In this way, my case is not meant to be generalisable to Kyrgyzstan or developing countries, but to the theories elaborated on in my theory chapter. I try to expand some theories in my thesis. I argue, like Yin (2003) and Thagaard (2009), that doing a single case study in contrast to a comparative case study gives a unique and deep understanding of contextually bounded processes. I argue that my case – people's participation in a development agency's development/ irrigation project in Kun Elek – is such a complex system, or process, as described above. This project is interconnected with its context at different local, national and global scales. An analytic single-case study will give a deeper understanding of the case and the relevant contextual framings.

2.3 Stages of the research process

Considering that the heavy responsibility of finding the variables, or relevant influential factors, of the study at hand rests on the researcher, I did a lot of research in the beginning. In addition, in preparations for, and during my field stay I read up on methods on how to conduct research in development settings. The theories I use derive from development studies and human geography, and I found participatory development theories and newer institutional theories particularly important for my thesis. Typically, when using qualitative methods, the different phases of the research process are flexible. There is a mutual influence between the formulation of the research questions, the collection of data, analysis and interpretation (Thagaard 2009). New information from reading materials or interviews continuously adjusted the interview plan, the research question and the focus of the thesis, making the different phases of the research hard to separate.

2.4 Data-gathering: Interviews as method

Because of the complex intertwined processes at many levels of society that was the context, and part of, my case, I believed that there were diverse people involved having diverse positions, and therefore diverse opinions and insights on governance, decentralisation and participation. As mentioned by Willis (2006) on research in development settings, the meaning with qualitative interviews is not to get statistically significant results, but to hear a ‘diverse range of people who might have different opinions and perceptions based on their own experiences and context.’ (p. 146). Their different opinions and perceptions might express the power differences and interests in the society, which was an integrated part of my research questions. To capture this variation, I interviewed people operating at different political scales - from the local to the global. I interviewed both state representatives and AKF staff at national, regional and local levels. As it turned out, my interviews with AKF staff at the local level were of less importance, as the regional office was more involved in Kun Elek than the local office in Gulche.¹⁴

I also did many depth interviews with villagers. The interviews took place during a period of 14 whole days in the village, with interviews ranging from 30 minutes to 2 hours. I tried to interview as large a variation of people in the village as I could, as there are often power differences in terms of class, gender and other social characteristics within a village (Mosse 2001, 19; Mohanty 2011; Mosse 2008; Cleaver 2001). I conducted interviews with people from different geographical places in the village. Often, those who live closer to water sources are better off, and sometimes those who live more excluded and far from water resources might be worse off. This turned out to have some significance, although some significance had been erased because of the building boom in Kun Elek.

I posed follow-up questions if something that seemed relevant came up and needed further elaboration. A lot of the time I was interested in information like the respondent’s opinion, meaning or understanding of a process or an issue. A problem with informants interviews is that what they say is often a mix of ‘facts’ about a process or an issue, and their opinion on this process or issue. I therefore tried to check the facts coming up in these interviews with a range of different sources. An interview schedule was developed, but was not strictly followed. My interviews with villagers were a blur of semi- and non-structured interviews.

¹⁴ [AKF UCA Application Form Norwegian MFA 30.11.10..DOC](#), accessed 12.05.2013.

Sometimes, moving towards more open conversations was useful as it opened for topics that I had not necessarily thought about on forehand. Also, information came up that I had not earlier assessed as relevant. When I was visiting the village, there were many spontaneous interview-situations occurring with different groups or individuals. Here, non-structural interviews were the main method because the setting was quite *ad hoc*. However, I learnt to always have some questions or issues ready for different groups of people, to have as a guide, and posed follow-up questions where I felt it was necessary. I also made a village diary where I made notes on important things that had happened during the day or important things to remember. I adjusted my questions for new information gathered that would influence the validity of planned questions, or give rise to new questions.

2.5 Doing interviews. Where, when and how

It is important to conduct the interviews in a way that is comfortable for both the respondent and the interviewer (Willis 2006, 148). I found it to be appropriate to use a recorder when I interviewed NGO staff, state representatives and experts, under the consent from the respondents. When I was in the village, I chose not to use a recorder. In these ad-hoc or more private interview situations, I did not feel it was appropriate or helpful using a recorder. I rather used some five to ten minutes after the interview to plot down the interview in my notebook, discussing what had been said with my interpreter. I was inspired by the methods of Willis (2006), who used a similar method during some of her research.

I wanted to conduct the interviews where people felt comfortable, and at a suitable time. I visited the villagers' homes during the day, when many villagers do not have much to do as chores are done in the morning. As unemployment is looming, many of those who are not working in Russia or Kazakhstan are at home. Especially women are at home a lot during the day if they do not have chores in the city or are attending events outside the village. As I was walking around the village, I also met those who were herding their animals or working in their garden during the day. Mostly, I chose to meet people in their homes as this seemed like a natural place. Villagers are used to greet guests to their home, and seemed comfortable with this arrangement. For women, they have no other natural place to meet in the village. In addition, we often found informants in the taxi going from the raion city/village centre to the village almost every day. We shared taxi with men, women, old, young and poor; however,

the very poor were perhaps not likely to take taxis very often. This was also a more randomized, although not optimally random, way to find respondents.

Sometimes it was hard to talk to women alone. Husbands and grown up male children came in and out of the room as we carried out interviews. I did not want to ask the women the most sensitive questions in the presence of their husbands, like issues of male domination in the village. I thought it might create disharmony in the home, or that it would not be answered truthfully. As the men went outside again, I turned or returned to these issues.

I also found there to be both negative and positive aspects with group interviews. They are useful because respondents get to discuss the topics among themselves, illuminate different sides and perspectives, go more in depth and give useful comments to the conversation topics (Thagaard 2009). At the same time, group interviews can give the powerful a strong voice on the expense of the weak. I therefore did both single and group interviews, sometimes with the same respondents doing both types of interviews.

Having an interpreter involved advantages and disadvantages. My interpreter functioned as a cultural gate-keeper, introducing me to and acquainting me with socio-cultural practices and explaining accepted behaviour. There is a risk that something was lost in translation when we did interviews in Kyrgyz in the village. At the same time, most villagers knew some Russian and I could in this way ask follow-up questions in Russian that they were able to answer or confirm. Also, we had continuous discussion about the meaning of different terms, how to ask questions, and cleared up ambiguities before, during and after interviews. In Kyrgyzstan, relatives are often obliged to help more vulnerable relatives get jobs (Kuehnast and Dudwick 2002). This affected the way I obtained an interpreter, as it became clear that she got the job through the Gulche AKF/MSDSP office because she was the niece of the director of the office. She was an English student, but frankly, she was not that good at translating. From where I was located, in remote rural Kyrgyzstan, it was difficult to get a new interpreter. Fortunately, I could do all interviews with state and organisation employees in Russian, without translation, but with us discussing some terms that came up as the interpreter was present. Some of these interviews were also done in English, or in Russian but explaining more complex parts in English. I read up on relevant vocabulary beforehand, as I am used to studying different terminologies and technical language from translation courses. What is more, the villagers' vocabulary was easier to translate for the interpreter. Villagers could in addition explain me in Russian if there was a need for this.

In addition, what I believe to be important is that villagers in Kun Elek are vulnerable in the interview setting, as there are power differences between me and the interviewee, and in the village setting and, often, in general. I tried to have this in mind when I had to handle spontaneous challenges in the field. As a researcher one has the ethical responsibility to be careful in the research situation, as any action from my side is to impose myself and my ideas in the village (Harrison 2006). My presence there might change something in the dynamics of the village. For example, if an informant is believed to have uttered negative meanings about leaders or the project or said something besides what is the norm, they might experience repercussions. When I encountered norms that were against my own, I tried to be careful not to judge them from my own cultural stand before I had a thorough knowledge about them. This is especially related to gender norms and the different types of bride kidnapping stories I encountered.

It is important that researchers “engage in in-depth reflection and acknowledgement of their own biases” (Mayoux 2006, 123). As my interest are within a more radical or critical development thinking, also from organisational work. I would say that I am biased towards these ways of thinking. This has probably affected my research, but at the same time my academic studies do give a buffer against such biases. Many times over my prior thoughts on a subject were met with evidence of something different, and I often reflected on my stands during field work and analysis work.

2.6 Positionality and gate-keeping

The researcher is always positioned in the research field. This positionality (in terms of race, gender, nationality, age, economic status or sexuality) may influence the data gathered (Willis 2006). In the village, the possible dependence on AKF staff or elite member of communities to collect interview objects proved a challenge. Such actors are often referred to as gatekeepers in development research. Being associated with elite individuals or powerful actors might give the wrong impression about your role and intentions. Because of their position, it is in one way useful to follow their advice regarding whom to talk to. On the other hand, they will guide you, not always intentionally, to some individuals, leaving out other segments of the community (Willis 2006). If villagers think you are associated with village leaders, they might avoid any negative comments about these leaders or their situation in the village in fear of reprisals from the leadership.

In my case, it was certainly an issue that the villagers thought I represented either AKF or a Norwegian donor. Therefore, I always took time to explain that I was independent of any organisation, and that I was only doing research as a student. To get a voluntary consent or approval, I introduced myself and my research as honestly as I could and asked if they would care to do an interview. In the village I assured them that the interview would occur under full anonymity. I also asked if they had any questions about me or the research, or if there was anything they wanted to discuss that did not come up during our conversation. There is a chance that some villagers still believed I could connect them to more donor resources, and answered my questions accordingly. There is a probability that both villagers and AKF staff sometimes told me what they thought I wanted to hear. Fortunately, I did not visit the village with any representative from the AKF, but AKF put me in connection with leading figures in the village. After a while, my interpreter and I started walking around the village ourselves, then people would come over to us, or we would walk over to someone if we saw them in the street. Once the authority figures had connected me with a few people, I explained to them as politely and thoroughly as possible how I needed to find my respondent myself. When we got acquainted with someone, it was easy to get introduced to others. Thus, we gradually moved from gate-keepers to the Snow-ball method. This method is also challenging because of its lack of representativeness, as people might lead you to other people according to somewhat patterned mechanisms (Thorsen 1993). But on the other hand, talking to the villagers was the only way to get information about the other villagers, and to be introduced to them. As other villagers often knew who was poor and who was not, or other particularities about other villagers' social status, this was a good way to meet a variety of people so as to include a wide variation of characteristics.

3 Theoretical departures

Good governance, decentralisation and participation are largely interconnected processes and they are sometimes grouped under the term ‘good governance agenda’ or ‘good governance reforms’. These agendas have come from different political camps to create a better functioning democracy, in developed as well as developing states (Heller 2001). In this chapter, I will define good governance and elaborate on the context in which this concept has developed. The context has implications for how good governance reforms take place at national, regional and local levels in development countries. I will explain how community or village participation was co-opted by the good governance agenda, and elaborate on different theories and types of village participation. Arguably, good governance, decentralisation and participation have become buzzwords that hide different agendas, much because of the historical-political and institutional contexts within which they have developed (Cornwall and Brock 2006; Cornwall and Eade 2010; Leal 2007; Doornbos 2001). Further, I will explain a more radical view on participation, where participation is to create political space for excluded individuals and groups. These more radical theories also maintain that villagers should be able to claim their rights as citizens and therefore participate in decision-making regarding their own development (Hickey and Mohan 2004; Gaventa 2004; Cornwall 2004).

As participatory development projects led by an aid agency involve a meeting of new, external institutions and existing local institutions, I will use the theory of ‘institutional bricolage’. As new institutions always mix with other institutions in society, one should focus on *how*, not *which*, institutions work, according to Cleaver (2012). I will elaborate on Henry’s (2004) thinking, which is based on how institutional bricolage are part of local coping mechanisms. These can sometimes be hierarchical yet necessary for survival in a poor village. Henry (2004) argues that many good governance theorists are too naïve when they push for citizenship rights and political space for excluded individuals or groups. With the theories of participation, institutional bricolage (Cleaver 2012) and local coping mechanisms (Henry 2004) I lay the basis for the next chapters, on how the complex institutional processes in Kyrgyzstan, and power structures and knowledge transfer within these, influence village participation and the possibility for villagers’ empowerment.

3.1 Good governance reforms

Governance refers to the ‘formation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, the arena in which the state as well as economic and societal actors interact to make decisions’ (Hyden, Court & Mease, quoted in Batterbury and Fernando 2006, 1853). As with other buzzwords of development discourse, good governance spread fast as the term enclosed different meanings to different actors. The term’s open nature made it attractive, as it enabled a focus on a wide range of issues concerning public policy-making and authority issues at a time of restructuring in these spheres in many countries. It attracted policy makers, analysts, governments and aid agencies (Doornbos 2001, 94; Batterbury, Fernando 2006, 1854). The good governance agenda has been criticised for having pushed forward a neo-liberal agenda. The concept rose as the cold war ended, and originated from donor organisations’ circles, particularly the World Bank. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, Western powers no longer had to support the authoritarian or corrupted politics of some anti-communist countries that the Western powers cooperated with and supported during the cold war (Doornbos 2001, 97). Donors from the west were now setting political conditionalities on structuring and operation of receiving countries’ institutions (Doornbos 2001). For donors, countries or organisations, good governance was about introducing state structures that would enhance accountability and effective laws. These things were to prepare countries for external policy intrusion, making them ready or even disciplining them to be receptive for the guide lines of global institutions (Doornbos 2001, 96, 97). To ensure that demands would be fulfilled, it was more efficient for donors to follow the World Bank’s guide lines for governance, which focused on “creation of state-market mechanisms in developing country contexts that have been characteristic for Western liberal-capitalist systems,” (Doornbos 2001, 96).

Good governance reforms frequently involve changing the scale at which institutions operate. The term describes a shift in political power from the central state to a range of other actors – to local levels, transnational organisations, civil society and private actors (Pierre and Peters 2000). Good governance is a package of reforms in the public sector that involves changes in policy, institutions and power relations between global, international, national, regional and local levels of society (Batterbury, Fernando 2006, 1854).

3.2 Decentralisation

Decentralisation emerged as states experienced that the Western institutionalised form of welfare democracies from the 19th century and onwards could no longer ensure an efficient state democracy in the context of the 21st century (Fung and Wright 2001). Decentralisation is the ‘devolution of resources, tasks and decision-making power to democratically elected lower-level authorities that are largely or wholly independent of central government’ (Bossuyt and Gold 2000, 1). The need to reform democracy in this way was a project taken on both by the political left and right in the Western world. Leftist ordinary people’s initiatives wanted to deepen democracy and make democratic state institutions respond to the people by implementing new and creative ways of ensuring popular democracy. Disappointed by the central government’s inability to secure basic services, they wanted an ‘affirmative democratic state’ — ‘the state that plays a creative and active role in solving problems in response to popular demands’ (Fung and Wright 2001, 5,6). The right, on the other hand, saw the costs of an affirmative state as too large. Their answer was to drastically reduce the role of politics. Their recipe was to deregulate, privatise and reduce social services (Heller 2001, 5).

There are many ways of decentralising government, and for this reason one cannot generalise from one country to another. Decentralisation is grounded in diverging political traditions, takes place in different policy environments and is to reform very different administrative systems. There are different forms of decentralisation. Two important ways of performing decentralisation are *decentralisation as devolution* and *decentralisation as administrative de-concentration*. In Bossuyt and Gold’s research on Ethiopia, Guinea and Mozambique they find that in cases of *administrative de-concentration*, civil service positions and budgetary funds are allocated to lower political levels. Simultaneously, decision making most often remains centrally. Local staff tends to answer to superiors located centrally. Decentralisation as de-concentration has often created less flexible and less people-responsive government (Bossuyt and Gold 2000, 1, 2). In contrast, where there was *decentralisation as devolution*, authority is devolved from central to lower levels. Decisions about resources are made locally, and local staff tends to answer to local leadership. In addition, most definitions of decentralisation as devolution also involve that recipients of the democratic devolution are locally elected bodies (Schneider 2003, 39). This makes for real devolution of power and more flexible and people-responsive government (Bossuyt and Gold 2000, 1, 2). Outcomes of decentralisation processes can be very different if decentralisation is taking place ‘by design’ - where central government wants to improve its development performance, in comparison to decentralisation ‘by default’ -when the government lacks fiscal capacity to deliver basic

services to its citizens and wants to devolve spending to lower levels. In the last case, the state decentralises the burdens but not the power of resources (Bossuyt and Gold 2001).

Expected positive effects of decentralisation are that lower level decision makers are likely to have better access to information, and that increases in efficiency will create lower transaction costs and stronger ability to compete (Agrawal, Ostrom 2001; De Vries 2000; Andersson, Gibson 2004). In addition, decentralisation is often defended as policy because it creates greater equity and imposes higher responsiveness from government to its citizens (Agrawal, Gupta 2005, 1101; Grindle 2011). Decentralisation holds great potential for deeper democracy and development.

“Decentralised government can provide space for people to participate in local development. It can ensure a more efficient allocation of resources (including development aid), enhance local resource mobilisation and improve local governance.” (Bossuyt and Gould 2000,1).

Decentralisation presumably spreads power, and moving government institutionally and spatially closer to the people will enhance democracy by increasing accountability and participation (Heller 2001, 132). It will improve decision making and responsiveness to the poor as the local level has deeper knowledge and care for ‘its’ population (Crook 2003, 77). Heller (2001) emphasises that the decentralisation project has turned out to be difficult. In reality, people often have much less power of decision making or choice. Central power has often been *de facto* sustained (Bossuyt and Gold 2000). Private companies, becoming part of the governance system for example by delivering services previously delivered by the state, have negatively affected livelihoods because of lack of checks and balances. Local elites have frequently captured power (Crook 2003), or non-embedded policies have been unsuccessfully enforced by states, NGOs and development agencies (Bossuyt and Gold 2000). In addition, as good governance has been pushed by many institutions that accord with neoliberal policies, lack of checks and balances and a failure to take account of power relations and politics from the local to the global have to a large degree affected outcomes (Heller 2001).

3.2.1 Governance and politics of scale

Governance reforms like decentralisation involve a rescaling of decision-making powers. The term ‘politics of scale’ is defined as how politics happen at different scales, or levels in society, and that these political-economic levels are in an influential relationship with each

other (Görg 2007; Herod and Wright 2002). Scale is socially constructed – ‘a produced societal metric that differentiates space’ (Marston and Smith 2001, 615). The scales most commonly referred to when talking about politics of scale are the local, regional, national and global scales (Jones et al. 2004, 174). Today, much governance is global, or having a global influence. Decision-making powers have been rescaled from the state to the global level. Much of the earlier debates regarding politics of scale were focused on how global companies and the power and governance of international capitalism were now truly globalised, and how the nation-state had lost much of its earlier decision-making powers in this new globalised world. Politics of scale were defined as politics happening at different levels at a naturally given and static scale, where the global was powerful and influencing the powerless local (Herod 2011, xii). But later scale analysis has gained more importance as it reveals the ‘asymmetries, conflicts and confrontation of the globalised world’, (Paasi 2004, 536). Global policies, human rights, business or other social processes have connected with actors or institutions at the local or the regional level, sometimes passing the state, in an unprecedented if not new way. But now, the emphasis in the term ‘politics of scale’ is on how actors, politics and power move across scale, and that local and global political processes, and those in between at central and regional levels, are deeply intertwined, informing and being informed by one other (Herod and Wright 2002, 1-4). Furthermore, ‘socio-spatial scales are continuously reconfigured through social struggles,’ (Bolin et al. 2008, 1497).

For example, development agencies’ policies are made at a global level, and are global in scope. Nevertheless, these policies and decisions are reconfigured and contested at national, regional and local levels within the countries implementing these policies, by both non-state and state actors.

As Masaki (2007) explains, policy interventions from global aid agencies are reworked and renegotiated by actors at local levels. In this way, the politics of scale affects the relationship between the state and its people (Mohan, Stokke 2000, 249–250, 258- 261). The different levels of decision-making from the local to the global are overlapping through both formal and informal mechanisms, and not clearly separated. Therefore, the success of governance processes at one level will be dependent upon its relationship to other levels (Görg 2007, 957). In addition, actors move across and within different scales in political or social processes to achieve their diverse goals (Swyngedouw 1997; Bolin et al. 2008). For example, if a local environmental group has strong ties to powerful actors globally, they could stop

decision-making at state or regional levels. Or, if state level decision-makers are very powerful, or have powerful allies at other levels of governance, they can reconfigure or contest decision-making at local or global levels to which they are not devoted. Because of this interconnectedness of governance as decision-making, I will look at how different actors at different scales are interconnected in decision-making in Kyrgyzstan in my thesis. This will be reviewed in my analysis chapters.

3.2.2 Participation as democratic decentralisation and good governance.

As decentralisation efforts were meant to move decision-making closer to the people, these merged with another agenda of *participation by the people* in their own development during the 1980s and 90s. This agenda had its roots in more radical development thinking from the 1970s. Disappointed with electoral participation as a traditional way of broadening democracy, it was argued that more direct forms of participations in decentralised governance would ensure democratic developments.

“Participation is seen as critical to increasing the overall capabilities of citizens, strengthening fragile democracies, improving the quality of governance, and countering the influence of organized and powerful dominant groups.” (Heller et al. 2007, 627).

Participation has been invented and reinvented again as part of development policy and discourse since the 1940s. Informal participation was the alleged saviour for groups and individuals that were excluded from broader development processes through post-colonial times and times of state failure. The alternative development approaches had their heydays in the 1970s. These approaches rejected grand explanations and embraced belief in cultural pluralism and participatory development, and were linked to Post-Marxist thinking seeing participation as group mobilisation against both market and the state (Hickey and Mohan 2004). They rejected class as the only locus for fighting for one’s rights, acknowledging other identities and relations. The alternative development agenda adhered to post-structuralism and claimed that Western and male biased grand truths were to be dismantled, the emphasis was on local knowledge revealed through more radicalised ethnography (Stokke and Mohan 2000, 248; Hickey and Mohan 20004, 60). One of the most widespread methods in development work in the field became known through Robert Chamber’s Participative Rural Appraisal (PRA). He was influenced by Freire, who believed that people in developing countries should

be enabled to gain a consciousness over their own situation to be able to improve it (Chambers 1994). PRA was based on methods in which both experts and villagers joined, sometimes reversing roles, in inclusive discussion groups, consciousness building and participation in village tasks and knowledge-building, and in which they were to obtain knowledge from those who was earlier claimed to be without it (Chambers 1994, 26). Plans were to be made for, and by, villagers themselves.

In the 1980s, community participation was mainstreamed into the major development agencies. It was a measure to exchange top-down, technocratic, blueprint planning of state-led modernization with bottom-up, people-centred, process-oriented and alternative approaches to modernisation (Hickey and Mohan 2004, 4). Participatory approaches were scaled up into national and international policy-making. Earlier, the participation agenda had been separated from the processes of institutional changes and good governance, being part of a more radical and grass-root or community development movement. Now, participation entered the government arena and governance institutions. Policy makers saw that participation could only be made effective if it was encompassed by institutional changes at all levels. Participation and changes in governance institutions became one mutual agenda; both processes were dependent on the other to make effective changes. This linked participation with much broader processes like democratisation and decentralisation (Hickey and Mohan 2004, 4, 27).

As project-based participatory methodologies were mainstreamed and spread from non-government organisations to major development agencies, participation was criticised for becoming a part of neoliberal policy under the same agenda as good governance and decentralisation. There were still two camps pushing participation, the political left and the neoliberals. However, both camps push forms of decentralisation that do not try to alter politics and power relations. The neoliberals' view on participation was technocratic, fulfilled through Western expert knowledge, institution building and public administration and planning. It did not include a political agenda of transferring power. The leftist vision had a tendency to reject other forms of representation for these groups, like parties and unions, and believes in the agency and participation of local actors themselves (Heller 2001, 132,139-140).In this way, the leftist camp has been swallowed by the neoliberal agenda, and both camps disregard political and structural realities in which participatory measures are placed. (Bossuyt and Gold 2000; Heller 2001; Stokke and Mohan 2000, 251-254).

3.3 Participation – the new tyranny?

Participation has become a contested issue within development. While Cooke and Kothari (2001) describe participation as the ‘new tyranny’, Hickey and Mohan (2004) brings a more optimistic view where participation could play a critical role in transformation. Cooke and Kothari express that the meaning of their own critique is to finally convey that participatory development as discourse might be the real problem, not that the methods or the foundations of it needs reconfiguration (2001, 5-7). As participation was mainstreamed into international policies, pushed by powerful international development agencies, the participation discourse is now criticised for hiding different meanings and discourses behind a nice buzzword. The participative efforts originating from the left discussed above had influenced people’s masses in authoritarian regimes in Africa and South America to oppose their regimes (Leal 2011, 72-73; Hammond 1998). As participative thinking became part of the Worlds Banks programs, it lost much of its political and liberating elements. As the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Programmes were put into action in the 1980s, consisting of harsh privatisation, the bank simultaneously developed programmes that focused on institution building and civil-society organisations so as to ‘soften the blow’ from state cut-backs and put a human face on development for the countries. These programmes were to ensure peoples’ participation in designing and implementing development programs (Leal 2011, 70- 74; World Bank 1989, 61). The Bank used words such as ‘empowerment’, ‘self-reliance’ and ‘participation’, and declared a deep governance crisis in the developing countries. The meaning of these words now changed from the meaning inherent in them when used by the radical people’s movements and those that influenced these. The radical leftist scholars had pushed empowerment of people to overturn authoritarian state control through increased *political* participation. The World Bank advocated the removal of that state from the economy, substituting it with the market. This was in fact quite similar to its Structural Adjustment Programmes, and arguably does not ensure development with a human face in any larger degree than these (Leal 2011; Cornwall and Brock 2005).

Cooke and Kothari believe that the discourse of participation thus downplays political realities and power relations, both locally and between the local and the World Bank and other global structures (Cooke, Kothari 2001, 14). They claim that participatory facilitators overthrow existing and legitimate forms of decision-making. Cleaver (2001) reflects on the way development agencies and implementers focus on creating and building local institutions

for villagers to participate in; community organisations, associations and committees. These mirror Western bureaucratic patterns of governance, which is paradoxical when the reason they are implementing them is to ensure development freed from the state bureaucracy's shortcomings. Thus, water user associations established by external experts have been prone to undermine existing governance activities that have been established through locally adapted channels. These local methods are not necessarily any better than externally imposed institutions, as they might uphold exclusion and vulnerability. But externally imposed institutions also have a tendency not to remedy these conditions, as they leave untouched the wider structural factors that shape exclusion and vulnerability (Clever 2001, 40, 42, 44). These experiences are highly relevant for the set-up of water committees in my own case, and how the INGO in my case later moved away from this policy of setting up committees.

Many professional experts dominate decision making and manipulate, instead of facilitate, development processes (Botes and Rensburg 2000, 43). Mosse's (2001) focus on how local knowledge, those times when participatory development measures claim to be based on this, is actually often shaped by the knowledge of the participation facilitators. Thus, the villagers' wishes for development, becoming clear after they have participated in discussion meetings, is dependent on what they know or believe the development agencies can help them with. Development goals are based on external knowledge and practices, not local knowledge and needs. In this way, Mosse (2001) criticises participative methods for not taking into account power and knowledge relations. As power and knowledge stay with development agencies and their facilitators, participation sometimes does not lead to empowerment, or to the expression of real local needs. In these instances, participation functions as legitimisation for what developing agencies have planned to do (ibid; Botes and Rensburg 2000, 43).

3.3.1 The tyranny of the group, the local and wider power relations

Participative development has often been criticised for ignoring hidden power relations and exclusionary traits in communities. As Heller states

“(..) to govern is to exercise power, and there are no a priori reasons why more localized forms of governance are more democratic.” (Heller 2001, 132)

The group dynamics that take place in participation efforts might make the already powerful more powerful at the expense of the weaker. Local participation is shaped by local practices and relations of power, authority and gender (Botes, Rensburg 2000, 45; Mosse 2001, 19). One challenge is elite cooptation, where local leaders or power elites might monopolize decision making and information channels. This again means that participation in the village setting takes the form of excluding women or other vulnerable groups and including those with power (Cleaver 2001, 53). Thus, participation is not always beneficial to those groups who have previously been excluded (Kothari 2001). Often, women's participation is limited to participation in practical implementation, influenced by essentialist views on women's traditional roles and naïve thoughts about "the local" or "the community" (Cornwall 2011, 203). Agrawal (1997) points out some problems for women's participation in decision making that keep getting repeated. There is little comprehension of the time constraints women experience due to the responsibilities and work that are traditionally assigned to women; there is official male bias; there are social constraints about women's capabilities and roles and there is an absence of a critical 'mass' of women and lack of public speaking experience. Another example is village participation in water governance that sometimes exclude marginal populations living on the fringes of or outside the village, but who nonetheless are users of the water source (Cleaver 2001, 52). These challenges and other pitfalls are also evident in research on water resource participation, which I will return to in my analyses.

Also, there are great power differences *within* different groups. For example, there are differences between women when it comes to age or status that are leading to the excluding of some women and inclusion of others in decision-making. Sometimes, the women themselves *do* make some women with higher status the vocal representatives for them as a group, because they are more eloquent and knowledgeable and retain a higher status in the community. In this way, they are respected and will be listened to in village meetings. Hence, groups and communities might have their own ways of handling these kinds of representation problems (Cleaver 2001, 44). At the same time, it is not given that particular women can be representative for women in general. Women with high status or power might secure only their own family's resources (Cleaver 2001, 49; Cornwall 2011, 207). These are processes of inclusion and exclusion, and power differences, happening along various social relations within a society – class, gender and ethnicity (Cleaver 2001; Cornwall 2011; Mohanty 2011).

Wider power relations, not only within communities or groups, are also problematic for participative efforts. Cooke and Kothari (2001) elaborate on wider structural factors, like the power of the development agencies and how participation have contributed to the preservation of powerful structures and agencies. Hickey and Mohan (2004) agrees that much of the earlier alternative participation approaches that allegedly created the aforementioned bottom-up benefits did not create them in a sustainable way. PRA, the project-led alternative approach where in particular Robert Chambers was hugely influential, was not politicised enough and its focus was too local. Even Chambers himself realised this when he accepted to work for the World Bank on participative approaches in 1999. He argued for a critical chapter on the power of the powerful, included the World Bank, when he contributed to the World Bank Development Report 2000-2001. The World Bank ignored his arguments. After this he started looking at how powerlessness of the poor is sustained by the power of the powerful, he gained a more structural view where the personal power of the professionals, the “uppers”, was deeply linked to the institutional (Gaventa 2011b). Alas, alternative development and neoliberal positions tend to ‘underplay both local inequalities and power relations as well as national and transnational economic and political forces’ (Mohan and Stokke 2000, 247).

3.3.2 The tyranny of the method

Related to this, another critique of participation is that these methods take focus away from other methods better suited to create real political changes on a higher level than the village, connecting the state and the people. Power relations are at status quo in exchange for participative development assistance. The very act of including excluded groups in development projects might lead to disempowerment, as it inhibits them from challenging prevailing hierarchies and inequalities in societies (Kothari 2001, 143). On the other hand, inclusion of these groups can be empowering if participation is explicitly connected with a political agenda and not only with the implementation of projects by development agencies. Uniting excluded groups and creating linkages from excluded individuals or groups to higher political levels have proved more successful for creating long-term empowerment (Mitlin 2004; Florisbelo and Guijt 2004). Mitlin (2004, 176) shows that studies of federating community groups, linked together by shared economic, political and cultural interests, have been remarkably successful in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Zimbabwe. This can be done through NGOs or popular resistant movements, and through alliances and partnerships with international agencies, international popular movements, unions, political parties and other

formal political-administrative structures (Mitlin 2004). Florisbelo and Guijt (2004) exemplify this with Zona da Mata, a meso-region of the state of Minas Gerais in Brazil. Here, poor rural smallholders have gained more political power in formal public administration through sophisticated political alliances (Florisbelo and Guijt 2004, 191- 198).

These agendas were able to connect activities at various scales - local, regional, state and global, linking local activism to global political advocacy work. This is a good example of 'politics of scale', where politics happen at different scales and also affects different scales in a non-hierarchical way (Görg 2007). In this way, they were able to connect villagers with state structures and thus create real political changes. Much local-global empowerment action bypass national governments in favour of applying direct pressure to global institutions. Although connecting the local with the global scale of decision-making has helped these societies, one shall not over-emphasise the importance of this connection. It is also important to connect poor people with their respective state. In fact, most participative development efforts need to connect with both state and non-state actors to have an empowering effect on citizens. Most poor movements still mobilise around issues with reference to the state responsible for delivering their rights (Hickey and Mohan 2004, 165; Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington 2007). In addition, most people in poor countries do not have the means to attain a position to use these types of local-global linkages that are mentioned above (Gaventa 2010, 262). In this way, we see that different scales of governance are not synced or sufficiently linked to each other, and most importantly they are not necessarily linked to the people.

3.3.3 What kind of participation?

To connect the people with the state, Hickey and Mohan argue for using people's citizenship as a base for rights and participation to create power transfers that have potential for real change (Hickey, Mohan 2004, 3-5; Gaventa 2004, 37). If participation shall be empowering for communities and individuals, White argues it must be in the shape of representative or transformative participation (White 1996). In representative participation, the people who are the targeted group of a project have a voice in shaping the character of a development project. This way, being active in their own meetings and in discussions with the NGO, the people ensure leverage to influence the project. When participation is truly transformative, participation leads to real empowerment of the population involved. All involved parts, especially the local population, gain a greater consciousness about what makes and keeps

people poor. The local population gains a “greater confidence in their ability to make a difference”, and is able to influence government and power-structures (White 1996, 60). This kind of participation must involve action from below, but it is often through experience with external NGOs that transformation and empowerment is gained. White’s example is a village cooperative created by hillside families in the Philippines, encouraged by a community organiser. After learning about their own situation and poverty through their own discussions in this cooperative, the villagers started to organise political actions towards a repressive government. In this way, the villagers had gained consciousness about the reasons for their poverty. Also, they were now conscious about the rights they could fight for in opposition to the government in the belief that they could transform their own lives and ensure well-being for their families (White 1996).

Much participation is instrumental, that is, people participate with their labour or their resources. Here, often, participation has no higher goal and include repressive mechanisms, as some groups might be exploited to do the work. It is often at a cost to the population, as they take time off from other chores, paid employment or leisure (White 1996). If the state has abandoned its responsibilities for its citizens or has low capacity to take the responsibility to deliver social services, self-help in this way is seen as a good option and gets support from the state and INGOs. The last instance then becomes a substitute for development policy rather than the missing ingredient needed for development (Stiefel and Wolfe 2011, 23; Masaki 2004, 129). A Leal (2007) contends, it becomes compatible with neo-liberal agendas of withdrawing the state leaving service delivery to the market and civil society.

3.4 Participation as citizenship; a political project

Within a frame they call critical modernism, Hickey and Mohan (2004) hold that everyone involved in participative development must start to think about participation in a different way. Policy makers, practitioners and scholars need to think of participation as a political project. To them, modernism is simply material well-being. They argue for a radical democracy with direct popular control over all resources and institutions. The consequences of an unjust capitalist society can be contested and transformed by using one’s rights as a citizen. They use Turner’s (quoted in Hickey and Mohan 2004) definition of citizenship, where

“ Citizenship can be defined as that set of practices (juridical, political, economical or cultural) which define a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups” (Hickey and Mohan 2004, 2).

By denoting practises, Turner focuses on the informal realities that form a person’s status in a society. Citizenship is no longer linked to formal rights as members of a territorially defined state. As governance today includes actors and processes beyond the central state, citizens can claim their rights on the basis of local or global identities. They can work across different scales to claim these rights (Mohan and Hickey 2004, 62-65; Gaventa 2009).

Gaventa (2004, 27-28) points to the misconception of focusing only on local participation. The focus should be on pulling the state and its citizens closer together and create mechanisms for people at the local level to influence politics at higher state levels concerning them. He agrees with Fung and Wright (2001) that the state’s inability to create welfare for its citizens and the decline in legitimacy of public institutions should not be used as an excuse by the right to dismantle the state (Gaventa 2004, 27). Local authorities have oftentimes gained responsibility that they have no capabilities to perform, and in addition they have not gained power. Political elites at higher levels often informally keep control, as they do not wish to give up their power positions. Alternatively, decentralisation has occurred, but without ensuring democratic mechanisms at the local level and so local elites have co-opted power and resources (Bossuyot and Gold 2000). The answer is to deepen democracy by creating a strong participating civil society *and* an accountable state that meets civil society with institutional change and structures for good governance (Gaventa 2004; Mohan and Hickey 2004). Citizenship, as emphasised by Turner, contains *practises*. This is to enable people themselves to actively struggle for expanding and claiming their rights. Rights are seldom given, but must be claimed (Mohan and Hickey 2004, 67). Gaventa points to the fact that participation works best if these conditions are met; strong central state capacity, well developed civil society and an organized political force (Gaventa 2011a, 260; Gaventa 2004). These conditions are in many countries, like Kyrgyzstan, not present. So, citizenship cannot be successfully claimed everywhere. Here, it is imperative to create or develop *spaces* where excluded groups and individuals might obtain knowledge, seek strength and solidarity (Hickey and Mohan 2004).

3.4.1 Spaces for citizenship claiming

Cornwall (2004) situates citizenship and rights-struggle spatially, arguing that these processes they take place in a certain space in contrast to other possible spaces. A general, yet usable, definition of space by human geographers is where ‘place is located’. Place is ‘lived space’ (Agnew and Livingstone 2011, 318) – place is usually filled with social meaning, conventions or cultural understanding, but framed by, or located in, space. So, the spatial frame or location affects social processes (Agnew and Livingstone 2011).

The practical display of citizenship struggles and widening democracy takes place in new, or reformed, spaces. But some political spaces where differentiated people come together have not been sufficiently adapted to engage excluded individuals or groups. As an example, Mohanty (2011, 265) mentions local governance institutions and sectoral institutions for watershed development in Northern India. These institutions have been created at the village level by the Indian state to invite and enhance the participation of low-caste, poor, tribal groups and women. Although women constitute two thirds of these institutions, these spaces only reinforce stereotyped identities of women. Many women do not speak in public, and those that do are not heard and discriminated against in these spaces. Women’s participation in village meetings is against village code of conduct. Women’s inability to raise their voice in one space might also be a result of their status in other spaces, like gendered differences or discriminatory practices in the home. Or, it might be caused by their lack of knowledge (Cornwall 2004, 78; Cleaver 2001, 51; Cleaver 2012). These spaces are then largely *empty spaces*, where real participation and empowerment do not take place (Mohanty 2011).

So, the good governance agenda and decentralisation have opened up many spaces previously closed for people at the local level. Yet, only spaces that are claimed, fashioned and chosen by marginalised people might lead to radical change (Cornwall 2004; Gaventa 2004). Spaces that invite marginal people, but let power and status differentiations be played out in the given space, will rather keep the status quo. Gaventa (2004) separates between *closed spaces*, *invited spaces*, *empty spaces* and *claimed/created spaces* (Gaventa 2004, 35, 36). In *closed spaces*, decisions are still only made by a certain set of actors behind closed doors. In the *invited spaces*, efforts have been made to include people in decision making by governments, NGOs or supranational agencies. These might still be controlled by their instigators, and are often *empty spaces* if no transformation of power differences occurs. *Claimed or created spaces* are created more autonomously by the less powerful, or these groups of people are claiming spaces from or against power holders. These different types of spaces are not

autonomous but relational to one other, and actors will move between them. As mentioned above, status in the home space might affect status in other spaces negatively. Or, closed spaces might become invited spaces as the state needs to legitimise its policies. Invited spaces might become claimed spaces from the other end, as popular movements can take over the space for engagement with the state. Also, knowledge and power gained in one space can be used to enter and affect other spaces. For example, if we go back to Mohanty's study, (2011, 274-276), the women in the Akolpura village participate in healthcare and mother-centres. These are accepted women spheres, and therefore women can participate freely here. The space is not threatening for village cultural codes, which does not lead to political changes. Nonetheless, this space has given the women knowledge and education that have improved their capabilities. Mohanty claims that in villages where external NGOs create spaces next to the state-created spaces is where this effect really becomes prevalent. Here, NGO created institutions have given women a space to gain self-confidence and skills that can lay the ground for permeating other state-created spaces later. Thus, spaces constantly engage and affect each other (Mohanty 2011). Spaces are always 'infused with existing power relations', but they are also non-determinable and cannot be fully controlled. There are always possibilities to change these power relationships as long as a space is there; "they are always sites of resistance," (Cornwall 2004, 81). Although, in Mohanty's case above (2011), there is a danger that the spaces mentioned in Akolpura might also just stay empty.

Henry (2004, 147- 152) points to the fact that in many communities, spaces are too difficult to claim and participation as citizenship claiming upon the state are very far from real attainable goals. Here he contrasts to rights-based citizenship and space theories. He broadens the study of participative development as he acknowledges how social control and obligation to your village is the underpinning pillars of membership of a community. In villages of the Gurage, an indigenous group in Ethiopia, the villagers participate in an organisation for development by giving labour and money for development projects implemented by the communities themselves. The founders of the organisation are the urban elite in the capital Addis Ababa, by request of rural respected elders in the villages. The success of the project has been attained by rural-urban migration linkages. Networks and clan ties to the capital, held up by traditional ceremonial institutions or events and the leaders' and elders' network knowledge, makes the rural Gurage mobilise urban resources, as well as their own participation and contribution. Villagers participate due to strong social control and village norms of solidarity. Leaders carry out strong control and sanctions, but they are also trusted to have the abilities to

lead based on a strong sense of community citizenship and duties. Henry shows that strong and sometimes exclusive social control by leadership is necessary. Scholars should not be naïve and presume that participation by weak groups is always necessary (Henry 2004).

3.5 Institutional bricolage.

Henry's (2004) way of thinking has close resemblance to Cleaver's (2012) theory of 'institutional bricolage', where institutions are seen as always a mix of old and new, formal and informal. Cleaver explains how necessary improvisation, everyday norms and struggles over meaning and resources are mediated through institutions by all the people that use them. Institutions are in this way shaped by people as institutional engineers, or *bricoleurs* as Cleaver calls them. The bricoleurs are external development agents, state or local powers and villagers or citizens that are both using and shaping the formal and informal institutions from their experiences in their every-day lives. The different bricoleurs have very different capacities to shape the institutions, giving them different opportunities for deciding which norms are becoming institutionalised and which are not. For example, the power and capacity of a villager is often low in comparison to the state's or a powerful development agency's capacity to steer institutions. Cleaver contends that social theorists still have not explained well enough the relationship between structures and agency when it comes to the relationship between institutions and development. She argues that social theorists and some of the participation advocates do not elaborate on the dominating force of power on agents to a satisfying degree. In this way, she agrees with Mohan and Stokke (2000, 257) and Gaventa (2011b, 71, 72), and argue that the power of the powerful locally, and powerful external structures, are often keepers, not sharers, of power. The powerful may halt empowerment of the individuals in development projects.

Her work contrasts with the good governance agenda. Cleaver argues that one shall not ask *which* institutions are best, as governance institutions change dependent on which actors and what politics and institutions that are already existing. She wants to understand *how* institutions work in practice and in a given context, and consequently why the outcomes benefit some people and exclude others (Cleaver 2012, 1). This is especially because of the 'wickedness' of complex environmental problems; they are tightly connected to issues of values, equity and social justice in a way that will not create agreement on solutions. The problems cannot be solved only by science (Cleaver 2012).

Cleaver holds that meaning from one institution, like traditional community meetings or village solidarity norms, can leak to the newer institution of community development committees initiated by an external organisation. Meaning leaks as the institution builders can connect and draw on these earlier institutions and the value embedded in these so people can see the meaning inherent in the new institutions. In this way, institution building creates not entirely new and not entirely traditional institutions. Ad hoc and unplanned events make institutional processes filled with unintended outcomes. In addition, institution building mixes formal and informal elements, and unbalanced power relations are sometimes upheld. Formal good governance policies like decentralisation and participation might contrast with, and sometimes disable, important traits of bricolage (Cleaver 2012, 3, 4).

New institutions, externally imposed or indigenous ones, are never built from scratch by externals. Institutional bricoleurs draw on whatever they have of traditions and on ways of doing things (Cleaver 2012, 39, 43-45). Migration, village ceremonies and village norms of control, solidarity and sanctions all mix with newer institutions for resource governance. When using traditional governance institutions, villagers and village leaders often learn new and better participative and organisational methods from international development norms and methods. They can use these methods and norms as ‘institutional resources’ in their development scheme. Many development scholars point to a Foucauldian power ‘circulating within societies’, where power and knowledge from aid agencies and powerful leaders is both enabling and disciplining at the same time, circulating between the different actors in a society (Masaki 2007, 3- 17; Henry 2004; Cleaver 2012). Institutional bricolage is a way to see how villagers have different abilities to draw on external institutional traits that take different forms at different political scales. In formal good governance efforts and informal village practices, hierarchy and power is present, being both enabling and disciplining.

As developments in Kyrgyzstan match the theory of institutional bricolage, I will analyse how institutional bricolage have unfolded in the Kyrgyz context of governance reforms, and what outcomes there have been for development in Kyrgyzstan. These reforms are also scaled, where politics at the local, regional, state and global level affect each other. I will show how politics of scale and institutional bricolage together influence which actors that have decision-making power in the decentralised political system in Kyrgyzstan, and how the participative development approaches have led to decision-making power for some, but not for all.

4 Political dividing lines and informal mechanisms

In this chapter, I will outline the different historical dividing lines in Kyrgyzstan and how they merge with post-Soviet problems of economical, social and political nature. I will explain how these conflicts and dividing lines have created ethnic tension and violence, and I will outline the most important political events in Kyrgyzstan's 22 years as an independent state. I will examine in some depth how informal politics and power structures, based on regional clan divisions and clan structures, are mixing in with new political and institutional reforms in Kyrgyzstan. This political and institutional field creates room for a strong merging of formal and informal practices, a mix of more or less external and indigenous institutional practices.

4.1 Dynamics of conflict, power structures and political dividing lines

When Gorbachev rose to power in the Soviet Union, a new, so-called 'liberal-democratic' elite also arose in Kyrgyzstan, opposing the old Soviet 'Nomenklatura'. There is also an underlying historic conflict between North and South in the country, upon which the new elites and the opposing 'Nomenklatura' was based. The North was russified earlier under the Russian tsar from the 1860s, it became secularized and urbanised. The North grew to be the political administrative centre. The South is predominantly rural, it is a part of the multi-cultural green Fergana Valley and historically also a part of the Uzbek civilisation. This part is more traditional and Islam has a stronger position. In Soviet times, the North remained political-administrative centre and the South became the productive agricultural region. During Soviet times, the elites of the two different regions argued for resources, and further entrenched the division lines between the North and the South. Today, these division lines still count (Khanin 2004; Roberts 2010; Roy 2000).

North and South is further separated by the overlapping dividing lines of ethnicity and traditionally nomadic versus sedentary lifestyles. Ethnic Kyrgyz to a large part make up the population in the North together with the Slavic population. The latter has been severely reduced since the Soviet breakup. Uzbeks are concentrated in the South, in the Fergana valley and the borderlands to Uzbekistan (Khanin 2004, 216; Roberts 2010, 8; Roy 2000, 115).

There is a historical continuum of nomadic versus sedentary differences between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. As Kyrgyz in the South have been sedentary longer than the Kyrgyz of the North, the nomadic/sedentary divide still constitutes a difference in how Kyrgyz and Uzbeks live. High population density and scarce land is one of the most severe social, economical and environmental problems of the South, and is mostly taking place in the Fergana Valley (Sehring and Giese 2011). Although one should be careful not to over-generalise the social meaning of this divide today, the divergent attitudes towards property have aggravated conflicts between the groups (Roberts 2010, 3, 4).

The ousting of the first two presidents was, among other interconnected reasons, connected with the exploitation and balancing of the powerbases of North and South (Ryabkov 2008, 301- 303; Collins 2006; Crisis Group International 2010). After the second president Bakiev was ousted, the following ethnic riots in Osh stand as the most violent episode in independent Kyrgyz history. The riots, or as the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks that I have talked to on the streets call it; the ‘events’ or ‘war’, of summer 2010, killed approximately 400 people, mostly Uzbeks, and destroyed over 2000 buildings in Osh City¹⁵. As an economical and energy crisis happened at the same time as there was a power vacuum from the ousting of the Southern based president, fear spread and escalated into violent riots. Rumours and networks spread fear and violence that escalated because of the insecure vacuum of power, and gave the riots an ethnic framing (Hanks 2011, 179; International Crisis Group 2010). This reminded the population of the ethnic riots in June 1990, almost twenty years before the Osh events occurred.

4.2 Informal politics, institutions and structures of power

Kyrgyzstan was a clan based society¹⁶ prior to Soviet Rule¹⁷. Clan members in Kyrgyzstan are connected to a village or a region, no matter whether the members live there or not

¹⁵<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/193%20The%20Pogroms%20in%20Kyrgyzstan>,

Most recent detailed and chronological report on the violent happenings from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Memorial Human Rights Centre and Freedom House,

http://www.nhc.no/filestore/Publikasjoner/Rapporter/2012/Rapport_2_12_ENG_net.pdf

¹⁶ Clans are patrilinear units, congregated in larger tribes, whose members all descended from a common known ancestor (Hvoslef 1997, 99).

¹⁷ Although the Russians began colonising the region in the late 1860s, the Russians did not interfere with clan identities or customs in any formidable way (Luong 2000).

(Hvoslef 1997, 99). Although in some ways lying latent during Soviet times, clans survived through synthesis with the Soviet party system, and have according to Khanin (2004) shown themselves to be flexible in the post-Soviet period as well. The clans integrated the new 'democratic' elites surfacing in the perestroika years. These democrats mostly became partners of the urbanised and russified Northern political clans. The Northerners claimed they were liberal democrats and used this wave to oust the Southerners, who had high positions in the Soviet government. This is how the Northerner Akayev became president. Alas, the political shift was not really one from communists to democrats, but clan leaders taking advantage of change in government, 'a redistribution of power within and between neo-traditional informal political institutions' (Khanin 2004, 217- 221).

In post- Soviet Kyrgyzstan, the state and government elites control commercialised property and resources, and the most important source of conflict has been about acquisition of political power on national, regional and local level to attain resources (Khanin 2004).

Vladimir Khanin, explains that

“ (...) informal structures of power, or ' political clans', are among the most important institutional actors in the struggle for the control and distribution of resources in many Asian and African countries, including Kyrgyzstan. The political clans are neo-traditional institutions of power, an institutionalised form of patron-client relations, which play a dominant role in the majority of non-Western social systems,” (Khanin 2004, 217).

Political clan ties became the main mechanism to usurp power and resources. These clans were not longer only linked to kinship, but 'consolidated through a system of personal relations – people from the same region, on the one hand, and business, professional, property and administrative connections on the other,' (Khanin 2004, 217; Collins 2006). Hence, the new market and administrative opportunities created new and reconfigured informal mechanisms (Kuehnast and Dudwick 2002). The political clan elites are often a narrow group on national or regional level. In his decentralisation efforts starting already in 1994 the first president Akayev' he basically gave much power to the regional governors, the Akims, to build a good relationship with the regional elites. The Akims' growing influence meant that they became the leading political clan patrons. They obtained mechanisms to control regional, political, bureaucratic and business establishment. The use of both formal mechanisms – electoral machinery and local government organs – and informal mechanisms – mobilising ethnic and tribal support – 'is the key element in the influence of tribal-regional political groups' (Khanin 2004, 224). Khanin explains how this evolvement of decentralisation is

really what democratisation processes has been about in Kyrgyzstan, and how decentralisation of power structures intersects with

‘(...) the multi-structurality of local ‘pseudo- modern’ society, which adopts modern Western- style democratic institutions and enrich them with local, neo-traditional content,’ (Khanin 2004, 228).

At the local level, in the *ail s*- communal villages and small urban centres, Khanin argues that these conflict lines emerge ‘in the political competition of the leaders of extended family and lineage groups’ (Khanin 2004, 217.). At all levels, the informal relations were based on giving resources and services for support to their clan members in a patron-client relationship.

Khanin (2004, 217- 221) argues that clan and tribal political networking connects elite level of politics with the village clan network, creating a broad-reaching mutual system of support and resources from the local to the national level. I will argue below that this view hides important differences between the excluded and the included in society. Today, informal mechanisms and patron-client relationships are shaped by power and economic differences in a post-Soviet reality (Kuehnast and Dudwick 2002).

4.3 ‘Clan’ as an exhausted term?

The social importance of clan in Kyrgyzstan and similar societies, and the meaning of the term itself, are today of much discussion (Radnitz 2005; Collins 2006; Sjöberg 2009; Gulette 2010; Momunova 2012). Collins by and large agrees with Khanin, saying that ‘clan pacts’ are the foundational organising principle of Kyrgyz society, and she defines clan as

“(...) an informal organisation comprising a network of individuals linked by kin and fictive kin identities. (...) “Fictive kinship” ties go beyond blood ties and incorporate individuals into the network through marriage, family alliances, school ties, localism (*mestnichestvo*), and neighbourhood (*mahalla*) and village (*qishloq*),” (Collins 2006, 17).

In this respect, Radnitz (2007) argues that Collins creates false binary positions of informal and formal institutions, when culture and politics in Central Asia is far more complex, where formality and informality is blurred. Including such wide variety of relations, the term is exhausted and hides people’s diverse actions, interests and possibilities. As elites use a projection of clan unity and identity for political gains, clans have a different function within a village (Radnitz 2007). David Gulette (2010) argues that tribal and regional associations are to such a large degree constructed and claimed by political elites in struggles for economical

and political power that they are unfit as analytical categories. Today's Western understanding of these terms are formed by Russian colonial- and Soviet ethnographic discourses, which are built on evolutionary concepts of tribes and clans as pre-modern organisational forms, and 'not understood from the context in which they are embedded today,' (Gullette 2010, 37-49).

At the village level, Gullette's fieldwork showed that ties between friends and families, based not only on support but on traditions of obligation, was important to meet their needs and overcome overwhelming financial burdens (2010,103). Radnitz (2007) agrees, as he too claims that many accounts of clan systems are over-generalising and do not explain how clan systems are overlapping with other formal and informal organisations and institutions. Clans are tightly bound to a whole range of other mechanisms, identities, organisations and institutions. In Radnitz's research on how people were politically mobilised in the Aksy event¹⁸, he explains how clan mobilisations is confused with localism, that is, other local relationships. For villages, highly personified mechanisms and local support systems of families and friends can be more important if the village is excluded from richer clan networks or state elites and their resources. This overlaps with Bichsel's (2009) case study of and indigenous village associations in Kyrgyzstan created to erect water irrigation infrastructure. She explains how villagers first relied on promises from political candidates to the parliament, then sought support from the state, but gained no support from either. They eventually gathered money themselves and received resources from foreign donors.

This consists with Kuehnast and Dudwick's (2002) research. They argue that the networks of poor and non poor have separated in a 'process that parallels the sharp socio-economic stratification that has taken place since national independence,' (Kuehnast and Dudwick 2002, 51). In addition, the separated networks have changed their character. They argue that

"These social networks are important to understand as they bridge the policy gap between macro-level economic strategies and micro-level intervention. These networks provide an essential framework to understanding how informal institutions interact with formal institutions in the postsocialist Kyrgyzs republic." (Kuehnast and Dudwick 2002, 53).

¹⁸ The Aksy event happened between January and November 2002, when an Aksy city member of parliament (MP) was arrested for accusing the sitting president for corruption and treason. This resulted in a wide spread national mobilisation of ordinary citizens for many months, where people mobilised to free the MP. Up to about 8 000 gathered at some protests. These events resulted in the release of their MP, but also had tragic results as 6 died and 12 were wounded at a gathering where the police fired at the crowds. The event stands out as a violent episode of state injustice against its people (Radnitz 2005).

The non-poor are moving on to more modern, interest-based networks which they exploit successfully for resources. The poor do not have access to these modern networks. In addition, more traditional networks are becoming smaller and accumulate fewer resources necessary in the modern society – that is, money. The poor are more and more linked together in flat networks that consist of people from more or less the same social strata. This is because these people are too poor to be connected to the non-poor networks where people are obliged to contribute resources. If the crisis is big enough, though, poor connect with non-poor, but in a patron-client relationship where the poor gets indebted. This has disrupted the earlier supportive nature of kinship ties between rural poor and urban, better off relatives. Neighbours are today taking over some of the support functions. As the flat networks are very short on modern resources- money- these networks cannot support very many and keep shrinking (Kuehnast and Dudwick). Hence, the poor loose much contact with friends and relatives, have smaller networks and fewer possibilities (Kuehnast and Dudwick 2002).

The non-poor networks have become wider. They are spanning whole regions, and non-poor can obtain important information quickly. Through connections with people with formal or informal power and access to information, they find employment, obtain loans, start enterprises and gain access to elite institutions of education. They still use indigenous institutions - arranging lavish traditional parties to diversify their informal connections and joining traditional savings clubs or mutual aid obligations. It is now obliged to have money to access these institutions. So, the poor are further excluded from both social networks of friends and relatives, and ways to socially mobilize. The non-poor use money to mobilize upwards in the social hierarchy, and the poor use the little they have to survive (Kuehnast and Dudwick 2002).

Now, out-migration is creating more money flowing in to the country. However, the money is flowing into more lavish parties – *tois* – and new houses for those with relatives in Russia or Kazakhstan. The money does to a large degree not accumulate to wider developments for the country. This has created a gap between those who migrate and those who do not, hence increased the differences between poor and rich (Reeves 2012).

4.4 Political participation in Kyrgyzstan

Youth and in particular women are vulnerable groups in Kyrgyzstan today, and they are also to a lesser extent participating and engaging in politics and decision-making (Kuehnast 2002; Simpson 2006; USAID Youth Assessment, 2010; USAID/ CAR Gender Assessment 2010; Gullette 2010). I will therefore focus on these groups', particularly women's, participation in Kyrgyzstan.

Historically, the Kyrgyz nomadic culture is said to set them apart from their neighbouring countries concerning liberal attitudes towards women. Today, Kyrgyz women are said to be entering public space more and more, especially in comparison to Kyrgyzstan's more repressive neighbours (Simpson 2006, 18, 19). Kyrgyzstan is the only country in the Central Asian region to have a parliamentary democratic system, where there are relatively free elections, multiple parties, relatively free media and press and freedom for civil society. These political freedoms are marked by severe corruption, but they still stand out in its regional context as democratic and liberal. In this context, many women are involved in politics in Bishkek. Even the former president, taking over after the ousting of Bakyiev, Rosa Otunbayeva, is a woman (Simpson 2006) Nonetheless, women still bear the brunt of transition from Soviet society and economic hardships, from decreasing economic opportunities to increasing domestic violence and bride kidnappings¹⁹ (Thieme 2008;Thieme and Siegmann 2010). In fact, even though women are involved in politics at national level, USAID's gender assessment for Kyrgyzstan reflects a more negative position for women, in politics and at home;

“The crumbling social safety net, the small number of women in top political positions and the pervasive gender stereotypes have contributed to women's sense of disempowerment since independence.” (USAID/ CAR Gender Assessment 2010, 26).

Ilkhamov (quoted in Earle 2001) notes the growing patriarchal values of rural poor areas of Central Asia in general. Kandiyoti (1999) notes how the growth of subsistence agriculture as an effect of the continued poverty in Central Asia and the region's misfit with global economic trade has pushed women back into the sphere of the household. In addition, there are geographical differences on women in public. The Southern regions, with historically less nomadic lifestyles and more culturally mixed, are perceived as more traditional and women here are to a lesser degree in public (Ibid; Simpson 2006, 18,19).

¹⁹ Although, bride kidnappings refer to a range of different practises, from forced kidnappings to run-away weddings where the bride has given her consent. The latter is often practices if the groom lack resources to get married, or if parents are unhappy about their children's choice of partner (Gullette 2010)

Narusbaeva, state secretary of the National Agency for Local Self-Government (NAMSU), thinks that women definitely participate in the Kyrgyz society, although there are some geographical differences. Women are better represented in Northern Kyrgyzstan. Women are also represented at *obshestvennie nablyudatelnie sovyeti*, a civil society observing councils.

“There are actually 30% women at Ayil Okhmotos, in local self-government. And, women, and youth, are very involved in NGO’s. They are active, they have big influence on the authority of the government, on local level and central level. Last year, the president initiated *obshestvennij nabljudatelnij sovet*. Members (of this council) are youth and representatives of NGOs. All ministries and (state) agencies on central level have such councils. Now they are also on local level, it has started to form, also on AO. (It is an) additional instrument for contact and collaboration with civil soc.” (Narusbaeva, 9.11.11).

At the same time, there are ongoing disagreements among different Kyrgyz power structures whether the civil-society councils are rather overlapping with local self-governance organs, and have no role as a real critique of state or local self-government organs (Doishebaeva 2013). On the other hand, women might be involved in NGOs and working for AO.

Young people also do not participate in decision making to a large degree. Some youth, especially in cities, are active in organisations (Youth Assessment /USAID 2010). But they are not represented in village local self-governments. Local self-governments are not arranged so as to include youth in an effective way. Many youth are apathetic, and can be drawn to other more extreme directions in society today if they are not more incorporated in the state or gain a stronger faith in the state and the future of the country (Youth Assessment /USAID 2010). Some INGO projects have turned out to be positive for young people, but in an entirely different way that they were meant to be. Although often failing their goals, these projects have created space for youth in society. They have also provided young people with opportunities for entrepreneurship, for leisure pursuits and for experimenting with their dreams and fantasies (Kirmse 2009, 289).

Hence, pre- and Soviet conflict dividing lines have been continued and reconfigured in a post-Soviet context. Informal mechanisms are still highly important for resources, but in reconfigured and different ways. Informal networks are incorporating modern ways, and are changed by modern context through, as Cleaver (2012) argues, institutional bricolage. This process has included and excluded different people. Although some space has been created in society for particularly vulnerable groups, social stratification and post- Soviet changes has also affected these groups in a negative way.

5 Good governance reforms in Kyrgyzstan

In this chapter I will discuss how good governance efforts have been pursued by the Kyrgyz government, and how they have been supported and pushed by Western donors and large financial and aid agencies. I will describe how these efforts have been in the shape of decentralisation policies that push the retreat of the central state and more responsibility and powers to lower decision-making levels. I will further elaborate on how these decentralisations efforts have shaped power relations between the administrative levels of political-administrative governance. These are critical examples of politics of scale, as politics, power and actors at different scales (global, state, regional and local) are deeply intertwined and informed by each other. I will analyse processes of politics of scale, that is, how politics, power and actors are intertwined and the complexities of actors moving across scales to affect politics and power. Good governance reforms have also incorporated traditional practices and institutions. I will discuss what outcomes in practice this meeting of modern governance reforms, pushed by the Kyrgyz government and international aid agencies, and traditional practices has led to. Here, I will discuss both politics of scale and processes of institutional bricolage, that is, the melting together of new and old institutions that makes up new institutional tools.

5.1 Good governance and decentralisation reforms

The governance structures are the locus of political authority, and the social coordination of policy making (Krahmann 2003, 323). As mentioned in my theoretical chapter, these structures are in change, consisting of a wide range of institutions and actors at different scales with changing power and roles in governance issues. These institutions and organisations are located at different political-administrative levels, and they are the institutional framing of social, political and economical policies, including land, agriculture and water reforms (Sehring 2009, 72, 73). From its independence in 1991, Kyrgyzstan has engaged in political decentralisation processes, and these are still going on today. It was among the first post-Soviet states to establish a semi-parliamentary democracy, and was a frontrunner in the movement toward an open market economy (Sehring 2009; Gleason 2003,

69, 74). Decentralisation efforts in Kyrgyzstan were strongly supported by United Nations Development Programme and other large aid agencies (Bichsel et al. 2010, 258). Institutional and good governance reforms were in fact largely pushed by Western donors, especially the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, and their neo-liberal discourse. This discourse promoted decentralisation, market-reforms, local participation and development of NGO participation in decision-making and shaping of institutions; hence, an erosion of the state in governance institutional development (Sehring 2009; Baimyrzaeva 2012,149).

One of the first legal documents of the republic was the “Law on Local Government in the Kyrgyz Republic” (Alymkulov and Kulatov 2001, 526; Grävingholt et al. 2006, 44). The document made it clear that the influence of the centre should be reduced and responsibilities were to be delegated to local levels (Grävingholt et al. 2006, 44). As many other post-Soviet states, Kyrgyzstan has inherited the formal political-administrative system from its Soviet past. These geographical-administrative layers are structures from Soviet administration structures that were highly centralised. At sub-national level, the administrative units in descending order are *oblasts* (regions), *raions* (districts) and *okrugs* (administrative-territorial group/congregation of villages or towns). There are 7 oblasts and 45 raions. Today, at oblast and raion levels, there are 10 oblast-subordinate cities and 10 raion-subordinate towns. The most local level, the last layer of geographical-administrative units, is the *okrugs*. In 1996, Kyrgyzstan implemented the most profound political-administrative reforms at okrug level to ensure better local governance. The country now implemented the Ayil Okhmotu, the executive organ of the village administrations, and their counterpart Ayil Kenesh, the elected representatives’ councils. Now the okrug levels are most often called *Ayil Okhmotus*. There are 495 Okrugs/Ayil Okhmotus in the country, and there can be up to 17 villages under each of these village administrations. Like the okrug level and their local governance system of village administrations, all layers of government have an executive state administration body. They also have elected council bodies, *Keneshs*, that serve as the administration bodies’ checks and balances. Thus, the existing Soviet-inherited political-administrative governance institutions were reconfigured and decentralised (Jailobaeva 2011; Grävingholt et al. 2006, 6, 47, 52, 54).

At the *oblast* and *raion* administrative levels, the head of the executive organ is appointed by the president, and the organ is thus accountable to him or her. The local self-governance administrations for clusters of villages, the Ayil Okhmotus, are independent from central

government when it comes to decision making concerning local issues and management of local social issues. They are legally independent from the central level, as they are directly accountable to the Keneshs at the same level, and the people (Grävingholt 2006). In this way, the Ayil Okhmotu level is the real level of local self-government. The Ayil Okhmotu has to draft budget and development plans, manage municipal property and property gained from a central level redistribution fund and maintain infrastructure and facilities. AO collects taxes and duties (Grävingholt et al. 2006, 58), and is obliged to implement decisions made by Ayil Kenesh on local issues, and they organise meetings between the Ayil Kenesh and its constituents (Ibraimova 2009, 63). The head of the Ayil Okhmotu is also head of the Kenesh at this level, and elected by the population of all the villages that make up the Ayil Okhmotu every four years. He or she addresses the population of each village at annual village assemblies. Here, the villagers can voice opinions, and sometimes these opinions become the basis of an act to be carried out by the Ayil Okhmotu. Also, as the Kenesh meets quarterly, deputies sometimes seek public opinion by going to the villages. Later, they present villagers' opinion to the head of Ayil Okhmotu at these quarterly meetings. If the Ayil Okhmotu's performance is dissatisfactory, for example on budget spending, the head of the Ayil Okhmotu may be dismissed if two thirds of Ayil Kenesh wish so (Ibraimova 2009, 81,82).

Although the AO is supposed to be independent from other state structures to a large degree, most tax collected locally goes to the central level and the Ayil Okhmotu has in practice no economic autonomy (Grävingholt et al. 2006, 47, 54; Sybygalieva 2011). The AO is economically dependent on the central level as will be described further in the next paragraph. Also, although resource allocations go directly from the central to the local level, it is still the oblast level that distributes the earmarked grants. There is a risk that resources might get lost in informal rent-seeking or corruption here. In addition, the local level approve and control the implementation of social and economic development plans that have been developed at the respective raion and oblast levels (Grävingholt 2006). This is an example of politics of scale, as the local level is economically and politically dependent on formal policies from, and formal and informal actions happening at, higher levels. They are not autonomous, although they are meant to be to a large extent.

5.1.1 The political-administrative levels of governance and their interconnectedness

Formally, at oblast and raion levels, state administrations need the Kenesh's approval for its planned budget, and the Keneshs have the right to confirm the appointed governors and Akims. In reality, this council is largely under the power of the state administration - the executive power. The Kenesh approves the budget, but do not have the necessary oversight or resources to engage in budgeting process or its implementation (Grävingsholt et al. 2006, 52). In addition, the Akim exerts significant power and influence in the administrative system. Sometimes people turn directly to him and his administration to address their problems instead of going to bodies of local self-governance (Grävingsholt et al. 2006, 55). These councils are part of the local self-government structures and are therefore formally not under state structures such as the state administration, but in practice they are controlled or undermined by the latter nonetheless. As people often go directly to the Akim, the Kenesh's function is often superfluous.

The oblast level state administration is responsible for implementing policies from the president and central government in the raions. Essentially, raion responsibilities correspond with oblast responsibilities, limited to their particular territories. The difference in responsibilities is that oblasts are to relocate funds down to raion level, as financial flows are organised top-down from one administrative level to the next. Raion level also has some specific responsibilities; to ensure social protection, maintain local infrastructure and to provide developmental, technical and legal assistance to Ayil Okhmotu and civil society organisations. Nevertheless, duplication of responsibilities has led to discussions among experts on eliminating one of the two levels (Grävingsholt et al. 2006, 56, 57). Alymkulov and Kulatov (2010) note that

“In cases with different administrative-territorial levels of power, these are only effective if each level of government has their own powers that do not duplicate those of other levels- as sometimes occurs with the oblast and district levels. At the local level, an illogical hierarchy between the state government and local self-government prevails, resulting in poorly delineated functions and dual subordination.” (Alymkulov and Kulatov 2010, 564.)

This duplication is stopping the local governments in Kyrgyzstan from fulfilling their de jure functions and delegated powers (Alymkulov and Kulatov 2010, 572). Hence, this is politics of scale— higher levels of government affect local levels negatively in Kyrgyzstan, hindering them in doing their job. The top-down distribution of funds gives raion level immense control over activities at the local level. Tax inspection, sanitation regulation, land registration

(Gosregistr) and architectural authorities at raion level have great influence on economic development at local level. State structures continue to interfere in the work of Ayil Okhmotu (Grävingsholt et al. 2006, 56, 59). Also, although resource allocations go directly from the central to the local level, it is still the oblast level that distributes the earmarked grants. There is a risk that resources might get lost in informal rent-seeking or corruption here. In addition, the local level approves and controls the implementation of social and economic development plans that have been developed at the respective raion and oblast levels (Grävingsholt 2006). Hence, AO is also politically dependent on higher levels to a large degree.

In addition, most tax collected locally goes to the central level and the Ayil Okhmotu has in practice no economic autonomy (Grävingsholt et al. 2006, 47, 54). An improved system of local tax collection has not yet been implemented. Ayil Okhmotu only collects two types of taxes, for land and property. 14 of 16 types of taxes are collected locally now go back to the central government level, and thus give Ayil Okhmotu low incentives to accumulate more taxes (Ibraimova 2009, 86; Sybygalieva 2011, 149; Duishonbaev 2008). So, the responsibility for implementing policies has become de-concentrated, but there has been a low level of devolution of resources and political powers or autonomy. As Ibraimova explains,

“ powers are delegated without appropriate funding; it is not possible for local self- governance bodies to plan their budget, as it is distributed by the central government; there is no political will to support the decentralisation process on the local state administration level” (Ibraimova 2009,86).

Hence, although the AOs are supposed to be independent from other state structures to a large degree, they are not. This is an example of politics of scale, as the local level is economically and politically dependent on formal policies from, and formal and informal actions and practices happening at, higher levels. They are not autonomous, although they are meant to be to a large extent.

5.1.2 Governance within the water sector

Iskender Dzholdoshjaliev, head of Water Resources Management Department (WRMD) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources Management and Processing Industry, mentions that there are very few resources in the country and at the national level of government. He also mentions that there are ‘all kinds of problems with the cadres in Kyrgyzstan’ (Dzholdoshjaliev , 10.06.11). These problems are connected to the lack of

technical knowledge and lack of norms on governance concerning for example how to manage and govern water resources in the country. Also, there are very few young cadres as the educated youth have gone abroad. Those who stay do not have the skills required because of lack of education possibilities. Payment is very low, undermining work ethics amongst cadres. Dzholdoshjaliev believes cadre challenges exist at all levels of government. Mostly, knowledge has not trickled down to lower levels in government projects on local water governance (McGee 2011).

The oblast and raion levels are supposed to devolve money and resources onto the lower levels. At oblast levels, the decision to implement irrigation schemes lies with the Osh Oblast Agriculture Department. The chief of the department, “Olikbek”, explains how the Kyrgyz republic has suffered after the Soviet dissolution, as money and technical plans for irrigations schemes used to come from Moscow. The abrupt separation from the Soviet Centre has been harsh. 20 difficult years have passed since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and not one year has the oblast administration had enough money to cover the irrigation funds necessary. “Olikbek” explains that budget and finance problems at the upper levels of government accumulate downwards. As the resources are not enough at national level, they cannot distribute resources downward in the system. The same governance problems exist at all governance levels. The department is now working on 18 different farming projects, including irrigation projects, but finances are just not enough to cover the many other necessary projects. There is very much a need for these projects now, as rehabilitation and modernisation in land use and agriculture is necessary. There needs to be a lot of spending on infrastructure, like pumps, as they are from Soviet times and are in need of change and repair. (“Olikbek”, 12.11.11).

5.1.3 Donors in the governance system

Mosello (2011) asserts that donors have created important know-how and skills, and that they do negotiate development projects with national authorities so that projects are in line with the national development plans. Donors are needed for development, says ‘Olikbek’, as they often set up a broad plan at national government level. They often arrange an agreement with a ministry or the equivalent, and then set up an executive agency at this level (“Olikbek”, 19.11.2011). Thus, this has governance consequences, as donors are involved with decision-making at higher levels. They push their agenda in cooperation with the government at higher

levels. Dzholdoshjaliev also mentions that there is a tremendous need for international projects. Mosello (2011) has objections to this, as she argues that the downside of donor projects is the dependency it creates. External actors 'baby-sit' the government, which needs to take responsibilities for development efforts such as water management (Mosello 2011, 12,13). Otherwise, the government will never fully take this responsibility. In addition, Ayil Okhmotu use much time learning how to write project proposals for donors or other assignments to gain donor support (Grävingsholt et al. 2006). This has consequences for governance reforms, as it provides for less time and resources for needed administrative learning among officials (Grävingsholt et al. 2006). Thus, the governance consequences here are that the government will never be capable on its own. Dzholdoshjaliev acknowledges that donor projects are of varying quality, and that there are challenges with these projects. However, donor projects not only depend on the donor and the institutional setting and cooperation, but also on completely external factors, like regional and climatic differences. They work best, he says, in the South, where the land is fertile, and worse in the North and in the mountain areas. And, again, it really depends on the people and on how they work together (Dzholdoshjaliev, 10.06.2011).

Although Dzholdoshjaliev points to possibly obvious and 'unscientific' issues when he speaks of how things depend on people, he really points to important contextual difficulties around water governance. Cleaver (2012), as mentioned in the theoretical chapter, argues that what is 'wicked' about complex environmental and resource problems is precisely this; that they are so complex and therefore unlikely to be resolved by science and technology alone. This is because these complex problems cannot be separated from issues of values, equity and social justice. Analysis and solution often differ, and there is unlikely to be any agreement on solutions. Hence, following Cleaver's argument, donor support and science will not fix problems wholly, but they are there, adding to the institutional tools, which give both new possibilities and challenges.

Hence, we see examples of politics of scale, where politics at different levels of government affect each other. Global policies on decentralisation have reconfigured a Soviet government system, and Kyrgyzstan now pushes local governance reforms. Although this entails an extensive degree of local autonomy, the local levels are in fact financially dependent on higher levels of government, and are in this way still in a hierarchical relationship with one another. Duplication in the government structure results in poor connections between higher

government levels and local government, resulting in inefficient policies. The fact that the elected councils are subsumed under executive powers at all levels means that people lose their representative power. Resource challenges at the top affect all the other levels.

Additionally, out-migration and lack of education also affect all levels of government. Plans for development from the upper levels cannot be performed at the lower levels because of the trickling down effect of the lack of resources and knowledge as well as cadre problems.

5.1.4 Decentralisation and local self-government

Narusbaeva from NAMSU (see page 47), believes that decentralisation is going in the right direction. After the revolution in 2010 and the ousting of president Bakiev, new reforms were implemented by the new government. Previously, people would come to the parliament in Bishkek if they wanted something or had problems concerning money, land or water. Now, after the new reforms, these decisions are taken care of at local level. If the reforms turn out to be just as successful in the future, people will go to the local level with all their problems (Narusbaeva, 09.11.11). She expresses good hopes for the new reforms of the new government in terms of local self-governance. She believes independence will come if management is reformed on all levels. In her opinion, civil society is educated enough to drive development of local governance and resource management.

“I hope our country will be independent, it depends on our reforms, our management, and management on each level. If we give more independence like local self-government we will [have] success. We have [a] new president, new government. Our parliament [is] trying to think of new reforms on Local Self-government. Yesterday [there] was [a] parliament hearing on independence, financially, of local self-government. There was a new working group [established] on this. Parliament supports our reforms, I hope the new president and government will support them too. My personal opinion is that our civil society and our society are very educated now, they are monitoring the activity of parliament. I think we will move in the right direction because of strong monitoring and control.” (Narusbaeva, 09.11.11)

Shairbek Juraev, director at the American University in Central Asia in Bishkek, elaborates on the relationship between the head of AO, the decision-maker highest up in the local self-government system, and the population subjugated to the AO.

“Now, he [the head of Ayil Okhmotu] is elected by council members. From what I hear, sometimes the AO buys off the council members. But still, he has to answer for his public. So, even though there is some corruption, this system on this level actually works. The best working decision organ is this Ayil Okhmotu level; the members need to bring the decisions from the council back to their villages. (...) villages often send *elderly* to the AO, they have more negotiation power, they are harder to say no to. These people [in the council] are

often directors or something like this. Raion and oblast are looked at with scepticism because they are affiliated with wrong business, but the local level it is more functioning. There are much more of these things [wrong business, corruption] at Akim or oblast [level], as they do business. They are just too far away.” (Juraev, 12.11.11).

Here, Juraev describes the villages ‘local coping mechanisms’, as Henry (2004) would put it. Through the geographical vicinity and networks the villagers have with this level, held up by traditions and institutions such as the role of elders, these are the villagers’ ‘local mechanisms’ for support and resources. Although, as I will discuss in later chapters, not all villagers are supported through this system. Still, Juraev believes that the local level is actually the only functioning political level when it comes to checks and balances by the people. Oblast and raion level is believed to be more corrupt by the population.

“In early 2000s we had the first direct elections for village level. It came from the politics of decentralisation in Kyrgyzstan. This system has had its negative sides as well, the government seems to point to some negative factors, sometimes you have huge fights between village men. Women would support their husband’s candidate. But this should be a system that protects from power abuse by the state, and in the future it could be. And otherwise, it was really seen as what democracy really is. This is democracy now.” (Juraev, 12.11.11).

At the same time, Dzholdoshjaliev from the WRMD under the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources Management and Processing Industry, holds that in the water governance sector, local government does not perform very well. He contends that WRMD helps local government with resources, technical equipment and knowledge, but it is really the WRMD that has all the responsibility for water governance issues. Here, he implicitly says that there is no real devolution of responsibility for water governance to lower levels. This is confusing, as it contrasts other government policies which I will discuss later. He does comply that there are differences from context to context and that some local governments function better than others (Dzholdoshjaliev, 10.06.2011).

The director of local self-governance issues at MSDSP explains how governance structures at the local self-government level are exceptionally poverty-stricken (Saparova, 15.11.11). Hence, even though Juraev focuses on the functioning local mechanisms and checks and balances of these local structures, they are restrained in their functionality because of lack of resources. Even if they do get support from higher levels, it is not enough as all levels of government have few resources (Dzholdoshjaliev, 10.06.11, Saparova, 15.11.11). Local governments do not have resources to implement development schemes like irrigation themselves, although both they and other local resource associations are actually burdened

with this task through reforms that placed land and water under local self-governance²⁰ (Saparova 2011; Bichsel 2009, 65; Kreutzmann 2012). Here, Saparova points to the exclusion of poor villages from the networks of the non-poor. They do not have access to resources, and cannot mobilise, as they lack money and connections to people with information and formal or informal power, as mentioned by Kuehnast and Dudwick (2002).

There is at the same time a dependence on the higher levels that inhibits local governance from performing, due to low devolution of power, knowledge and resources (Sybygalieva 2011; McGee 2011). Mountain villages are in particular very poor due to the arid climate unfit for agriculture, but also for their remoteness from the political and economic centre (Jansky and Pachova 2006). They are on government subsidies, [“dotation”, directly translated by the informant from the Russian expression *dotatsyionnaya zavisimost’*, which means subsidised dependence] meaning that they get 98% of their budget from the state government (Saparova, 15.11.11). In addition, local level income has been reduced the last years for many of the local self-governments (Sybygalieva 2011, 149). According to engineers working at my village case project, money for these projects are therefore always found by circulating money from where ever they can be found, from one fund, organ or ministry to another (Engineers and Kojomkulov, 25.11.11). Hence, the organisation of resources for development projects is quite ad hoc and unsustainable. The organisation of resources from the central level to the local is characterised by informal networking through formal channels – that is, through the governmental hierarchy. This creates more insecurity, and therefore continuous dependency issues, for the local level of governance.

5.1.5 The executive local governance level - enabling and disabling participation

The Ayil Okhmotu and its leader have both positive and negative traits when it comes to inclusion and transparency (Ibraimova 81,82). There has been registered a high motivation of work in some Ayil Okhmotus since the institutionalisation of electing them started in 2001. Many of them have good knowledge of their constituencies, and as they are elected they have a willingness to understand and to do the best for their population (ibid.). In her case study on villages in four Ayil Okhmotus, Ibraimova (2010, 83) measures the scope of support for the

²⁰ The law “On Patures” from 2009 is particularly relevant. I will come back to this law in the beginning of the next analysis chapter, chapter 6.

different local governance structures; the Ayil Okhmotu, the Ayil Kenesh, local traditional institutions and other private community organisations or territorial bodies of local self-governance, like neighbourhood or street councils. She found that the executive administration of Ayil Okhmotus had the highest scores of support. The reasons for this were that this is a body that the villagers perceive as a provider of services. The Ayil Okhmotu is running their everyday lives in many ways as it organises village assemblies for decision making on issues such as for example tariff on cattle (Ibraimova 2010, 79,80). It helps them to fill out papers for village institutions, organises purchases of essential goods such as pesticides and fuel and helps villagers to fill out funding applications for international organisations. In this way, the Ayil Okhmotu is of great use for villagers as he connects them with resources that they are otherwise excluded from in their flat networks, and villagers participate in its operation (Kuehnast and Dudwick 2002; Ibraimova 2010, 65, 66, 83).

The Ayil Okhmotus do encourage participation in governance matters to some extent, as they include groups and associations in decision making. At the same time, some individuals and groups are excluded from these participative measures. The villagers are not always informed about the agenda of Kenesh sessions, even though this is under the Ayil Okhmotu's obligation. Information is given selectively by displaying some information, whilst for example agendas of sessions or budget information are not on display. Some heads of Ayil Okhmotus have even misused their power position by corrupt practices and the mishandling of public funds (Ibraimova 2009, 84; Temirkulov 2004, 20). Groups excluded from participation have expressed dissatisfaction, women groups in some Ayil Okhmotus have for example complained because they wish to be more intensively included in decision-making (Ibraimova 2009, 85, 86). The situation for women, particularly some, in decision making makes up an important point in the next chapter that analyses participation in NGO-led development in the village Kun Elek. In addition to the exclusion of some groups, Ayil Okhmotus tend to involve some traditional village organisations, like the elders council - the *aksakal council*. Some village women are not satisfied with this, as aksakals rarely discuss women's issues. They often direct women to elderly women for advice, but they are not part of the aksakal council. Thus, women are often not heard in decision making by the Ayil Okhmotu. Women activists are often instructed to arrange public cultural events, since women are in large part more concerned with these types of events. Thus, women are not given much space or motivation for public work or to "communicate their need to Ayil Okhmotu in an organised fashion" (Ibraimova 2009, 86). Thus, we see both possibilities and

limitations in the governance spaces where villagers are invited to participate by the Ayil Okhmotu and its leaders. In addition, women are particularly vulnerable to these limitations, as governance spaces are gendered in Kyrgyz society (Earle 2001; USAID/ CAR Gender Assesment 2010).

5.1.6 Checks and balances on Ayil Okhmotu

The head of the Ayil Okhmotu in Leninskyi Okrug, where Kun Elek is situated, explains how the Akim on raion level functions as sufficient checks and balances upon the head of Ayil Okhmotu.

“Yes. He (the Akim) sends out one of his co-workers every month, to check on the Ayil Okhmotu. If he does not do his work, this co-worker tells the Akim and the Akim writes a letter to the respective Ayil Kenesh that your Ayil Okrug does not do its work, and that they have to look into it, so that they can solve their tasks. If he works well, he (the head of Ayil Okhmotu) gets an award from the Akim” (Niva, 30.11.11)

This is supported by research from the German Development Institute. As Ayil Okhmotu is unofficially dependent on higher levels, he is also accountable to them. As one informant from Oblast level administration expressed, ‘But how can they truly not listen (to Akim and Oblast level administration) if tomorrow I can or cannot give them money?’ (Grävingsholt 2006, 87). That there is even a reward from the Akim to the best performing head of AO, shows that he is under semi-official observation from the Akim²¹.

Niva’s wording expresses how the head of AO has perhaps more decision power than the whole AO itself. As he is head of both Ayil Okhmotu and Ayil Kenesh, he is the highest responsible actor or institution for the quality of work to address local issues. In practice, people often address their problems or resource needs directly to the head of Ayil Okhmotu, not the actual organs of Ayil Okhmotu (Ibraimova 2009, 79, 80). Although he is of great assistance to his villagers, there is a risk that there are patron-client mechanisms in this relationship which gives the head of AO great power and leverage over villagers. This gives him a dual role as an enabling leader and a disabling patron. As they are dependent on him for resources and information, for example information on how to obtain projects from INGOs, the head of AO can exercise strong control upon his constituents. The control is further legitimised by the indigenous institution of the leader for villages. Hence, this is a process of institutional bricolage, as meaning from earlier institutional traits are used in patron-client

²¹ Niva, the head of Ayil Okhmotu, showed me a diploma he had received from the Akim for being a good head of AO.

relationships that have become more exploitative due to modern context. As the head of AO seems to be above many of the checks and balances installed, this further consolidates his powerful position. As explained, he is the head of both organs of the AO, but as I will describe further in the next paragraph, he exercises great leverage as he is often above the checks and balances of the Ayil Kenesh.

5.1.7 The Ayil Kenesh. Dependence on the Ayil Okhmotu

By law, and the very concept of decentralisation in Kyrgyzstan, the Ayil Kenesh is the main decision-making body in the local self-governance system, as it is the elected representatives of the people (Ibraimova 2009, 79,80). The Ayil Kenesh is like a local parliament for the several villages which are united under one administrative Ayil Okhmotu/ local self-governance structure. The Ayil Kenesh and the Ayil Okhmotu are supposed to function as mutual checks and balances on each other. Representatives from the villages are elected to the Ayil Kenesh through secret ballot elections for a four years term. Anyone can nominate himself for the election. Sitting in the Ayil Kenesh does not require full-time involvement. Usually, the members keep their place of work, which often means that they continue to be involved in agriculture to make a living. The Ayil Kenesh meets four times a year, discussing matters put on an accumulated agenda. The Ayil Kenesh deputies usually make decisions on management of municipal property and development plans. They are to draft and approve strategies for development, issue basic legal normative documents for local communities and make decisions on major life sustenance-issues of local communities (Grävingholt 2006, 54). At the same time, they are monitored by Ayil Okhmotu and other state bodies to ensure compliance with existing Kyrgyz law (Ibraimova 2009, 62, 63, 80).

Although the Ayil Kenesh is supposed to be independent, it is in fact highly dependent on Ayil Okhmotu. The local parliament is *de facto* subject to the local administration, the latter therefore being the true decision maker. As the Kenesh appears to the people not to have power, people, as mentioned, tend to go directly to the head of the Ayil Okhmotu. In addition, the staff at Ayil Okhmotu is better known to the people, as they are approached when people apply for municipal services. Some villagers have concluded that their Ayil Kenesh staff does not perform its assignments (Ibraimova 2009, 79, 80). As their status is low, and the positions are not paid, there is a self-fulfilling prophecy in the claim that the Kenesh staff does not do its job. They therefore find it hard to attract new skilled staff. In this way, there has been a

small degree of devolution of decision making and power to organs of people's representatives. There is in fact no difference in practice between the executive body and the council in charge of checks and balances. There is now a local Kenesh system for which there is no real need, an institution stripped of real content and basically without political power (Ibraimova 2009,133). As Saparova, the local governance officer at MSDSP's office in Osh, said to me about the Keneshs and the Ayil Okhmotu,

“The problem is on the local representative board [council] because they are not paid, and there is no national program to invoke their capacity. So, representatives have not capacity to give consultation to the others [to the Ayil Okhmotu administration] because they are not specialists. Here, we often find business men or aksakali, so they are often not responsible people. They just say, ‘great, go a head!’ To whatever is suggested. But they should recognize their role, and they should be trusted.“ (Saparova, 15.11.11)

Hence, in contrast to Niva's firm belief in proper checks and balances between the administrative levels, the checks and balances function is missing between AO and Ayil Kenesh. Hence, people are to an extent not represented in local government organs, as Kenesh deputies and the head of AO is elected by the people, but the rest of AO bureaucrats are not.

5.1.8 Jamaats and other bodies of public self-governance

Jamaats are voluntary community associations that are made up by members of a part of a village or town – a street, a block or other territory. There can also be other territorially based associations; these can actually take on some of the functions of Ayil Okhmotu or Ayil Kenesh. They can also be allocated municipal territory, and local governments are obliged to get their consent on decisions regarding local resources or management of municipal property (Ibraimova 2009, 65). If Jamaat associations register at the Ayil Okhmotu, they can influence local self-governance, but contrasting with other territorially based associations they can only function as consultants of state and local self-governance bodies on local issues. However, they go through a considerably easier registration than the other territorially based organisations or other private organisations, like women's groups, village development groups or resource associations. These must register at the Ministry of Justice. The positive aspects of registering are that you can apply for funds and support from international development organisations that work with officially registered groups of villagers exclusively (Ibraimova 2009, 66, 67). In this way, these groups, and more so the Jamaats, have the power to move across scales to connect with actors at global governance levels, bypassing elected

local assembly and regional and state levels of governance. Nevertheless, Jamaat in practice refers to very diverse types of organisation dependent on the particular village in discussion. Villagers might refer to them as business enterprises or self-help groups involved in land use and cattle breeding (ibid.). In Kun Elek, the Jamaat was mostly referred to as a way to organise the village in neighbourhoods. Each neighbourhood had its leader, a Jamaat Bashty, who cooperated with the Ayil Bashty and head of AO on local development issues. He addressed these authorities on behalf of his Jamaat if they needed resources, and counselled them on what was needed in his Jamaat (Jamila 2 and her husband, a Jamaat Bashty, 25.11.11).

Hence, although Jamaats can have an influence on governance, they are restricted in their role as counsellors. This can also mean that they are free from responsibility to do anything. One old Aksakal in Kun Elek told me; ‘The Jamaat Bashty doesn’t really do anything. It is the Ayil Bashty and the head of Ayil Okhmotu that really does anything’ (Aksakal 25.11.11). Hence, the Jamaats also seem dependent on leaders – or patrons - further up in the local hierarchy. The AB and the head of AO seem to have a dual role, as both enabling leaders and disabling patrons.

5.2 Formalising informal practices in governance structures.

The Kyrgyz law on local self-government also includes local referenda, citizen meetings and other forums of direct democracy and traditional community practises (Alymkulov and Kulatov 2000, 532; Ibraimova 2009, 81). Informal practices such as *kurultai*, *aksakals* and *ashar* have been institutionalised and formalised to implement local village practices as part of democratic development. In addition, these practices are also attaining new content and being used for purposes different from their traditional ones (Temirkulov 2010, 97; Earle 2005). They are traditional framings with reconfigured content and purpose (Baimyrzaeva 2012, 119) – a process of institutional bricolage, in the words of Frances Cleaver (2012).

The Kurultais are village assemblies taking place at least every two years, when it is found necessary by the people. Kurultais dates back to the 15th or 16th century, or earlier.

Throughout most of its history, the Kyrgyz led a nomadic lifestyle. Each tribe had a social structure consisting of the executive or leader (bi or bek) and kurultai – the collective council

or meeting of the elderly. The kurultai was to ensure some accountability between the people and the leader, and the leader should carry out the people's will (Baimyrzaeva 2012, 119). In pre-revolutionary Central Asia, kurultai also functioned as large national assemblies, where people were informed about and called upon to discuss national matters. The institution of Kurultai waned during Soviet times (Temirkulov 2008). Today, its role as a collective assembly or meeting has been revived, but reconfigured. A kurultai can be demanded by all members of the village, and they are to encourage local participation in decision making and discussing major local issues, like changes in the community charter or establishing community property and its management. In 1999, a presidential decree on kurultais was passed in order to enhance their role, requiring the raion Akims and city mayors to send their drafts for social and economic development at the local level for approval by the kurultais. Two years later, the Akim or governor must report to a second kurultai on the progress of implementation. If the kurultai finds the progress to be unsatisfactory, it will advise the Ayil Okhmotu to give a no confidence vote in the Akim and submit it to the president. Otherwise, the Akim will complete his four years in power.

Kurultais can also be initiated by government officials or even the president. In 2001 the government formalised kurultai even more by a new decree; kurultais were now to strengthen state structure, democracy and also to have more control over local communities. There have been 5 national kurultais since independence (Temirkulov 2010). They are intended to inform people on changes in the constitution or in politics, but also to discuss problems of the Kyrgyz republic and the Kyrgyz people (Gullette 2010, 160; Temirkulov 2008; 324,325).

Critics say kurultais create tension between the old system and the new forms of governance. Kurultais may reduce the influence of the Ayil Okhmotu in Kyrgyz politics, and even impede representative democracy. Representative organs – the Ayil Kenesh- will have even less opportunity to influence the head of AO as kurultais to an extent take their role in the political system. On the one hand, these people's meetings and protests are also a form of raising important issues and demands from the people to the government, and can therefore also promote democratic processes²². However, kurultais, often in the shape of protests, has become the main form of control and checks and balances on authorities, and therefore undermines the role of the representative organs- the Ayil Kenesh- to influence the administration and the head of Ayil Okhmotu (Alymkulov and Kulatov 2000, 533,534; Ruget

²² <http://cesmi.info/wp/?p=142>, last visited 02.02.2013.

and Usmanalieva 2007). Furthermore, kurultais coupled with other traditional institutions have been used by Kyrgyz authorities to consolidate their position. For example, under president Akaev, oppositional forces were banned from taking part at the kurultais, and influential pro-governmental elders – *aksakals*- were used to form people's opinion. At the same time, the political opposition also arranged their own kurultais and used aksakals to inform people's opinion and, legitimize their actions and mobilise more followers (Temirkulov 2008, 325). Thus, people's meetings can be manipulated from above through patron-client relationships and actually impede democratic development. These people's meetings sometimes take the shape of public protests. Protests are a very prominent form of political activity among citizens in Kyrgyzstan, and they are also known to be manipulated by elites through patron-client relationships (Ruguet and Usmanalieva 2007). Large protests can push through the will of some strong parties. These changes have not been through any democratic deliberations, like institutions where cases are voted on by people's representatives. Because of this, these types of protests are seen as impeding the development of institutions that will lead to a functioning form of democratic deliberations. Party politics are to an extensive degree based on these kinds of protests, which creates constant stalemates and conflicts in parliament instead of deliberations and compromises (Gullette 2010; Ruguet and Usmanalieva 2007). Thus, we see a scalar dimension to institutional bricolage. The meaning inherent in institutions are continued, but also reconfigured, by people because of societal changes. The institutions of Kurultais are moved to the central level by powerful actors, creating mechanisms where actors move across scales. This is politics of scale which gives possibilities to local actors influencing higher levels of government, but people are also manipulated across scales, as aksakals are manipulated at state and regional levels.

An *Aksakal* is an elder, directly translated it means “white bearded”. There are two meanings included in the word; not only does it mean elderly, but it connotes intellect, leadership and authority. Aksakals are the oldest generations of men in a community, but the expression is also used to denote knowledgeable men that might be younger. In 2002, the law “On local self-government and local state administration” was issued. It formalised the authority of the aksakals by creating a Council of Aksakals and a Court of Aksakals in local communities. Their court decisions are largely followed, and they have a large legal influence in villages. Aksakals have retained their role in informal politics as well. Aksakals are central in much of the organisation of community life. They use their authority, both formal and informal, to maintain social control in society, to mobilise the community members and to settle conflicts

involving the community. Even their mere presence can make an event respectable. To maintain social control, they use informal tools that are in widespread use in community life in Kyrgyzstan, also by others than aksakals (Bichsel 2009, 71; Temirkulov 2010). It is important to include the aksakals because of the respect they enjoy in the community. All the same, their role in the community is changing with historical and societal changes that are taking place today. The aksakals' role today is restricted to some social fields. Within fields where modern knowledge is required they have less or only marginal authority (Bichsel 2009).

As aksakals become both informally and formally part of the governance system, we see governance reforms meeting traditional and informal practises, continuing yet reconfiguring these practises to fit modern society. Kurultais have also become part of formal governance structures, reviving institutional practises and meanings from pre-Soviet and Soviet times in modern framings. Both institutions have become open to use by a wide variety of people, having been continued and reconfigured to fit modern reform demands of decentralisation and participation. At the same time, different power-relations and new exclusionary network systems in society makes it easier for some to use, or abuse, these institutions. In this way, this is a process of institutional bricolage. Traditional institutions are moulded by societal needs and new institutions, and the new institutions are again being affected by the old institutions.

5.2.1 Traditional community solidarity and volunteer labour reconfigured for development efforts

Tooganchilik is the traditional Kyrgyz idea of community solidarity, where every Kyrgyz has a duty to help others in the community. The practice of traditional solidarity gained popularity among the population after independence, as it provided social security through a guarantee of mutual aid (Temirkulov 2008, 7). Through this traditional idea of the community solidarity, people perform community *ashar*. *Ashar* is another informal institution or tradition in Central Asia which has been formalised and reconfigured with new content (Temirkulov 2008, 320; Earle 2005, 252). 'ashar is a pre-Soviet form of collective voluntary work, in which groups of people were mobilised to provide assistance for family and neighbours', (Earle 2005, 252). Thus, *ashar* is the actual community work that stems from the idea of community solidarity; *tooganchilik*. It is believed to have been first practised by nomadic people. According to

Thurman (quoted in Bichsel 2011, 73), *ashar* was frequently used to conscript labour for construction and maintenance of irrigation canals under the Kokand khanate prior to Russian colonialism. It survived during Soviet times, and Bichsel finds that *ashar* was still used at village level for maintenance of irrigation infrastructure and merged with the Soviet practice of *subbotnik*. *Subbotnik* was, and still is in post-Soviet countries, unpaid, communal work on Saturdays (Bichsel 2011, 75). Earle asserts that in the late Soviet period *ashar* mostly meant organised efforts to build a house with help from the extended family (Earle 2005, 252). Unrelated neighbours and other villagers would also contribute. Normally, men who were fit to work would do physical labour, *aksakals* would give advice, and women would cook (Earle 2005). This form of *ashar* exists also today, but another form of a more formal use of *ashar*, similar to the pre-Soviet and early Soviet *ashar*, coexist alongside it (Earle 2005). More and more often, state organs, NGOs and development agencies and organisations are using *ashar* for community work where people themselves are building common infrastructure (Earle 2005). *Ashar* is being employed to tackle the problem of contribution from villagers and involvement in the implementation of projects (Earle 2005, 251- 253). The respected *aksakals* are being used for mobilising people for *ashar* or at least they have an important role in decision making in the project (Earle 2005; Bichsel 2011, 76, 80). Here we see how an institution has been reconfigured in processes of institutional bricolage and changed with societal, structural changes and needs. Through institutional bricolage, collective participation has been what Henry (2004) calls an important local coping mechanism when societies have had to cope on their own through collective work. It has enforcing effects, as it obligates people to do unpaid work. Under societal forms where power differences are wide, under for example Russian colonialism, there is, though, a risk that people will get exploited. In the next analytical chapter, I will discuss how the widespread use of *ashar* affects participation and governance by the people in development projects and resource governance.

5.2.2 Social control functions in local governance

Babajanian has studied 16 World Bank participatory development projects in Kyrgyzstan. His conclusion was that the social control functions excluded many vulnerable people from the projects and processes concerning the projects. Leaders, through their authority and village solidarity norms, forced villagers to pay for infrastructure projects when they really could not afford it. Thus, informants expressed some very negative views, and on how villagers in

North Kyrgyzstan were forced to become even poorer by paying for infrastructure (Babajanian 2011, 323). From this follows that vulnerable villagers do not have much to say in decision-making, but are forced to pay for development through the social control function of strong leaders. It should be mentioned, though, that these social control and solidarity practices have different meaning depending on the social dynamics and process in different places. Babajanian (2011, 323) found that village solidarity is more entrenched in the South than in the North. His research revealed that the population in the North was more reluctant to pay. This, he believes, is because in the more affluent Northern oblasts, capitalist exchange and individualism had replaced much of the traditional community solidarity, supportive networks and social control functions. This process has been exacerbated by the migration stream from the South, creating social alienation and division between the old and new inhabitants (Babajanian 2011).

5.2.3 External aid agencies meeting old practices in resource governance

International aid agencies and national or local NGOs alike deal with and position themselves among the Kyrgyz governance institutions at different administrative-political levels. NGOs and other actors of civil society constitute a part of the governance structure in Kyrgyzstan today. The civil society sector has flourished in comparison to some of the other Central Asian countries after the Soviet Union collapsed, as the country has a relatively open political environment in Central Asian terms (Earle 2005, 249). The development of NGOs has been promoted and shaped by Western donors' views on the role of NGOs in society.

Decentralisation efforts have opened up a space for donor-driven NGOs and aid agencies in community and rural development, invited by the first independent Kyrgyz government under president Akayev in 1991 (Adamson 2002; Earle 2005). These agencies and international NGOs became the Kyrgyz government's new mentor, replacing Moscow's role from the Soviet times (Baimyrzaeva 2005 OR 2012?, 31).

Mosello (2011) fears that many donor projects will create governance problems, as many people's needs and voices will not be heard. Projects will not be based on real needs by the people, as projects that win funding rather win due to leaders with skills and contacts and ideas that fit donor policies. People with strong leaders do not necessarily have the possibility to voice their needs, as there might be exclusionary mechanisms between villagers and leaders

or between villagers (Hickey and Mohan 2004). The competition for donor funding will therefore lead to inefficient and non-sustainable projects. In contrast, Baimyrzaeva believes that local NGOs have learned through this competition for donor funding to become more skilful (Baimyrzaeva 2012, 168). Nevertheless, NGOs working on projects involving local governance issues and actors meet severe challenges. This is explained by Saparova, the Manager of Local Governance at MSDSP in Osh (Saparova, 15.11.11). She works closely with local government organs, civil society and villagers to make these actors go into dialogue on development projects. MSDSP also try to help them to behave like checks and balances on each other to achieve democratic governance. She believes that there is an overlapping between workers in NGOs, AO and the local Kenesh sometimes, as people tend to work for all these different governance structures at the same time. She claims that people can wear ‘different hats for different occasions,’ and that this is not a problem. The problem lies in the personalisation of politics, she says, where you do not have any guarantee whether a bureaucrat working in local self-government is doing his work or not. Local government officials from the village administration often lack the competence to perform their tasks.

“Politics at the Ayil Okhmotu level depends on personal factors, on whether or not they have the will, desire, and if they are active. Sometimes people here are very passive.” (Saparova, 15.11.11).

As aid agencies and large externally instigated NGOs operate in this complex political field, they are also implementing traditional institutional traits of Kyrgyz society in aid projects. Aid agencies and NGOs are promoting reconfigured or re-imagined pre-Soviet forms of community mobilisation. Donors involve aksakals and ashar as collective mobilisation for improving or implementing infrastructure (Earle 2005, 249). As local institutions and practices are shaped by local politics and power differences, this adds to the complex political field within which aid agencies and larger NGOs are operating.

Informal institutions on the different political levels have often been misunderstood by international aid agencies (Bichsel 2011, 84). Bichsel compares two irrigation projects in two different villages in Southern Kyrgyzstan. One project was implemented by an aid agency, involving the establishment of a community based organisation (CBO), and another projects was instigated by the community itself without external aid interference. In the latter example, the community created an association, the *Jangy Jer*. The externally instigated project showed little understanding of the meaning of village institutions, although they tried to build on them, like using the aksakals’ role as older men with authority. The aid agency had not

understood the social support basis of the aksakals. Aksakals that had authority was only those who earned support from the different families making up the village. In contrast, the project instigated solely by the community exerted a high degree of social control. These aksakals were middle-aged, and represented families and households of the village, which is the way representation function in many villages. Constituents of village boards or meetings are often not individuals, but families, as help and solidarity within families are very important for the survival of individuals in the village. Members of the *Jangy Jer* expressed that strong cohesion among villagers, coupled with honesty, accountability and the strong leadership performed by the Aksakal leaders was very important for the success of the project. The association had strong elements of social control, but this was not enforced through traditional norms of solidarity. The leaders used both coercion and enticement to control the population. For example, new land that now became irrigated was first given to villagers if they became members of the *Jangy Jer* association for only 2USD. Later, when the canal construction required more investment, families who wanted to keep their allocated plot were forced to pay 100 USD per family. The *Jangy Jer*'s early distribution of land secured it from being grabbed by other interested parties, including governmental and other power structures (Bichsel 2011,81,82).

Bichsel concludes that aid agencies often lead to disempowerment of local institutions. By including participation of elders for instrumental and process-oriented purposes who are not supported by solidarity groups, they modify 'the societal models these institutions are embedded in' (Bichsel 2011, 85). Hence, as the INGO here altered the real village meaning of the Aksakal institution, associational power seized to exist. It was this associational power and local coping mechanisms that were needed for empowerment in the other example, where the community created their own association. This overlaps with what Cleaver (2012) explains about the meanings inherent in institutions. The indigenous association used social control functions in a new way, reconfiguring yet keeping this institution. This is an example of institutional bricolage, as institutions are reconfigured to meet modern societal challenges. With this associational power they moved across scales and fought off powerful actors at different scales. This process reminds us more of the political activism in Mitlin's (2004) and Florisbelo and Guijt's (2004) cases, where local activists were able to move across scales and affect higher level politics by linking local and global agendas. These examples are from Brazil and South-Africa and are set within different political and cultural systems. Nonetheless, this proves that connecting local activism to affect politics at higher levels of

government can be quite successful independently of cultural context. In the following chapter, I will analyse how an INGO works within and relates to decentralisation efforts, local self-government and participation when implementing a development project in my case-study, the Kun Elek village.

5.3 Concluding remarks

Politics from the global to the local influence each other, and informal and formal power-and institutional practices create dependencies. The local level is dependent on the central level and international organisations for resources. International policies of decentralisation affect all levels of government, and the politics of each scale in the end affects, but also merge, with the existing local power-and institutional practices. This has created both powerful local actors, and weak citizens, in the way that some citizens are heard and some are not as they are excluded from important informal networks of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan.

Politics on higher level merge with politics on lower level, that is, decentralisation policies meet informal institutions. At the same time, pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet institutions of governance meet in governance of resources today; this is institutional bricolage. Meanings from earlier institutions and forms of society are both continued and reconfigured. The different institutions create for a range of channels or possibilities for actors, this also has a scaled expression as they can move from different scales through the different institutional possibilities. As decentralisation policies meet informal institutions through informal power networks, some powerful actors are able to affect politics at higher level in an informal way. They can retract resources at higher levels, whereas those excluded from networks and without knowledge cannot. This is a good example of politics of scale, where politics and actions at different levels influence each other.

6 Village project in Kun Elek. The NGO between government, village, informal structures - and participation.

In this chapter I will analyse how NGOs work in a complex political field, such as the one described in the last chapter, which is shaped by the meeting between state decentralisation and traditional institutions and practises. Through my case study, an integrated village irrigation project, I will discuss the roles of different actors, including the village people. I will elaborate on how this creates space for some participation at local level, but restrains some participation as well.

I shall elaborate on what kind of space for participation and citizenship claiming MSDSP and local decision-making actors create in the village. I shed light on how power and knowledge are important issues in the development project in Kun Elek, and how these issues influence the degree and type of village participation. I will also discuss institutional bricolage in Kyrgyzstan, that is, how people can draw on different institutions and traditions to govern and manage their society and common resources in such strained environments as in Southern Kyrgyzstan. I aim to explore how institutional bricolage are connected to politics of scale - how politics at different scales, from the local villagers to the global policy level, are interconnected and how actors and power can potentially move across these scales through 'bricolaged' institutions.

6.1 The case study: Kun Elek village

The Alai District in the Alai valley of Osh Oblast has 14 rural administrative communities – Ayil Okhmotus (AO). These are, as I have explained earlier, part of a local governance structure, and partly detached from the state political-administrative structure. Every AO consists of a number of villages with one being the administrative centre. Kun Elek is one of four villages in Leninskiy Aiyl Okhmotu, a village okrug²³ in the barren mountains in the Alai

²³ The Ayil Okhmotu, when defined as a group of villages under one administrative unit and same jurisdiction, is overlapping with the term 'okrug' from Soviet times which holds the same meaning, see page 50.

valley. There are 1335 people living in Kun Elek, or 361 families (Suleimanova, manager Natural Resource Management MSDSP, 17.09.12). Because of lack of water and land and no other possibilities to get a job in Alai valley, youth are migrating to Russia, Kazakhstan or other cities in Kyrgyzstan to find work. Many who go to Russia or Kazakhstan come home to Kun Elek a couple of months during winter, as the market is slower in the cold periods in Russia (Interviews in village, 18-26.11.11; Suleimanova, 17.09.12).

Kun Elek is, according to MSDSP staff, one of the poorest villages of the Leninskiy AO because of its relative shortage of farming and pasture land (Interviews MSDSP staff, Niva the head of AO). According to MSDSP statistics, though, 64% of the population in Kun Elek is rated poor, only a few per cent higher than the other three villages of Leninskiy okrug. At the same time, 41% of Kun Elek villagers, approximately 10 % more than in the other villages, earns less than approximately 12 USD monthly.²⁴ The Leninskiy Ayil Okhmotu is among the poorest AOs in Osh, according to research on the geographical spread of poverty in the country (Kyrgyz Republic committee for national statistics, supported by the World Bank, 2005). Leninskiy AO has a poverty level among its population of 60 % or more. According to Niva and MSDSP staff, Leninskiy AO and Kun Elek are also poor due to lack of employment opportunities. The Alai valley has a continental climate, with high seasonal variation in weather and temperature. It is also a very arid valley, because of the non-fertile mountainous soil which makes it a difficult place for agriculture when compared to other regions in the country (Jansky Pachova 2006). Climate changes have led to the melting of glaciers, which in the long run will lead to more arid climate in the valley. As the population in Alai valley is dependent upon their agricultural activities and livestock herding, water is crucial. Food insecurities have been alleviated by humanitarian and development aid and money transfer from seasonal and permanent migrants from the region. At the same time, the struggle for survival over the last twenty years has severely degraded the mountainous ecosystems and their resources. Mountain villages are located far from central areas and excluded by their mountainous location. The discontinuation of state employment and social benefits has led to further exclusion, social degradation, poverty and out-migration.

Thus, decoupling of Soviet agriculture and export system, together with scarce resource production and harsh living conditions in mountain villages up to 3,500 meters, exacerbates the poverty. This affects these mountain societies' capabilities of coping with the increasing

²⁴ [AKF UCA Application Form Norwegian MFA 30.11.10..DOC](#), accessed 13.05.2013.

natural disasters and everyday hardships they are experiencing (Jansky and Pachova 2006, 104, 105).

6.2 The INGOs' position and role in a complex political field. Between Western policies and local politics.

In the beginning of the decentralisation reforms, development agencies like AKF and their daughter organisation MSDSP supported village associations to take care of community development. These associations for management of diverse village resources have, in AKF's view, developed in an unsustainable direction (Saparova, 15.11.11). In 2009, the state government implemented a law 'On Pastures'. This transferred all farm land management to local committees and associations (Kreutzmann 2012, 136). Water associations had started developing already in the 1990s, mostly by international donor agencies (Sehring 2009, 69). The government delegated all issues to the local governance authorities. Communities started associations, committees and administrative boards parallel to local government. These were independent from government in all development spheres, like water, land, irrigations or farming. But the leaders from these community groups were not paid, they were more like volunteers. Saparova says that how they work now, directly with local governments, is much more sustainable. "(...) this new structure, this is government structure, and sustainable, and involving people." (Saparova, 15.11.11)

Saparova explains how MSDSP has changed its development efforts from village associations to working with local governments or NGOs in the areas where they work in Osh, in Alai and Chong Alai raions. The less active village associations were simply handed over to the AO, and merged into these already existing structures that might be more capable.

"Within 5 years there were established 63 village associations, like water associations. What to do with them? Some were very passive, some active, because all mountain areas used to get support from [the] government during Soviet times. So they got addicted to that. But now they were supposed to work, when they are not used to it. So, we, or the district officers, suggested something that we transferred to Shahid [director of MSDSP in Bishkek] and divided village associations in three [groups] – very active, not active and the middle one [medium active]. The passive ones were asked to transfer all projects, potatoes, education, goat breeding, infrastructure, poultry, transfer or hand over everything to [the] village head or the local governance structure." (Saparova, 15.11.11).

At the same time, active village associations that were able to deliver good services became NGOs.

“The active were asked if they could get registered at the Ministry of Justice, just to become a local NGO. The middle ones, we had a meeting with them and asked if they would keep developing activities or if they could deliver [these] over to msdsp. Now, we have 32 or 38 that were ready to register as NGOs. Before, they got all support from MSDSP, they did not do anything themselves, but now they needed to register at the Ministry of Justice to get support. They need to arrange a village fund. So now, many of these became very good NGOs”. (Saparova, 15.11.11).

Dzholdoshjaliev, from WRMD under the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources Management and Processing Industry, explains that they actually still support water user associations. WRMD has the supervisory responsibility of these. However, he admits that they are successful in a very varying degree; it completely depends on the individuals making up the WUAs. This conflates with Narusbaeva’s thoughts on how governance issues are very personalised in Kyrgyzstan. Also, there seems to be some non-coordination between state and INGO efforts on WUAs. Mosello (2011) points to the danger of uncoordinated efforts of aid agencies, as resources could be used at other more pressing agendas.

Hence, external aid agencies are contributing their guiding rules not only on higher, but also lower levels of governance. Through MSDSP’s policies towards local self-governance, either NGOs or official governance structures deliver services and implement development measures in localities in Alai region. MSDSP was an instigator in changing the social organised forms of associations into NGOs, and thus is heavily involved in local decision-making. The governance functions of the associations paralleled those of local village administrations, which according to Saparova at MSDSP (15.11.11) made both of the institutions to perform badly. The associations were often overlapping with Ayil Okhmotu, so they were basically the same as the Ayil Okhmotu (Sehring 2009, 73). Also, as Saparova mentioned above, associations lack incentives to perform as their work is unpaid. This indicates uncoordinated efforts between the central state and AKF/MSDSP. However, it might indicate that those who function live on, and others are transferred to other units of governance. In this way, different local units for resource governance might just be contextually suited institutional arrangements.

Now, through support from MSDSP, Ayil Okhmotu has regained its strong position, although MSDSP believes that local NGOs are flexible in this system. To have both AO and other units of governance to govern resources might be a necessary flexible system fitted for its context.

At the same time, as pointed out by Bichsel (2009, 74) and Cleaver (2001); the manner in which international NGOs implement projects typically strengthen local power relationships. The donors and INGOs are dependent on the village elite in the AO to carry out the project within their time frame. The AO is necessary to involve as it has power to get decisions through and implementation done. Having them involved in development implementation is a type of local participation and an important coping mechanism. On the other hand, vulnerable groups are not likely to be represented in this decision making.

6.3 INGOs and development agencies play an enabling and a disabling role at the same time

Saparova, the manager of local governance at MSDSP, explains how MSDSP functions as a necessarily disciplining institution when it comes to making sure that the projects are accurately planned by the communities. MSDSP ensures that the money needed for a project is kept at a minimum. Sometimes they inspire communities to implement projects and cut costs themselves.

“There was one project where the villagers asked for street lighting. But when they gave their proposal to us they had made wrong calculations. We could not believe it would be so expensive. So, they did a recalculation and did it cheaper themselves, without any support. We thought it was a great idea, especially because an assessment in the community proved they wanted it themselves, this was in Kara Kulja, but the same case happened in Naryn and Osh oblast as well.” (Saparova, 15.11.11).

Narusbaeva, from the state agency for local self-government, asserts that donors seem to focus on some issues and regions they have found to be most important, whereas other important issues are left behind.

“It is a problem that most local self-government projects are on budget and finance issues. No one does municipal issues, legislation. I am trying to talk to different donors about new programs for these directions, AKF and OSCE - but they are just working with the Southern Kyrgyz regions, nobody works with the Northern regions”. (Narusbaeva, 09.11.11).

Baimyrzaeva (2012) agrees with this, saying that this leads to the targeting of only some actors and areas, leaving others behind. In this respect, foreign aid might lead to uneven or scattered geographical development.

Nevertheless, Narusbaeva also believes that donor activity has had overall positive influence on development in Kyrgyzstan. What she believes to be problematic are certain time constraints and the fact that donor support is not long-term.

“It is a problem that donors are here for one or two years, then all work is to stop because donors completed the project. We have each year new donor meetings to make them further develop the projects. If a new project should start they [donors and aid agencies] should start from, continue from, results from prior projects. With MSDSP, with Chinara [Saparova], we work with five raions on different aspects of local self-government. This year they closed local self-government component, and I am afraid they will not continue to work in this area.” (Narusbaeva, 09.11.11).

Shairbek Juraev is the director of the American University of Central Asia. He is an expert on international actors and the influence of international policies in Kyrgyzstan. Juraev explains how there are hazards for aid to exacerbate corruption in Kyrgyzstan, but this is very much on a case-to-case basis.

“There is this fashion that there are hazards [for aid to exacerbate corruption]. Foreign aid basically compensated the state’s ability to deliver various errands. On the one hand, that’s kind of bad, but it is hard to make a general statement on this. Most donor projects I think do a very good job. They create discussion, and a certain discourse.” (Shairbek Juraev, 12.11.11).

In this way we see how international aid agencies or INGOs have had both an enabling and disabling effect on Kyrgyzstan. There seems to be differences of opinions between the AKF staff on the regional level, the representative for Kyrgyz State Agency for local self-governance and the Kyrgyz scholar. The AKF staff sees its role as mostly positive and disciplining in a good way. The state representative sees that there are some time-and priority challenges with donors, although the overall influence of external aid has been positive. The scholar, Juraev, views aid as complex and enabling, but at the same time it does have some negative aspects. He also points out how effects are difficult to generalize. Thus, the complex process gives unintended effects which make many development efforts both enabling and disabling at the same time.

6.3.1 Knowledge transfers from the INGO

Juraev points to the importance of aid money in the hard nineties, when Kyrgyzstan was in the building stages of becoming an independent state. At the same time, he further elaborates on the problems related to time-frames and lack of local knowledge in the agenda-setting stage of project planning.

“IOs and INGOs have been crucial to build up Kyrgyzstan in the early 90s. [There have been] lots of NGOs and exchanges. But the problem is that [the] agenda is set not in Kyrgyzstan but somewhere else. The

agenda changes all the time - first it's climate, next year - not even next year but next proposal – it's gender, freedom of press or something completely different.“ (Juraev, 12.11.11).

“Because of the nature of international organisations, they do not have - you don't expect from them - such deep context knowledge. They are there for a bit, and then they go somewhere else [to another country]. They are professional. Those that are in Bishkek probably don't understand the villages.“ (Juraev, 12.11.11).

Hence, the changing of the agenda would seem to make it more difficult to transfer knowledge in a sustainable way. As Mosse (2001) sees it, there is a danger that knowledge will stay with the benefactor. In one way, the knowledge from NGOs is thought to be more important than the local knowledge when the agenda is set somewhere else by people that are not in the Kyrgyz setting, but at main offices in Geneva or Haag. Juraev even claims that these international organisations are ‘professional’, which indicates how the professional supersedes the local in importance. This reflects Botes' and Renburg's (2000) views, as they criticise development agencies for imposing external knowledge, and for implementing agendas and decisions already made by the international development agencies. In this way, in much participative measures the local population is not really participating in decision-making stages at all. In the Kyrgyz instance, according to Juraev, agenda-setting is already made and it is made in an external setting.

At the same time, much knowledge transfer is viewed as important and positive by AKF workers. Saparova, from the department of local governance at MSDSP, sees the importance of the spread of these methods to other regions of the country but also outside Kyrgyzstan.

“This approach shows very good results, and it is important to expand to other mountain areas, and in other sub-districts of the same districts [where they have already been implemented]. In this [district] we have [projects] in five AOs, but there are altogether 75. So, a big issue is that AKF supports year by year, and AKF wants to get resources from other donors. So that's why we asked Norwegian government. Another challenge is the capacity of staff. Even I didn't know how to do my job before I got an education, a job and then experience.“ (Saparova 15.11.11).

Hence, in her view, the problem lies with the lack of donors, resources and training of staff, not the methods of MSDSP. Although, she sees the knowledge transfer from MSDSP to the communities as positive, she sees some constraints in the knowledge sharing effect that development agencies have. The knowledge-sharing could be more bottom-up.

“Since [the] beginning we have this training of trainers, you asked about shared knowledge? We conduct training of trainers before [the] projects. I gather all my district staff here in Osh, hire a professional trainer, they conduct training for my staff. My staff gets this knowledge, they go in the district and give this

knowledge to the AO. Now, sharing knowledge is kind of top down, when sharing knowledge should be bottom up. Lessons learned, case studies, documenting activities - we do not have capacity for this. We know how to implement projects, taken from the top and delivered to the local, but disseminate the message from the local community to the donors is... ah... this year we practice developing case studies for the donors. The street lighting was a case study for the donors. And probably we need to increase our staff capacity for the document fixing, and cases, and deliver these to the donor, the AKF and MSDSP, to tell about success and challenges.” (Saparova, 15.11.11)

As Mosse’s (2001) argues, ‘what is taken as ‘local knowledge’ is constructed in the context of planning and reflects the social relationships that planning systems entail,’ (Mosse 2001, 17, 26). Where donors and NGOs are dependent on little resources and timely delivery, the local knowledge aspect might be lost in practice. Participation from villagers, as a means to extract local knowledge to achieve locally adapted development, is reduced to the more passive beneficiary. This is, in White’s (1995) words, a kind of instrumental participation, or information transfer, in contrast to participation as real representation and voice in implementation of projects. It is also not empowering, at least not directly. Their participation has not transformed their consciousness about their own situation and how they can claim their political rights.

At the same time, Kun Elek villagers strategise with the resources at hand and the knowledge they have gained about the strategies of NGOs. In the same situation in Mosse’s research in India, villagers strategise to maximize short-term benefits from wages and subsidies (ibid.). Some version of this seems to be happening in Kun Elek too, in an inventive way. The villagers in Kun Elek seem to have a large focus on the aspects of keeping youth by creating jobs and halting out-migration. AKF also implements youth development, halting out-migration and job creation in the irrigation projects, although irrigation is slightly more in focus. In contrast, as one young man in the village said, “We need water, but most of all we need developed youth and work (Religious young man, 23.11.11). The local leaders also emphasised the importance of halting migration and creating jobs for youth (The librarian and ‘executive leader’ of the project, 23.11.11; Head of AO, 30.11.11). Kun Elek seems to have accomplished the project they wanted, using the knowledge and institutional resources available in an institutional bricolage process (Cleaver 2012). As AKF get their irrigation and youth development project, the village gets theirs. The policies of external agencies might not be influenced by local knowledge, or lessons learned locally, to a large degree. Gender equality, climate adaptation and freedom of press might be difficult to implement sustainably,

or sustainably transfer knowledge on how to perform, if these policies change all the time. Nevertheless, villages learn how to cope and use these new institutional possibilities in a rather inventive way. INGO knowledge is both disabling and enabling, or inspiring, for participation and for communities.

6.4 Village norms and mechanisms: Local leaders and their network, knowledge, social control and checks and balances.

Niva, the head of Leninskij Ayil Okmotu, was one of the lead instigators of the project. Much because of his acquired experience and skills, Kun Elek won a project through an AKF competition for grants. As mentioned, he knew about Kun Elek's water problems. After gaining some new information on irrigation schemes and the help available from AKF, he wrote a project proposal together with villagers at a village meeting (Niva, 30.11.11). In addition, Niva also managed to get hold of extra resources when there was a lack of money in the closing phase of the project. He obtained these resources through contacts in the capital, Bishkek, and through the Oblast governor. There is a fund called "structuration fund", from which Niva was distributed resources by the government in Bishkek. These resources were handed over through the governor of Osh oblast (MSDSP Engineers, 26.11.11). Niva personally went to Bishkek two times to ask for donations (Niva, 30.11.11).

Niva is powerful in the way that he can decide which village under his okrug that he will help arrange a project for. He has experience with writing project proposals, and he has the right contacts. He has a broad network and contacts in Bishkek, he has access to information and he holds good knowledge of the raion and of how to do political work in the raion. Niva possesses these skills as he was born here and has worked in different positions in the raion bureaucracy. In this way, he was a key person for ensuring the project for the village. As he says,

“ In my opinion it is not hard to get money or help from the national political level, because the one who works, the one who thinks, he will always find a way. It is not difficult for me, because I know the raion, I have worked in the raion and I know my business. I know how to find money, because I am myself an economist. I worked for a long time as head account at *predsedatelj kolkhosa* [chairman of the collective farm]²⁵.

²⁵ Collective farms existed in Soviet times. Now, they have been privatised, and most of them have been divided into smaller farms (Bichsel 2009).

I know the path and what to do – first I write the project, then they need to agree on raion and oblast centre level of powers, they support and respect me”. (Interview “Niva” 30.11.2011).

If the population comes to the Ayil Okhmotu for help, but the Ayil Okhmotu must seek extra resources from the state for development projects, this level is still not de facto independent. There is a certain decision-making freedom, but without real devolution of power they are dependent on resources from above. Local government is in fact restricted in performing development for their constituents because of this lack of real devolution. In Kun Elek, the irrigation project depended to a great deal on Niva’s contacts. As he explains;

“If I myself cannot solve these problems or questions, I talk with the raion, oblast or Bishkek (level). I have acquaintances. How can I help? People come with questions for money, or they want material help and I do what I can” (Niva 30.11.2011).

Niva’s views shows that he can accumulate more knowledge and power based on his already existing knowledge and power. He knows how and through whom to operate, and gains resources and more power by doing this. The fact that Niva clearly views himself as an important and powerful person implies the importance of status, position and networking are in Kyrgyzstan. He can create opportunities for his villagers, and thus the power he holds will ‘circulate in society’ and reach the villagers that can take advantage of this power (Masaki 2007). At the same time, those excluded from supportive networks, with less knowledge and power will have a harder time gaining more of these attributes in this kind of system. Other excluded villages with less connected leaders will have difficulties creating these opportunities. Also, these exclusionary traits exist *within* communities as well, which I will return to later.

Niva also validates the elected Ayil Bashty, the head of a village under his okrug, or validates the removal of a dysfunctional Ayil Bashty. He needs to be present at these events, and can veto these decisions if he wants to. According to Niva, the village leader in Kun Elek was elected at a village meeting where around 300 or 400 were gathered. As this first elected village leader was incapable of performing his duties, Niva was called to validate the new elected leader, whom a few aksakals had chosen under a village meeting (Niva 30.11.2011; Old Lady, 22.11.11).

The leader of each village, the Ayil Bashty, addresses the Ayil Okhmotu for instructions. Niva explained how village leaders come to him with problems or processes going on in their villages, and how he delegates responsibility to them;

“Every Monday they come here and discuss what they have done the last week, and I give them tasks for the coming week. If they cannot come, we talk over the phone about what they shall do, what problems they have and how I can solve their problems.” (Niva, 30.11.11).

The Kun Elek Ayil Bashty found being a leader to be a difficult job and a great responsibility. It is difficult to work with the Ayil Okhmotu and the head of AO, as the salary for being the village leader is small and he sometimes quarrels with the Ayil Okhmotu. Sometimes, people do tricks to get extra resources, or they do things differently than how he has told people to do them (Ayil Bashty 26.11.2011). Ulan, the Kun Elek Ayil Bashty, explain how he was elected because of the trust he had already gained from the aksakals; ‘I used to be Jamaat Bashty, they knew I did a good job and trusted me. That is why they wanted me as Ayil Bashty.’ (Ayil Bashty, 26.11.2011).

Hence, the head of AO has some power over election of the village leader, but his role is more consultative. As the village leader, who was first elected by the people, turned out to be unsuited, local coping mechanisms came through; if elders chose a leader, the people would trust their authority to find a good AB.

Dardak is the village librarian. He takes care of the library and he was in fact renovating it during my research. In addition, Dardak has run several projects, and he has learnt how to write project proposals. He has also arranged the workers brigades for this project, gathering youth from around Osh city and from Kun Elek. Niva calls him ‘kind of an executive in the project, when we wrote the project plan, so I know him. I initiated a commission so that he does everything by the correct building norms’ (Niva, 30.11.2011). Niva also explains the necessity of these leaders;

“I love and support these people. If they (the village) do not have these people, my deputies can help. But people understand what needs to be done, and understand the need for a leader that earns their confidence.” (Niva, 30.11.11).

As there surfaced unexpected obstacles in the way of project implementation, there was need for extra resources and money. One obstacle was in connection with the building of a new

road, which was part of the project. The new road was to connect Kun Elek to the market, so that necessary equipment and pipes could be transported to the village. The villagers can now appropriate different kinds of resources (money, credit, food) easier as they are connected to wider markets. The problem is when the snow melts from the mountains during spring; large chunks of stone fall and block the road. This was fixed by a wealthy businessman with connections to the village. He bought a bulldozer, and cleans the road every spring (Suleimanova, 16.11.11; Technician, 16.11.11).

Niva claims that Ulan is the ‘fixer’ and the decision-maker on village-level regarding the project. Dardak, the librarian, seems to have more influence on the practical implementation of the project. Niva said that “but Ayil Bashty takes care of everything; the school, the library, competitions – and he also answers to me, what he shall do” (Niva, 30.11.2011).

Consequently, there is a web of leadership that is important for village development at the level of local self-government in Kun Elek. It consists of the head of AO and the village leader and other local instigating actors. This is coherent with O’Neill Borbieva’s (2010) research on the development industry in Kyrgyzstan. Her research covered 6 out of 7 oblasts in Kyrgyzstan, and she argues that all over the country there were always charismatic and industrious local or village individuals needed to translate projects for villagers, and make the project work. In Kun Elek, these men were key persons for getting the project through. Hence, getting a development project is largely based on whether the villages’ AO or head of AO, alongside other key actors, are well connected through networks to other governance levels. It also depends on whether they hold information and knowledge or not. This suggests that development is largely dependent on personal factors, networking and local coping mechanisms in the wording of Henry (2004). These key actors are, as Cleaver calls them, bricoleurs, who shape and use institutions as they have better access to them through their roles as leaders and through their knowledge and network. In addition, this again points to the important factor of knowledge, which is needed to already be in place for actors and communities to be able to obtain donor support. In this way, knowledge and informal networks – that is, the networks between higher political levels, the head of AO and other local actors - are the powerbase of these communities. As projects are based on a competition, where the best project proposal wins a project, there are many other villages that did not get a project. Other leaders in other villages might lack the necessary knowledge and contact network. Hence, externally led development uses methods that lead to development for some,

but might lose others in need that the state might be better suited to help. This argument parallels the good governance critics (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Gaventa 2004) who warn us that the good governance agenda is to a considerable part shaped by new public management practices derived from a neoliberal logic that are unsuitable for development processes. That is, competition practices are a double-edged sword; they are needed to give donors some kind of guarantee that the projects they support are good and will be successful. At the same time, those less able to write proposals, but who might need projects, are left excluded.

The head of AO is elected by the people, and the head of the village appears, in Kun Elek anyways, sometimes to be elected by the people and sometimes by trusted aksakals. I will now look at the villagers' participation in village meetings, or councils, and meetings about development projects held in the village. I will discuss how knowledge about participation in different spaces for decision-making has an effect on each other. Therefore, I look at village participation in such a general manner.

6.5 Village participation. What kind of participation, and who participates in what?

6.5.1 Ashar – participation as labour and resources

The actual canal which was planned in the project was built by unemployed youth, both from the village and from smaller cities around Osh city. The team of young workers is called *brigady* by MSDSP staff (Suleimanova, 16.11.11). They were supervised by technicians and engineers from MSDSP in Osh. These workers were informed by Dardak, who had connections that he used to find the young men from around the Osh area. The workers have a real contract, and will be paid after the project is finished (Young workers, 19.11.11). In addition, the Kun Elek villagers who were able to work were told by the Ayil Bashty and the practical leader Dardak to join in volunteer labour, ashar, which has been elaborated on in earlier chapters. This was decided, or confirmed, by the head of AB. The villagers dug parts of the canal that they did not need supervising from the engineers to dig. The population dug a part of the canal in proportion to the property they had; if they had a large property they had to dig a length equivalent to this large property. If a young man and his family were distributed a new land plot, the family dug a part proportionate to this plot. Often, men dug and women served food, as women do not contribute in this type of hard labour. Also, those

who could give a contribution in money were told to do so, whilst those who did not have the means merely contributed in handy work and food gifts (Suleimanova, 16.11.11, Technician, 16.11.11; Niva 30.11.11).

This differs from what some villagers told me. Some old women, having no animals and no sons, and whose daughters had left the village, told me they had to pay for the project. Their life situation suggests that they are poor in the village, as those without animals and help from their family are considered poor (Four middle-aged and old women at house warming toi, 18.11.11). This might be an example of patron exploitation of the poor and of those excluded from supportive networks. In addition, there is a risk here that participation is only instrumental and reduced to labour or contribution of resources. In the next paragraph I will analyse whether or not empowering participation is also involved.

6.5.2 Participation in decision making or participation as information?

It seems like most men in Kun Elek between the approximate ages of 20 and 50 years participate in village meetings; this includes the meeting about the water irrigation project. At village meetings, they vote for candidates for Ayil Okhmoto, the head of Ayil Okhmoto, the village leader, or they discuss development plans for the village. Many of my informants explained that the head of AO, the Ayil Bashty and Dardak had explained to them the importance of water under the irrigation project meeting. After the meeting, they felt that they had understood the importance of irrigated water for the future of the village, for better agriculture products and to create jobs for the migrating unemployed (Young man building house, 27.11.11; 4 Young men, 28.11.11;).

Sometimes at Kun Elek village meetings, the aksakals – old men and/or a group of respected and knowledgeable men, choose candidates for Ayil Okhmoto or the village leader post, and the villagers who are attending the meeting simply confirm their choice (Jamila 1, 19.11.11). According to one older woman of the village, the villagers often have more faith in a village leader candidate's abilities and power if he has been elected by the aksakals than if he is simply chosen through other mechanisms.

“The last Ayil Bashty was supposed to give me and my family land, but he did not. Because he did not do good work, he had to go. This time, the aksakals elected the Ayil Bashty, and not everyone, like last time” (Friend of Dabulazhe, 24.11.11).

Although aksakals can give legitimacy in some spheres, they do not have the same authority in others. In spheres or situations where new technology is used, they are not involved. (2 aksakals in taxi, 26.11.11). In Kun Elek, it seemed that some aksakals were important for employing the right village leader, but many, as one elder told me, were simply pensioners sitting at home much of the time (Aksakal, 25.11.11).

Hence, most men participate in the village meetings, including the meeting concerning the irrigation project. In these meetings, leader figures are explaining the project and its necessity to the villagers. The villagers are not so much joining in decision making and discussions, but are getting information from their trusted leaders. These leaders are sometimes only chosen by a few trusted men – aksakals - and the villagers confirm their choice. In one way, villagers do have some influence, so there is representative participation in process. Villagers participate in decision making as they oust the leaders that they are displeased with. Leaders who do not do their job or are not knowledgeable enough to create possibilities for their villagers will not perform in a satisfactory way and might be removed as leaders. In this way, villagers perform a function of checks and balances upon their leaders, who otherwise has strong decision making power and exercises strong social control due to their knowledge and skills. But this is not really transformative participation, as villagers really do not have so much to say in development efforts, but are in larger part informed. Knowledge and political power stay with the implementers and the leaders. As O’Neill Borbieva (2010) contends, there is a necessity for local actors to translate projects to villagers. However, what is needed is possibly a deeper structural development, not projects that encourage citizen participation without linking this to political or structural changes. There is no claiming of citizenship rights, that is, villagers are not encouraged to claim resources for development of irrigation from government structures based on their rights as citizens.

6.5.3 Women in the village. Women falling outside of participation – but not all women

Many women in Kun Elek were not involved in local governance issues. Many did not go to village meetings concerning the development of the village, and they did not vote for the

village leader or deputies to local self-governance organs. One woman explained how she was not informed of the election of a new village leader;

“It was supposed to be election for Ayil Bashty. And suddenly, he was elected, without us knowing it! He was chosen by 7 aksakals” (Jamila1, 19.11.11).

However, there seems to be quite a large difference between women. Richa (2008,1) finds that older women who grew up in Soviet times not only have a different attitude towards participation in public matters, but also have an assigned responsibility for village participation on the count of their age. This is supported by Babajanian (2011), who found that women that participated in village meetings often had posts in the local school, clinic or in the local administration. The majority of these belonged to a cohort of Soviet activists, who had either worked at the collective or state farms or been active in local party committees. In Kun Elek, I also found differences between women who had experience with participation and activity from their own family or environments, like their job, and those who did not. Some women who come from a ‘participative’ family, where husband and wife are more equal, are often participating if they have no small children. For example, the mother of the village leader and the wife of a Jamaat²⁶ leader participated in village meetings. She even voted for deputies to the Ayil Kenesh, the village administration representatives, which no other woman I interviewed seemed to have done (mother of village leader - the Ayil Bashty, 26.11.11). The wife of the neighbourhood leader, Jamila, also had very active children at school, she said. In addition, Jamila worked as a nurse. According to Elmira, another interviewee, this was also crucial for women’s involvement with development in the village.

“Those women who have jobs, they get around and they get to see what is going on. They are participating in all kinds of meetings” (Elmira, 19.11.11).

This seems to fit with what was said by a female teacher at the Kun Elek School. Teachers are often considered as authoritative and important in villages in Kyrgyzstan (O’Neill Borbieva 2010). This teacher participated not only in village meetings, including the irrigation meeting, but also in all other meetings arranged by AKF/MSDSP. She was in fact the only teacher at the school who was involved in a project on trainings for teachers, where teachers receive support, training and different magazines and reading materials for the children.

²⁶ Neighbourhood

“Many women have children, and do not have time. Or, they are just not interested. I am interested. Not only with how our children are doing, but on what is going on outside, around, in Osh or Bishkek” (Teacher, 29.11.11).

In comparison to middle-aged women, many young women do not participate in village affairs. There are many reasons for this, they told me. Richa (2008) argues that participation is not young Kyrgyz women’s responsibility in the village setting. I found that women with children in Kun Elek do not have time, which is not surprising as women bear the main responsibility for their children in most societies today (Mayoux 2006). Also, women who are married, especially the younger ones, are expected to be more at home. Some young women think that if an older woman from their family participates, there is someone there representing the family. As the daughter-in-law of Jamila, an older woman in the village, who told me;

” I do not participate, because my mother-in-law does. If there is anything important, she will repeat what was going on at the meetings.” (Daughter-in-law, 20.11.11).

At the same time, the wife of Dardak, a powerful man with a large network in the raion and much agency to make different development efforts, did not participate in public meetings. As her husband had all the connections, she did not need to do much;

” I do not care about politics. I do not participate in groups or meetings, I have a husband who makes money and knows everyone in the village, so I don’t need to. I don’t know which women are poor or rich because my husband has the overview on that. I have grown used to life at home, I don’t care about politics.” (Dardaks wife, 19.11.11).

Thus, women without husbands are also more vulnerable, as they have to take care of the children and work alone without a husband, who would most likely be much more involved with village affairs than his wife. Under a group interview at a house warming *toi*, one woman whom the others characterised as poor was present. They felt sorry for her, almost pitied her. They explained how her husband had died, and that she was raising her small children by herself. Her children were young, and could not migrate to Russia and send back remittances, like these women’s children did. In addition, she lived far away, and this added to her exclusion from village affairs (Interview with five women at house warming, 18.11.11). This coincides with Babajanian’s research on World Bank projects in 16 villages. He found that women could be represented by their husbands, but if they had no husband there was strong

possibility that their voices would not be heard, and they would fall under heavy social control pressure (Babajanian 2011).

Thus, many of the Kun Elek women believe that only one person in the family needs to be participating in village affairs. As long as the family is represented, there is no need for every individual to be present. According to Bichsel (2009, 83), families and not individuals make up the units of a Kyrgyz village. Those who are most excluded, like young, married women or older women with no husband and few children, or those without children migrating to Russia or Kazakhstan, stay excluded without their voices being heard. Exclusion from supportive networks is yet another exclusionary mechanism. Social and power relations such as class, age and lifestyles among women in Kun Elek often decide whether they participate in village affairs and meetings or not. In addition, there are differences in how these different women view the scope of woman participation in village matters. Many women who do not participate, like the interviewees quoted above, express that ‘meetings are for men’. As another young woman said to me, “in general, women do not participate. I know a few who does, those that are very outspoken, and do not have a husband.” (Young woman1, 24.11.11). In contrast, the women that participated uttered that many women did participate, that it was normal for women to participate (Mother of village leader/Ayil Bashty, 26.11.11). Some expressed that they found it easy to express their meaning in village meetings, it was important and necessary and in general a good thing (Jamila 1 and Jamila 2, 19.11.11).

Some women in Kun Elek were also isolated from having their voice heard in local governance organs because of more specific village institutions and traditions. Some of the work the women do is to organise *toi* - parties- for the appropriate events that demand a party in the village – for example a house-warming or a marriage. Especially house-warmings are frequent, as there is a building boom in the village. In fact, much of Kyrgyzstan is experiencing a building boom as the money they earn abroad is often used to build a new house. So, new possibilities in terms of money have accelerated old institutions of both building and celebrating new houses. A group of women arranging a *toi* told me that there is a lot of work arranging it (Jamila 1, Jamila 2, Young *toi* Woman 1, Young *toi* woman 2, 19.11.11). One woman exclaimed;

“I am not at meetings, it is *toi* season! I am never at meetings when there is a *toi* to organise!” (Young *toi* Woman 1, 19.11.11).

One woman was unable to go to any participative meetings or gathering because of traditional behavioural norms in the village. Her brother had died, and she had to excuse herself from any social events for a year (Old lady, 28.11.11). Here, I found support in Babajanian's (2011) research, whose female informant explained that she did not participate in village meetings because her husband had died. Hence, these institutions and traditions confine women to spaces at home and exclude them from spaces of politics and influence. Hence, women's subordinate status in the private or the home space might be transferred to other spaces as spaces influence each other (Mohanty 2011; Cleaver 2001; Cleaver 2012). This corresponds with the opinion of some of the Kun Elek women themselves, as they expressed that gatherings outside of home are men's business, and women only gather at home. The women at the health station in Kun Elek think that women are spending too much time in their homes, and that it is very good for their development to get out of this sphere and join training sessions (2 Women Health Clinic, 26.11.11).

In the village, women and men share some work loads such as farming, but there were certain gendered spheres of work and interests that to some extent reflected what kind of development efforts villages wanted. Cornwall (2011, 207, 208) points out how women sometimes are given or claim space, but that they voice needs that might be connected with fulfilling their duties as wives and mothers. This is a dilemma in feminist development work, where women ask for specific support for such things like handicraft, which might not be empowering to women, but might reinforce their inequality. Many women in Kun Elek did want support for these kinds of activities, for example to be able to make traditional toys that are expensive. They need to make traditional carpets and food, and fabric and yarn is very expensive. A lot of money is being spent on toys (Jamila 1, Jamila 2, Young toy Woman 1, Young toy woman 2, 19.11.11). The traditional toys are, as mentioned, the women's sphere. Preparing for these, women gather to chat and gossip while they make traditional carpets and food. Although these are things that women enjoy, and toys give women some space for themselves away from harder labour, toys are also in some ways keeping women fulfilling the tasks as wives and mothers. In addition, toys drain the communities of money (Reeves 2012). As Kun Elek is already poor and women are not gaining or claiming space to make changes for their position, this reflects Cornwall's (2011) above-mentioned dilemma.

A lot more work which was only conducted by women, was connected to everyday chores in the home and involving children. These activities were for example cooking, washing,

fetching water and taking care of children. Some women feel that they have the same workload as their husbands, in addition to having the responsibility for kids and cleaning. The women I interviewed were more preoccupied with development efforts that would liberate them from some of their homely duties. Many women wanted a kindergarten, or a shop or a bazaar where they could work (Elmira, 19.11.11.; Jamila 1, 22.11.11.; Old lady, 22.11.11.; Women's group making blankets for house warming, 19.11.2011). This would make their lives easier. These women were of different ages, but many had experienced the Soviet era and might have memories of a time where women worked more outside of the home. No matter why, the fact that many women wanted a bazaar or a shop where they could work implies that they want to come out of their homes, be active and take care of income generating activities. One might say that voices of the women had not been heard as these projects had not been realised, but an irrigation project, largely voted for by men of a certain age, is being implemented. It seems like what many women need in their everyday lives are other things than water. On one hand, access to water within closer vicinity will lift some of the labour burden for some women. At the same time, however, the more structural challenges remain, that is, women are not being liberated from their homely sphere as opportunities like work outside of home and kindergartens are not prioritised. It seems like women do not claim their rights as citizens, as spaces for decision-making are to a large extent closed to them.

On the other hand, most women seemed to have participated in other participative arrangements than village meetings. MSDSP have implemented many projects on women's and children's health as well as courses for young mothers in Kun Elek. Women seem to especially value the opportunity to meet other women at these meetings, and to observe the MSDSP women leader in the project, who was even from another country. Many women remember one woman from AKF, or MSDSP, that was helping to install water taps around the village. They say she did a very good job.' When there are women having courses or meetings, and they come and invite us, we participate' (Jamila 2, 22.11.11). Other women agreed to this statement, and explained that they also would have participated in activities led by women (Young woman 1, 24.11.11; Emret's friend, 22.11.11; Elmira, 19.11.11; Jamila 1, 22.11.11). Jamila 1 was middle aged and participated in village meetings in general. But also, young girls who were not involved in public life otherwise were excited about the health meetings arranged by AKF;

”I have not voted for either Ayil Okhmotu, Kenesh [deputies] or Ayil Bashty. I know that some women, without a husband that is, are involved in these meetings. But, I have participated in other AKF meetings, for young mothers. It was very important for me to join, to learn, and I liked it. Unfortunately, it only lasted for an hour as the AKF woman had to go on to other villages” (Jamila 1’s daughter-in-law, 25.11.11).

Further, it seems like the youngest married women did not even participate in these meetings. They seem to be home most of the time. Emreet, a 16 year old girl, was married to a boy when she was 14, when the boy was about five years older. She had been kidnapped, but was not too dramatic about this fact, as kidnappings in the Kyrgyz society can be conducted in a range of different ways and with different purposes in mind by the actors involved (USAID/ CAR Gender Assessment 2010; Gulette 2010). However, as she was from another village she did not know anyone except for her husband. She was therefore home all the time, had not heard about the project or participated in any meetings at all (Emreet, 22.11.11). This contrasted with the life of a friend of hers, a 16 year old girl who was not married. She had heard about the water project and had participated many times in health projects, through school. She was excited about these projects, as she felt she was learning something and meeting other young women from other places.

“I thought it was really good, I was even at a meeting, and on a training [session]. I have even met women from other raions, which was really interesting.” (Emret’s friend, 22.11.11).

6.5.4 Spaces for women - transformative spaces or empty spaces?

The example above of the women and children meetings arranged by MSDSP seems to match Mohanty’s (2004, 31) research on women’s participation in India. She explains how spaces created by aid agencies will give training and development of a certain consciousness for women and give them opportunity to engage in other spaces later. She argues that ‘Even the most unpromising of institutions may open up possibilities for learning the skills and the arts of governance, which people can use in other spaces’ (Mohanty 2004, 26). The Kyrgyz village norms and burdens for some women make it difficult for them to join in village meetings, and the only space they have outside home in Kun Elek to discuss women needs and experiences are these health meetings. This invited space has been shaped by the inviters to fit women’s needs and village norms. Here, they get a possibility to gain influences from outside and become conscious about their situation in the village.

On the other hand, Mohanty warns us that these spaces might also restrict possibilities for participation and democracy at the local level, as they still keep women in non-political and unthreatening spaces. In this way, such spaces must not be conflated either with democracy or with participation (Mohanty 2004, 27). In Mohanty's case of 'empty spaces' for women in local forest management in India, there is no intention to get women from local forest committees engaged in village councils, where most decision making takes place. In fact, no women in this case, although participating in the forest committees, were involved in village council meetings (Mohanty 2004). There are no NGOs or external agencies working in the village, which make women accept whichever spaces the state makes. So, even though it is important not to bypass the state when INGOs work in villages, it is also sometimes necessary to have the presence of an INGO or NGO to balance the state in some cases. Here, we see a difference from Kun Elek. Some Kun Elek women are engaged in village meetings, and explain that they feel they can express their meaning (Jamila 1, Jamila 2, 19.11.11; Mother of Ayil Bashty, 26.11.11). There might be a better balance of INGO and state presence that creates possibilities for influencing other spaces than the ones created by NGOs. Thus, these apolitical spaces in Kun Elek might influence the political spaces, and in a way they serve as political spaces too. Spaces are made outside of the home, where women can learn about their own situation and how to act in public spaces. AKF/MSDSP can thus push women's empowerment in these spaces, or, women might start taking action without being pushed. Through their own experiences in the spaces opened by the AKF/MSDSP, women might start claiming real influence in the political spaces. Nevertheless, health and child meetings are non-threatening spaces, and are devoid of political, transformative or empowering meaning. Women are excluded in the home, and based on this household identity this exclusion is transferred to other spaces at higher levels, from the local to the regional, and arguably, the national. Here, meanings and power from one level move across scales and influence other levels, as described by Herod and Wright (2002). Here, scale meets institutional bricolage in a negative way, as stereotypes and exclusion of women are transferred from one institution - the home - to others - the decision-making institutions (Cleaver 2012: 128, 132).

6.5.5 Participation of other vulnerable groups.

Economic inequality, in Kun Elek materialised in no cattle and less land or no arable land, cuts across as an obstacle within groups like women and youth. As mentioned, the economically poor will be further excluded from supportive informal networks (Kuehnast and

Dudwick 2002). People without cattle and less land have a difficult time in the village, as they are considered to be the poorest in the village. As already mentioned, if they in addition are women, have few children or their husband has died, or if they are old, they seem likely to have very little power or possibility to impact village matters (Dabolazhe, 24.11.11). Suleimanova, manager for Natural Resource Management at MSDSP, explain how villagers are co-financing the projects that MSDSP is supporting, and how difficult this can be;

“20 % of the total cost they have to pay themselves. If costs are too high, they simply cannot do it. This depends on amount of households; if it is a small village it is difficult. If it is 500 or 700 households, it's more simple.” (Suleimanova, 16.11.11).

Suleimanova also explains how dependent young people are on land and irrigation if they are to stay in the villages, and in the country:

“It is difficult for villagers who are young - they might have a very small plot or no land at all. Some villages are just [inhabited by] youth, sometimes there is no land for them so they have to move. This happens not often of course. Very seldom. What often happens is that they do not have irrigation water, and they start to move out because they do not see how they can live on there. Like what happened in the Kara Kulja village. They had no money to repair their canal. Without it [the canal], nothing is growing for animals to eat, so there is not even water for animals. If there were no such troubles to irrigate land, there would not be such strong out-migration. Even when we have repaired some of the canals, they do not want to come back because they have now arranged better paid jobs than [what they can earn in] the village.” (Suleimanova, 16.11.11).

As Dardak, the head of AO and many of the villagers tell me, the migration of people of working age due to lack of jobs is the real problem and focus of the irrigation project. New land, with improvement in soil nutrition with a new irrigation system, will expand farming possibilities. Young families will be able to grow more nutritious food for themselves, and they can expand from subsistence farming to selling their vegetables at markets. These economic opportunities will help halting the migration of youth who are needed for the village's survival. As irrigation also will be installed in the lower part of the village, already populated, it will improve their lives as well as halt their seasonal migration (Niva, 30.11.11).

As the migrants I have been talked to are seasonal migrants and come home every year, they have their homes in the village. Many of these young inhabitants of Kun Elek agree that they would stay if more and better land, together with economic opportunities in farming, was available in Kun Elek. One migrant exclaims ‘Of course we would stay, what do you think? We are from here, this is our home’ (Friend of head of village, 19.11.11). Some young men

seem to think that participation in village meetings are only for older men. As all the youngest sons are to remain at their parents' home to take care of their parents, they have perhaps a somewhat different role in the village than older sons or older men. Maybe this is why they are not participating. Even though they will probably stay in the village later, they are still not participating in any village meetings (Zamir, Friend, Friend's brother, Worker Boy, 28.11.11; Viktor, 29.11.11).

Several young men in the village, many of them working on the project, wanted a sports or culture centre to be set up, or the possibility to do something entertaining in the village (Young workers 22.11.11; Other young workers/men 25.11.11). As mentioned, many women of different ages also wanted other development efforts that could make their everyday lives better. Hence, women and young people of both genders have wishes for their well-being that are not being implemented. Also, it is clear that young people need more than water to stay in Kun Elek. As Suleimanova mentioned above, they might stay in the capital as income opportunities are better. These men's wishes for cultural activities are covered there.

Although many young people would like to stay in the village, it is needed to include youth in decision-making spaces so that they can join in an integrated plan to keep youth in the village. As it is now, young people are not claiming their rights as active citizens, as no space for this is made for or by young people in the village. As many of the villagers from these groups do not participate in any village meetings, and therefore have had less of a chance to have had an influence on decisions regarding the project, will these groups benefit from the project?

6.5.6 Who benefits? Differences in benefits from the project for different groups

Many women with whom I spoke mentioned that they had not participated in meetings, but they had contributed money for the irrigation project. In fact, all women and men in the village were to donate money or food, except for the workers (Lady without cattle, 30.11.11; Lady with seven children, 28.11.11). The wife of Dardak, the connected librarian who managed a lot of the labour and organising for the irrigation project, was working at home, providing all the workers food and a place to stay. This was a lot of full-time work, and she was paid approximately 200 USD a month for this (Wife of Dardak, 19.11.11). It contrasted to the others who had to pay, as she was already married into a powerful household. Also, 200 USD is quite a sum of money a month for a villager, when many employed workers in Osh

earn around 48 USD a month. Compared to this, one older, poor woman with no cattle, whose children had moved away, told us that she had paid for the irrigation project although she would not benefit from it. She was living in the upper part of the village, where there was already water and no pipes were to be laid (Dabolazhe 24.11.11). So, meanwhile the wife of a powerful man in the village gains both resources and water (she is living in the lower part of the village, which will receive irrigation), a more excluded woman living outside the soon to be irrigated areas is forced to pay and does not really benefit from the project. It seems that in some instances the powerful benefits from this project, and the excluded does not.

The new land that is to be irrigated had already been distributed to young, married families. This had been decided by the Ayil Okhmotu, and the village leader had distributed to the young married families who wanted a plot of land (Olimbek, 24.11.11). This secures land for the future vulnerable generation and the future hope of Kun Elek. At the same time, single young women and men are also vulnerable, and do not benefit from the project. In addition, the water for irrigation is meant to go to one plot first, then to the next and so on. The last household in the chain will have to wait a long time for water, and might have problems with upstream households using too much water. These kinds of problems have been observed in projects of an almost identical nature other places in Southern Kyrgyzstan, causing conflicts (Earle 2005). In Kun Elek, land has been distributed, but it has not yet been decided which plots of land go to which families. So, there are some vulnerable people who benefits, and some, including more excluded people, who do not. Is this fair, and does this benefit the village, including excluded or vulnerable individuals?

6.5.7 Leaders and authority persons – legitimate or illegitimate power?

As already mentioned, three men with authority have had a significant meaning in and influence on the appropriation of the project. The head of Ayil Okhmotu, Niva, was crucial to the project. He had the right connections, the right knowledge. He knows the language of the aid discourse, and he knows how to write a proper project proposal. In this way, he ensured that Kun Elek won a competition for resources from the AKF (Niva, 30.11.11). He himself obtained the knowledge about irrigation projects from AKF. Also, he has the respect and authority to have village leaders and other villagers listen to him. So, he gathered the village and made a proposal so they won the project. One old lady with 7 children and no cattle said;

“The AO does a lot of work, he does all kinds of things. He gives us Gumpomosch [humanitarian aid/support], and he gathers people if there is something that needs to be fixed.” (Women with 7 children, 28.11.11).

At the same time, there are different opinions of the work Niva does for the village. “AO can’t help. Some even puts money in their pockets” (Jamila1, 19.11.11). Many old men found that village leaders in general were doing a good job. On the other hand, some of them disagreed, and said it was a big variation among leaders who really participated in decisions regarding the village. The present village leader was doing a good job for now (Aksakals, 18.11.11). Many of the women also disagree. Some said that Ulan up until now had done a good job; some claimed he does not really help them in any important way (Women interviews, 18-28.11.11). However, he and Dardak have been among the drivers of the project, getting people to come to a village meeting where the project was voted on. Here, together with Niva, they also gave information about everything regarding the project, the need for irrigation for the village and the need for community work (Niva, 30.11.11).

6.5.8 Community solidarity and social control

The mechanisms of solidarity and social control - that is, leaders who can gather people for collective work, inform, create consent and collect money, have been crucial to the development project. Without the money that was collected through the authority of the leaders, the project could not have been implemented. These leaders and the villagers are in a patron-client relationship, as leaders connect villagers to resources they are otherwise excluded from. As the state is of little support for the villagers of Kun Elek, mainly staying far away and not having much role in practice in the MSDSP-led project, these local support mechanisms are the only ones available. It is a bricolage process where the mechanisms available, traditional social control and coping mechanisms, are used in a modern development setting where knowledgeable actors play by the rules that have been set up by aid agencies to gain wanted development.

As some vulnerable individuals and aksakals in Kun Elek expressed a disbelief in authority persons and that government structures would help them, they nonetheless supported the irrigation project to a large part (Lady without cattle, 30.11.11; Dabolazhe 24.11.11; Aksakals 18.11.11). Most of my interviewees, including excluded women, expressed that water was their first priority because it would give young people work in the village (interviews

22.11.11, 23.11.11, 28.11.11). Water and jobs for young people were prioritised before other development measures on their wish list, and would perhaps lead to more improvements for their individual lives. As the head of village, the head of AO and Dardak had explained them their the opportunities through one member of the family, the irrigation was something that all villagers also very much saw the importance and usefulness of. Also, they did not protest very much that they had to pay for a project that might not even benefit them. One woman said;

“I think it is ok to pay, because they told me that you have to pay if you want to have water. I think it is safe to pay, I do not think the head of AO is swindling us.” (Neighbour of Dabolazhe, 30.11.11). Another woman expressed their urgent need for water;

“First we need jobs. For the youth, for example for my daughter in law. But before that, we need water. We cannot live without water!” (Old woman 2, 23.11.11).

In this way, they expressed solidarity with the village and the community. My interviewees did not respond as negatively as in Babajanian’s research on participative approaches and villager’s contribution. This might be explained by the fact that my case-study took place in Southern Kyrgyzstan only, and here community solidarity is strong. Babajanian argues that more excluded respondents from poor Northern villages were especially negative towards paying. As migration from the South and exposure to modern capitalist social norms has affected Northern villages more than in the South, this has lowered village solidarity norms and supportive networks here. This, he stresses, is why they did not want to pay (Babajanian 2012). At the same time, although Kun Elek villagers were positive to the project, the need for water to create youth employment might have been imprinted in them by people with authority. As villagers depend on knowledgeable leaders to connect them with resources, like INGO’s projects, they are in a vulnerable patron-client relationship where they will perhaps be indebted to their patron, or be under his strong control. For example, vulnerable villagers that did not benefit from the project were obliged to pay. This might make them further economically and socially excluded, as lack of money will exclude them from those informal networks that create social mobility, according to Kuehnast and Dudwick (2002).

Nonetheless, most people did not express negative feelings about paying for the project. From this follows that leaders might have legitimate power to demand villagers to follow social norms. The fact that leaders demand villagers to pay, even though they are not directly benefitting from it, might be in their interest if they are sincerely preoccupied with the future of the village and their community. Also, it is one of the few mechanisms available to create

development for excluded villagers. Very many of my interviewees articulated a strong ‘familial’ bond to the village, that ‘the whole village is related’, and that they share one forefather (Interviews 18-28.11.11). So, the need for irrigation does somehow overshadow the space for vulnerable groups, as their voices and needs are not heard. Both leaders and in many cases the villagers put the needs of the village first. Henry (2004) claims that this is citizenship based on community affiliation. Rights based and space claiming agendas are too naïve when they wish to tie villagers and the state together to make the state responsive. Social control and strong leaders are local coping mechanisms that are crucial for villages’ survival. This contrasts with Hickey and Mohan (2004) and Gaventa (2004), focusing on how little is done with the unbalanced power differences, both within the village and between villages and structures at different levels. This makes real change difficult to obtain, as people themselves need to push for their voices to be heard.

6.6 Concluding remarks

Both institutional traits of the MSDSP and the local institutions play a continuously dual role for villagers. They are both enabling and disabling, and encounter one another and intertwine as new democratic spaces of local self-governance are based on local control and solidarity mechanisms. AKF’s projects are needed, as the state does not have resources to create irrigation services and arrange water governance reforms for its people. At the same time, AKF’s knowledge creates dependency for aid, and is not so much based on what villagers know. Nevertheless, AKF has given villages and their population new institutional tools. They use the AKF institutional traits, knowledge and power inventively to create opportunities for themselves. This is an expression of institutional bricolage, and also an example of how power and knowledge circulate in society (Masaki 2007).

The success of the irrigation project in Kun Elek has been dependent on local leaders with networks and connections to higher levels of government. The village solidarity and control mechanisms have also been crucial to the realisation of the project. At the same time, some excluded groups are very vulnerable when these mechanisms are at play, and do often not benefit. These are women, young people, those that have few resources or are in general outside of informational and supportive networks. As the local self-government does not include all groups in spaces of political decision-making, the excluded risk staying excluded, although potential political space has been opened by AKF in the village.

7 Conclusion

Here follows a conclusion from both chapters, where I present my main findings on good governance, decentralisation and participation in Kyrgyzstan. I return to the research questions, and analyse and discuss them in the light of the theoretical departures that I have earlier presented and of the empirical findings. *How have institutional decentralisation and participation influenced different actors' and institutions' roles in governance processes? How has this affected development in Kyrgyzstan?*

The outcome of good governance reforms and decentralisation in Kyrgyzstan is shaped by the encounter and interconnectedness of governance reforms and traditional institutional practices. Politics on global level merge with politics on lower level, that is, decentralisation policies meet informal institutions. The practical outcome is the local self-government structure. Institutional traits such as elder's councils, village councils, forms of community solidarity and social control have either formally or informally become part of these local self-governance structures. Some small organisations, like the neighbourhood associations Jamaats, are now able to affect their local government in an easier way than others. They can easily apply for funds from international development organisations (Ibraimova 2009). Thus, pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet institutions of governance meet in governance of resources today; this is institutional bricolage. Meanings from earlier institutions and forms of society are both continued and reconfigured. In this way, we see a scaled expression of Cleaver's (2012) institutional bricolage. Meanings from older institutions are reconfigured, and their meanings move across scales by actors. At the same time, some associations are left out, like women's groups or other private associations who cannot afford and do not have time to register. Another quite different example are the kurultais - village assemblies or meetings – that have been reconfigured and can now be performed at state level. At the same time, this old but reconfigured institution is an obstacle for other democratic institutions, like parliamentary deliberations and making compromise, or other channels of affecting governments. The kurultais have become instruments for power abuse by the powerful.

Foreign aid institutions are a large part of governance processes, as they have decided much of the decentralisation agenda. Through the AKF, the villagers have been able to work across different scales. They have been given additional institutional tools in a constrained environment, characterised by lack of resources and supportive institutions or government

structures. In the Kyrgyz governance system today, local, knowledgeable leaders or authority figures, within or with network connections to the Ayil Okhmotu, are important. Actors, that is, the leaders, have worked across different scales through networking when it comes to the state and levels within the borders of Kyrgyzstan, and through knowledge and ‘donor- talk’ when it comes to working with AKF. So, this is a typical example of scalar politics. Actors can move across scales, but the fact that power politics at these scales might usurp money or resources, and that those without power and donor knowledge are left out, will lead to the fact that some will stay excluded.

Thus, decentralisation and participation measures have produced local arenas that create both possibilities and limitations for people’s participation. These are what Gaventa (2004) calls invited spaces or arenas. Decentralisation efforts have been implemented largely by the government, Western aid agencies and local and international NGOs to include people in governance issues, but these are still initiated, and to an extent controlled, by elites and not by the people themselves. They are not claimed spaces (Gaventa 2004), they were not formed from below and were not efforts from the people to claim their rights as citizens. The different institutions create for a range of channels or possibilities for actors, this also has a scaled expression as they can move from different scales through the different institutional possibilities. As decentralisation policies meet informal institutions through informal power networks, some powerful actors are able to affect politics at higher level in an informal way. They can retract resources at higher levels, whereas those without network and knowledge cannot. Thus, although powerful and connected actors can move across scales, decentralisation efforts by the government and development agencies have made the local level of politics is the only level that poor villagers can influence. Some, though, are excluded from influencing this level. In this way, decentralisation has not led to an increase of accountability from the central state to the people.

What is the role of an INGO and other actors involved in a participative project at the local level? How are villagers participating in village development projects where issues of governance and participation are involved? Case-study: An integrated and participative irrigation project in Kun Elek, supported and implemented by MSDSP/AKF.

The MSDSP has had a powerful role in social organisation and governance in Southern Kyrgyzstan, as they have created and changed the ways that Kyrgyz people organise and execute local governance. These changes have been enabling in the way that the executive

council at the local level has gained power and can now implement many development activities through forms of social control and village solidarity. Other forms of associations have failed in implementing development as they have not inhabited the power of social control and legitimacy the way local self-government structures have. But the changes have at the same time been disabling for excluded groups and individuals, who have to a large degree been further excluded. Those that are poorest need to pay for development projects as they are forced by local norms and social control mechanisms, which excludes them further from supportive networks as they need money to access these.

The MSDSP also has a weak position in relation to the actual function of local self-governance organs. It has been challenging to influence these bureaucrats' level of skills and independence, as the national level is not implementing functioning plans for their development. In addition, resources often remain at higher levels, so the local governance structures remain poor. As the bureaucrats are often unskilled, many are not doing their job. Also, the executive council is superior to the representative council through informal networking and mechanisms. We see a merge of informal and formal structures through institutional bricolage as new formal democratic spaces are filled with informal mechanisms. Also, these are processes of politics of scale, where politics and power at different levels affect each other. There is a lack of devolution of power in the sense that people are not empowered through their representatives in local self-governance organs. Aid agencies like AKF can help local self-governments to become more transparent and skilled. At the same time, by doing this the central state does not take enough responsibility to make local governance better.

The villagers that are most vulnerable, like women and young people, are not empowered. These groups only participate in practical implementation and payment for the development project, and do not participate in decision-making in the village. As spaces influence one another, and meanings are transferred from one space to another, women's participation in children and health meetings is at least a step towards empowerment. Women in Kun Elek are at home a lot, as their chores as subsistence farmers and wives and mothers are all located close to home. MSDSP has created a space for women outside of the home as they arrange women's and children's health meetings. In these meetings they get to discuss things that are important to their lives and futures. This might affect the homely space, and in the end also political spaces. As for now, it seems as if the homely space is not affecting women's space in

politics. The women and children's meetings and village meetings are now both spaces of the type that Gaventa (2004) calls empty. The powerful are still making and shaping decisions. Although the INGO-created spaces do have potential to become invited or even transformative spaces they are now non-threatening and devoid of political, transformative or empowering meaning. Women are excluded in the home, and based on this household identity this exclusion is transferred to other spaces at higher levels, from the local to the regional, and arguably, the national. Thus, the allegory of scaling can be used here as a suitable description of women's empowerment and participation in Kyrgyzstan, much in tune with Herod and Wright's (2002) and Cleaver's way of thinking. Here, scale meets institutional bricolage. Meanings, power-differences and stereotyped imaginations from one institution influence others. This is spatially expressed by meanings and stereotyped imaginations moving from the scale of the household to a higher decision-making level.

At the same time, the very same functions that exclude the most vulnerable are vital to a village's survival. To have leaders that organise development, through control functions and solidarity mechanisms, is part of the reality for village life, as Henry (2004) contends. He rejects citizenship to claims on the state, as this does not fit with the reality in many villages or indigenous settings. Excluded villagers' poverty and exclusion from state and powerful clan networks are not only due to the central state's lack of political will, but also the real lack of resources. Institutions like village solidarity and strict obligations demanded by connected village leaders, somewhat controlled by the villagers, are necessary for the village's survival, and it might be naïve to believe otherwise. In addition, through a positive institutional bricolage process, AKF/MSDSP creates more institutional choice for villages and enables development to happen. So, knowledge from externals are used in what Henry (2004) describes as 'social coping mechanisms'. Paradoxically, AKF/MSDSP's work also, at the same time, maintains dependency on aid and exclusion of vulnerable or excluded groups. Hence, knowledge and power circulating in society, but stemming from powerful local leaders or INGOs and their powerful policies, are both enabling and disabling at the same time.

I think it would be fruitful to undertake further research on the dual role of local mechanisms; how coping processes and exclusionary mechanisms are combined and changed in complex ways in the modern-day setting of Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere.

Literature

A Chronicle of Violence. 2012. The events in the south of Kyrgyzstan in June 2010. *Freedom House, Memorial Human Rights Center, Norwegian Helsinki Committee.*

http://www.nhc.no/filestore/Publikasjoner/Rapporter/2012/Rapport_2_12_ENG_net.pdf

Adamson, Fiona B. 2002. "International democracy assistance in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan: Building civil society from the outside?" In *The Power and Limits of NGOs: A Critical Look at Building Democracy in Eastern Europe and Eurasia*, edited by Sarah E. Mendelson and John K. Glenn, 177-206. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press.

Aga Khan Foundation web site. <http://www.akdn.org/AKF>.

Agnew, John A. 2011. "Space and Place." In *The Sage Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, edited by John A. Agnew and David N. Livingstone, 316-330. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Agnew, John A., and David N. Livingstone (eds). 2011. *The Sage Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Agrawal, Arun, and Elinor Ostrom. 2001. "Collective Action, Property Rights and Decentralisation in Resource Use in India and Nepal." *Politics and Society* 29 (4): 485-514.

Agrawal, Arun, and Krishna Gupta. 2005. "Decentralization and Participation: The Governance of Common Pool Resources in Nepal's Terai." *World Development* 33 (7): 1101-1114.

Agrawal, Bina. 1997. "Editorial: Re- Sounding the Alert- Gender, Resources and Community Action." *World Development* 25 (9): 1373- 1380.

Alymkulov, Emil, and Marat Kulatov. 2001. "Local Government in the Kyrgyz Republic." Chapter 10, in *Local Government in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Sentral Asia*. UN report, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/APCITY/UNPAN008037.pdf>.

Andersson, Krister, and Clark C. Gibson. 2004. "Decentralized governance and environmental change: Local institutional moderation of deforestation in Bolivia." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 26 (1): 99-123.

Apthorpe, Raymond. 2012. Theory seminar: “Effective Aid: on how humanitarian aid ‘works’”, *Norwegian Foreign Policy Institute*, Oslo, September 18.

Application for grants from the Norwegian Ministry of foreign Affairs. Aga Khan Foundation, Kyrgyz Republic. Approved November 2009. [AKF UCA Application Form Norwegian MFA 30.11.10..DOC](#)

Babajanian, Babken V. 2011. “Problematising the community-contribution criteria in participatory projects: Evidence from Kyrgyzstan.” *Development in Practice* 21 (3): 317-329.

Baimyrzaeva, Mahabat. 2012. *Institutional Reforms in the Public Sector. What Did We Learn?* Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Bardhan, Pranab. 2002. “Decentralization of governance and development.” *The journal of economic perspectives* 16 (4): 185-205.

Batterbury, Simon P. J., and Jude L. Fernando. 2006. “Rescaling Governance and the Impacts of Political and Environmental Decentralization: An Introduction.” *World Development* 34 (11): 1851-1863.

Bichsel, Christine. 2011. *Conflict Transformation in Central Asia. Irrigation Disputes in the Ferghana Valley*. New York: Routledge.

Bichsel, Christine, Gilbert Fokou, Asel Ibraimova, Ulan Kasymov, Bernd Steimann, and Susan Thieme. 2010. “Natural resource institutions in transformation: The tragedy and glory of the private.” *Global Change and Sustainable Development* (5): 255-269- A Synthesis of Regional Experiences from Research Partnerships. Perspectives of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South, University of Bern. Edited by H Hurni and U Wiesmann.

Bolin, Bob, Timothy Collins and Kate Darbyc. 2008. “Fate of the verde: Water, environmental conflict, and the politics of scale in Arizona’s central highlands.” *Geoforum* 39: 1494–1511.

Bossuyt, Jean, and Jeremy Gold. 2000. “Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction. Elaborating the linkages.” *Policy management brief* 12. University of Helsinki, Institute of Development Studies.

- Botes, Lucius, and Dingie van Rensburg. 2000. "Community participation in development: nine plagues and twelve commandments." *Community development journal* (35) (1): 41-58.
- Chambers, Robert. 1994. "The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal." *World Development* (22) 7: 953- 969.
- Cleaver, Frances. 2001. "Institutions, agency and the limitations of participatory approaches to development." In *Participation: the New Tyranny?*, edited by Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, 36-55. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Cleaver, Frances. 2005. "The inequality of social capital and the reproduction of chronic poverty." *World Development* 33 (6): 893-906.
- Cleaver, Frances. 2009. "Institutional Bricolage, Conflict and Cooperation in Usangu, Tanzania." *IDS Bulletin* 32 (4): 26- 35.
- Cleaver, Frances. 2012. *Development Through Bricolage: Rethinking Institutions for Natural Resource Management*. New York: Routledge.
- Collins, Kathleen. 2006. *Clan Politics and Regime Changes in Central Asia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Cooke, Bill, and Uma Kothari 2001. "The case for participation as tyranny." In *Participation: the New Tyranny?*, edited by Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, 1-15. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Cornwall, Andrea. 2004. "Spaces for transformation? reflections on issues of power and difference in participation in development." In *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?*, edited by Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, 75-91. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Cornwall, Andrea, and Karen Brock. 2005. "What Do Buzzwords Do for Development Policy? A Critical Look at 'Participation', 'Empowerment' and 'Poverty Reduction'." *Third World Quarterly* 26 (7): 1043-60.
- Cornwall, Andrea, and Deborah Eade. 2010. *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*. United Kingdom: Practical Action Publishing.

Cornwall, Andrea. 2011. "Whose voices? Whose choices? Reflections on gender and participatory development." In *The Participation Reader*, edited by Andrea Cornwall, 203-223. London and New York: Zed Books.

Crook, Richard C. 2003. "Decentralisation and poverty reduction in Africa: The politics of local–central relations." *Public Administration and Development* 23 (1) :77- 88.

De Vries, Michiel S. 2000. "The rise and fall of decentralization: A comparative analysis of arguments and practices in European countries." *European Journal of Political Research* 38 (2) :193–224.

Doornbos, Martin.2001. "Good Governance: The Rise and Decline of a Policy Metaphor?" *The Journal of Development Studies* 37 (6): 93-108.

Doishebayeva, Kalia. 2013. "ONC: Doveria, no proveria." *24kg*, April 20.

<http://www.24kg.org/perekrestok/print:page,1,152674-ons-doveryaj-no-proveryaj.html>

Duishonbaev, A.A. 2008. " Sovmestnoe Razvitye Konstitutsionnix Institutov Prav Cheloveka I Mestnovo Samoupravlenye V Kyrgyzskoi Respublike." UDK. *Vestnik KRCY* 8: 59-61.

Earle, Lucy. 2005. "Community development, 'tradition' and the civil society strengthening agenda in Central Asia." *Central Asian Survey* (24) 3: 245-260.

Emmel, Nick, and Kathryne Hughes. 2009. "Small N-Access Cases to Refine Theories of Social Exclusion and Access to Socially Excluded Individuals and Groups." In *The Sage Handbook of Case-Based Methods*, edited by David Byrne and Charles C.C. Ragin, 318-331. London: Sage Publications.

Ferguson, James. 1994. *The Anti-Politics Machine*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Florisbelo, Glauco Regis, and Irene Guijt. 2004. "Participatory municipal development plans in Brasil: divergent partners constructing common futures." In *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?*, edited by Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, 190-204. London and New York: Zed books.

Follow-up Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA): Kyrgyz Republic. March 2012. *World Food Programme*,

<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp248503.pdf>

Fung, Archon, and Erik Olin Wright. 2001. "Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance." *Politics & Society* 29 (1) :5-41.

Gaventa, John. 2004, "Towards participative governance: assessing the transformative possibilities." In *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation*, edited by Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, 25-41. London and New York: Zed books.

Gaventa, John. 2009. "Exploring Citizenship, Participation and Accountability." *IDS Bulletin* 33 (2): 1–14.

Gaventa, John. 2011a. "Towards participatory local governance: six propositions for discussion." In *The participation Reader*, edited by Andrea Cornwall, 253-264. London and New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Gaventa, John. 2011b. "Power and Participation." In *Revolutionizing Development*, edited by Andrea Cornwall and Ian Scoones, 67-73. London and Washington, DC: Earthscan.

Gleason, Gregory. 2003. *Markets and Politics in Central Asia: Structural Reform and Political Change*. London and New York: Routledge.

Granit, Jacob, Anders Jägerskog , Andreas Lindström, Gunilla Björklund, Andrew Bullock, Rebecca Löfgren, George de Gooijer and Stuart Pettigrew. 2012. "Regional Options for Addressing the Water, Energy and Food Nexus in Central Asia and the Aral Sea Basin." *International Journal of Water Resources Development* 28(3) :419-432.

Grävingholt, Jörn, Bettina Doerr, Kathrin Meissner, Stefan Pletziger, Julia von Rümker, and Jochen Weikert. 2006. *Strengthening Participation through Decentralisation. Findings on local economic development in Kyrgyzstan*. German Development Institute: Bonn.

Grindle, Merilee S. 2011. "Good enough governance revisited." *Development Policy Review* 29 (1): 199- 221.

Gulette, David. 2010. *The Genealogical Construction of the Kyrgyz Republic. Kinshp. State and 'Tribalism'*. Folkstone, Kent UK: Global Oriental

Görg, Christoph. 2007. "Landscape governance: The "politics of scale" and the natural conditions of places." *Geoforum* 38 (5): 954–966.

Hammond, John. 1988. *Fighting to Learn: Popular Education and Guerrilla War in El Salvador*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Hanks, Reuel R. 2011. "Kyrgyzstan in Crisis: conundrums of ethnic conflict, national identity and state cohesion." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13(29): 177-187.

Harrison, Margaret E. 2006. "Collecting Sensitive and Contentious Information." In *Doing Development Research*, edited by Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter, 62-70. Sage publications: London.

Heathershaw, Jon. 2012. "Protests in Kyrgyzstan: Disorder or Democratisation?" *Central Eurasian Scholars and Media Initiative*, May 22, <http://cesmi.info/wp/?p=142>

Heller, Patrick. 2001. "Moving the State: The Politics of Democratic Decentralization in Kerala." *Politics Society* 29 (1) :131- 163.

Heller, Patrick, K. N. Harilal, and Shubham Chaudhuri. 2007, " Building Local Democracy: Evaluating the Impact of Decentralization in Kerala, India." *World Development* 35 (4): 626-648.

Henry, Leroy. 2004. " Morality, citizenship and participatory in development in an indigenous development association: the case of GPSDO and the Sebat bet Gurage in Ethiopia." In *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?*, edited by Samual Hickey and Giles Mohan, 140-156. London and New York: Zed books.

Herod, Andrew. Melissa W. Wright *Geographies of Power. Placing Scale*. Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishers.

Herod, Andrew. 2011. *Scale*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.

Hickey, Samuel, and Giles Mohan. 2004. "Towards participation as transformation: critical themes and challenges." In *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?*, edited by Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, 3-24. London and New York: Zed books.

Hickey, Samuel, and Giles Mohan. 2004. "Relocating participation within a radical politics of development: critical modernism and citizenship." In *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?*, edited by Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, 59-74. London and New York: Zed books.

Hickey, Samuel, and Giles Mohan. 2004. "Relocating Participation within a radical politics of development: Insights from political action and practice." In *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?*, edited by Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, 159-174. London and New York: Zed books.

Hvoslef, Erlend H. 1997. "Tribalism and Modernity in Kirgizia." In *Nordic Research on the Middle East 3. Ethnic encounter and culture change*, edited by . Bergen, Norway: Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies.

Ibraimova, Asel. 2009. *Legal and Institutional Framework for Empowerment of Rural Communities in the Kyrgyz Republic*. Wien and Berlin: Lit Verlag.

Infrastructure report 2011. Aga Khan Foundation.

[Infrastructure 2011 report August Norway.xls](#)

Jailobaeva. Kanykey Bayalieva 2011. *Return of the state to development: the state, donors, and NGOs in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan*. Phd thesis, University of Edinburgh.

Jansky, Libor, and Nevelina E. Pachova. 2006. "Towards Sustainable Land Management in Mountain Areas in Central Asia." *Global Environmental Research* 10 (1): 99-115.

Jones, Martin, Rhys Jones, Michael Woods. 2004. *An Introduction to Political Geography: Space, Place and Politics*. London: Routledge.

Kandiyoti, Daniz. 1999. "Poverty in Transition: An Ethnographic Critique of Household Surveys in Post-Soviet Central Asia". *Development and Change* 30 (3): 499-524.

Khanin, Vladimir. 2004. "Political Clans and Political Conflicts in Contemporary Kyrgyzstan." In *Democracy and Pluralism in Muslim Eurasia*, edited by Yaacov Ro'I, 215-232.

Kipping, Martin. 2008. "Can "integrated water resources management" silence Malthusian concerns? The case of Central Asia." *Water International* 33(3): 305-319.

Kirmse, Stefan B. 2009. "Leisure, business and fantasy worlds: exploring donor-funded 'youth spaces' in Southern Kyrgyzstan." *Central Asian Survey* 28 (3): 289-301.

Kothari, Uma, and Bill Cooke. 2001. *Participation: The new Tyranny?* London and New York: Zed Books.

Kouplevatskaya-Buttoud, Irina. 2009. "Adaptation to Change and Re-designing of Governance Systems. Cases from Small-Scale Rural Forestry." *Small-scale Forestry* 8: 231-248.

Krahmann, Elke. 2003. "National, Regional or Global Governance: One Phenomenon or Many?" *Global Governance* 9: 323-346.

Kreuzmann, Hermann. 2012. *Pastoral Practices in High Asia*. Dordrecht Heidelberg, New York, London: Springer.

Kuehnast, Kathleen. 2002 'Poverty Shock: The Impact of Rapid Economic Change on Women of the Kyrgyz Republic,' in *When Things Fall Apart: Qualitative Studies of Poverty in the Former Soviet Union*, edited by Nora Dudwick, Elizabeth Gomart, Alexandre Marc, and Kathleen Kuehnast, 33-56. Washington D.C: World Bank

Kulipossa, Fidelx P. 2004. "Decentralisation and Democracy in Developing Countries: An Overview." *Development in Practice* 14 (6): 768-779.

Kyrgyzskaja Respublika: Geograficheskoe raspredelenie bedonsti. Vsemirnyi bank, Natsional'nyi statisticheskyi komitet Kyrgyzskoi Respublikoi 2005.

Leal, Pablo Alejandro. 2007. "Participation: The Ascendancy of a Buzzword in the Neo-Liberal Era." *Development in Practice* 17 (4-5): 539-48.

Lebel, Louis, Po Garden and Masao Imamura. 2005. "The Politics of Scale, Position, and Place in the Governance of Water Resources in the Mekong Region." *Ecology and Society* 10 (2): 18.

Lobjakas. Ahto. 2013. "EU Envoy Warns Of Regional Risk From Kyrgyz Instability." *Radio Free Europe*, June 23.

http://www.rferl.org/content/EU_Envoy_Warns_Of_Regional_Risk_From_Kyrgyz_Instability/2080537.html

Luong, Pauline Jones. 2000. "Sources of Institutional Continuity: The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia." Prepared for delivery at the *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*, August 31-September 2, Washington, D.C.

Mason, Jennifer. 2002. *Qualitative Researching*. London: Sage Publications.

Marston, S., Smith, N. 2001. "States, scales and households: limits to scale thinking? A response to Brenner." *Progress in Human Geography* 25 (4): 615–619.

Masaki, Katsuhiko. 2004. "The 'transformative' unfolding of 'tyrannical' participation: the corvée tradition and ongoing local politics in Western Nepal." In *From Tyranny to Transformation?*, edited by Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, 125-139. London and New York: Zed Books.

Masaki, Katsuhiko. 2007. *Power, participation and policy. The 'Emancipatory' Evolution of the 'Elite-Controlled' Policy Process*. Plymouth, United Kingdom: Lexington Books.

Mayoux, Linda. 2006. "Quantitative, Qualitative or Participatory? Which Method, for What and When?" In *Doing Development Research*, edited by Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter, 115-130. Sage publications: London.

Messerli, Siroco, and Maksat Abdykaparov. 2008. "Participatory Approaches in Developing Farmer Education and community ownership of training in Kyrgyzstan." *Community Development Journal* 43 (3): 341-357.

- McGee, Heather LaRue. 2011. *Water, International Development and Collective Action: An impact assessment of an irrigation management project in Southern Kyrgyzstan*. Phd-dissertation, Public Policy and Political Science: The University of Michigan.
- Mitlin, Diana. 2004. "Securing voice and transforming practice in local government: the role of federating in grass roots development." In *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?*, edited by Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, 175-189. London and New York: Zed books.
- Mitlin, Diana, Sam Hickey and Anthony Bebbington. 2007. "Reclaiming Development? NGOs and the Challenge of Alternatives." *World Development* 35 (10): 1699–1720.
- Mohan, Giles, and Kristian Stokke. 2000. "Participatory development and empowerment: The dangers of localism." *Third World Quarterly* 21 (2): 247- 268.
- Mohanty, Ranjita. 2004. "Institutional Dynamics and Participatory Spaces. The Making and Unmaking of Participation in Local Forest Management in India." *IDS Bulletin* 35 (2): 26-32.
- Mohanty, Ranjita. 2011. "The politics of domesticating participation in rural India." In *The Participation Reader*, edited by Andrea Cornwall, 265-280. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Momunova, Akjibek. 2012. "Party and Clan Politics in Kyrgyzstan: Is the Clan an Organizing Principle for Political Parties? The Case Studies of the Three Parties in Power." *Master thesis, Central European University, Department of Political Science: Budapest*.
- Mosello, Beatrice. 2011. "Moving towards the local: Barriers to participation in water resource management in Kyrgyzstan." *The SRC Research Fellows Working Papers November 2011*.
- Mosse, David. 2001. "People's knowledge', Participation and Patronage: Operations and Representations in Rural Development." In *Participation: the New Tyranny*, edited by Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari, 16-35. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Mosse, David. 2005. *Cultivating Development*. London: Pluto Press.

Nasritidinov, Emil, Mehriqul Ablezova, Jypara Abarikova, and Aigoul Abdoubaetova. 2010. "Chapter 18. Environmental Migration: Case of Kyrgyzstan." In *Environment, Forced Migration and Social Vulnerability*, edited by T. Afifi, J. Jaeger, DOI 10.1007/978-3-642-12416-7_18, Berlin Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.

Nel, Etienne. 2004. "Evolving Participatory Governance and Developmental Local Government in Post-Apartheid Africa." In *Participatory Governance: Planning, Conflict Mediation and Public-Decision Making in Civil Society*, edited by W. Robert Lovan, Michael Murray and Ron Shaffer, 23-38. Bodmin, Cornwall: MPG Books Ltd.

Olimova, Saodat. 2005. "Paper 3: Impact of external migration on development of mountainous regions: Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan." *Strategies for development and food security in mountainous areas of Central Asia*, http://78.136.16.170/publications/2005_akf_mountains_paper3_english.pdf

Olimova, Saodat and Olimov, Muzaffar. 2007. "Labor Migration from Mountainous Areas in the Central Asian Region: Good or Evil?" *Mountain Research and Development*, 27(2):104-108.

Olsson, Oliver, Matthias Gassmann, Kai Wegerich and Melanie Bauer. 2010. "Identification of the effective water availability from streamflows in the Zerafshan river basin, Central Asia." *Journal of Hydrology* 390 (3-4): 190-197.

O'Neill Borbieva, Noor. 2010. "Mobile Institutions: Circulation and Negotiation in the Development Encounter. *Opus: Research & Creativity at IPFW*, Indiana University – Purdue University Fort Wayne.

Paasi, Anssi. 2004. "Place and region: looking through the prism of scale." *Progress in Human Geography* 28 (4): 536-546

Pierre, Jon, and B. Guy Peters. 2000. *Governance, Politics and the State*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Ragin, Charles C., and Howard S. Becker (editors). 1992. *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Radnitz, Scott. 2005. "Networks, localism and mobilization in Aksy, Kyrgyzstan." *Central Asian Survey* 24 (4): 405-424.

Randeria, Shalini. 2008. "The State of Globalization : Legal Plurality, Overlapping Sovereignties and Ambiguous Alliances between Civil Society and the Cunning State in India." *Theory Culture Society* 2007 24: 1.

Reeves, Madeleine. 2012. "Black Work, Green Money: Remittances, Ritual, and Domestic Economies in Southern Kyrgyzstan." *Slavic Review* 71 (1):108-134.

Richa, Dhanju.2008. "Water and Women's Empowerment in the Ferghana Valley: Agency of Older Women from Soviet Era in Contemporary Rural Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan." *Thinking Gender Paper* UCLA Centre for the Study of Women, UC Los Angeles

<http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/2hp521v6>

Roberts, Sean R. 2010. "What's ethnicity got to do with it? Healing The Wounds of Uzbek-Kyrgyz violence in the Ferghana Valley." *PONARS Policy Memo* No. 106, The George Washington University.

Roy, Olivier. 2000. *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*. New York University Press: New York.

Ruget, Vanessa and Burul Usmanalieva. 2007. "The impact of state weakness on citizenship a case study of Kyrgyzstan." *Communist and Post- Communist Studies* 40: 441- 458.

Ryabkov, Maxim. 2008. "The North-South cleavage and political support in Kyrgyzstan." *Central Asian Survey* 27 (4): 301-316.

Schneider, Aaron. 2003. "Decentralisation: Conceptualization and measurement." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 38 (3): 32-56.

Schoch, Nadia, Bern Steimann, and Susan Thieme. 2010. "Migration and animal husbandry: Competing or complementary livelihood strategies. Evidence from Kyrgyzstan." *Natural Resources Forum* 34 (3): 211-221.

Sehring, Jennifer. 2009. "Path dependencies and institutional bricolage in post-Soviet water governance." *Water Alternatives* 2 (1): 61-81.

Sehring, Jennifer, and Giese. 2011. "Global Environmental Change and Conflict Potential in Central Asia." *Coping with Global Environmental Change, Disasters and Security Hexagon Series on Human and Environmental Security and Peace* 5: 525-534.

Smith, B. C. *Good Governance and Development*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Stiefel, Mathias, and Mashall Wolfe. 2011. "The many faces of participation." In *The Participation Reader*, edited by Andrea Cornwall, 19-30. London and New York: Zed Books.

Sybygalieva, A. C. 2011. "Finansovaya Obespechennost' Bjudzhetov Organov Mestnogo Samoupravleniya V Kyrgyzskoe Respublike." *UDK, Vestnik* 11 (10): 149-153.

Thorsen, Liv Emma. 1993. *Det fleksible kjønn*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Tokbaeva, Dina. 2012. "Kyrgyzstan: Agricultural Woes Give Way to Food Security Concerns." *Eurasianet*, April 4.

<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65314>

McDonald, Kara C. "Troubling Turnover on UN Security Council." Expert brief, Council on Foreign Relations. October 15, 2009.

Temirkulov, A. A. 2008. "Informal actors and institutions in mobilization: the periphery in the 'Tulip Revolution'." *Central Asian Survey* 27 (3-4): 317-335.

Temirkulov, A. A. 2010. "Formalization of Traditional and State Institution-Building in Transitional Countries. The Example of "Aksakals" in the Kyrgyz Republic." *American University of Central Asia Academic Review* 2010 2 (12): 82- 97.

The pogroms in Kyrgyzstan. Asia report no 193. 2010. *International Crisis Group*, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/central-
asia/kyrgyzstan/193%20The%20Pogroms%20in%20Kyrgyzstan](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/193%20The%20Pogroms%20in%20Kyrgyzstan).

Thieme, Susan. 2008. "Living in Transition : How Kyrgyz Women Juggle Their Different Roles in a Multi-local Setting." *Gender Technology and Development* 12: 325.

Thieme, Susan, and Karin Astrid Siegmann. 2010. "Coping on Women's Backs : Social Capital-Vulnerability Links through a Gender Lense." *Current Sociology* 58: 715.

Unsworth, S. (editor). 2010. *An Upside Down View of Governance*. Centre for the Future State, Institute of Development Studies: Brighton.

USAID/ CAR Gender Assessment: *Central Asian Republics*. Authored by Susan Somach of DevTech Systems, Inc. and Deborah Rubin of Cultural Practice, LLC. March 2010.

USAID/ CAR Youth Assessment: Kyrgyz Republic. Prepared by Daniel Oliver and Karin Akins. October, 2010.

Waddington, Mark, and Giles Mohan. 2004. "Failing forward: going beyond PRA and imposed forms of participation." In *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?*, edited by Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, 219-235. London and New York: Zed books.

White, Sarah C. 1996. "Depoliticising Development: the uses and abuses of participation." *Development in Practice* 6 (1): 6-15.

Willis, Katie. 2006. "Interviewing." In *Doing Development Research*, edited by Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter, 144-153. Sage publications: London.

Interviews

Dzholdoshjaliev, Iskender. Head of Water Resources Management Department under the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources Management and Processing Industry. At his office, Bishkek. 10.06.11.

2 Engineers from MSDSP. Outside, all along canal site, Kun Elek. 26.11.2011.

Kojomkulov, Baatyrbek. Manager of Infrastructure Department at MSDSP, Osh City. At MSDSP office, Osh City. 25.11.2011.

Narusbaeva, Ulara. State Secretary of the National Agency for Local Self-Government. At her office, Bishkek. 09.11.2011.

“Olikbek”. The chief of Osh Oblast Agriculture Department. At his office, Osh City, 12.11.2011.

Saparova, ‘Chinara’ Chynarkan. Manager of Local Governance Department at MSDSP, Osh City. At MSDSP office, Osh City. 15.11.2011. Also by email 07.02. 2013.

Suleimanova, Jyldyz. Manager of Natural Resource Management at MSDSP, Osh City. At her office, Osh City. 16.11.2011. Also by email 17.09.2012.

Village interviews

15-20 aksakals Old or middle-aged knowledgeable men. At an informal aksakals meeting at a house warming *toi*, Kun Elek. 18.11.2011.

Aksakal. Old man. At his house, Kun Elek. 25.11.2011.

2 aksakals. Old men. In Taxi from Gulche to Kun Elek. 26.11.2011.

Ayil Bashty/ ‘Ulan’. Village chief. In Kun Elek village. 18.11.2011, 26.11.2011.

Dabulazhe. Old woman. At her own house, Kun Elek. 24.1.2011.

Dardak, the Librarian. Outside, in Kun Elek. 23.11.2011.

Daughter-in-law of Jamila 1. Group interview in the house of Jamila 1, Kun Elek, 20.11.2011.

Elmira. Young woman with no job, mother. At her own house, Kun Elek. 19.11.2011.

Emret. Young woman. At her and Zamir's house, Kun Elek. 22.11.2011.

Friend of Dabulazhe. At Dabulazhe's house, Kun Elek. 24.11.2011.

Friend of head of village. At his grandmother Jamila 1's house, Kun Elek. 19.11.2011.

Jamaat Bashty. Neighbourhood leader. Kun Elek, at his house, interview with wife, 23.11.2011.

Jamila 1, old lady. At her house, Kun Elek. 22.11.2011.

Jamila 2, nurse, wife of Jamaat Bashty- neighbourhood leader. At her own house 23.11.2011. Juraev, Shairbek. Director, American University of Central Asia in Bishkek. On the university premises, Bishkek. 12.11.2011.

Lady without cattle. At her house, Kun Elek. 30.11.2011

Lady with seven children. At her house, Kun Elek. 28.11.2011 Mother of Ayil Bashty. In the house of Ayil Bashty, Kun Elek. 26.11.2011.

'Niva', head of Leninskyi Ayil Okhmotu. At his office in Lenin village, Leninskyi okrug, Alai valley, Osh oblast. 30.11.2011.

5 old and middle-aged ladies at house-warming *toi*. Lower part of Kun Elek. 18.11.2011.

Old Lady. In taxi from Gulche to Kun Elek. 22.11.2011.

Old woman 2. At her house, Kun Elek. 23.11.2011

Olimbek, taxi driver. At his house, Kun Elek. 24.11.2011

Religious young man. Outside his house, Kun Elek. 23.11.2011.

Teacher. Woman. At the school in Kun Elek. 29.11.2011.

Wife of Dardarin/Dardak. Dardak's house, 19.11.2011.

Workers. Brigady, workers team. Kun Elek, outside by pump, 17.11.2011, at Dardak's house, 19.11.2011.

Young man building house. Outside his house, Kun Elek. 27.11. 2011

4 Young men; Zamir, Zamir's friend, Younger brother of Zamir's friend, Worker. Friend of Zamir's house, Kun Elek. 28.11.2011.

Young Workers. At canal site, Kun Elek. 22.11.2011.

Viktor. young man/boy, son of Olimbek. 18 years old. Outside, Kun Elek. 29.11.11

2 Women in Helath Clinic. At the health clininc, Kun Elek, 26.11.11.

4 Women at group interview: Jamila 1, Jamila 2, Young toi Woman 1, Young toi woman 2, women's group making blankets for house-warming *toi*, myself and interpreter included in blanket making. At new house, Kun Elek, 19.11.2011.

