

History and Possibilities of Community-Based Management in Hungary and Romania

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Commons were widespread in Hungary till the late medieval times, and were largely destroyed deliberately in the 18-19th century. Only some remained, mainly pastures owned by animal breeders of the villages. In the end 19th century committees of pasture and forestland were organized, according to a government law. During the communist period local community based management was decreased. But till today, the grazing regime of the pastures is mostly determined by the local community. In Hungary nature conservation is mainly directed by national park directorates according to governmental and EU regulations. Participatory management planning is very rare, but in the last years there are some examples connected to Natura 2000 site management. Local rangers can do the most in incorporating local values and interests in nature conservation management since they are responsible for the execution of nature management plans. In Hungary since 2003 a group of young scientists and other participants are working on the understanding and revival of the traditional Hungarian nature and human connections (Landscape and Man Folkschool, lead by Zsolt Molnár and since 2005, Anna Varga). Functions of commons are a crucial part of the discussions and projects.



Pastureland and Forestland of Committee of Homoródkarácsonyfalva in Transylvania, Romania

Quite exceptionally in Europe, the medieval (16-18th centuries) common land management rules in Transylvania (Romania) have been analysed (and published!!) in details. Hundreds of regulations survived in archives, and these were studied by the historian István Imreh. It turned out, that “ecosystem services” were highly valued and protected also taking into consideration longer term processes. In the beginning of 20th century modern committees of village were organized to use pasture and

forestland. Today there are some new regulations, that build on these traditions, many of them survived even during the communist period. In 2000 committee of pasture and forestland was reorganized based on old rules and traditions. Gyimes (Eastern Carpathians,Romania) even today some pastures are owned by a group of families. The group decides when and how to clear trees from the pasture, how many animals can be kept by a family, and in summer the cattle are grazed and milked in a rotation depending on the total milk production of the cows belonging to one family.

Our case studies of used and abandoned wood pastures demonstrate well the processes of community based management in Hungary and in Romania.