Do Institutions Matter in the Management of Commons?

A field-based analysis of the monitoring, controlling and sanctioning instruments in the communal villages’ obște.

David Diaconu
MA in Political Theory and Policy Analysis
National University for Political and Administrative Studies, Bucharest
Outline

• What is an Obște?
• Two types of Obște
• Three periods of the Obște development
• The relevance of the 4th and 5th Elinor Ostrom’s design principles
• Monitoring & Sanctioning instruments in the Old Obște
• Monitoring & Sanctioning instruments in the New Obște
• Discussions & Implications
The Communal Village
- Archaic associative form of property characterized by indivisibility and communality

The Obște
- The leading organization (founded on local-based institutions) of the communal village

The commons owned by the village and managed by the Obște
- Forest areas
- Pasture
- Common infrastructure (headquarters, ballrooms, cemeteries, etc).

Credits: George Iordăchescu
Two Types of Obște
and the data collection process

Inegalitarian
*The membership is based on a number of shares*

Egalitarian
*All the villagers are part of the Obste*

For the case of Vrancea I had the opportunity to collaborate with the research team of the Romanian Forest Commons Project (P.I. Monica Vasile) – [http://romaniacommons.wixsite.com/project](http://romaniacommons.wixsite.com/project)
Three periods of development & analysis

• The period until 1948 (*The Old Obște*)

• The communist period

• The period since 1990(2000) (*The New Obște*)
Ostrom’s design principles (4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th})

- A design principle should be understood as “an essential element or condition that helps to account for the success of institutions in sustaining the CPRs and gaining the compliance of generation of participants to the rules-in-use” (McGinnis and Ostrom 1992, 8)

- 4\textsuperscript{th} design principle: \textit{Monitoring}
- 5\textsuperscript{th} design principle: \textit{Graduated Sanctions}
## M & S instruments in the Old Obște’s Forest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monitoring instruments</th>
<th>Inegalitarian Obște</th>
<th>Egalitarian Obște</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each member was in charge with the monitoring process. (The personal interest of the villagers that owned more shares was higher than the others’)</td>
<td>Each member was in charge with the monitoring process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sanctioning instruments</th>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Severe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light: admonition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium: curses proposed by the priest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe: ostracization from the village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other details</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ All the members were involved into the Obște’s economic activity</td>
<td>❑ All the <strong>villagers</strong> were involved into the Obște’s economic activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ There is not any differentiation between the monitorization capacity or the sanctioning instruments depending on the number of shares detained.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# M & S instruments in the New Obște’s Forest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monitoring instruments</th>
<th>Sanctioning instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inegalitarian Obște</td>
<td>Graduated Sanctions proposed and applied by Police or Judicial Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarian Obște</td>
<td>Forestry District (private or public)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other details**
- The villagers are not involved into the Obște’s economic activity
- The state is the only entity that is allowed to sanction persons, even though they are part of a local-based institutional arrangement.
Discussions & Implications

- The Communist Period acted as a **Critical Juncture** (Acemoglu & Robinson 2013)
- There are probabilities linked to the sanctioning instruments in the New Obște
- The implication in the Obște’s economic activity
- The imposition of the new monitoring and sanctioning systems may represent a part of a “Leviathan Solution”

*The CPRs institutions robustness level decreased in the case of the New Obște than in the case of the Old one. A tragedy of the commons cannot be fully avoided in a long – term perspective.*
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!
david.diaconu@politice.ro