

MARTOR



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Introduction: A Place for Hay. Flexibility and Continuity in Hay Meadow Management



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Aware that in interpreting landscape, researches should be oriented both towards the present, but also towards the remains of the past in the landscape, be they natural or cultural, Tim Ingold has suggested the use of a “dwelling perspective”, which stresses that “the landscape is constituted as an enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves” (1993: 152). The present and past connection is even more obvious since, as established by historical ecologists such as Urban Emanuelsson (2009), human society has been actively contributing for centuries to the creation and shaping of the landscape, which, in turn, had a direct influence on the people and their ways of perceiving space. The “dwelling perspective” is therefore concerned with researching the immediate involvement in the landscape (Ingold 1993: 152), the everyday life, as a starting point. Daily activities have a direct influence on

the landscape, as humans have used local resources, have modified and controlled space in order to provide food. The “dwelling perspective” allows the researcher to see the landscape not only in its physicality, but its temporality as well, which can be traced in the tasks associated with the landscape. The “taskscape”, as defined by Tim Ingold in his seminal work, is a “pattern of activities” that can be traced into an array of features found in the landscape, including what we can hear (Ingold 1993: 162). As a result, human beings are seen as active agents and producers of change in a territory, by means of their activity and interactivity (Ingold 1993).

Transformations in the landscape do not only occur as a result of daily activities, but also as a result of particular events, which have a long-term effect. Such events are the technological or the social drivers that produce change in a more drastic way (Hartel *et al.* 2016), for instance, events like wars and migration, or industrialisation – e.g. the introducing of new technology





played an important part in configuring the landscape and environment, especially starting with the twentieth century, when the use of artificial fertilizers began to spread in Europe, announcing a new age (Emanuelsson 2009: 24; 33-34).

Space is also socially and culturally produced, as Christopher Tilley explains using a phenomenological lens to look at the landscape: space “is constituted by differential densities of human experience, attachment and involvement” (Tilley 1994: 11); it is experienced by people and cannot be understood in isolation from social practices. Even more so, exploiting local resources has socio-economic implications and moral consequences (Scott 1976) as well as cultural ones given that humans have created intangible heritage, namely the traditional or indigenous knowledge (Sillitoe 1998), or traditional ecological knowledge, as a direct result of their interactions with nature (Berkes *et al.* 1998; Berkes *et al.* 2000).

Landscape, as Laurence Le Dû-Blayo highlights, is more than a place of practice, “it is a laboratory for understanding the potential of the surrounding environment, the renewal of cultural identities, the spatial and temporal logics of each territory” (2011: 417), and, as a result, it becomes a topic for public policies. As part of the dynamic of contemporary history, landscapes in Europe have changed dramatically over the last century, due to socio-political and economic developments that led to a decreasing number of areas managed in a traditional manner, such as the highly biodiverse semi-natural hay meadows. As a direct result, researchers are more and more concerned with the topic of biodiversity loss associated with agricultural improvement of meadows management, and the interest for traditional knowledge has increased lately (see, for example, Biró *et al.* 2014; Knowles 2011; Dahlström *et al.* 2013; Gustavsson *et al.* 2007, etc.). An important number of works are concerned with the study of biodiversity in ecosystems, stressing the

necessity of conservation and restoration management of hay meadows (Eriksson *et al.* 2015; Smith *et al.* 1996; Smith *et al.* 2000, Molnár *et al.* 2008) in areas where traditional management practices have been lost, a phenomenon that Ian D. Rotherham called “cultural severance” (Rotherham 2008; Rotherham 2015).

As a result, European institutions are increasingly considering the heritage dimension of land management practices and policies. Ever since 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has insisted on the value of traditional knowledge, recognizing „the close and traditional dependence of many indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles on biological resources, and the desirability of sharing equitably benefits arising from the use of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices relevant to the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components” (CBD Preamble 1992: 1-2). Further, the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy claims a commitment to the preservation of biodiversity (Beaufoy 2014, Stroe 2015) and traditional landscapes and their custodians, i.e. peasants and farmers. Policies built around the concept of cultural landscape connect an increasing concern for biological diversity loss with the concern for the disruption and loss of local and traditional land management knowledge (McCarter and Gavin 2014, Varga and Molnár 2014). A new role, i.e. provider of ecosystem services, is assigned to the small-scale, unindustrialized land management actors, haymakers included. At the same time, technology makes its way into hay work and becomes visible in changes concerning both the nature of this work and the management of landscape: haystacks are replaced by round hay-bales; scythes are replaced by mechanical mowers; fodder crops (*alfalfa*) replace semi-natural hay meadows.

This challenges the use and transmission of local and traditional knowledge of making

hay. Nevertheless, a vulnerable category of stakeholders, the semi-subsistence farmers of postsocialist Europe and the inhabitants of highland areas, is still organising their hay work and hay meadow management according to traditional ecological knowledge (Babai and Molnár 2014; Roué and Molnár 2016): agricultural calendar, crop rotation, mowing and haymaking times and techniques, grazing and pasture management, husbandry and herding. Even as there is growing consensus in ecology scholarship on the importance of these traditional techniques in biodiversity management, as well as on their dependence on the survival of the small-scale (often subsistence and semi-subsistence) farm households, much of this knowledge is neither integrated nor legitimized by agri-environmental policies. The homogenizing pressure of EU policies paired with the flexible pressure of neoliberal market forces gave rise to a new, post-modern rurality, where processes of *de-peasantisation* and *re-peasantisation* run side by side as livelihood strategies.

The current number of *MARTOR* journal focuses on the social history of hay, collecting original contributions and multi-disciplinary approaches regarding the bio-cultural heritage of hay. The articles gathered in this issue explore the roles and different understandings attributed to traditional hay knowledge; the role of policies and public incentives in reshaping farmers' vision of nature and land management practices; the moralities behind hay production; biodiversity and hay production; but also how hay features in art and museology.

The volume is divided in six main sections: the first three consist of scientific articles, the fourth covers the presence of hay in art and museum displays, the fifth is dedicated to field-notes, and the last is dedicated to book reviews concerning related topics.

The first section, HISTORICAL INSIGHTS ON HAY, includes two articles that look into historical sources (documents,

travel accounts, statistics, oral history and so on) that mention the importance of hay and meadows in two different regions, one in Romania and the other in France.

Ion Blăjan's article relies on eighteenth-century historical records from old Wallachia, examining haymaking as feudal *corvée*, while also looking into the alternative practice of transhumance, as mentioned in the documents of the time.

In the next contribution, Chantal Dhennin-Lalart highlights the important part the First World War played in damaging the landscape and causing the abandonment of local practices along the German-British combat lines in France. The author focuses on the way the local population reengaged in agricultural activities after the war, with a special emphasis on semi-natural meadows and cultivated fodder, by presenting statistical data, oral history data, but also data coming from a literary work written by Léon Bocquet in 1924.

The second section of the issue, BIO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF HAY, includes four articles. These contributions address the contemporary cultural and biological heritage of hay meadows, but also Romanian hay-related practices.

The first two articles focus on the value of hay as biological heritage, analysing how the adaptations of local traditional practices to the challenges of institutional changes and globalization influence a region's biodiversity.

First in the second section, the article written by Cosmin Ivaşcu, Kinga Öllerer and László Rákósy looks into the role of traditional ecological knowledge in providing and preserving semi-natural ecosystems, as illustrated by the case of Ieud village, in Maramureş county. The article presents the hay classification system developed by the local community from their observations of nature and the landscape, organised according to criteria such as the dominant topography, land use types, slope exposure, dominant plant



species and structure.

Next, Tibor Hartel, Cristina Craioveanu and Kinga Olga Réti focus on the nutritional value of trees, presenting the practice – now largely abandoned – of using leaves as alternative fodder for livestock in several communities in Transylvania. Arguing that trees on pastures can simultaneously embody several important values, e.g. biodiversity, nutrient source, but also important aesthetic and cultural values, the authors stress the need for appropriate policies and local actions that will help reconnect human societies with trees.

The following two articles focus on the cultural aspect of hay, more precisely on how a hay culture determines the locals' activities and their way of perceiving space and time, including feast days.

Anamaria Iuga's article focuses on the intangible heritage associated to hay in the village of Șurdești, Maramureș county. She describes first the traditional ecological knowledge integrated in the activities of mowing and gathering the hay, but also the local traditions and beliefs regarding the feast days when doing hay work is forbidden. In order to examine the two dimensions of the local intangible heritage, the author stresses the dynamic and moral implications, but also the role that collective memory plays in the preservation of these two dimensions, and how they are experienced by the community.

Next, there is Ioana-Ruxandra Fruntelată, Elena Dudău and Cristian Mușă's case-study of current hay practices and knowledge in Starchiojd village, Prahova county. The article focuses on two related topics. First, it provides an account of "haylife", the term the authors use to describe how hay culture informs the organisation of space, time and social relations in this Romanian village. Second, the article discusses "haylore", i.e. the knowledge, beliefs and traditions associated to the haymaking.

The third section, DRIVERS OF CHANGE IN HAY CULTURE, presents

a few social, cultural and political causes that determine changes in land use, the abandonment of meadows or their recovery after long periods of abandonment, as well as causes of changes in land management, with visible effects on the local biodiversity. The common thread of these three contributions is their comparative dimension, which produces results with relevance to broader geographies.

Starting from a comparison between three rural communities in Europe: Folkare (Sweden, Darlana region), Uxeau (France, Burgundy region), and Botiza (Romania, Maramureș county), the contribution of Tommy Lennartsson, Anna Westin, Anamaria Iuga, Elizabeth Jones, Scott Madry, Seth Murray and Eva Gustavsson focuses on how hay practices are affected by the transition from subsistence agriculture to industrial agriculture. The article discusses hay production in relation to the entire production system, the local natural conditions and the variety of ways by which the practice was transformed over time. It also argues for the benefits of interdisciplinary approaches (anthropology, biology, historical ecology and geography) for a better understanding of the complex interaction between people, their social and economic context, and their environment.

The effects of another important transition are traced in the next paper: Monica Stroe and Bogdan Iancu draw attention to the impact of EU's CAP subsidies on semi-subsistence agriculture as it is visible in the hay economies of Botiza (Maramureș county) and Fundata (Brașov county). The authors identify and describe a few of the key elements which define "eligible hay" – hay whose production is regulated by the prescriptions of the Common Agricultural Policy framework in terms of types of practices, rhythm, instruments, etc. – and how the legitimacy and sustainability of certain traditional uses of land and natural resources are challenged by the hegemonic normative discourse of "ecosystem services" imposed through agri-



environmental subsidies.

Using structured indoor and field interviews and participant observation, Dániel Babai and Zsolt Molnár explore the traditional local knowledge related to the flora and vegetation of species-rich hay meadows in the Gyimes/ Ghimeş region of the Eastern Carpathians. A closer look at these systems, Babai and Molnár argue, would provide a framework to harmonise ethnographic and ecological research, as well as to assist NGOs and governments in developing more effective conservation strategies to fight abandonment and intensification. Furthermore, traditional ecological knowledge regarding the recognition of species and habitats provides background information that can help with ensuring appropriate management and long-term preservation of the natural resources administered by the local communities.

The museology section, a traditional section of *MARTOR Journal*, HAY ON DISPLAY in the current issue, will focus mainly on a visual exposé of the way in which hay becomes an art product, displayed in museum exhibitions or integrated in works of art. The section includes presentations of exhibitions organised at the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant. First, the 2015 “Traditions and Transitions of Hay” exhibition is described in the form of a dialogue between Anca-Maria Pănoiu and the curators. Next, there are the 2013-2015 “Garden” exhibition series dedicated to the four seasons, coordinated by the landscape architect Nicolas Triboi, together with Ruxandra Grigorescu and Mirela Florian, which also included displays of hay. The section ends with an essay by Transylvanian artist Ernő Bartha, who uses hay as an artistic resource.

Drawing on an in-depth visual ethnography, Alexandru Iorga proposes in the fifth section, FIELDNOTES ON HAY, an essay which describes the practices of haymaking and animal husbandry in postsocialist Caraorman, a village from the Romanian Danube Delta Biosphere

Reserve, where fishing was considered the traditional occupation. The researcher adds a set of photographs to the field notes on the system of work exchange between locals, snippets of social history from the socialist period, when experimental farming and breeding were introduced in Caraorman to improve varieties of cattle and sheep and to enhance the production in the harsh, marshy environment of the village.

In the last section of the review, the readers can find two captivating book reviews. The first one is a review by Stelu Şerban of Ştefan Dorondel’s book, *Disrupted landscapes. State, Peasants and the Politics of Land in Postsocialist Romania*, Berghahn, New York, Oxford (2016). The second book review is written by Kinga Öllerer on the book: Dániel Babai, Ábel Molnár and Zsolt Molnár, “*Ahogy gondozza, úgy veszi hasznát*” *Hagyományos ökológiai tudás és gazdálkodás Gyimesben/ Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Land Use in Gyimes (Eastern Carpathians)*, Institute of Ethnology, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Institute of Ecology and Botany, Centre for Ecological Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Vácrátót, (2014).

Finally, the issue includes a rich visual dossier, published in excellent graphic conditions, including photographs taken by the American artist Kathleen Laraia McLaughlin, who spent several research periods (1999, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2012 and 2015) in the village of Sârbi in Maramureş county, where she documented the everyday life of a community that still lives according to the rhythm of agrarian farm works. In her photographs, McLaughlin seems to use the anthropologist’s lens as her camera captures a world which is about to change under the impact of globalization. Her photographs can be found on the cover of the review, but also as chapters and articles separators.



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I. Historical Insights on Hay