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Title: The re-creation of the forest and pasture commons in Romania – an analysis of the institutionalization process

In 1948, the Romanian communist leaders decided that all the resources above and under the ground would be transferred into the state’s ownership, including the large amounts of forest and pastures jointly owned by rural communities in the form of commons. Communities and individuals were thus deprived of their right to manage and own their properties. However, 52 years later and 11 years after the fall of the regime, the process of restitution of the collectively-owned forests was started and historical commons were re-established. My paper aims to grasp some elements of the commons’ re-institutionalization process, by exploring the re-creation of historical commons from three major perspectives: legal and policy framework available, the process of restitution of ownership rights and the relationship between the commons and the public bodies. For this purpose I will analyze 323 questionnaires applied to the presidents or other board members of commons all over Romania. Whenever the case will be to illustrate some specific situations, I will use examples of the commons from two counties that I study in depth: Covasna and Sâlaj. I argue that the restitution process was in no way easy or avoided by conflicts, misunderstandings or faults and reflected the scarce knowledge of the political actors, general public and other stakeholders in regard to the historical traits and characteristics of the commons as a form of joint-property. My paper comes to complement the work on this subject of several Romanian authors that documented the process (e.g Vasile & Mantescu, 2009, Vasile, 2018, Bouriaud, 2008) and contributes to the understanding of how policy, politics and public authority influence local practices in regard to forest management and livelihoods.