

Romanian Mountain Commons Project

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ROMANIAN MOUNTAIN COMMONS

About the project

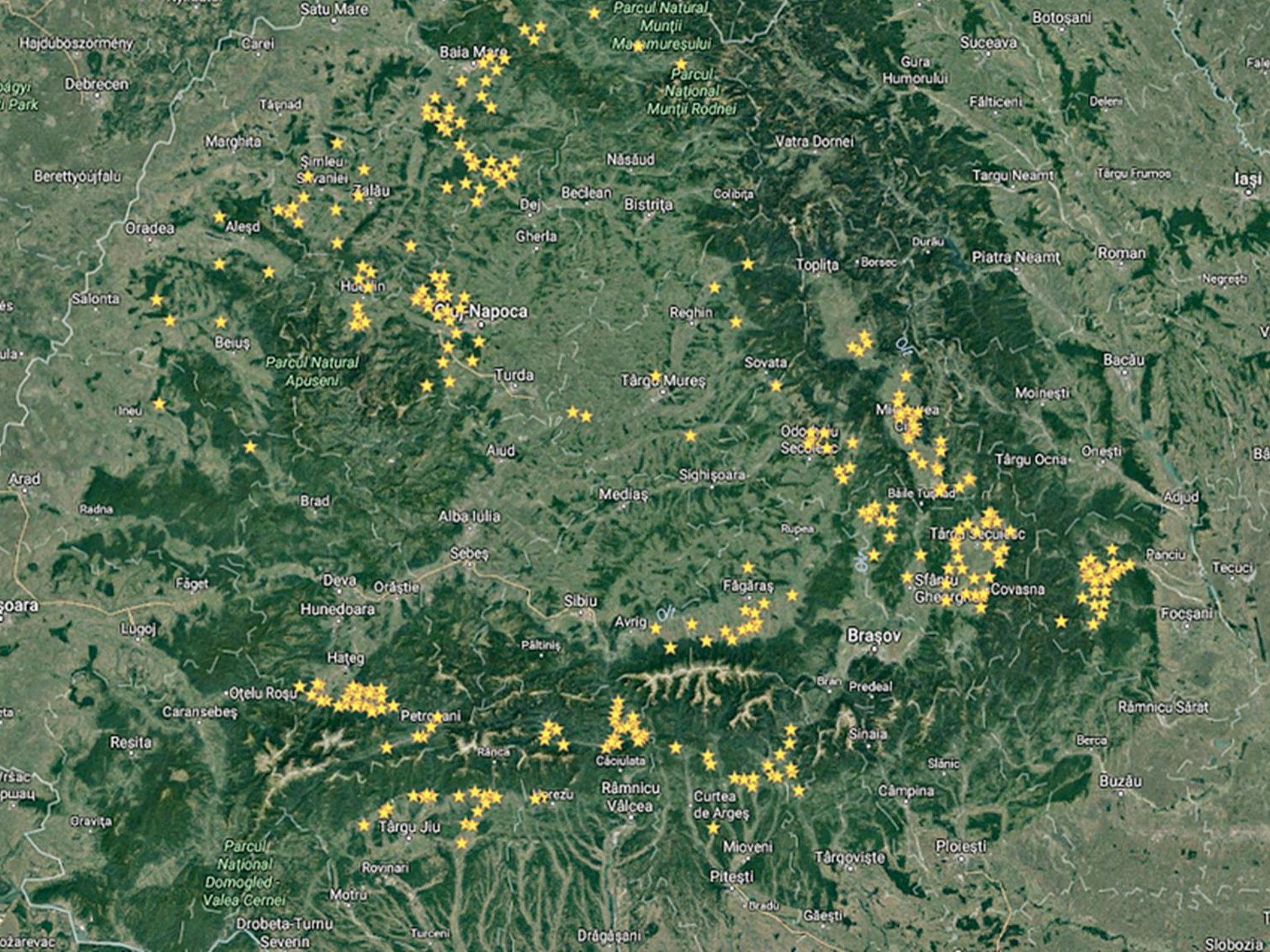


- ✓ High number of commons spread across the Carpathian Mountain
- ✓ Commons are woodlands and grasslands owned and governed mostly by communities, which can be territorial villages, kinship-groups or groups of descendants.
- ✓ The most notable difference is between 1) place-based systems of equal rights and 2) inheritance-based systems of unequal rights.
- ✓ As a category of property regime are called in Romania 'traditional or historical associative forms', referred to in local language mainly as obște (pl. obști), composesorat (pl. composesorate) and asociație urbarială (pl. asociații urbariale).
- ✓ From a legal point of view, they are considered land in private property of 'juridical persons'.

What did our project do?



- ✓ The extensive research of contemporary Romanian land commons is unprecedented.
- ✓ Data collected in the period 2015-2017
- ✓ Database including 329 surveyed cases of commons
- ✓ 20% of the existing number of commons in Romania
- ✓ Nearly 1/2 of the forests owned by the commons
- ✓ Nearly 1/3 of the surface of pasture owned.



Methods

1. Social Mapping of the Romanian Commons

- ✓ Interviews with commons representatives – survey of 330 commons
- ✓ The project aimed at describing the large variety of commons to be found across the Romanian Carpathians, investigating the following dimensions:
 - Normative frameworks: ways of regulation of the commons, state laws and institutions, customary rules, and instruments of organizing access, monitoring and management
 - Local practices: associated with new forms of governance and use of the commons
 - Relation to the environment; practices of logging, pasturing, narratives of forests and pastures

Methods

2. Multi-sited Ethnography / Understanding the relation between commons and local livelihoods

- ✓ Case-studies in selected locations: counties Gorj, Vâlcea, Argeş, Maramureş, Harghita, Vrancea
- ✓ In each location in-depth interviews with over 20 commons members, key actors and commoners.

3. Documents Analysis / Archival research

- ✓ collecting and analyzing forestry maps, cadastral maps, members registers, budgets, regulatory statutes
- ✓ archival research in the National State Archives of Hunedoara county

4. Photographic Recording / Image Archive of the Commons

Numerical estimates

- ✓ more than 1500 commons
- ✓ more than 400.000 right holders / commoners
- ✓ woodland surface app. 870.000 ha
- ✓ 14% of the forested area of Romania governed in commons regime
- ✓ 24% of the privately owned woodlands
- ✓ grazeland surface estimated app. 300.000 ha

*rough estimates from corroborating our results with partial official data

Benefits from the commons



- ✓ Primary uses of the commons are: firewood, grazing and liquid proceeds from commercial leases and enterprises.
- ✓ In some areas, individual revenues and cash dividends derived from commercial logging and subsidies.
- ✓ Commoners can also graze animals for free and receive a quota of firewood at half price.
- ✓ In many cases, the commons provide collective community welfare, especially so in the Eastern area of Vrancea, and the eastern Transylvanian counties (Harghita and Covasna).
- ✓ Traditionally in these areas, the commons (composesorate in Harghita county) sponsor local groups of musicians, football teams and other youth activities.

Governance

- ✓ The commoners elect a commons council (consiliu), usually formed of five members, and, among the members of the council, a president.
- ✓ They also elect an auditing committee (comisia de cenzori), formed of three members.
- ✓ The normative framework is provided by the local bylaws, a document containing rules and regulations legally approved and upheld.
- ✓ Most decisions regarding the commons are expected to be taken by the assembly of commoners.

Institutional hosts



- ✓ Solidarity Lab, Bucharest (from 2018)
- ✓ Institute of Sociology, Romanian Academy, Bucharest (2015-2017)
- ✓ IRITHESys, Humboldt University, Berlin (2015-2016)
- ✓ Rachel Carson Center, LMU, Munich (2017-2019)
- ✓ Financing (2015-2017): Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation, CNCS-UEFISCDI, Project number PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-2865

Recent publications (excerpt)



- ✓ 2019, Vasile M., [The enlivenment of institutions: Emotional work and the emergence of contemporary land commons in the Carpathian Mountains](#), special issue on Institutional Work, eds. Raoul Beunen and James Patterson, Journal of Environmental Planning and Management 62(1)
- ✓ 2018, Vasile M., [Formalizing commons, registering rights: The making of the forest and pasture commons in the Romanian Carpathians from the 19th century to post-socialism](#). International Journal of the Commons. 12(1), pp.170–201. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.18352/ijc.805>
- ✓ 2018, Vasile M., [The vulnerable bison: Practices and meanings of rewilding in the Romanian Carpathians](#), Conservation and Society 16(3), PP. 217-231. DOI: 10.4103/cs.cs_17_113
- ✓ 2018, Opincaru I., [Elements of the institutionalization process of the forest and pasture commons in Romania as particular forms of social economy](#), 3rd EMES-Polanyi International Seminar Selected Papers



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For more information please visit our website

<https://romaniacommons.wixsite.com/project>

Thank You!

**Looking forward to
hear your questions!**