Explaining the Existence of Pseudo-Commons in Post-Communist Countries

Considerable work from collective action scholars in the last 50 years have documented ample cases, derived concepts and formulated principles that reflect that shared natural resources can be sustainably managed through commons governance approaches. Yet, there are common-property regimes that only exist on paper, or are set up intentionally to profit individuals. To explain these pseudo-commons in post-communist societies, we studied their political and social background in the irrigation and forestry sector. We illustrate pseudo-water user associations and pseudo-joint forestry management systems that do not show many key features of a true common-property governance regime. The socialist legacy of striving for economic and political benefit by elites, the prevailing Soviet mentality of preferring higher level authorities as decision-makers and the over stressing of cooperation foster pseudo-commons, with the tragic result of destroying trust in a kind of governance proven to be successful otherwise.

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