

Forest management reforms in three ex-Soviet Republics

Abstract

Given the radical changes that East European countries have recently gone through, it is of general interest to study what institutional and organisational set-ups for forest management were selected in the individual countries and why.

The purpose of the presentation is to present results from a study of reforms in State forest management of Ukraine, the Russian Federation and Latvia in 1990-2000, focusing on underlying reasons.

A number of models were formulated, mostly based on Public Choice theory and theories on institutional development.

In Russia, some key reforms in the forest sector were initiated as part of the Government's general agenda. The main such set of reforms generated from decisions to privatise forest industry but keep forest State-owned. Most other reforms of the period were consequences of this general decision but other models of the study provided additional understanding.

In Ukraine, one can argue that the Ukraine State Forest Committee as an organisation was an example of Rentier-Capitalism, given that it continued to control the majority of Ukraine's forests, enjoyed a close-to monopoly on final fellings and came to control a large part of Ukraine's forest industry. The processes that led to this situation were strongly influenced by Interest Group Struggles and Path Dependency.

Concerning Latvia, most striking is the breach with the Soviet-era institutional set-up and thus also with Path Dependency. Latvia created in only 10 years a new institutional and organisational set-up, quite similar to the Scandinavian countries. The models that best explain Latvian forest sector reform are Political Necessity and Historic Experience. By the end of the studied period, the main forest institutions and organisations demonstrated practically no resemblance to what had existed prior to 1990. In this respect, Latvia differed very clearly from Russia and Ukraine.