

Institutional Diversity in Romanian Carpathians

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Abstract

This paper examines various ways of governing the commons in the Romanian Communal Villages and their governance system known as Obște. Historically, the Romanian rural areas were characterized by two perspectives of local governance: communal villages and villages under vassalage. This paper presents both ways but with an emphasis on the institutional diversity of the communal villages. From a methodological standpoint, the paper employs a mixed-methods research design including document analysis, interviews, surveys, and economic data from various periods. Regarding timeframe, the paper takes into account a few critical junctures. For example, the year 1948 – when the *new* (socialist) political regime enforced nationalization and collectivization policies, and 1989 – when the Romanian revolution took part and the political regime switched from a socialist to a democratic one.

Along with the general perspective about commons governance throughout Romania, the paper also refers to several fruitful case studies and their specificities linked to institutional development and outcomes. Finally, the paper aims to offer insight into some of the Romanian Carpathians' institutional diversity puzzle, contributing to the development of both commons and institutional theoretical frameworks.