

EASTERN EUROPEAN DAYS
**INFORMAL PRACTICES AND STRUCTURES
IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA**
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE:
21 – 23 NOVEMBER 2013, UNIVERSITY OF FRIBOURG

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PANEL 13

INFORMALITY AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS III: GOVERNANCE AND STATE ADMINISTRATION

13.1 Elvin Gjevori, Dublin City University Institutionalisation and Informal Practices in Unconsolidated Democracies

Researchers have long been interested in the informal practices of unconsolidated postcommunist democracies in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The research has mostly focused on the negative effects of these practices and the failure of domestic institutions and international donors to eradicate them. Such focus, while illuminating the manifestations and effects of informal practices, misses the root causes that make them persistent. I argue that the strength and longevity of informal practices are inversely related to the institutionalisation of institutions in unconsolidated democracies. Where substantial institutionalisation is present informal practices are largely absent. Therefore, to understand the structural conditions that enable informal practices, researchers have to study institutionalisation as the variable that most affects informality. Such perspective transforms the research question into: how can countries institutionalise their institutions and decrease informality in their polity?

Unfortunately such perspective is absent from current studies. To address this limitation I propose a pre-institutionalisation approach – with collective memory as a causal mechanism – as an explanatory account for institutionalisation and informality in unconsolidated, post-communist democracies. To substantiate this argument, I explore the case of military and judicial reform in Albania from 1992 – 2009. I argue that the combination of the memory of the autocratic past and main transition crises created the frameworks through which Albanian elites enabled further institutionalisation and less informality in the military than the judiciary. This proposition is tested through content and discourse analysis of parliamentary debates on military and judicial reform. The findings show that for political elites to support meaningful institutionalisation which decreases informality, they have to interpret transition crises as institutional deficiencies which threaten simultaneously the national and their political interests. This paper aims to establish a dialogue between institutionalist, democratisation and transition studies.

13.2 Dragana Stokanic and Dragan Stanojević, University of Belgrade Informal Connections in Political and Economic Spheres in Serbia

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the debate on the importance of informal connections between the politics and the economy in Serbia after the year 2000. The main idea which leads us is that there are obvious and numerous irregularities in individuals' behaviors toward legally established rules and that unwritten rules and practices exist in the political field. Those informal prescriptions of actions are dictated by functional requirements of social system in which economic and political players act as rational actors in a specific context of the post socialist state.

Furthermore, we will use qualitative approach in order to capture and explain individual practices and institutions which political and economic officials create. Particularly, we will conduct the in-depth interviews with middle-range politicians on the executive positions in the highest state institutions. The analysis will be based on interviews held from April to June 2013 and it will present two integrated levels of interactions between politics and the economy. Firstly, we will analyze the relations between the public institutions and the private capital. Especially, we will show how politicians use their positions in the public institutions to gain particular interest for their political parties. Secondly, we will investigate the process of monopolization of the positions in the public sector by the political parties which currently hold public resources.

On the first level, it is shown that political parties are significantly financially dependent on the economic capital. These interactions are informal in a way that politicians gain financial support in order to provide privileged positions for their partners. On the other level, we consider the reality that political parties became the important channel for social mobility. Thus, it is crucial to understand the dynamics and functional conditionings and limitations between different structures in the political party. Taking into consideration that political parties depend greatly on loyalty of their members, it gives the possibility for middle and lower echelons to make a pressure on party leadership to infiltrate party members in the public institutions.

13.3 Ana Kirvalidze, Ilia State University **Informal Practices in the Policing System after the 2012 Governmental Changes**

The institutional changes characteristic of the post-Soviet period acquire particular significance when analyzing the democratic development of countries in a transitional period. In this context, issues of formal and informal institutions move to the foreground. In this respect, the rapid institutional changes that took place in Georgia made 2003 a turning point. The 'Rose Revolution' marked the beginning of the implementation of a range of political and institutional reforms in the state. Today the institutional changes implemented in the policing sphere are cited as one of the successful reforms of the state, and are the topic of my research from the perspective of studying informality.

It is noteworthy that the formation of the institution in question dated from the Soviet period and, like other state institutions, it stood out for its high level of corruption, criminal offences, violent crime, and control of traffic movement. This institution operated in society basically as a control, and essentially enforced USSR criminal law. The basic characteristics of the pre-reform policing institution were its operating informally outside formal boundaries, and informal interpersonal networks which gave individuals the means to coordinate with formal organizations via alternative paths. Its informal network was very robust, one in which all players co-operated with one other. As a result of these reforms, the institutional changes that were implemented reduced the informal practices in question to almost zero, as is evidenced by the findings of numerous studies, both local and international.

Raising issues connected with informal practices in the institution in question, both in public debates and on the part of various non-governmental organizations, began in October 2012 in parallel with the implementation of governmental changes. In the police, the issue of informal practices was becoming an urgent issue in the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) as a result of changes to the implemented legislation, which were connected to the introduction of laws regulating certain personnel issues. The new legislative acts in question created the possibility of appointing or promoting people to important posts without attending professional education programmes and retraining, which itself gave rise to suspicions of the institutionalization of a new informal network. All this accompanied a rise in the number of cases of summary dismissal of employees of the MIA and the police.

The aim of this research is to identify and study informal practices that originated in the policing institution in the aftermath of the 2012 governmental changes. More specifically, it looks at what type of informal practices we can come across in the appointment or dismissal of police employees. To this end, cases of informal practices are identified and studied. This research is empirical in its nature, and implies finding primary data concerning the issues in question from actors directly involved in the policing institution, including people dismissed from their posts. With the aim of increasing the objectivity of information in this qualitative research, 'mediators'

ABOUT ASCN

ASCN is a programme aimed at promoting the social sciences and humanities in the South Caucasus (primarily Georgia and Armenia). Its different activities foster the emergence of a new generation of talented scholars. Promising junior researchers receive support through research projects, capacity-building trainings and scholarships. The programme emphasizes the advancement of individuals who, thanks to their ASCN experience, become better integrated in international academic networks. The ASCN programme is coordinated and operated by the Interfaculty Institute for Central and Eastern Europe (IICEE) at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). It is initiated and supported by Gebert Rűf Stiftung.

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ABOUT RRPP

The Regional Research Promotion Programme is aimed at fostering and promoting social science research in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). Researchers receive support through research grants, methodological and thematic trainings, policy dialogue projects as well as opportunities for regional and international exchange and networking. The programme is fully funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

www.rrpp-westernbalkans.net, office@rrpp-westernbalkans.net

