



50 years of commons research relevant for post-socialist countries today

Fifty years ago, US ecologist Garret Hardin launched a global debate. In his essay "The Tragedy of the Commons" he warned of the consequences of a growing world population. The steadily increasing, uncontrolled consumption of resources is leading to a global collapse. Today, "commons" research is established worldwide and provides answers to local and global problems. In light of this, the "World Commons Week" will be held around the world from 4 to 12 October.

In his 1968 essay Hardin criticised the belief that all of mankind's problems could be solved through technical innovation. He regarded the biggest problem as being the consequences of an ever-increasing world population. He wrote at the time in the journal "Science" that this was increasingly consuming freely accessible and limited resources, such as land and water. He predicted a long-term collapse of the entire system at the end of this development. He called for a change in thinking: access to public goods would have to be privatized or controlled by the state.

The biologist, who provided a boost to commons research, was, however, not an ethicist. And: Hardin makes an error in his essay: he equates common goods with free, unregulated access. He talks about resources for which there are no rules. However, this is not at all the case for common goods. In the case of traditional common goods, like forests and fishing grounds, there is in fact a defined set of rules. These stipulate the rights and obligations of the users and detail who is entitled to use them.

Common goods have a much broader definition today than 50 years ago, for example, the global atmosphere or public spaces are regarded as common goods. There are also many considerations with regard to regulating science, software and IT using "commons" principles. The commons idea is even playing an increasingly important role in municipalities. Many cities offer small areas within the city - so-called urban gardens - that can be planted and cultivated by its citizens.

Half a century of commons research is being marked by the "World Commons Week", organised by the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC), whose founding president was Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom. It will take place worldwide from 4 to 12 October 2018 and it also aims to give new impetus to research on commons governance.

Within the framework of the World Commons Week, the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC) together with the Plovdiv Agricultural University and the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg organizes a



Mini Conference on Pseudo Commons in Post-Socialist Countries

on Monday, 8th October 2018, in Plovdiv, Bulgaria

In contrast to the critique towards Hardin’s misconception of a tragedy of the commons, a “real” tragedy of the commons exists when the common-property regime may only exist on paper and not supported with activities, or may be set up purposefully to serve individual benefits.

With this mini-conference we want to explore what the so-called pseudo-commons mean. In particular, we would like to address the following questions:

- Do we find such pseudo-commons increasingly in post-socialist countries and
- What would be typical examples?
- What would be the reasons for emergence of such pseudo-commons?
- Can we blame the implementation of real socialism in the past, dominant groups of political and economic elites during the transition phase, the persisting socialist legacy or the sometimes-called prevailing Soviet-mentality as being responsible for the appearance of pseudo-commons?
- Do we find promising examples of commons management and collective action in post-socialist countries, and what can we learn from them?

These practical and conceptual questions will be discussed at our mini-conference! Come and join!

Morning Debate		
9:30 – 10:00	Get together coffee	
10:00 – 10:30	Welcome address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plovdiv Agricultural University ▪ Insa Theesfeld (IASC Europe coordinator) 	Short introduction to IASC Europe and the World Commons Week
	Individual talks with inputs on commons management in post-socialist countries	
10:30 – 11:15	Markus Hanisch (confirmed) Humboldt-University Berlin (HU), Germany	Cooperatives in post-socialist countries – how far are we down the road to overcome the post-socialist legacy?
11:15 – 12:00	Insa Theesfeld (confirmed) Martin-Luther University Halle-Wittenberg (MLU), Germany	The role of pseudo-commons in post-socialist countries – no chance for real commons?
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch break	

The preliminary conference program:

Planned Afternoon Talks and Exchange of Ideas	
	Perspectives on commons management in post-socialist countries and abroad



	Ilona Otto (tbc) Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIC), Potsdam, Germany	Perceptions and management of global commons in post-socialist countries
	Ivan Penov Agricultural University, Plovdiv	Post-socialist labor force as a common-pool resource: how the land source foundation supports its provision
	Violeta Dirimanova Agricultural University, Plovdiv	Discussant
	Andrej Udovč Biotechnical Faculty University of Ljubljana, Slovenia	Slovenia's experience of commons and collective action – between success and failure
	Ladislav Jelinek, Research Institute of Agricultural Economics and Information (IAEI), Prague, Czech Republic	Discussant
	Jaroslav Pražan UZEI, Czech Republic	Cooperation in provision of public goods in agriculture – the Czech Republic example
	Ivan Boevsky New Bulgarian University, Sofia, Bulgaria	Discussant

For more information on how to join the meeting or travel organization, please contact:

Violeta Dirimanova: violeta_dirimanova@yahoo.com

Ivan Penov: ipenov@au-plovdiv.bg

Insa Theesfeld: insa.theesfeld@landw.uni-halle.de

The International Association for the Study of the Commons is likewise launching 24-hours straight of 12:00 **noon-time webinars** around the globe on commons research and practice on October 12, 2018 as part of IASC's #WorldCommonsWeek!

Speaker lineup: <https://www.worldcommonsweek.org/webinars>.

Information on how to join each webinar will be posted in September.