

Research and Development in the Kyrgyz Walnut-Fruit Forests:

Achievements and Lessons Learned for the Future

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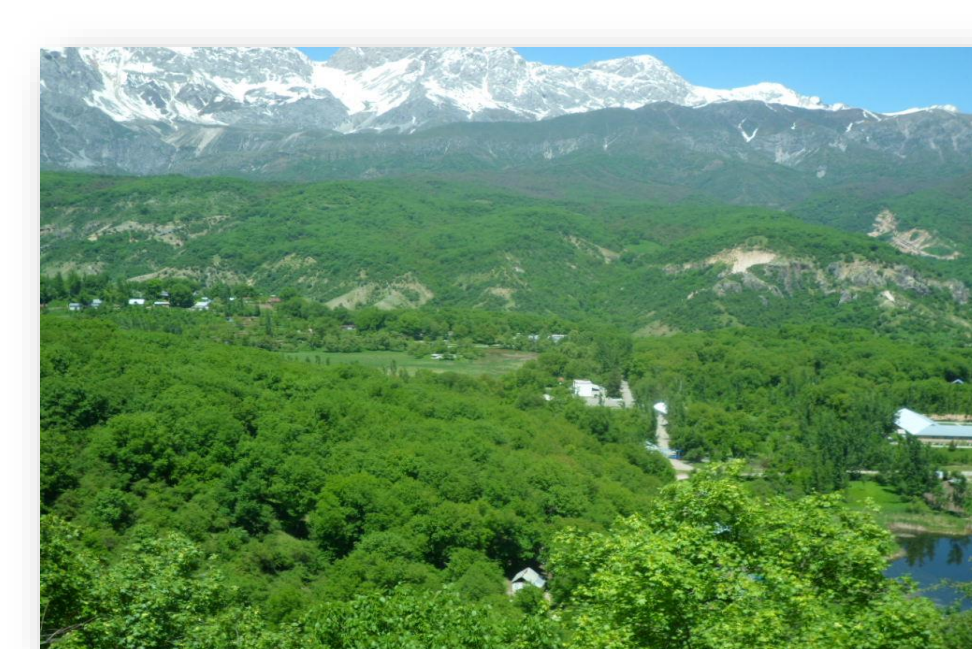
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1. Background and introduction



Research questions:

- What were the focus and results of walnut forest research over the last decades?
- Were the results of past scientific research and development projects sustained and used in current projects?
- Who are the main actors today on the field of Development Cooperation in the walnut forests?

Hypothesis:

Numerous projects and studies have taken place over the last decades in the Kyrgyz walnut-fruit forests. Yet, results of this work had only minor impact to improve the forest and living conditions in the area mainly due to the limited transfer of research and practical results from past to ongoing activities.



2. Methods and tools

Data collection on development projects

- Representatives and project staff of 10 currently ongoing development projects (internationally supported technical cooperation) were interviewed and data confidence was kept;
- Representatives of 2 out of 10 projects refused to take part in the interviews, so data was collected from publicly available sources;
- Content analysis was used to interpret the results of the interviews, and to compose the stakeholder and activities maps;



Data collection on scientific research projects

- A list of academic and non-academic publications that appeared between 1930 and 2018 (n=221) was used for content analysis;
- The literature was classified by topics and by date to build the literature map.



3. The map of the active development projects in the walnut-fruit forests

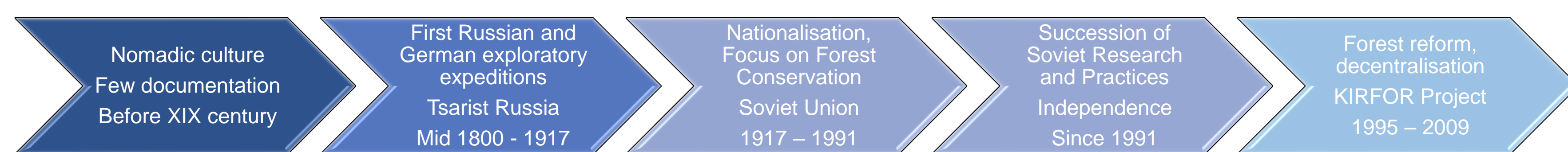
Projects	f	K	G	C	W	F	A	J	R	L
		MV					MV	MV		
Goals	BD	BD	BD							BD
			PA	AGR	IN	IN			AGR	PA
				CBFM						CBFM
Role	CD	CD	TA	CD	CD	CD	TA	TA	CD	TA
				PU						CK
Methods	EDU				CG					
	D	PIU	D	PIU	D	PIU	D	PIU	PIU	PIU
	CB	CB	CB				CB	CB	CB	CB
	TR	TR	TR	TR	TR	TR	TR	TR	TR	TR
	IK	IK		IK	IK	IK	IK	IK	IK	IK
	DEMO	DEMO		DEMO			DEMO	DEMO	DEMO	DEMO
Collaboration with processors	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y
Beneficiary	LC	LC	LC	LC	LC	LC	LC	LC	LC	LC
	YW	LA		HA	LA					
Selection of Beneficiaries	IM	IM	PPP	PPP	PPP	PPP	IM	PPP	IM	IM
Difficulties	-	-	BEU	BEU	BEU	BEU	LI	LI	LI	NI

Legend*

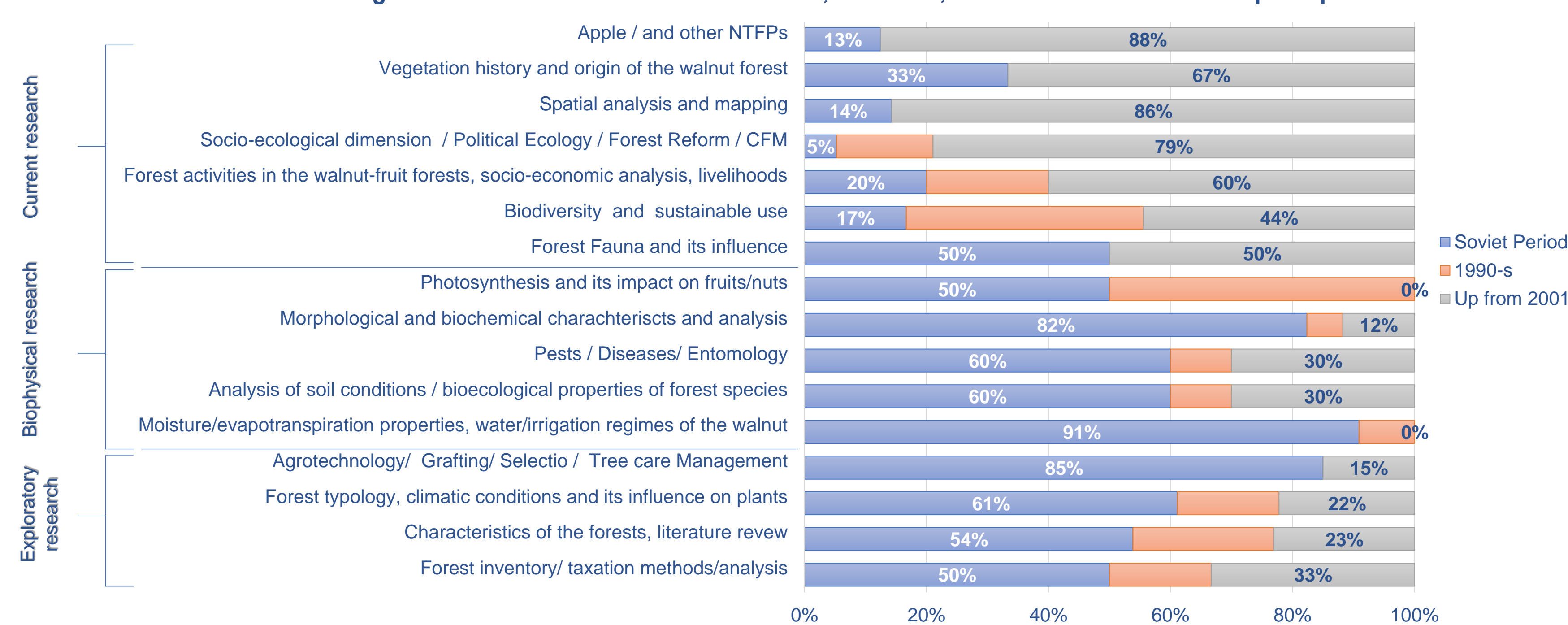
MV	Marketing/ Value Chains	TR	Trainings
BD	Biodiversity	IK	Informing/ Knowledge dissemination
PA	Poverty alleviation	DEMO	Demonstrations
AGR	Increased agro productivity	Y	Yes
IN	Innovations in monitoring	N	No
CBFM	Collaborative Forest Management	LC	Local Communities
CD	Capacity Development	YW	Youth and women
TA	Technical assistance	LA	Local authorities
PU	Pasture use	HA	High level authorities
CK	Consultation/ Knowledge dissemination	IM	Interest/ motivation
EDU	Education	PPP	Previous pilot projects
CG	Capacity building for governing bodies	BEU	Bureaucracy, top-down relationships
D	Donor	LI	Lack of interest among local populations
PIU	Project implementation Units	NI	Non-implementation of activities
CB	Capacity Building		

*Sequence of codes in legend in order of appearance in project map.

3.1 Research and reform in walnut forests: a change over time



A change of research focus in the walnut forest, over time, % of the literature sources per topic



4. Discussion

- According to Ulybina (2015) the past activities of the Donor Projects as well as Forest Reform attempts over 1995-2009 were not successful to establish community-based forest management (CBFM) in the Kyrgyz forests mainly due to a poor understanding of how it can be fit to the local settings, low capacity of the local populations, the influence of the Soviet socio-political heritage, and continuous top-down approaches.
- A similar pattern can be seen in the ongoing projects. Box 3 summarizes the activities of current development projects in a project map. The ongoing projects are all working on a common territory of the walnut forests and apparently have very similar or even partially overlapping project goals (increased incomes, improved processing and marketing opportunities etc.).
- In addition, the selection of beneficiaries lacks inclusiveness, as only interested villagers or communities from existing pilot projects are considered.
- While projects aim to consider local relationships, conditions and perceptions in their work, some problems described by Ulybina (2015) still exist. Such as reluctance of authorities to collaborate (mainly when changes would reduce their power and influence), or the unwillingness of community members to participate and to implement the agreed project activities.
- Difficulties and conflicts mainly occur on the axis of changes initiated by the donors or Project Implementing Organizations (PIUs, such as local NGOs) on the field (such as bureaucracy and staff turnover of the local authorities) or unwillingness of the local forest enterprise to give up their power and influence over the local communities) (Box 3.2).
- The project classification model in the Box 3.2 showed that it is mainly the donor programs shaping project implementation and defining what should be done, whereas other parties are not involved. According to respondents, a variety of pilot projects can ensure a better understanding of suitable activities to achieve intended outcomes. PIUs, in contrast, are clearly located in the „Painting by Numbers area“ (Obeng, 1995), i.e. they typically execute concrete tasks without much room to deviate from prescribed tasks.
- The literature map (Box 3.1) shows a limited transfer of research results from past to ongoing activities. While exploratory and biophysical research on the walnut forests were an important priority during Soviet times, research on these topics declined during the 1990s. Current research mainly covers topics such as biodiversity or sustainability of livelihoods and resource use, reflecting changing resource management systems and economic activities in the emerging market economy. Despite the apparent neglect of biophysical research topics, knowledge generated from such projects is still an important foundation required for the successful implementation of development activities in the walnut forests of Kyrgyzstan.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

- There is significant overlap and duplication in the work and implementation methods of development projects.
- The literature mapping shows that there was no continuity in walnut forest related research activities after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The change of research priorities reflected new social and economic realities in Kyrgyzstan.
- Inclusiveness is important at the stage of beneficiary selection. Along with that it is essential to assess the expectations, perceptions and the core issues of the local communities in order to develop the appropriate project activities.
- Systematic approaches including both socio-economic and environmental/ biophysical studies are important to find the correct solutions.

References

- Obeng E., All Change: The Project Leader's Secret Handbook (Financial Times Series), 1995
- Beyeler S., Rehms M., Venglovskaya G.A., Sorg J.-P.: Bibliography on the walnut-fruit forests of southern Kyrgyzstan, 2011.

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