

Institutional structures in the governance of grasslands in western China

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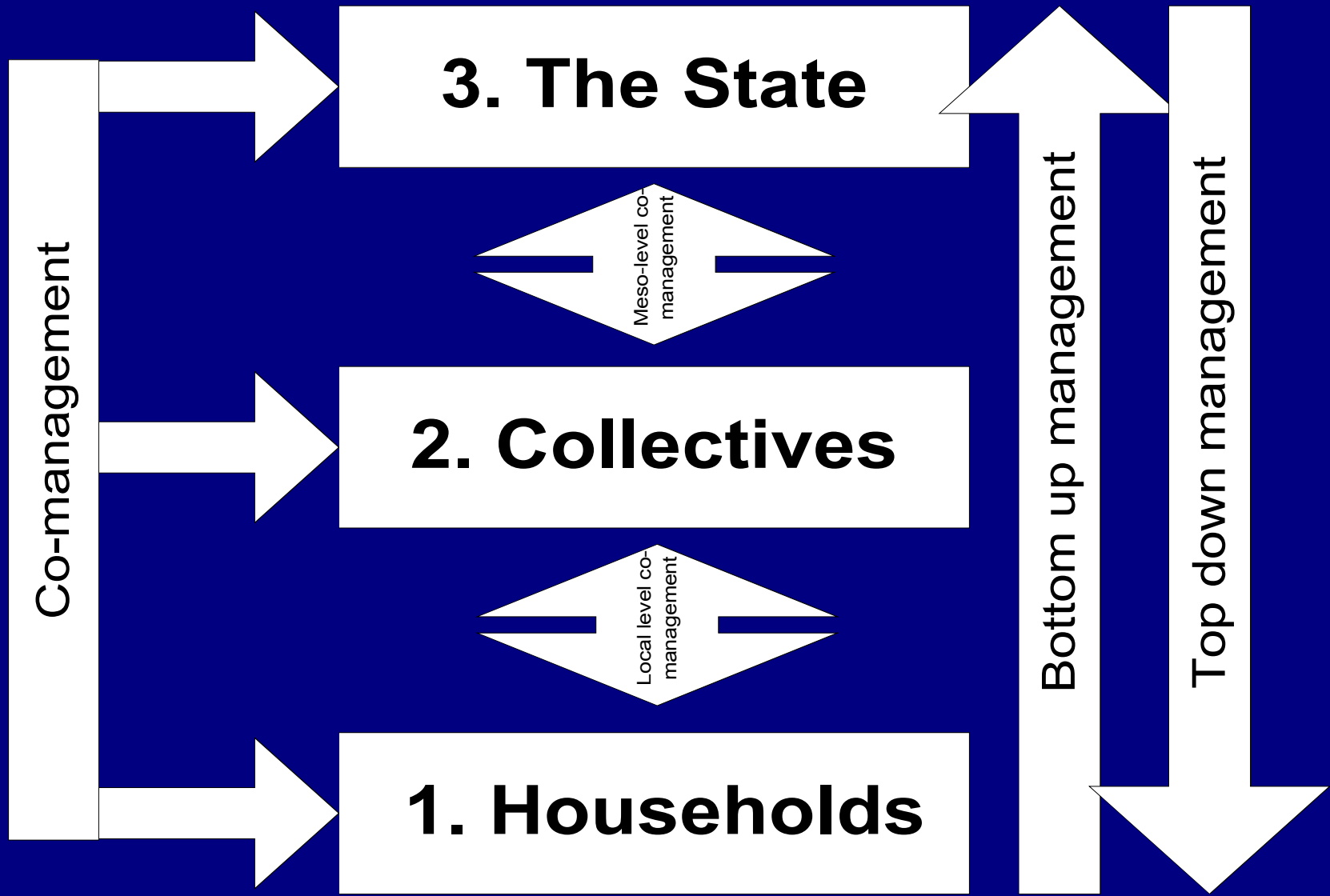
“Sustainable development of grasslands in western China” Workshop



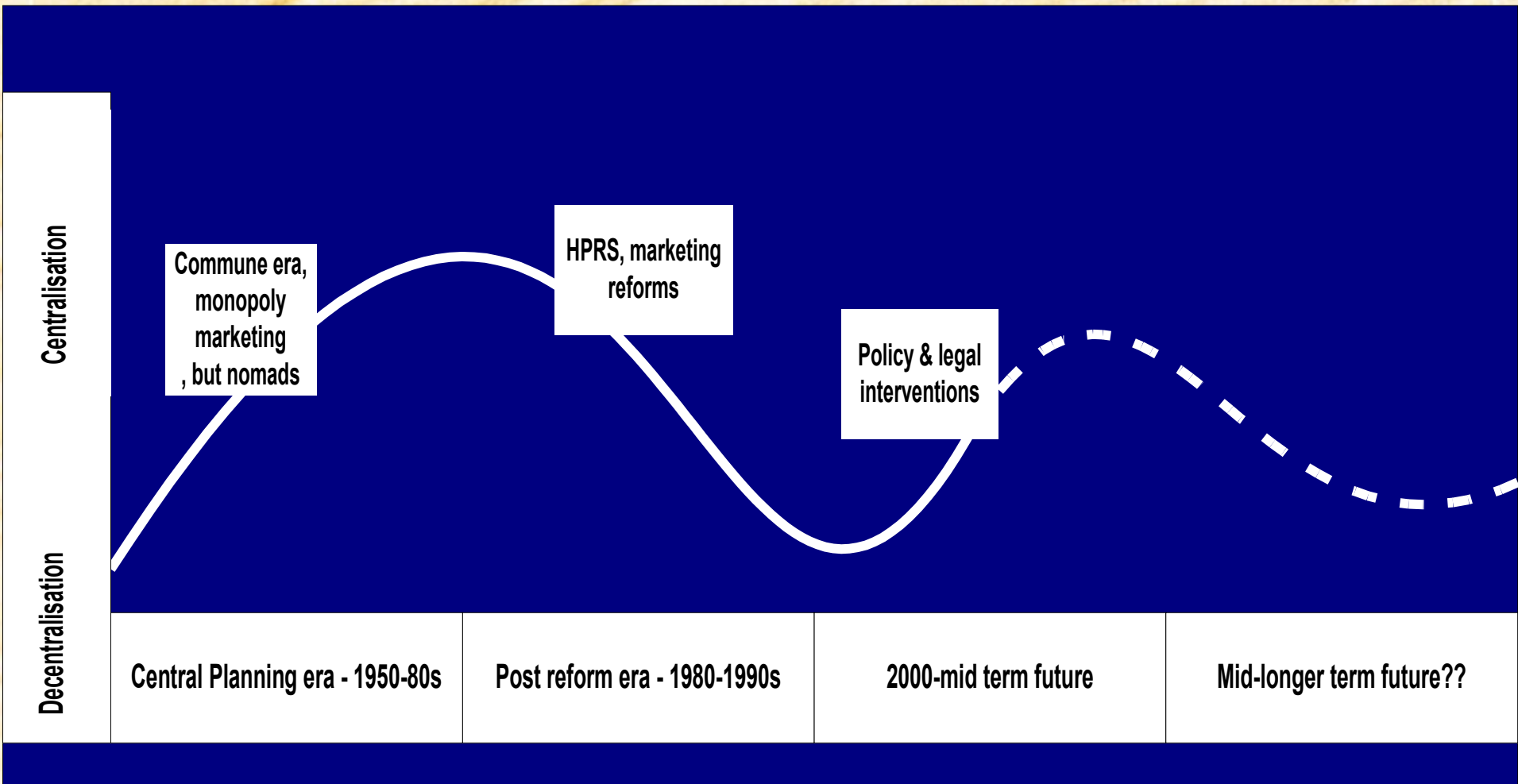
- Simple overview provided here
- Substance in Brown et al. (Sept. 2008)



Institutional structures in the governance of grasslands



Control-release cycles in grassland management



1. Individual households

- Re-included in the decision making process in the reform era
- Obviously important for on-farm management decisions
- Obviously more needs to be done to strengthen understanding & capacity of households



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Household decisions but

forged by their institutional environment

In the areas of:

- Which genetics & when
- Which disease prevention / treatment & when
- Stock numbers and type
- Where to graze & when
- How to pen-feed & when
- Timing and assistance with shearing and turnoff

Function of:

- **Household decisions**
- **Service provision**
- **Policy**



Township
(State)

2. Collectives

Party

Administrative village

Natural village

Other kinship & grazing groups, associations, co-ops

Households
(individual)



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Collective decisions

- Especially important in collective grazing systems
 - In remote areas
 - In areas without perimeter fencing on spring/summer pastures, water access etc.
- Local leaders / elders traditional role in
 - Governing grazing access and monitoring
 - Dispute resolution
- Local livestock technician – service delivery



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Local level collective/household co-management systems

- Decreasing role in grassland management due to:
 - Perceived failure – in managing grasslands & livestock
 - Conflicts of interest – in supervision & production
 - Ability to cope with changing / modernising demands
 - Lack of understanding & capacity
- Acts as argument for capacity building at local levels
 - Most effective level of management
 - Micro-level and traditional knowledge



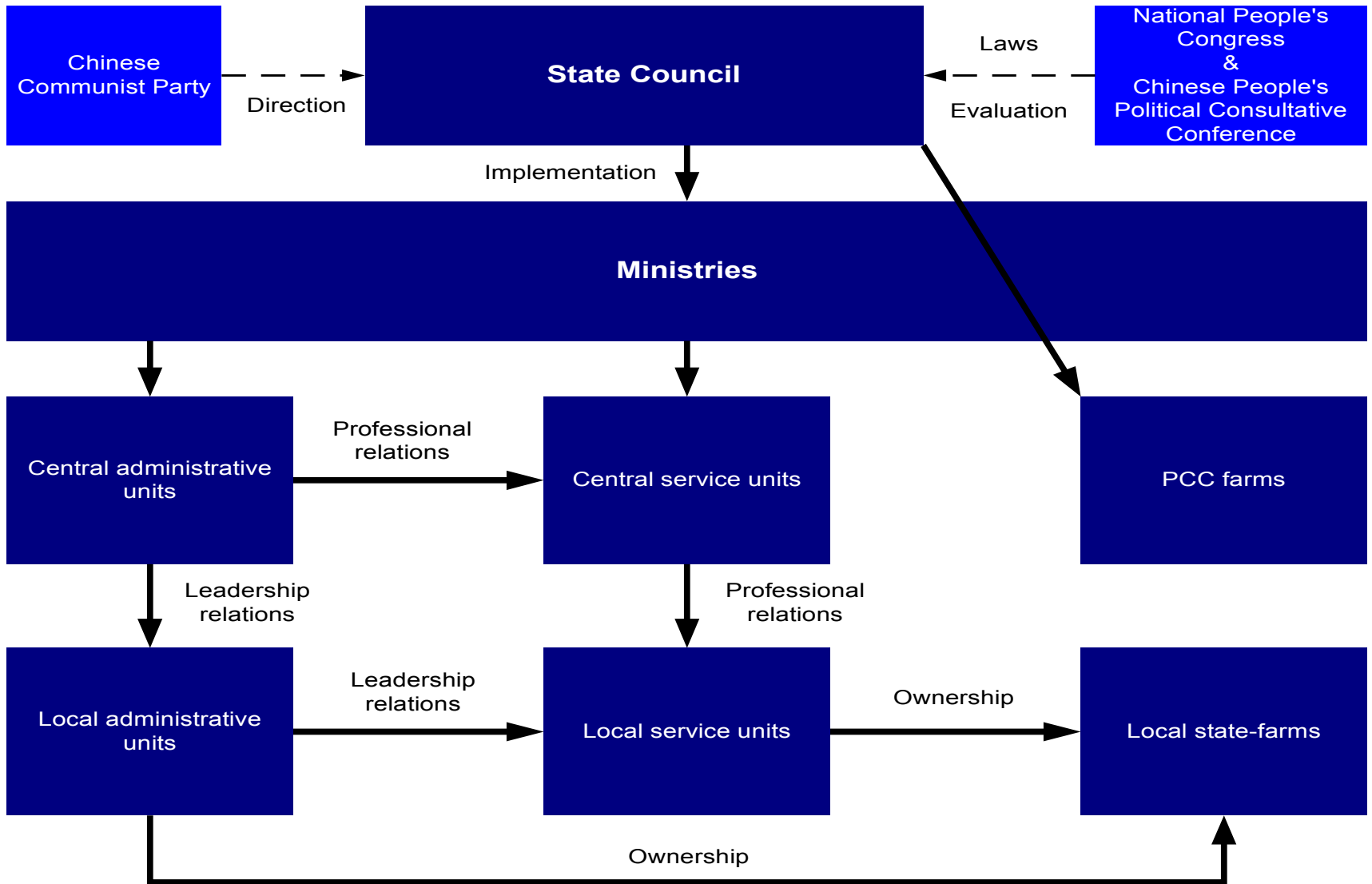
But until local level capacity building happens:

- ***The State is re-assuming control***
- **To provide immediate solutions to immediate problems**
- **Through a powerful “carrot-stick” approach / strategy, measures include:**
 - Grazing bans / restrictions
 - Pen-feeding
 - Adjustment of herd/flock structures
 - Settlement & resettlement
 - Increasing access to off-farm infrastructure, services & jobs
- **To**
 - Intensify systems
 - Get people & livestock off the grasslands!
 - Bring about structural adjustment of the pastoral region
- **Providing potential**
 - For on-leasing and increased farm sizes
 - But an aging herder demographic?



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3. The State sector



Mobilisation of the State

- Highest echelons have directed “macro-control” (cross-sectoral) departments to deal with the pastoral region
- E.g. ministries / commissions of
 - Development & Reform
 - Science & Technology
 - Environmental Protection
 - Land Resources
 - Civil Affairs
 - Poverty Alleviation
 - Etc.



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But ... Ministry of Agriculture

- Retains jurisdiction over grasslands, especially the AHB
 - Administrative units to county level
 - Service units / stations to township level
- MoA as a “specialised” (sectoral) based department
 - Therefore potential conflict of interest – in increasing production while engaged in environmental monitoring
 - e.g. AHB leadership relations with grasslands stations
- But some strengthening in “macro-control” functions of MoA
 - E.g. food safety, disease, information, marketing, environment/grasslands
 - E.g. creation of Grasslands Monitoring Centre – service unit of MoA
 - Furthermore, direction reflected in AHB service, extension, supervision systems



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Implications (a)

- Can't assume independent household decision making
 - Pastoral areas different to agricultural areas
- Reasons for State control
 - Perceived failure of local level collective/household co-management
 - Immediate solutions to immediate problems
 - State changing outlook to pastoral area – environmental and social issues
- Paternalistic “top down” governance
 - Both on-farm and off-farm



Implications (b)

- However
- Local level individual/collective co-management work critical
 - State needs feedback to refine policies
 - Enormous potential for impact through dissemination into State systems
 - Limits to State intervention – logistics & dispersed nature of grasslands
 - State may “release” control in the medium term future
 - In which case will need “bottom up” capacity



Decentralisation of grasslands managements??

