

January 6th 2010

Starting with Number 1 – Design Principle

Ostrom describes that a requirement before any progress can be made, the first design principle must be established. In short, it is stating the importance of clearly defined boundaries in long-enduring CPR institutions.

For any participants, or appropriators, I agree that without the first principle confusion is likely. They must not only know the confining space of the CPR, but also what is owned by them as an appropriator. Without this crucial first step, free-riders (from outside the constraints of the CPR) can take advantage of the institution as it is beginning to form, therefore corrupting the positive goals of the appropriators and other major players such as providers and monitors. Also, disputes between appropriators would be probable; even with those members that would like to honor the spirit of the future agreements the collective would create, due to confusion of private property and collective property. The uncertainty that would result without this first step actually ends the process of creating a new CPR institution before it even begins.

In each example the CPR is clearly defined by the geographical location and resources being discussed. The main difference between the cases is the individuals, and their stake in the community, and how the resources in each case are being managed for them. The first example discussing Japanese villages is describing common lands that originally spanned 12 million hectares. As Ostrom describes each situation as self-explanatory for each case, this specific one described the process of harvesting the resources, one of the most important being Sake, from the commons. Each individual of

the community was represented by a larger family (household) unit as the smallest measurement of an appropriator.

In the second example of the irrigation system in Spain, the appropriators were the individual farmers in all of the Heurtas, although some of the CPR's boundaries were created differently for each location. All of them had institutions that were designed to serve the farmers and make best usage of the irrigation systems established for the specific circumstances of each location; however, some of the locations had little interference or communication with the main government of Spain. In fact, one of the only locations, Alicante, had any interaction worth mentioning. The construction of the Tibi Dam allowed the Spanish Monarchy to eventually seize control of it in 1739 (Ostrom) and therefore the CPR institution that was created by Alicante was temporarily disrupted. Without this first and essential principle being established permanently, also breaking principle 7 referring to recognition by the way, the institution can not exist.

In the final example about the Philippines and the irrigation community provided for, the CPR's boundaries are easily defined as the irrigation community. The appropriators began as individual farmers that agree to be part of the community, and in turn are rewarded with a 'membership share' called an atar. Clearly, each member is an individual appropriator. Unfortunately, if one dislikes complexity, the membership share could be divided among survivors if the original member becomes deceased and then multiple inheritors would share the same role of the appropriator unless another agreement is reached between what is assumed to be his/her children. The importance of the first principle is what defines each example, and is what I believe should be the most malleable factor in creating these much sought-after 'long-enduring CPR institutions.'