

64th GEWISOLA conference
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“Innovative concepts for a sustainable agricultural and food economy”
Pre-conference workshop

Post-Soviet countries as laboratories for land use change analysis

Coordination:

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Session idea, objective and format

In terms of agricultural resources, the Eurasian continent is home to vast tracts of fertile cropland and millions of farm animals. These productive assets make the continent significant for questions of global food security as well as the management of environmental resources such as water and biodiversity. Agricultural practice contributes notably to global greenhouse gas emissions. In 1991, the collapse of the Soviet Union pushed open an arena of reform debate and restructuring policies that has not closed thirty years later. From the Baltic countries to Central Asia and the Far East, the socialist era bequeathed its collective and state farms to the newly independent states. In the decades to follow, policymakers, analysts as well as farm managers and rural workers would struggle with restructuring the former collectives into alternative farming models considered fit for the envisaged market economy.

From an academic point of view, the post-Soviet countries thus provide a fertile ground for studying land use change on a large scale. Compared to other emerging and developing countries, statistical offices provide access to fairly rich and well-structured data sets, thanks to the legacy of Soviet central planning. Due to the arbitrary political borders often defined by Russian colonisers or Soviet despots, the dissolution of the Soviet Union produced many “natural experiment” settings in which political borders dissect otherwise naturally and socially homogenous environments. Aided by new data sources and analytical tools drawing on remote sensing and huge online databases, researchers have only in recent years come to appreciate the opportunities for innovative and policy-relevant empirical work on the Eurasian continent.

This session puts on display work in progress in this area that combines rich data sources, various innovative methodologies and policy relevance. Contributing from difference disciplinary backgrounds, the speakers focus on land use change processes that are often at the heart of economic, social and environmental transformations.

Session speakers

Individual contributions:

Recent advances in the economics of land use change

Prof. Dr. David Wuepper, Land Economics Group, University of Bonn, Germany

Multidisciplinary approaches to study economic outcomes of Central Asian rangeland systems

Dr. Sarah Robinson, Center for international Development and Environmental Research (ZEU), Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany

The effects of privatization on pasture productivity in southern Kazakhstan: econometric evidence from a rich cadastral dataset

Eduard Bukin MSc, Institute of Agricultural Policy and Market Research, Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany

Collapse and recovery of livestock systems shape fire regimes on the Eurasian steppe: a review of ecosystem and biodiversity implications

Prof. Dr. Johannes Kamp, Department of Conservation Biology, University of Göttingen, Germany

Post-Soviet changes of agricultural land use dynamics and their effects on water use in the Amu Darya Basin

Prof. Dr. Daniel Müller, Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO), Halle (Saale), and Humboldt University Berlin, Germany

Q&A with the auditorium

Moderation: *Prof. Dr. Martin Petrick, Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany*