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"Rangeland Use Rights Privatisation Based on the Tragedy of the Commons: A Case Study from Tibet"

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Rangeland use rights privatisation based on a tragedy of the commons assumption has been the backbone of state policy on rangeland management and pastoralism in China. Through an empirical case study from Pelgon county, Tibet Autonomous Region in China, this paper provides an empirical analysis of rangeland use rights privatisation. It shows that the tragedy of the commons is not the correct model to apply to Tibetan pastoralism because pasture use in Tibet has never been an open-access institution. Thus, when the tragedy of the commons model is applied as a rationale for rangeland use rights privatisation, the result is not what is intended by the policy, but rather a misfit to features of pastoralism and thus disruption of the essence of pastoralism, i.e. mobility and flexibility. The paper further shows that a hybrid institution combining household rangeland tenure with community-based use with user fees is a restoration of the pastoralist institution. This demonstrates the capacity of pastoralists to create adaptive new institutions congruent with the interdependent and integrated nature of pastoralism consisting of three components: pastoralists, livestock, and rangeland. (Text from author's abstract)

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