

CHAPTER 9

Contemporary Transformation of the Pastoral System in the Romanian Carpathian

A Case Study from Maramures Region

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Introduction

Traditional rural households in Romania used to be self-sufficient, until the end of World War II, when Romanian peasants relied mostly on the products of their own household, rather than on products they could buy. This was mostly a result of traditional animal husbandry, which provided the families with all the necessary products of animal origin (milk, cheese, wool, meat) that a household would need for its survival and development (Netting 1993). In the mountain regions of the Carpathian Mountains, cattle and sheep breeding is still quite common, decisively influencing the socioeconomic and cultural system of local cultures. When agriculture and small-scale animal husbandry were the main occupations of the inhabitants of these regions (until the mid-twentieth century), their life revolved around the needs of the animals which supported their livelihoods. For example, in some areas, livestock was of such importance that new families would build a barn first and their house second (information from Şurdeşti village, Maramureş region, northern Romania, 2013).

Moreover, pastoral calendars are of great importance in the communities, the year being divided according to the main work that must be done for taking care of the livestock. A dominant activity is finding good pastures for the animals (sheep, goats, but in some cases also cattle), activity reflected in four different types of pastoral practices, as framed by the ethnographer R. Vuia (1964). The first type is the local agricultural pastoralism, which was the most widespread pastoral practice not

only in Romania but all over the Carpathians and the Balkan area (Vuia 1980). It is considered one of the most ancient forms of pastoralism because it implies year-round grazing on the village territory and manuring the fields with the help of the animals (Vuia 1980). Secondly, there is agricultural pastoralism with the sheepfold in the mountain pastures during summer. Thirdly, there is the pastoral practice that entails year-round pendulation (Romanian term for short-distance transhumance) between village territory and mountain pastures: during summer, grazing is done on mountain pastures; during autumn, winter, and spring grazing is done on the meadows situated within village territory. The fourth practice is the long-distance transhumance, when sheep flocks are travelling long distances starting in autumn to reach the winter pastures in the lowlands.

In the present study, we focus on the changes that occurred in the pastoral system in northern Romania (Maramureş region), where a mixed type of pastoral practice has been developing in the last twenty to thirty years, fusing the first and second types of pastoralism described by R. Vuia, due to socioeconomic and political changes. Among the drivers that generate change in the pastoral system all over the world, uncertainty (environment and resource uncertainty, economic uncertainty, and administration uncertainty, see Nori and Scoones 2019) is considered an element of great importance to livestock management. Most of it is also true in our case study, based on an interdisciplinary approach, using social science and natural science methodologies, and conducted in three villages (Botiza, Ieud, and Şurdeşti, in the Maramureş region of Romania), in the past sixteen years. Nonetheless, most transformations are mainly linked to social changes—the focus of our study—such as the massive emigration of locals to temporary or permanent jobs in agriculture in Western Europe, along with the aging population.

A Short History of Pastoral Practices in Maramureş

Maramureş is a historical and cultural region in northern Transylvania (Romania), situated in the largest depression of the Eastern Carpathians; until the year 1918, it also covered some parts of Zakarpatia area, situated in Ukraine today. This chapter is focused on Maramureş, a region situated in Romania, surrounded by mountains and hills on all sides, many of the mountain peaks are above two thousand meters, the highest being Pietrosul Rodnei (2,303 m); the lowest altitude is found near the Tisa River (214 m). The climate is temperate continental, with excessive precipitation and harsh, long winters. Maramureş is rich in forests, almost 60 percent of

its area covered by broadleaf and coniferous forests. The lush grasslands with remarkable biodiversity (see Johansen et al. 2019; Wehn et al. 2019; Dahlström, Iuga, and Lennartsson 2013) are found here, spread all over the landscape, and are proof of the region's rich heritage in animal breeding and agriculture. Human presence in this region dates back to the Neolithic period (Popa 1997), being known that the communities of that time relied mostly on agriculture and animal breeding; hunting, fishing, and fruit gathering were less important. Sheep and goat breeders have been present here since Antiquity, starting with the Dacian culture, also found on the territory of Maramureș. Ancient sources even mention Dacians being skilled in fodder production and keeping their animals in stables during wintertime (Crișan 2007). Yet, the first documents that name the historical region of Maramureș and its sociopolitical organization are from the thirteenth century, depicting an independent voivodeship, inhabited mostly by small Romanian nobility (see Popa 1997).

The fourteenth-century documents related to the political and economic life of Maramureș mention several times the existence of arable fields, forests, rivers, hay meadows, enclosed meadows, sheepfolds, pastures, and mountain pastures used for grazing, among other geographic and cultural units (Mihaly 2009). For example, Ieud village is mentioned in the year 1435 by a document that uses as landmarks nine sheepfolds spread over a territory of 130 km², representing the border of the village, among other natural elements as rivers and mountain peaks. According to Popa (1997), the number of sheep in a single village during this medieval time could be around two to three thousand animals. The same fourteenth-century documents, when mentioning the possessions of certain villages, use specific phrases like *descensum in alpibus* (descent in the alps/mountains), *descensum vel caulam ovium* (descent or sheep fold) or *loci estivales* (places for spending the summer) (Mihaly 2009). This terminology is a certain proof that, back then, the pendulation of sheep flocks for summer grazing in the mountains or outside the village territory was already common. This is evidence that, in the fourteenth century, the system of pastoral pendulation ("short-distance transhumance") was already in use in the region, at least for sheep husbandry.

This system of "short-distance transhumance" is more accurately described in seventeenth-century documents, which mention many more mountains with high alpine pastures grazed by sheep flocks during summer. An interesting social phenomenon involving the minor Romanian noblemen was happening then. The number of their flocks increased and were used to compensate for the compulsory military conscription (see Ardelean 2012). Furthermore, documents mention several conflicts and trials with the locals in the neighboring areas (mainly the Bistrița-Năsăud

region), on the rights to use the alpine pastures, conflicts that had a late reconciliation in the mid-nineteenth century (Ardelean 2012).

A drastic change occurred in the year 1919, after the union of Transylvania and almost half of Maramureş (up to the Tisa River, which served as the border with Czechoslovakia at that time, see Filipaşcu 1940) with Romania (1 December 1918), when more than a hundred mountains used for summer grazing in northern part of historical Maramureş region were no longer available. Therefore, the number of flocks and herds decreased considerably in number (Papahagi 1925).

A turning point in local history is the period of time between 1949 and 1962, when forced collectivization took place in this region (see Dobeş and Bârlea 2004). At that time, only some of the villages were collectivized, as a form of punishment for the peasant's rebellions against the communist regime and their refusal to renounce Greek-Catholic faith (Kligman and Verdery 2015). In Ieud, the first village to be collectivized in this region, in 1950, this process deeply affected the land use and the proprietary rights and land ownership but not the pastoral system, which remained more or less the same. During collectivization, all arable fields around the village and the forests were seized. The locals remained with little arable fields on steep hills and hay meadows. Nevertheless, the pastoral use of the landscape was maintained in the same way as before the creation of collective farms. The collective farm had its own sheep and cattle with hired shepherds from the community. Before the celebration of the Pentecost, both the flocks of the community and the flocks of the collective farm would go on pendulation outside the village territory to alpine and subalpine pastures of Maramureş and Rodna Mountains (Ivaşcu and Rákosy 2017). Botiza and Şurdeşti villages were not collectivized, thus the land use remained pretty much the same as before 1949. In these two villages, peasants were forced to provide different quotas of all their products (meat, eggs, milk, wool, agricultural products such as cereals, fruits, and so on). The quotas were meant to pay Romania's war debt to the Soviet Union and were established in accordance with their social status (those peasants considered wealthier, because they owned more land, had higher quotas to pay).

Traditional Pastoral System in Maramureş

It should be mentioned that in Romanian scientific literature, both ethnographic and geographic, the term "pendulation" is used to describe short-distance transhumant pastoralism. This activity implies that animals, cattle and sheep, graze during the summer on mountain pastures and then, in autumn, return to the village territory, where they graze in

arable fields, meadows, pastures, and in some areas, even forests, depending on the ecological conditions and social organization of each village. During winter, all animals are kept either in barns, or enclosed under open sky, as the local sheep breed, called *țurcana*, is resistant to the cold climate of Maramureș. Altogether, the most important fodder for winter is hay, the locals in this region hold considerable and extremely detailed traditional ecological knowledge about this resource (Ivașcu, Öllerer, and Rákósy 2016; Iuga 2016). Additionally, fodder, like leaves from pollarded broad-leaved trees or spruce branches were quite common in the past, especially for feeding sheep, a frequent practice that was encountered all over Romania (see Hartel, Craioveanu, and Réti 2016).

Long-distance transhumance or simply “transhumant pastoralism” as it is called in scientific literature about Romania (Huband, McCracken, and Mertens 2010; Herseni 1941; Vuia 1964, 1980) is more complex. Similar to distance transhumance, this form of pastoralism entails the movement of large flocks of sheep for summer grazing in the mountains. The difference is that during autumn, shepherds and their flocks would travel to lowland pastures situated on the Danube Riverside, the Danube Delta, but also in the Tisza River plain and lowland Banat (see Vuia 1964; Constantinescu-Mircești 1976; Huband, McCracken, and Mertens 2010; Dragomir 2014). Once they arrived here, after traveling distances of about two to three hundred kilometers, they would spend the whole winter in these regions with milder climate and would reach the mountain pastures in spring.

One of the main differences between transhumance and pendulation is the year-round sheep-grazing (Vuia 1964) on grasslands or arable stubbles. It was a necessity due to the high numbers of animals (around one to two thousand in a single flock according to Constantinescu-Mircești 1976), which made it impossible to procure hay for so many animals for the whole winter. However, once they arrived in the lowlands, transhumant shepherds would also buy fodder from locals if the resources there were insufficient (Vuia 1964). It is also worth mentioning that in the case of transhumance, the flocks of sheep are usually owned by a small number of owners, sometimes it is only one owner. This form of pastoralism has developed mostly in southern Transylvania in the regions of Sibiu, Brașov, and Covasna. As a result, only the wealthier shepherds were practicing transhumance (see Huband, McCracken, and Mertens 2010). Its emergence is linked to the development of the wool industry in the Saxon cities of Sibiu (Hermannstadt) and Brașov (Kronstadt) in the fourteenth century. This is also the time when transhumant shepherds are mentioned in the Danube harbors and the ports of Dobrogea. The high demand of wool in the industry of these cities led to an increase in sheep numbers in the surrounding Romanian villages, beyond the carrying capacity of the grasslands available in this region (Huband, McCracken, and Mertens 2010).

In the Maramureş region, the long-distance transhumance was never practiced by the locals, there is no mention in the historical documents, nor is it a current practice. The most common pastoral system in the region is “the agricultural pastoralism with the sheepfold in the mountains” (Vuia 1964), also called “double cycling pastoral pendulation” (Idu 1999). This practice implies that shepherds will take the sheep and other animals (such as cows and horses) for summer grazing to the nearby mountains. Consequently, herds never leave the region of Maramureş or the territory of the villages during wintertime, as they did in transhumant pastoralism. There are some exceptions, as there are several medieval documents that speak briefly about the presence of shepherds from Maramureş in the Western Beskids Mountains, during summer (Filipaşcu 1980), but at the end of summer they would return home. Thus, although there are long distances involved (more than four hundred kilometers), this cannot be included in the long-distance transhumance practice, as winter was spent in the community of origin. Usually, the pendulation, common until very recently, involved small distances, around sixty to one hundred kilometers away, to Rodna or the Maramureş Mountains, although, before the year 1918 shepherds would take their flocks to the Eastern Beskids Mountains.

Pastoral Calendar in Maramureş

The calendar of the pastoral year in Maramureş is divided by local community according to the four seasons: *primăvăratul* (springtime herding), *văratul* (summertime herding or summer grazing), *tomnat* (autumntime herding), and *iernat* (wintertime herding). The English translation of these vernacular names is approximate, because in local speech their meaning is more complex, each of the names deriving from the Romanian name of the seasons (*primăvară*, spring; *vară*, summer; *toamnă*, autumn; *iarnă*, winter).

Although the chapter focuses on drivers of change, we consider that elaborating on the pastoral calendar and the activities for each stage will shed light on the transformations that have occurred lately.

The first quarter of the pastoral year, called *primăvărat*, begins when grass starts to grow, when, as the local beliefs say, “cuckoos start to sing” (end of March) (information from Ieud village, Maramureş, 2016), and lasts until late April, the reference date being the feast of St. George (23 April). Spring grazing is done only with sheep and goats. Cows are kept indoors during all this time and are fed with hay. Grazing happens on a lower scale (Figure 9.1), as each owner grazes its own land (usually former arable fields and hay meadows).



Figure 9.1. Spring grazing in the hay meadows situated in close proximity to the village, Șurdești, 2012. © Anamaria Iuga

It is of great importance to mention that in the villages targeted by our study, the landscape is divided by the community, either by name or by practice, into a number of grazing areas (see Dahlström et al. 2013; Ivașcu and Rákósy 2017). There are three essential borders, marked by several geographic elements (roads, hills, ridges, etc.), demarcating a lower (first) level between 300–650 m in altitude (in Ieud). It is the land situated close to the households and the village, generally used for crops, as it is the best land in the village for agriculture (though lately transformed into hay meadows). Then, a middle (second) level that delimitates the land from the middle part of village land, situated at an altitude of 650–1,000 m (in Ieud), with arable fields (terraced slopes) and hay meadows and secondary forests; and an upper (third) level, 1,000–1,200 m (in Ieud), with permanent semi-natural grasslands used as hay meadows, or currently as pastures and beech and spruce forests. In Ieud, these three divisions bear the name *mejde* (border) (see Ivașcu and Rákósy 2017) and are known as *mejdele de jos* (lower border), *mejdele de mijloc* (middle border), and *mejdele de sus* (upper border). In the other two villages, Botiza and Șurdești, there is no special name for these three different levels, villagers name the landscape with the term *țarină* (land), but use them differently in practice.

In early spring, grazing is done on fields and meadows situated on the first level, mainly the ones from the vicinity of the household, and nearby hilly areas.

After 23 April, grazing will take place on the second border. Animals will spend about four weeks here, attended by their owners. Meanwhile, arrangements are being made for the next step, which means gathering the animals in a large flock, managed, and protected by the shepherds on the high-altitude mountain pastures. The animals will be at a *stâna* (sheepfold) all through the summer, led by a *gazda de stână* or *vătaf* (sheepfold leader), until 8 November, when people celebrate the holiday of *Sânmedru Vechi* (Old Saint Demetrius, calculated according to the Julian calendar). The sheepfold leader will be responsible for the management of the whole sheepfold: coordinating the movement of flocks, animal healthcare, and also milk, cheese, and *urda* (produced from whey, similar to the Italian ricotta) production and redistribution to each animal owner.

Before taking the animals to the alpine pastures, their owners must provide for animal fodder from grazing their own pastures (rent them if necessary) or grazing their own hay meadows. Then, they organize the gathering of the animals, together with the milk measurement custom. This custom takes place at the end of spring, after the first two days of grazing on summer pastures. Over the summer, each owner will receive, periodically, cheese and milk, according to the agreement during milk measurement. It must be highlighted that the production of milk and cheese always takes place at the summer farms.

Milk measurement, which in Şurdeşti is called *Sâmbra oilor* (meaning “gathering of the sheep”), in Botiza and Ieud, *Ruptul sterpelor* (meaning “separation of the barren sheep”), is an important event of the pastoral year. The three villages are situated at various altitudes, thus, the milk measurement feast takes place at different times of the year, depending on weather conditions: in Şurdeşti, it is held at the beginning of May, mainly in the first week of the month; in Botiza, it is held in mid-May (around 12–15 May) and, in Ieud, in the second half of May (around 18–27 May). The feast implies that each owner is to milk their animals (sheep and goats, and in Ieud and Botiza also cows) and, according to the amount of milk collected, the amount of cheese that they receive for the whole summer. The milk is measured according to an ancient measurement unit, the *font* (½ liter). In Şurdeşti, in the summertime, owners receive seventy halves (thirty-five liters) of raw milk for each half liter of milk they are milking at the feast, and one member of their family will turn it into cheese when it is their turn to go for a few days to the mountain farm. In Botiza and Ieud, the owners will receive only the cheese (twelve kilograms of cheese for one liter of sheep milk, or eight kilograms of cheese for one liter of cow milk in Botiza; and in Ieud, they receive ten kilograms of cheese for one liter of sheep milk).

The feast is accompanied by several ritual gestures meant to protect the animals and the shepherds. For example, in Ieud and Botiza a fir tree (*Abies alba*) is brought from the forest with its branches shaped as a cross (called in Ieud “the cross of the fir tree”). It is then placed in the front opening of the corrals (which has been decorated with flowers by young girls only). The sheep will go through this opening when milking begins. In Ieud, the branches of the fir tree are decorated with specific garden flowers (such as the peony, which is also called locally “the flower of the shepherd”) and two ritual loaves of bread, which are meant to provide prosperity for the sheepfold. The Lord’s Prayer is said before starting to milk. Then, the leader of the shepherds would throw salt above the corralled sheep (the role of the gesture being to protect the udder from injuries and infections). Another important gesture is to thrust an axe in the ground in front of the place where the sheep are milked, to protect the animals from being struck by lightning (in the village of Ieud). To make sure that the sheepfold is protected, the local priest is invited to bless the sheep and shepherds. If the sheepfold is situated too far from the village, holy water is sprinkled by the leader of the shepherds over the sheep before going to graze but after milking, a gesture that would ensure prosperity and protection. In Ieud, before grazing, the owner of the summer farm plays a natural trumpet (a straight tube without valves, originally made of wood, but nowadays made of brass—see Iosif 2016) (Figure 9.2), announcing the



Figure 9.2. Before the sheep leave for grazing, the shepherds’ leader plays the natural trumpet, Ieud, 2016. © Anamaria Iuga

end of the milk measurement. The shepherds' leader plays the trumpet also before this custom begins, but during the custom, it is forbidden to play any instrument or even to whistle. After milk measurement, when all owners know how much cheese or milk they get for the summer, a large feast takes place, where main courses are especially cooked: a specific lamb soup prepared with wild thyme (*Thymus* sp.) and a special type of polenta.

After the milk measurement feast, the *vărat* (summertime grazing) begins and the animal flocks go to the mountains, to the alpine pastures. The sheep from Botiza graze on alpine pastures close to Vişeu and Borşa (two cities located 40–52 km northeast; the sheep and cattle from Ieud also spend the summer in Maramureş Mountains and in Rodna Mountains (40–60 km away) and the sheep from Şurdeşti graze on the mountain pastures of Gutâi, situated around 13 km up north from the village. During the seventeenth century, the noblemen in Ieud owned seven peaks in Rodna Mountains used for summer graze by the whole community. Between World War I and World War II, the community owned two peaks in the Maramureş range (Ştevioara Mică and Ştevioara Mare), but the property rights and grazing rights have changed in the last centuries due to various socioeconomic factors, thus, some of these mountains are not used for grazing anymore.

There is a quite precise grazing calendar followed by sheep owners. In Şurdeşti, the flocks go to the mountains on 21 May, the feast of St. Constantine and Helen, a feast that has become a landmark of the pastoral calendar. In Botiza, they go higher to the mountains, at the end of May. In Ieud, the system is more complex, due to the division of the village territory in three almost-equal bioeconomic zones, covering an area of 78 km². Thus, animals graze for four weeks on the second level and two more weeks on the third level. Also, flocks go to the mountains at the beginning or mid-June, before Pentecost. Once the mountains are reached, after a trip of twelve or twenty-four hours, summer grazing begins. Sheep are separated here: milking sheep, together with goats, graze the best grasslands; barren sheep, along with lambs and rams graze on other areas. Cows are also brought on these alpine grasslands (in Botiza and Ieud, but not in Şurdeşti), being watched by a separate herder. Cow's milk is mixed with sheep's and goats' for producing cheese and other products. Oxen and horses could also be brought after ploughing; they may remain in the mountains until the feast of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist (29 August), when they are brought back to the village, for agricultural works (for hay transportation mostly, but also for crop harvesting). Cows are also brought back to the village for this feast and are kept on the village common pastures (Botiza), or already indoors (Şurdeşti), grazing only around the household. Individual herders watch every flock (sheep, barren sheep

along with lambs and rams, cows, oxen, and horses in the past) during their grazing in the mountain and alpine pastures. Meanwhile, back in the village, farmers harvest hay from the meadows and crops from the fields preparing for the return of the animals.

The end of summer grazing for sheep and goats is marked by the feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross (14 September), when sheep and goats, together with cattle are brought back to the village territory. Now, the third phase begins, the *tomnat* (autumn herding), with grazing starting from the upper level of the village and moving downwards. In the meantime, this area is already mown, and haystacks are built. Sheep flocks slowly descend through meadows to arable fields, already stubble land when the animals arrive. All the plots in the village territory are communally grazed by the shepherds until 7 November, just before the feast of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel (8 November) or, as mentioned before, according to the “old” Julian calendar, the feast of St. Demetrius. It is the time when shepherds receive their payment from their leader and all the animals return to their owners. However, during this period of time, grazing continues on an individual basis until the fall of the first snow. Each farmer takes their animals to graze within the village territory where they have most of their land. Otherwise, sheep would be taken close to the household, to prepare for the winter (*iernat*) phase. If farmers choose to keep their sheep in the fields during winter, they are to provide hay which is stored in temporary buildings scattered around the landscape, called *colibe* (huts) or *case în câmp* (houses in the field) (Figure 9.3), larger permanent constructions for hay and stables.

During the winter phase, arable fields and hay meadows are manured with the help of livestock. Sheep are enclosed in corrals overnight, and



Figure 9.3. *Casă în câmp* (house in the fields) with *șopru* for hay storage and stables for cows. Sheep are kept under open sky and are moved on the terrain to improve the vegetation, Ieud, 2015. © Cosmin Marius Ivascu

by moving the corrals from one place to another on their properties, the land is manured and prepared for cultivation the next spring. This type of manuring takes place also in spring, when sheep are grazing and are kept overnight outdoors, moving from one field to another. To accomplish this task, locals use movable huts. People with less animals used to pay other villagers who had enough animals to accomplish this task. This is a remnant practice, more intensive in the past, and, in Ieud, as proof of this practice, the terraced slopes used for cultivation, apart from being present all over the lower level of the village, can still be seen at altitudes of one thousand meters.

To increase the hay and crop productivity of these hills, locals fertilized them with the help of sheep kept in corrals during autumn and winter. This is also one of the reasons why this form of pastoralism is also called “agricultural pastoralism with sheepfold in the mountains” (Vuia 1964), agriculture and animal breeding being interlinked and highly dependent on each other.

Nowadays, during the winter phase, most people keep their animals indoors, feeding them with hay, either within their household or in scattered temporary constructions (*colibe*—huts) and barns all over the village territory. Sheep are also kept under the open sky, although they are fenced. Regarding the cattle, these are kept inside barns in the winter, being fed with hay, or second time cut grass, or alfalfa, clover, and also grains. In winter or early spring, the manure they produce is still taken to the fields, mainly on the cultivated plots, to increase productivity.

From the presentation of the pastoral year in the region of Maramureş we can clearly see the interdependence of agricultural activities and pastoral ones and we can better understand how most of the traditional rural households were self-sufficient. Nowadays, although the pastoral practices have remained pretty much the same, the scale at which they are practiced has changed due to several drivers (economic, social, but also political). Along with that, the land-use has also changed. In the following, we present the drivers of change that we encountered in the field and how they have transformed the countryside lifestyle.

Drivers of Change

Agricultural pastoralism with sheepfolds in the mountains was the most widespread practice twenty years ago in Maramureş, but it has been made vulnerable lately by a number of drivers that are urging change. The major change, though, was collectivization (1948–62). In Maramureş, collectivization was imposed in some villages such as Ieud, while in other

villages the inhabitants were supposed to provide quotas of their production (Botiza and Șurdești among them). This major change forced the peasants to increase their productivity by intensifying agricultural practices on the land they owned (reduced in size now in Ieud), in order to cover not only for their needs, but also for the state's requirements. For this reason, as resources were limited, many people in Maramureș, especially in collectivized villages, or people who owned small plots of land (in non-collectivized villages), found seasonal jobs outside their region, traveling to the southwestern part of Romania, where they were active in agriculture labor. In the 1980s, people migrated seasonally from Ieud and Botiza to the Banat region (southwestern Romania), but not from Șurdești, where villagers worked at the nearby mining industry in Cavnic town. Migrants returned home either with the money earned, that were used to build a new house, or with products (wheat, corn, rye, etc.), that catered to their household needs.

Due to the fact that people in Maramureș had been used to obtaining necessary cereals or corn from other Romanian regions, the way they worked their land changed after the fall of the Communist regime (December 1989). At the beginning of the 1990s, the land collectivized in Ieud was already requested by the rightful owners. Apparently, there were no drastic changes, as people returned to the lifestyle they had known before Communism; yet, people continued to go to Banat for seasonal work. The generation that had to deal with the restraints of collectivization had gotten old and a new generation of peasants adjusted their work strategies to other rules, migration included. As a result, land-use underwent several transformations: cropland surface was diminished, being transformed into hay meadows, or cultivated with alfalfa or clover. For instance, people had already given up cultivating wheat at the beginning of 1990s, since Maramureș is a hilly region, and the cereals cultivated here were local varieties of wheat, well-adapted to the cold climate and the poor soil composition, but with lower productivity. Over the next two decades (2000–20), the villagers started cultivating cereals exclusively as animal food (rye, oats, triticale, which is a hybrid of wheat and rye), but not on large parcels, as they could always buy more at local markets. In every village there is a local market on a different day of the week, and at the market there are cereal traders from regions such as Satu-Mare or Banat.

Accordingly, the use of parcels situated in different bioeconomic zones changed (see Dahlström et al. 2013) and the dominant transformation concerns the descent of the hay-meadows from the areas situated further away from the village (the third border in Ieud, or the second in Botiza and Șurdești). As a result, these remote hay meadows that used to be grazed in spring and autumn and mown in August are now abandoned or mainly

used as pastures. Consequently, as pastures are available that close to the village, there are some summer farms that do not take the animals up to the mountains, instead they remain to graze on the territory of the village. They usually pay the owners of the land they graze on in animal products, mainly cheese, still very much appreciated in the region. In 2010, there was already a summer farm in Şurdeşti and two summer farms in Botiza that grazed only on the territory of the village, on the remote former hay meadows. Another consequence of this new practice is the abandonment of the alpine pastures situated in the mountains each community owns. In 2010, in Şurdeşti, villagers mentioned the abandonment of the pastures situated in Gutâi Mountains (around twenty kilometers away from the village, at an altitude of 850–1200 m). In the same year, in Botiza and Ieud, the alpine pastures of Maramureş and Rodnei mountains (thirty-four to sixty kilometers away from the village) were abandoned, because locals could reach them only by walking for one day and one night, or by transporting the sheep in a truck, activity that was deemed too expensive and complicated for the sheep owners, thus, they decided to remain on the village territory.

Another important driver of change is the decrease in the number of animals after the fall of Communism: all over Romania, the number of sheep and goats dropped by 38 percent in twenty-three years, between 1990 and 2013 (Popovici, Bălţeanu, and Kucsicsa 2016). In 2014, in Şurdeşti, there were 498 cattle, and 1,340 sheep and goats (ISUMM 2016); in 2018, there were 401 cattle and 1,372 sheep and goats, according to the data provided by the town hall, and divided into four summer farms. People remember that before 1989 there were more than ten summer farms in the village, and around 3,000 sheep. In 2014 (ISUMM 2016), in Botiza, there were 818 cows and 1,171 sheep and goats, in five summer farms, although people remember that before 1989 there used to be up to nine summer farms, thus, a higher number of animals. The decrease in the number of animals is obvious in Ieud: in 1879 there were 12,000 sheep (Latiş 1993), while in the year 2014, there were only 2,541 sheep and 1,170 cows (ISUMM 2016). This change has two main causes. First, there is the circular migration (see Sandu 2000) to Europe, a repetitive and seasonal migration that has intensified in the last 20 years. Mostly young people leave their birth places to work abroad, leaving behind their children, and also the elderly population to take care of the household, including the animals. This aspect brings us to the second cause, the aging of the local population. Consequently, due to the lack of human resources, villagers started to sell their animals, especially their sheep, which require constant handling by shepherds (information from Şurdeşti village, 2010). Sheep are sold also because wool is no longer sought for, synthetic fibres being easier to purchase and process.

It must be mentioned that, although the number of animals has been constantly decreasing since 1990, there is another trend emerging within the communities living here. Since 2007, due to the subsidies given by the Romanian APIA (Agency for Payments and Interventions in Agriculture), many local animal breeders have abandoned sheep breeding and replaced them with two to five cows. This trend was noticed also in the neighboring mountain regions of Bucovina and Bistrița-Năsăud. The CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) payments from the European Union have had a considerable role in the change of animal husbandry type. This was motivated by several reasons. The first reason is that cows require fewer operating costs than sheep, and that the subsidies are higher for these animals, thus, being more profitable. Another reason is the lack of shepherds: the professional shepherds in these mountain regions complain about finding seasonal shepherds to help them herd sheep. It is getting harder and harder, as most of the young shepherds prefer to migrate to other EU countries, for seasonal work that provide more income. As shepherding activities also face the lack of workforce, the animals' owners themselves usually look after the sheep, taking turns, and involving only their family members.

In all three villages mentioned, the decrease in the number of animals is linked to workforce migration to the EU and led to the dissolution of centuries-old partition of the landscape for agricultural and pastoral purposes. The first outcome is the abandonment of summer grazing on alpine pastures situated in the high mountains of Gutâi, Maramureș and Rodna. Pendulation to these areas became unprofitable, since many former meadows in the upper level of the village could be used only for this purpose, instead of being abandoned. Nowadays, after the milk measurement, cattle and sheep flocks are moved to the next section of the landscape, where they spend the whole summer, until the feast of The Elevation of the Holy Cross (14 September). After this holiday, flocks start descending to the lower sections of the village, grazing the hay meadows that are already mown, some even a second time. Horses are usually brought for summer grazing in the upper section of the village, when the work they are needed for is done for a while. Yet, there is a significant difference: on the alpine pastures the herd of horses used to be watched by a herder (called *stăvari*), while nowadays they are just brought there and left by themselves on the grasslands, gathering in semi-wild herds that move around freely. The horses' owners come and take them home whenever they have some work to do or take them home for winter, in August.

As mentioned earlier, many villagers completely abandoned sheep breeding and only some farmers are now engaged in this activity. As a result, the collective role of pastoral practice started to diminish, changing

it into an individual activity, which reshapes the land use. Some of the animal breeders started buying more land in the first division or on the second level of the village, and completely abandoned moving their animals up to the third level of the village (above one thousand meters) during the summer. To ensure the right amount of land for summer grazing compared to the number of animals, shepherds usually rent from other villagers their former hay meadows for this purpose. In the year 2018, in Ieud, there were at least two mixed cattle and sheep pens—each having more than one thousand sheep—that have grazing animals on this third level. However, there was also a cattle herd summer grazing on the first level (400–600 m), and large sheepfolds on the second one (650–1,000 m).

The fact that peasants specialize in animal breeding, and that the number of families having a few sheep decreased, have brought change to local rituals, namely the milk measurement feast. If there is only one owner of the sheepfold, there is no need to hold the feast, as there is no point in measuring milk and dividing it among the owners. Thus, there are less and less summer farms where this feast is held; it is losing its meaning. Another mutation is the nostalgic approach of the former sheep owners to this feast: as they have no sheep, they do not have any reason to participate in the milk measurement feast; yet, some of them attend local feasts where friends or family members have sheep, just to take part in the spring ritual and to rejoice with their close ones.

An additional change brought to the milk measurement feast is its celebration together with another ritual performed in the past, right before the departure to the alpine pastures. When the livestock and the shepherds passed through the village on their way to the mountains, the priest would perform a special service (called *şfeştanie*), blessing the animals and the herders. The priest is currently invited to the summer farm to perform this service, right after the milk measurement, on the same day.

The changes that have occurred in the past twenty to thirty years are socially driven but have economic and local land-management repercussions. It proves that all human activities are connected and interdependent. Thus, any small change leads to an adjustment in the whole local management system. All alterations are proof of the changing world we are living in, with new sociocultural and economic patterns and values. Maramureş is one of the few places where small-scale agriculture and animal husbandry is still in practice, defining the lives of the locals, although transformations are more intense and frequent than in the nineteenth or the twentieth century. In a sense, the communities in this region, as much as they are bound to and value tradition, are equally eager to change and to embrace all that is new (lifestyle, values, constructions, mechanization,

subsidies, and so on). Pastoral practices are but a reflection of the important changes occurring right now.

Conclusion

Among different drivers of change, migration is the most important one, especially migration to Western Europe, an activity with a major impact on the historical herding practices of Maramureș. The result is a rapid change within the structure of the community, which is also reflected by the pastoral practices (organization of movements and specific pastoral customs). The collective role of traditional pastoral practices specific to this region is starting to fade, since decreasing livestock means a small number of locals continue to specialize in this activity. One of the results following all these socioeconomic changes is the increasing number of grasslands (former arable fields) situated now in the vicinity of the village. Thus, mountain hay meadows within the village territory are nowadays used almost exclusively as permanent pastures.

From the pendulation pastoral system, the current pastoral practices are turning more and more into a local agricultural system, where most of the sheep are not moving outside the village territory. Actually, this is the resilient response of the local community to the imminently changing social and natural environment; it is a practice perceived as the only option for using these resources and avoiding the succession of vegetation of these ecosystems, which will eventually turn into forests. However, the old way of managing the land and the old pastoral way of pendulation is inscribed in the landscape, as a place of memory for the local communities. Landscapes are temporal (Ingold 1993) and reflect, by the way they are shaped, the practices our ancestors used to carry them on. Signs of earlier grazing practices are, thus, reflected in the trees, in the biodiversity of the meadows, or in the shape of the hills. Even more, they are still part of the memory of the local population, and they should be valued as such, to remain a vivid component of the local history.

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