

Prof. Tirthankar Roy (LSE/Kansai)

"The Great Retreat? : Tropical Pastoralism since the late-19th century"

Abstract

Savannas or grasslands cover about 20 per cent of the earth's land area, often merging into the desert edge in the world's tropics. Animal herding is usually the only livelihood possible in these lands. Many writers and reports on how this livelihood changed, in the long run, suggest that pastoralism has declined, in some cases, from the colonial era in the nineteenth century, as farmers and city-dwellers grabbed land available for pasture. The long-run land use statistics, however, contradict this narrative. The paper explains why the facts are inconsistent with the narrative and suggests how the narrative needs revision.