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Conference Proceedings

Forests and Pastures' Devolution Process in Albania: A Sustainable Management of Mediterranean Commons?

Authors : BERNARD, Claire (Ciheam-IamM), CROUTEIX, Oriane (AgroParisTech), LERIN, François (Ciheam-IamM), LOPEZ, Ruben (AgroParisTech).

I/ Introduction

Forests and pasture in Albania are still counting for more than 50% of the entire territory, with roughly 1.5 million ha of forests and wooded lands, placing Albania among the most wooded countries of the Balkan Peninsula (ANFI, 2005). However, these resources have been intensively exploited for many decades. During communist period, a large scale policy of new agriculture land creation was undertaken, by the amendments of large coastal and lowlands wetlands (Shallari 2013), but also at the expense of forests and pastures, especially from the 1960s (Sjöberg 1991). These land use transformations resulted in a significant loss of forest and pastoral areas (Agolli 2000). In addition, the development of forest logging on an excessively productivity-based model, exceeding natural regeneration rate of forests, had significantly degraded the forest cover, led to an unbalanced age structure of forest stands (Carçani 1994; Proko 1997).

Since 1991, Albania has been entering a phase of double transition, first towards market economy and a multi-party political system, and second towards its integration to the European Union. This period was characterized by profound changes in the productive structure of the country, modifying spatial demographic distribution and societal relationships with mass migration from the mountain and remote areas (Lerin and Marku 2010). The forestry sector has been particularly affected by this transition:

Inception Study on Communal Forestry in Albania – December 4th, 2013 – Tirana

disintegration of forest enterprises, massive illegal logging, weak state forest services, few investments in the forest sector (Bouriaud 2005; Müller and Munroe 2008). The overall environmental balance of this post- transition period - which now has more than twenty years now - is generally considered to be very negative, leading to a vulnerable and degraded ecological situation of forests and pastures (Dida 2003; Stahl 2010).

An answer to this alarming environmental observations was initiated under international political pressure from multi and bi-lateral donors, who strongly supported the revision of forest legislation in 2005, and the drafting of a *National strategy for development of the forestry and pastoral sector* (DGFP 2005). This strategy could be consider as a real landmark in the forestry sector development, focusing on the multifunctional management of forest areas, the fight against illegal logging, rehabilitation of ecological functions of forests and pastures, while limiting productive forest exploitation. This legislative and policy changes in the forestry sector have gone along with significant modifications in terms of territorial governance (decentralization, creation and empowerment of Local Government Units such as communes and municipalities) and land tenure (devolution process, beginning in the 90's and ending in 2008). It is worth noting the central role of the World Bank, through two main forestry projects, focused on the development of community forestry as a means of decentralization : the *Albanian forestry Project* (World Bank 1996) and the *Natural Resources development Project* (World Bank 2005).

In contrast, field implementation of these national processes (decentralization and devolution), shows an extremely complex chronology even confusing for many actors. Diversity and overlapping of tools and monitoring instruments - such as forest inventories, GIS, cadastral registration, management plans, etc. - creates de facto many uncertainties in terms of management accountability and property rights. Moreover, the achievement of devolution process in 2008, which grants the ownership and management of 60% of forest and pasture land to 240 Albanian communes and municipalities, opens an important debate on its future developments: does the transfer of user rights to beneficiaries identified as such (villages, clans, families, individuals,) is sufficient to ensure a sustainable management of these areas ? Or, should it go further, with the creation of property rights, increasing private interest in the sustainable management of forest and pasture resources? And at last but not least, is communal level the appropriate and effective scale of action to answer local forest management challenges?

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Specific focus of the study

In this context, we undertook a field study mainly through two Master of Science (Oriane Crouteix and Ruben Lopez) to deal with the apparent confusion of the so called “devolution process”, using a practical and pragmatic approach of Albanian communal forest management. In other words, it seemed to us necessary to “deconstruct” the complexity of the situation with a comprehensive approach of local situations based on field work observations. The main idea, putting field work first, was to tackle the complexity (if not the confusion) of the interpretation of the devolution process at the national level, by working at the scale of communes and transferred territories. Our conclusions will not address the national devolution issue globally. But this bottom-up perspective might bring some clarifications, if not to the confusion of the situation, at least to the reasons and modalities of its complexity.

Throughout in depth case-studies of three municipalities in northern Albania (Orosh, Rubik, and Khtelle), located in Lezhë district, we characterize environmental issues at local scale (II), linked with effective management of those resources: local practices and commercial uses of forest resources (III). Using a systematic descriptive approach of local practices, we want to highlight the existence of multiple uses on the same area. Doing so we identify a plurality of rules and access rights in territories, defined by neo- institutional economic approaches, as “Common Pool Resources” - CPR (Ostrom, Burger et al. 1999). We also show how these different levels of effective management (practices) do not mobilize the same logics of action, playing on different decision-making levels and types of interests.

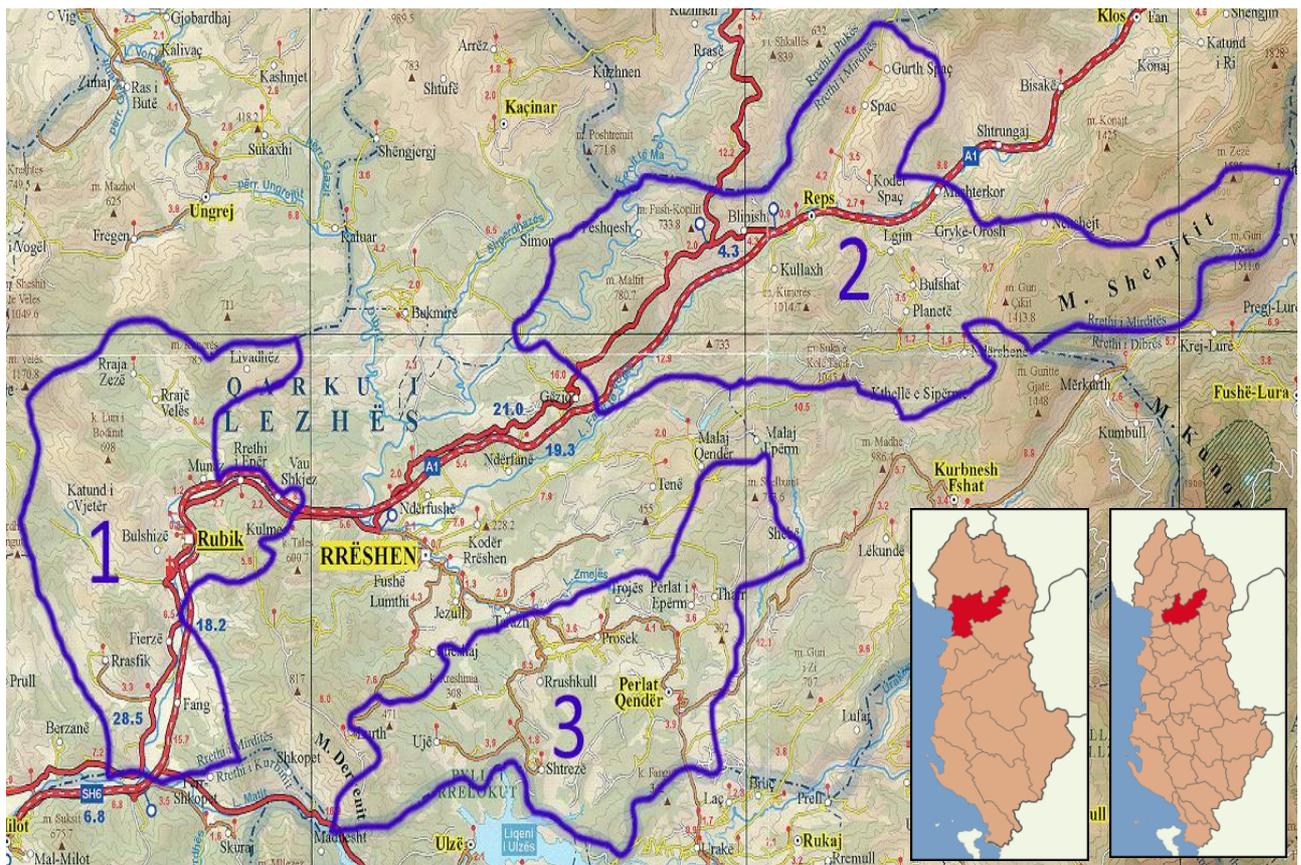
Then, we examine how the devolution process implementation connects multiple management tools, texts of laws, national strategies, with three different forest management models (ideal type) versus local consensus (IV). Against a simplistic dualism, which puts facing local tradition versus modern legislation, we want to show how conflicts, uncertainties and local practices are a syncretic production in which it is important to take into account the political and social dimensions. We propose to go beyond the apparent *aporia* of local situations diversity versus the need of a common legal framework at national level, to promote embedded local initiatives and pilot projects, as test for iterative national institutional design for forestry management.

Doing so, we propose to conclude with a renewed perspective on future forestry projects design. It starts with considering communal forest issues in a broader perspective, including forest and pasture ecosystems in the frame of territorial development, rather than constituting a strict forest sectorial issue. In its process towards European Union accession, Albania must find new forms of intervention, which combine environmental, economic and social dimensions driven by territorial collective action to make best use of available EU funding (IPARD like, LEADER, etc.).

A/ Presentation study area and local specific environmental issues

Our study takes place in the Region of Lezhë (*Qark Lezhë*); in the district of Mirdita and focuses on three communes and municipalities: the Municipality of Rubik (*Bashkia Rubik*), and the two communes of Orosh and Khtelle (*Kommuna Orosh dhe Kommuna Khtelle*). The research team stayed three months, based in Lezhë city, as a base for further explorations and inquiries in the surroundings. The three studied communes all present a substantial wooded area but contrasted uses of these resources, inherited from distinct geomorphic and climatic situations as well as different development patterns and economic specialization from the communist period. Moreover, despite of their geographical and administrative proximity, the three local government units (LGUs) show different forest and pasture management profiles, and contrasted implementation of the forest and pasture devolution process.

Figure 1: Presentation of study area: Local Government Units of (1) Rubik, (2) Orosh (3) Khtelle (Region of Lezhë, Miredita Diextract, Albania)



1. Methodology

To characterize environmental dynamics and land cover changes occurring in our study area, we started to take an inventory of the various tools and systematic monitoring devices available in Albania (see figure 3). They proved to be numerous, but presented a low accessibility for some, other were highly politicized, which made results interpretation a tricky exercise, other were technically limited (scale, vegetation, digitalization, etc.), and confrontation of the results has proven difficult for methodological compatibility issues.

This study is based on two main methodological aspects: an environmental assessment of forest and pasture ecosystems, coupled with descriptive analyses of local practices based on extensive semi-directive interviews.

We led an environmental assessment of forest and pastures ecosystems in Rubik, Orosh and Kthelle using *Corine Land Cover* data (2000 – 2006), handled with an open source desktop geographic information systems (GIS) application that provides data viewing, editing and analyses capabilities (QGIS). *Corine Land Cover* is an open source European data base concerning land use change. *Corine* stands for *Coordination of Information on the Environment*. *Corine's* land use inventory by satellite considers 44 types of land use and produces a map at the scale of 1:100 000. The program was first launched in 1985, and it is now monitored by the European Environment Agency. For Albania, data exists for the year 2000 and for the year 2006. Processing *Corine's* data we could easily characterize environmental dynamics between 2000 and 2006. The main limit of *Corine Land Cover* database is the scale. Indeed, this tool could be used to a regional level, but in downscaling, results are losing their accuracy, and field work is highly needed to start building some interpretations.

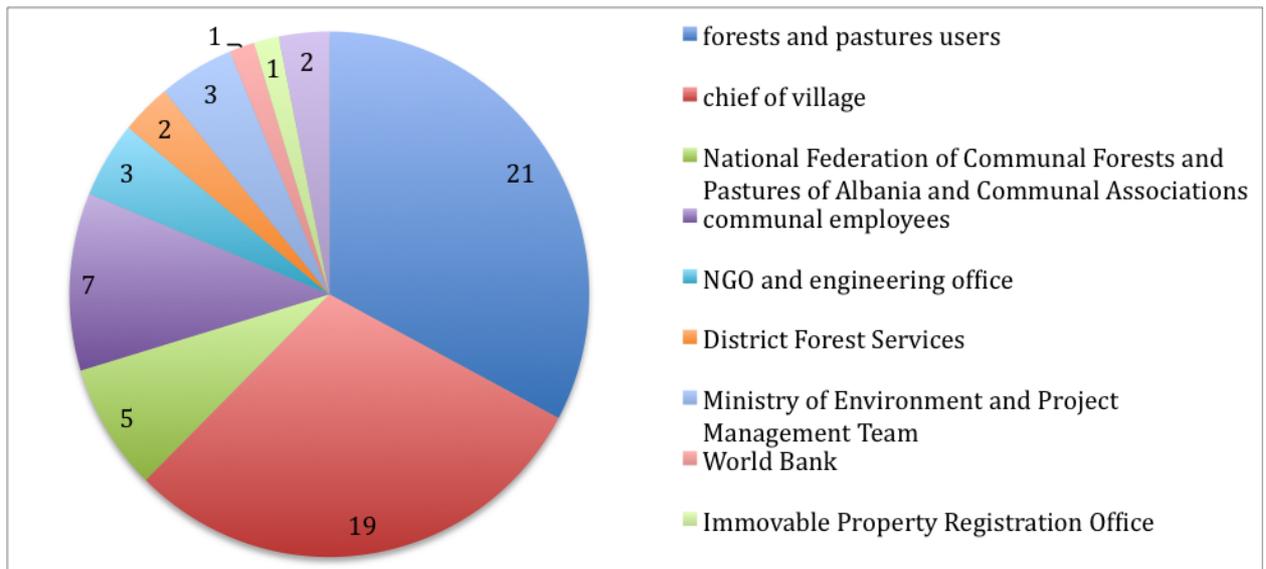
To delimit the boundaries of the local government units, we used an American database¹, it's seemed to be the more used municipalities' limits. But in the case of Rubik, for example it's not possible to superimpose these municipalities' limits and the limits of devolved lands drawn on the map of management plan.

We also lead 62 semi-directive interviews of the main actors, mainly at the local level to describe local practices, but also at the national level to have an overview of the devolution process at a larger scale (see on the figure below). We made both interviews in Albanian and in English.

¹ According to "Global Administrative Boundary": <http://www.gadm.org/download>

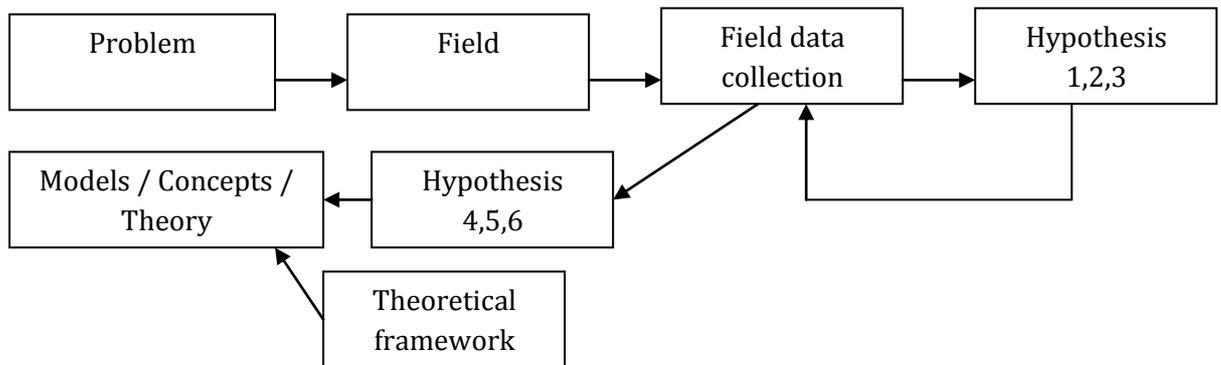
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Figure : 62 semi-directive interviews (June to August 2013) – Lezhë Region and Tirana



Our approach was an inductive and a comprehensive approach of local situations based on field work observations.

Figure 2 : Overall research design adopted for the study



Inception Study on Communal Forestry in Albania – December 4th, 2013 – Tirana

Figure 3 : Table of tools of diagnosis and monitoring instruments available in Albania to assess environmental state of forests and pastures

Tools / date	Done by Used by	Objectives	Level, Scale	Division and Nomenclature	Limits
Corine Land Cover (2000 – 2006)	Done by the Environment European Agency (EEA) Used by : Researchers (open source)	Environmental and land planning issues : - land use changes - landscape analyse - forest evolutions - environmental impact assessments, etc.	Europe 1/100 000 SPOT (XS) or LANDSAT (MSS) CLC 200 and 2006	Vegetation Land cover and land use (polygons 25ha)	-Local scale
National Forest Inventory 1985	Done by Albanian District Forest Services Used by Albanian foresters	Forest settlement Economic issue	National 1/25 000	- Forest economy from 1985 for vegetation and harvesting analysis	- Old data, linear projection - Not computerized
ANFI 2005 (1991-2001/2)	Done by Agrotech SpA, Rome + University of La Tuscia at Viterbor + local and international experts Used by World Bank and Ministry of Environment	National forest policy (national strategy) Environmental and productive issues: - land cover/use changes between 1991-2001/2 - land cover/use data for 2001/2 - forest health and productivity	National 1/100 000 Landsat 5 TM (1991) Landsat 7 ETP+ (2001)	- Land cover use for vegetation and land use change analysis	- Only second data are available (software for primary data work is inexistent in Albania) - Not used for forest settlement
Local forest inventory – communal management plan 2006-2008	Done by communal foresters/consultants Used by Albanian foresters contracted by PMT and forest district services	Forest settlement of attributed land Economic issues	Local, municipalities 1/10 000	- Forest economy from 1985 for vegetation and harvesting analysis	- Exiting but not used for forest management -Little actualization from the field -No completed
Cadastral map IRPRO After 2008	Used by Ministry of Justice	Property registration and cadastre	Village 1/2 500	Vegetation Land cover/use	- For urban planning primary, low precision for vegetation categories - Expensive

2. Orosh, Kthelle and Rubik : three different profiles with contrasted environmental issues

Rubik is a “Bashkia” with a small downtown and many villages around, whereas Orosh and Kthelle are two “Kommuna” where the rural exodus is high. In each local government units, the devolution process implemented with some variations: Kthelle has the ownership of 100% of their lands and it’s the only local government units from Lezhë region which has registered whole their lands to IPRO (Immovable Property Registration Office). Ownership of 50 and 80% of the commune’s total territory was given to respectively Rubik and Orosh.

Moreover, each territory has a specific development profile, inherited from the long term history, and reinforced during the communism time, with the productive specialization of each territory, depending on their geography and their natural resources.

- In Rubik the industrial sector was developed based on copper mines and industry
- In Kthelle, the agricultural sector was developed
- In Orosh, mining sector, with the presence of copper and wood sector with the high exploitation of two forest units were developed.

> Environmental presentation of the three communes

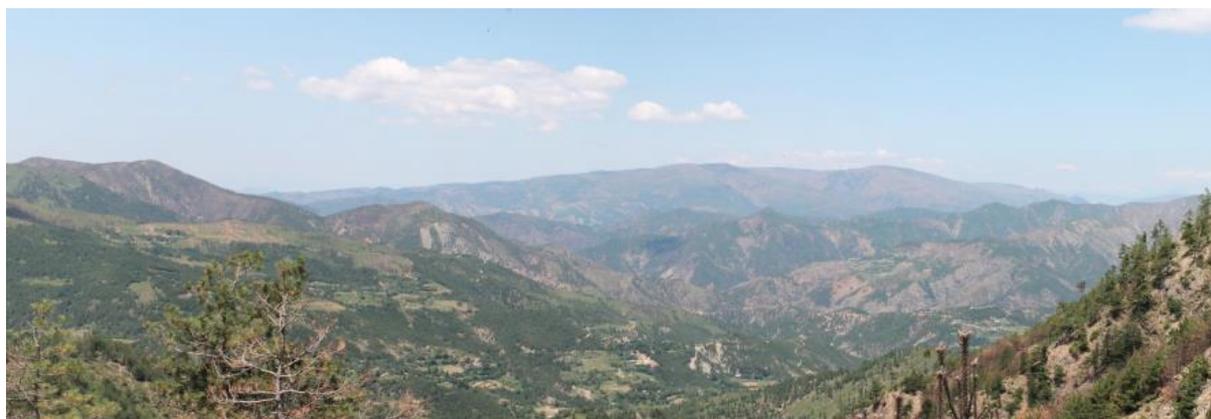
Orosh is a mountainous commune endowed with forest resources. More than 50% of the communal territory has been transferred to the municipality. Orosh's economy was oriented toward forest and mining sector during communism. Nowadays, the population is living from auto-consumption, emigration, or state-employment and pension.

In this commune, the timber industry (mainly beech exploitation) seems most important (two sawmills and one firewood industry for export). Timber exploitation takes place in remote areas of the commune, mostly on State forest that have not been transferred. The timber industry is in decline because the resource is decreasing. Many pine forests are no longer subject to collective control due to rural exodus and suffer the fires during the summer.

Figure 4: On the left: Fani i Vogel Valley, and the highway Durës/Kosovo. On the right: the village of Gryk, in the municipality of Orosh.



Figure 5: Landscape characterization of Orosh's territory: high mountains and steep forested slope



In Kthelle, agriculture and livestock have always occupied an important place in the local economy during communism 60% of agricultural land were irrigated, two agricultural cooperatives were installed and many lands have been cleared for increase arable land. Today there are many problems related to irrigation.

Kthelle is a pilot commune for forest management, because it is the only commune of Mirdita who received 100% of the land from the devolution process, who recorded it under IPRO, and who employs a full-time forest engineer. However Kthelle's forests are not timber productive forests, and could rather be considered as extensions of agrarian systems. They mainly composed of oak coppice forests; used for the production of firewood and charcoal. Nowadays, forested land are increasing and the sales of firewood and charcoal are growing activities, in some village like Rushkull.

Figure 6: Landscape overview of Kthelle, from the municipality building.



Figure 7: Landscape characterization of Kthelle's territory



Rubik is the second local government unit of Mirdita, the service sector is more and more important after the fall of the copper industry at the end of Communist time. About 80% of the land in Rubik has been transferred during the devolution process. One of the resources of Rubik is medicinal and aromatic plants (MAP), which are sold to a local collector.

Since the end of the mining sector industry, most of the remaining population in Rubik is living from self-consumption agricultural activities, livestock raising, medicinal and aromatic plants collection, as well as small scale firewood trade. Pine forests plantations in Rubik are suffering from a lack of maintenance, and prone to summer forest fires.

Figure 8: On the left, the Communist cooper factory of Rubik,. On the right, Bulshize city.



Figure 9: Landscape characterization of Rubik's territory [view from Kryezez village]



Inception Study on Communal Forestry in Albania – December 4th, 2013 – Tirana

Figure 10 : Recapitulative overview of three communes’ main characteristics

	Bashkia Rubik	Komuna Kthelle	Komuna Orosh
Communal surface² (ha)	8200	8200	14000
Devolution surface³ (approximate %)	80	100	50
Number of village	11	9	15
Centre	Bulshize	Perlat Qender	Reps
Historical activities	Copper industry and copper mines	Agricultures	Copper mines and forests exploitation
Inhabitants (active population 2003⁴)	4852	2604	2727
Demographic dynamic	↘	↘↘	↘↘

Figure 11: Recapitulative table of the 3 communes’ environmental characteristics

		Rubik	Kthelle	Orosh
Territory		(Low) Mountains and large valley	Hills	(High) Mountains
		CLC⁵ 2006	CLC 2006	CLC 2006
Forest type (ha)	Broadleaved forests	2550	4713	3534
	Pine forests	573	0	2317
	Mix forests	293	0	1243
Forests (ha)		3416	4713	7094
Agricultural lands (ha)		655	1304	987
Pastures (ha)		263	610	445

² According to “Global Administrative Boundary”: <http://www.gadm.org/download>

³ According to map of communal management plan done by DiavaConsulting

⁴ According to INSTAT 2003

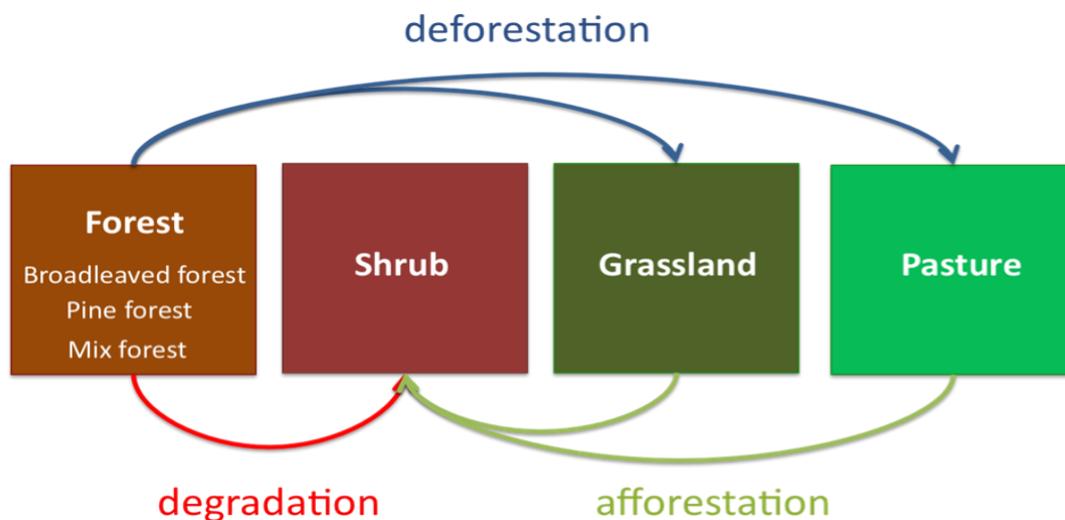
⁵ CLC: *Corine Land Cover*, European database of land cover. <http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps>

> Environmental dynamic characterisation

We proceeded to a characterization of environmental dynamic observed in the three communes.

- i. Deforestation: referring to a drastic increase in timber and firewood extraction, leading to the disappearance of forest cover, turning high forest or coppice forest (forest areas) into grasslands or pastures
- ii. Degradation: referring to a drastic increase in timber and firewood extraction, leading to a serious degradation of the forest cover, turning high forest or coppice forest (forest areas) into shrub (other forest area)
- iii. Afforestation: referring the dynamic of landscape closure and pastures and grasslands spontaneous reforestation, turning open areas into forest areas (forest or shrubs)

Figure 12: Environmental dynamics identified communal in forest and pasture ecosystems



By using CLC, couples with field observations, it's possible to localise forest and pasture ecosystem dynamics occurring in commune between 2000 and 2006.

Figure 13: Evidence of degradation patterns in beech forests, in high mountains territories of Orosh [between 2000 and 2006 – Corine Land Cover]

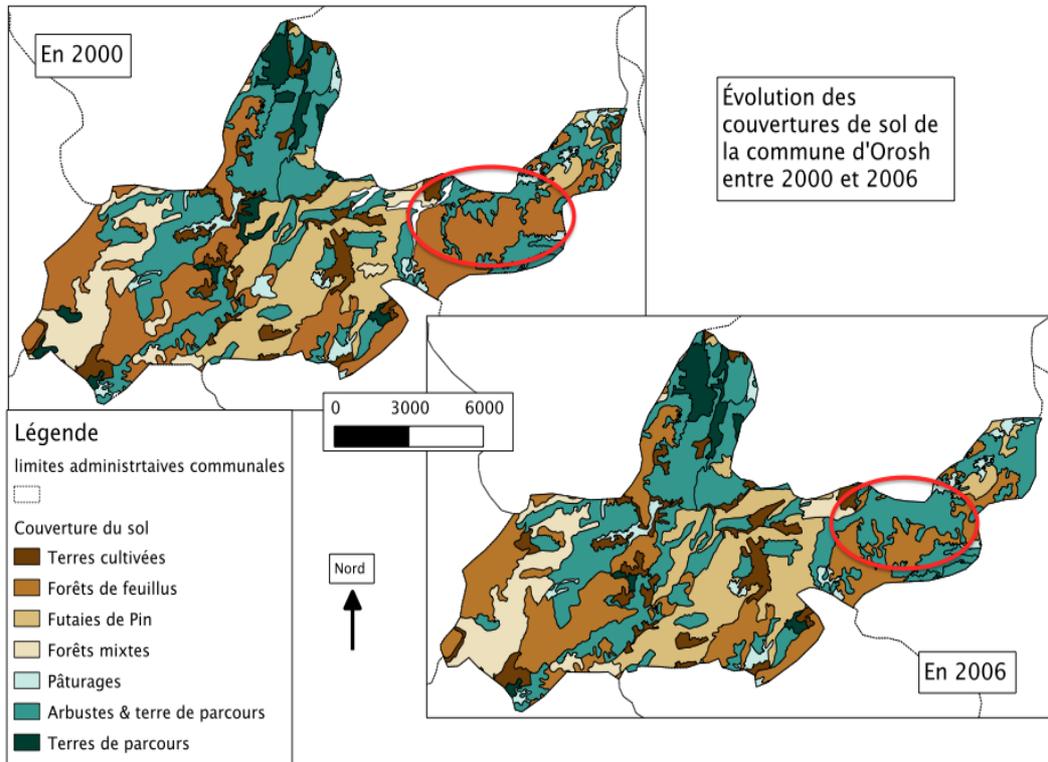
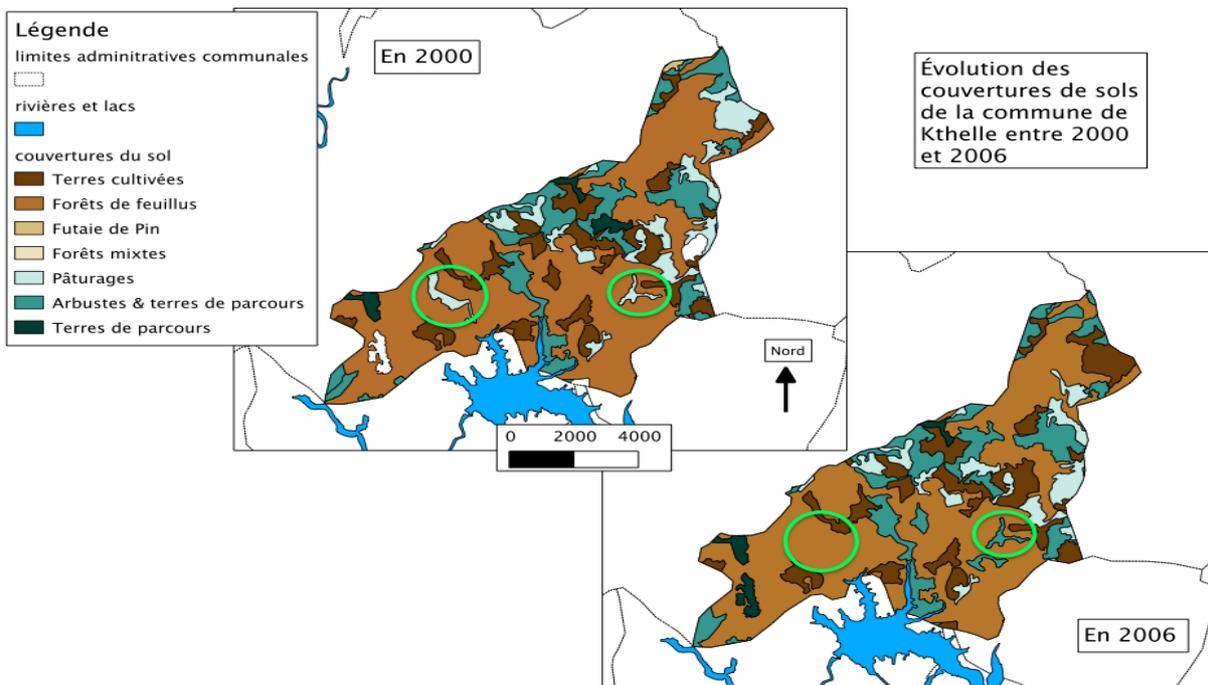


Figure 14: Dynamic of afforestation in Kthelle, mainly on agricultural lands opened during communism time and now abandoned [between 2000 and 2006 – Corine Land Cover]



Inception Study on Communal Forestry in Albania – December 4th, 2013 – Tirana

Land cover changes identified on the territories of these three local governments units highlight different environmental issues in each local government units: deforestation, afforestation and degradation.

Figure 15 : Land cover changes in ha by vegetation type in the three communes [between 2000 and 2006 – Corine Land Cover]

		Rubik (ha)	Kthelle (ha)	Orosh (ha)
Broadleaved forests	2000	2529	4666	3837
	2006	2550	4713	3534
		21	47	-304
Pine forests	2000	573	16	2382
	2006	573	0	2317
		0	-16	-65
Mix Forests	2000	293		1263
	2006	293		1243
		0		-20
Shrubs	2000	1143	1240	4207
	2006	3062	1303	4874
		1919	63	667
Grasslands	2000	2166	138	607
	2006	651	151	506
		-1515	13	-100
Pastures	2000	224	810	511
	2006	263	610	445
		39	-200	-66
Environmental issues		Afforestation Manage spontaneous afforestation for fires prevention and sustainable MAP collection	Afforestation Manage spontaneous afforestation to maintain multi-functionality of agrarian systems and fires prevention	Degradation Limit timber and firewood extraction to ensure sustainable resources exploitation

B/ Effective management: local practices and value chains in communal forests: a twofold environmental stake for Albanian LGUs

“Effective management” is a term used to bring together every anthropogenic action that, consciously or not, intentionally or not, have a decisive influence on the environmental object defined. Here, the environmental object that we choose to focus on is forests and pastures in the whole municipality’s territory. Our environmental frame of reference, to which we are going to refer in order to analyze the effective management, is degradation, when a forest turns to be shrubs, and afforestation, which is when pastures or grassland turn to be shrubs.

We can distinguish two kinds of effective management that have a strong impact on forests and pastures’ state: local practices and the forest sector producing firewood, charcoal and timber from oak and beech forests.

1. Local practices and uses are organized at village level

A detailed and systematic work of observation and description of local practices was carried on at the village level, on the three communes, in order to specify the type of resources and ecosystems and the level and rules of collective organization. Therefore, we propose to use the concept of “*resource-area*” (Barrière and Barrière 1996) to list the different practices and describe, how different types of uses and resources management are combining with different access rights organized at the village scale.

Figure 16 : List of local uses in the three communes, according to resource type

Resource type/ Area	Usages						
	Fire Wood	Charcoal	Timber Wood	MAP collection	Pasture	Chestnut collection	Fodder
River banks					x		
Other Forests	x			x	x		
Broadleaves forests: oak and chestnut	x	x		x	x	x	x
Coniferous forests : pines			x				
Mix forests: beech and pine	x		x		x		x
Pastures and Grasslands				x	x		

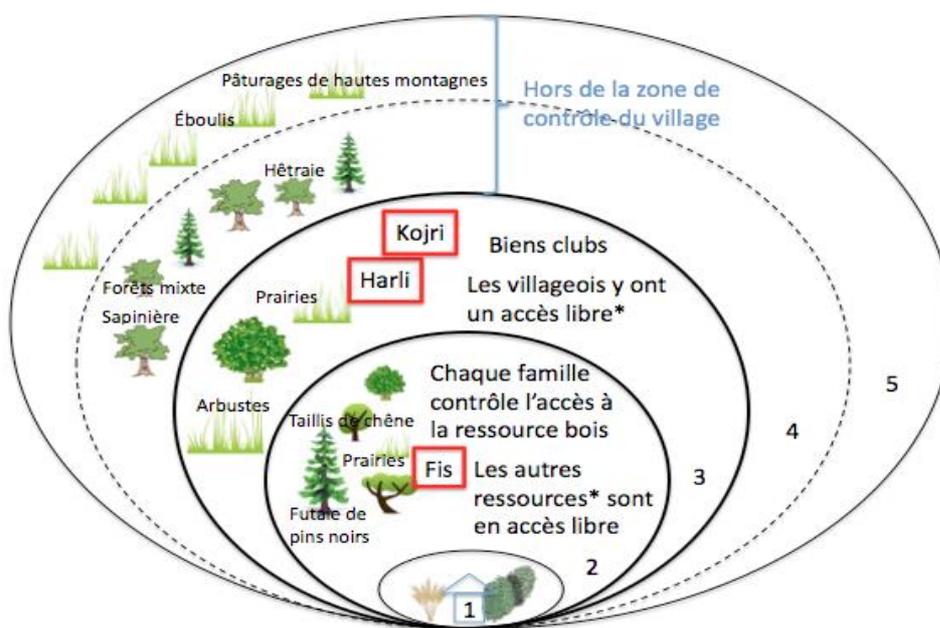
Inception Study on Communal Forestry in Albania – December 4th, 2013 – Tirana

To go further, we propose to territorialize those local practices and related access rights. Starting from the village, as the core zone, we can divide the territory into five zones of influence/management. The first three zones are directly depending from the village's influence, and constitute the boundaries of this collective management.

- *Zone 1*: referring to the connate area to the houses and private garden, composed of private agricultural lands, attributed to each family in 1991, according to the Law on the land, n°7501 of 19/07/1991.
- *Zone 2 [Fis]* : referring to the adjacent area to the village, of common access but whose use rights are divided into the different “clan” of the village, or even sometimes sub-divided between the families of the clan. In those areas, fodder, firewood, charcoal, and chestnut collection are strictly reserved for the clan/family. They have the right to market these resources. Pasture and MAP collection are allowed to all villagers.
- *Zone 3 [Hali] or [Kojri]*: referring to the relatively near area to the village, a bit further than the *Fis* area, of common use and access to all the inhabitants. Firewood, charcoal, chestnut and fodder collection as well as pasture and MAP collection are allowed to all villagers.

[Note on firewood: The larger the family is, and the colder the winter is, the higher are the needs in firewood. Globally we can estimate the needs in firewood from 5 m³ per family per year in the lowlands to 15 or 20 m³ per family per year in the mountainous regions].
- *Zone 4 and 5 [Male]*: Referring to remote areas, far away from the village, which are not directly used and managed by villagers.

Figure 17 : Territorial representation of local practices uses and access on forest and pasture ecosystems



Inception Study on Communal Forestry in Albania – December 4th, 2013 – Tirana

To summarize, the debate on local forest management is too often presented in terms of binary land ownership (private property versus public (communal or state) property). Here, we want to show, based on an in-depth analyse of local uses and practices, that a village-based collective action is existing in Albania and articulates different appropriation modalities that could not fit into the category of private or public property.

These appropriation modalities range from free access to exclusion, passing by extraction, management, and alienation rights. Those different level of appropriation, are divided up among individuals or collective structures: families, *fis*/clan, villages, etc.

One interesting results comes when transferring those combination of rights of access and uses into economic classification, to define different type of goods. It does not exist a given economic nature, but for a given resource, its economic status can change depending on the rules of appropriation. And the same resource can be consider in certain cases as a common pool resources, and in other cases as a club good of private good.

Figure 18: Multiplicity of resource appropriation modalities in adjacent areas to Albanian villages (adapted from (LeRoy, Karsenty et al. 1996)

	<i>Public Good</i>	<i>Common Pool Good</i>	<i>Club Good</i>	<i>Functional property</i>	<i>Private Good</i>
<i>Appropriation</i>	Access	Access & Extraction	Access, Extraction & Exclusion	Access, Extraction, Exclusion & Management	Access, Extraction, Exclusion, Management & Alienation
<i>Management</i>					
Public	Forests and pastures (for recreational purposes)	MAP collection area Mountain summer pastures			
External (Village)		Livestock grazing in <i>hali</i> and land belonging to different <i>fis</i> (Coppice forest)	MAP collection area Firewood collection in <i>hali</i> (Coppice oak forests - personal use only)		

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External- Internal (Fis)			Productive pastures in <i>hali</i> at spring, fodder divided per family	Firewood collection in <i>fis</i> ' territories (Coppice oak forests – commercial use possible)	
Internal (Family)			Fodder collection in <i>fis</i> ' territories (coppice oak forests)	Chestnut collection	
Private (Individual)					Any IPRO registered property

Therefore, it would be prejudicial for sustainable forests and pastures management, to reduce their land tenure and economic status to on use (eg. Firewood extraction or carbon sequestration). Rather than, there is a challenge to manage the coexistence of a wide range of appropriation modalities, with existing legal framework and communal forest management plans.

2. Forest sector value chains: extraterritorial activities

The forest sector value chain stretches out different scales of organization: municipal, regional, national and even international. By describing the different steps of transformation of wood material, we want to point out that the resource exploitation is mainly organized on the municipality's territory, but outside communal forests from the devolution. Moreover, the added value (stemming from wood transformation) is mainly produced outside the communal level. In that sense, we can speak about the fire and timber wood value chain as "extra-territorial" activities, since most of the added value does not stay at communal level, even if the resource extraction fits with communal administrative boundaries. In our study area, we can distinguish two different forest sectors:

- The oak value chain in Rubik and in Kthelle,
- The beech value chain in Orosh.

> **The oak value chain in the areas of Rubik and Kthelle mainly deals with the production of firewood and charcoal.**

Oak forests are located near villages and are in open access all year long. To produce charcoal, it takes ten to twelve days. Charcoal is often produced in the forest, in order to reduce transport costs.

For the firewood collection, the villagers go to the forest or rent the services of an acquaintance owning a chainsaw and able to cut the trees and let the wood on the spot. Then they can come to take it and transport on horseback or a using a mule.

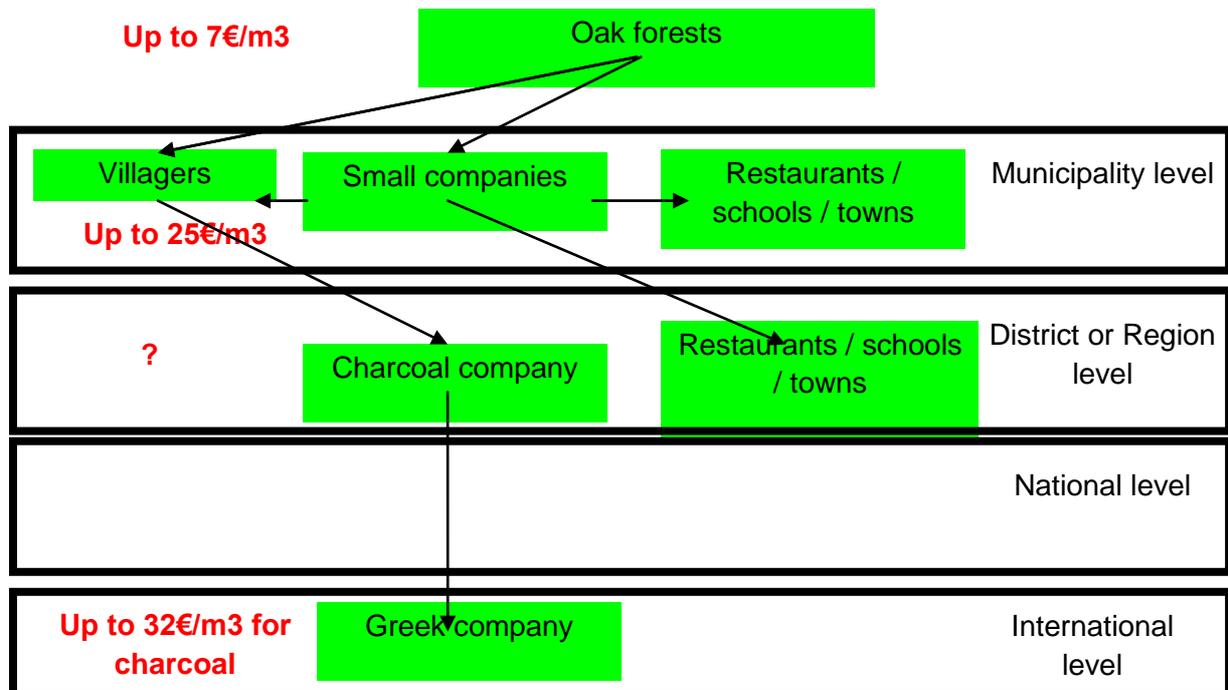
Some villagers are producing also some charcoal, but it can often be associated to job instability or lack of job security.

Villagers can sell charcoal or firewood (to be transformed into charcoal or for restaurants) directly or through the intermediary of a charcoal company, like the one Rreshen which also exports charcoal to Greece.

This company has a state license (from the forest services) for a given quantity of wood, but no attention is paid on the origin of the raw material. No matter where the wood comes from, as long as the authorised quantities have been respected, it becomes legal.

This lack of wood origin certification and tracking allows an easy legalisation of raw material, cut in communal forests, as soon as it reaches the charcoal and wood companies and enters the distribution networks.

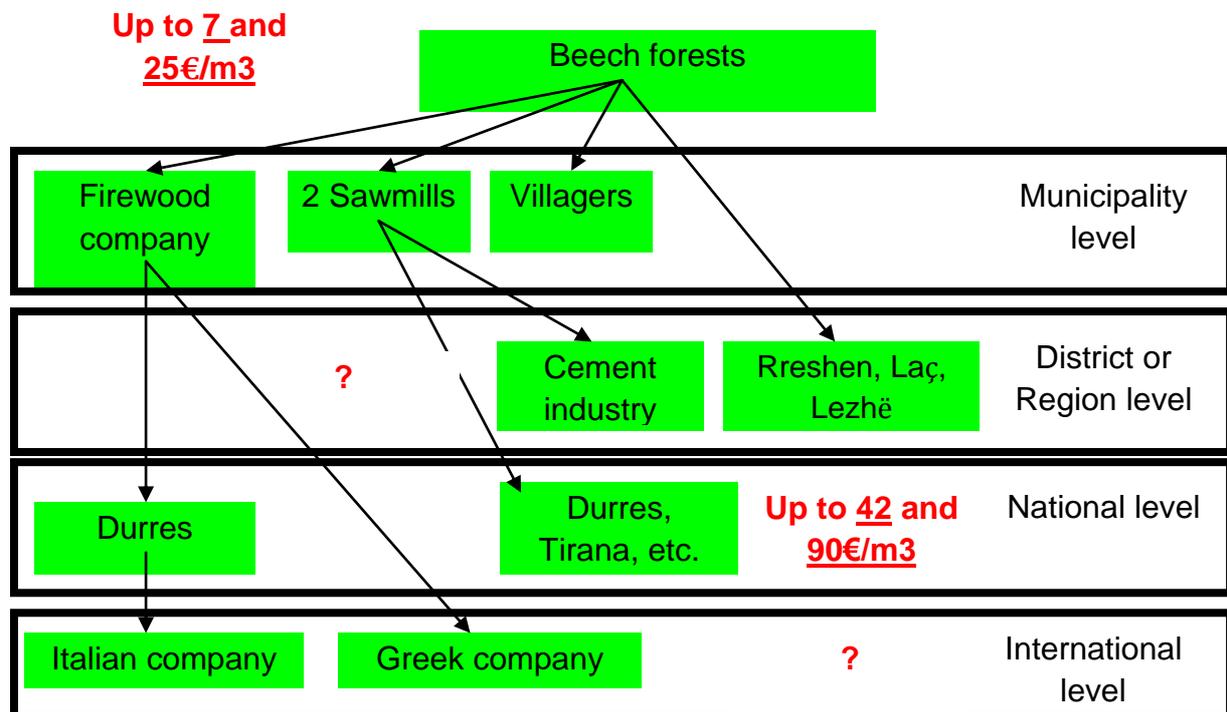
Figure 19: Oak Value Chain Organization Rubik and in Kthelle



> **The beech sector in Orosh, deals with the production of firewood and timber.**

Beech forests are located on the top of the mountains, **on areas that have not been attributed to municipalities during the devolution process**. Those forests are located in Orosh municipality or near it: between the village of Nenshejt and the village of Lajthize (Orosh regional park), and in Munela’s mountains. Beech forests are far from the municipality’s centre, at about three hours from it. People have access to the forests only during summer time. Small companies are working in the forests (2 to 5 people) and are selling 4 to 5 meters long logs to the 2 local sawmills of Orosh or to firewood company in Repts, with or without transportation. Transportation from the forest to the first transformation place: sawmills or firewood company, is made by occasional drivers, owning a truck and renting their services. They can also sell firewood in town (Lezhë or Tirana) or to restaurants outside of the municipality’s territory. The 2 sawmills also have one or two trucks and 5 to 15 workers, whose can be drivers or lumberjacks. The director of one sawmill in Orosh has also a furniture company in Dures and carries the wood there. The firewood company exports wood to Italy and Greece.

Figure 20: Beech Value Chain Organization in Orosh



=> *Even though forest and pasture management responsibilities has been transferred to the LGUs through the devolution process, we can observe that commercial forest sector is mostly organized at the district or national level (no taxes nor added value for the LGUs) and local practices for auto-consumption are strictly organized at village level.*

3. Environmental impacts of oak and beech value chains on forest ecosystems

- The most environmentally impacting activity is the beech value chain in Orosh. Beech high forests in the regional park of Orosh and in Munela’s mountain are obviously degraded because of illegal timber logging.

Figure 21: Forest degradation patterns, in Orosh Commune



- The environmental situation of oak coppice forests is more difficult to characterize. They seem quite healthy even if there is no control from the communes. Nevertheless, we showed that an increase of charcoal production and firewood selling activities can have an influence of oak forests’ degradation: those activities have to be supervised.

- Local practices for auto-consumption and uses seem to have a rather positive environmental impact. On the contrary, land abandonment, decreasing of pastoral practices, and rural exodus, are leading to landscape closure, and unmanaged afforestation, that reduce forests multi-functionality, increasing fire risks, and reducing medicinal and aromatic plants (MAP) resources (Sirami, Nespoulous et al. 2010).

Figure 22: Environmental impacts of forests and pastures effective management in the three communal territories.

	Afforestation	Degradation
Land abandonment	<p style="text-align: center;">+</p> Loss of multi-functionality on the municipalities’ attributed land: shrubs increasing (MAP, fires)	0
Oak sector (firewood and charcoal)	0	<p style="text-align: center;">+/-</p> Firewood resources on the municipalities’ attributed land: young oak forests seem quite healthy
Beech sector (fire and timber wood)	0	<p style="text-align: center;">++</p> Unsustainable timber logging out of the municipalities’ attributed land: old beech forests decreasing

C/ Devolution process and sustainable management of communal forests and pastures

1. Dealing with the “devolution process” complexity

The devolution process finished in 2008, when the property of 60% of the forests and pastures areas has been transferred to the local government units (*Kommuna* and *Bashkia*). This process is presented as national wide process, oriented toward decentralization and social and environmental sustainability of forest management.

However, its long chronology, starting in the mid 1990's until 2008, is still raising many issues in terms of management accountabilities and property rights on communal forests and pastures. In that context, how to deal with the apparent confusion of the so called “devolution process”?

We made the hypothesis of that devolution process was in fact connecting three distinct issues, three national wide process, interdependent, but following their own philosophy of action. The devolution process, in its complexity, shows the intertwining of those legal, political, administrative processes, and how they interact at the local level to reach local consensus.

> Administrative decentralisation: municipalities become ad-hoc management level for forest and pastures

The aim of the devolution process was first, to decentralize political and managing competences from national level to local level, in order to go forward in European Union process adhesion. This process started at the end of the communist period, in the process of a democratisation, with the creation of local governments unit, as administrative level of management in 1992. This process was further reinforced in 1998, when Albania signed the *European Charter of Local Self Government* (Council of Europe). In its new *Constitution* of 1998, Albania recognized the regional level (*Qark*) as well as municipalities (*Kommuna* and *Bashkia*) as the decentralized levels for administrative management, and issued in 2000, a National Strategy for decentralization, followed by the Law n° 8652 On organization and functioning of local institutions, of July, 31st, 2000. In 2002, the Annual budget law introduced a formula to effectively distribute part of the government budget to local government units. And the following year, the fiscal package defined the taxing power of local governments (rates, base, sector), reinforcing their financial capacities. In that context, communes and municipalities became ad-hoc management units of forest and pasture to be transferred to the local level, even if the village scale was identified as the core organizational level of customary management of the commons.

Governance decentralisation in Albania is still an undergoing process, and a reform is currently under preparation. Despite significant progress toward more autonomy

given to the local level, communes and municipalities have still very little human and financial capacities and scarce resources to be allocated to the forestry sector.

> Forest sector evolution toward decentralized management of forest resources for environmental and social sustainability

Secondly, the devolution process was part of the overall institutional reform of the Albanian forestry sector, toward sustainable management of forests and pastures, in line with international agreements on biodiversity and environmental protection, as well as national sectorial strategies (National development strategy, Forestry Development Strategy, Green Strategy, etc.). Bringing forest management closer to the local level was also foreseen as a way to achieve a more equitable sharing of revenues from wood exploitation for local people depending on forest resources.

One of the main actors of the devolution process implementation was the World Bank which has accompanied Albanian forest sector reforms, by two consecutive national wide forestry projects, namely the AFP (Albanian Forestry Program – 1996/2004) and NRDP (Natural Resources Development Program - 2005/2012). Under the communal forestry component of the projects, the World Bank was working toward a sustainable community – based natural resource management, mainly through the preparation of forest and pasture management plans, at communal level. After the project completion, 221 communes and municipalities were endowed with new, up to date management plans; to accompany the property transfer of identified pasture and forest plots to the local governments units.

In parallel, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, was undertaking institutional and legislative changes, to implement transfer process and regulate responsibilities sharing and cooperation, between the existing District forests services, local governments and communities. The latest evolutions to date were the Decision of Council of Ministers, 2008, amending the 2005 Forest Law, on defining the procedures and criteria of commune forest administration, and the creation of the Forest Extension Services in 2011, to accompany local government units with technical support in the management of their forests and pastures.

> From Public Assets devolution to property issues

Thirdly, the devolution process fit into the larger process of “Public Asset Devolution Process”, begun in 2002 and still ongoing for other public assets (roads, school, hospitals, water, etc.). In 2007, under the pressure international donors, financially supporting NRDP, the devolution process concerning forests and pastures was speed up to keep up the pace with the overall process of forest decentralized management. From autumn 2007 to spring 2008, for each commune, a list of forest and

Inception Study on Communal Forestry in Albania – December 4th, 2013 – Tirana

pasture plots, identified by District Forest Services (upon the references and identification numbers of the Forest Inventories of 1985), was drawn up, with the collaboration of the municipalities, and then agreed at national level by the Ministry of Environment, and Ministry of Internal Affairs, to be validated by the Council of Minister. By 2008, the transfer of a list of pastures and forest plots to communes and municipalities was completed. But they are now facing a third step: the property registration under the Albanian *Immovable Property Registration Office*, in order to get official property titles. This process is costly, but and could help the local government units to better secure their territory and base a stronger territorial management of their resources. To date, only a dozen of communes have proceeded to the registration of their land.



However, this Registration process - as the ultimate step of the Devolution process completion - is also raising a lot of anticipations among local actors on private property issues. Once the municipalities will be legally owner of their forests and pastures, they will have the possibility to cease/sell land property titles. Ownership claims on forest and pasture as traditional properties of families or individual are currently gaining more intensity at local level, questioning the role of municipalities in land use management, and the final objective of the national devolution process.

2. Three different forest management models arising from the devolution process implementation have to be clearly distinguished

From the implementation process of the “devolution” of forests and pastures to municipalities and commune and the multiple adjustments at national and local level, three main “ideal type” of forest and pasture management are emerging in Albania: Kommunal, Community and Private forest management. These three management options are open to effectively ensure a sustainable management of transferred forests and pastures, and we are not advocating *a priori*, for one best solution. The three options are not necessarily excludable, but it is important to recognise their differences and their specificities, in order to make the best solution fit with the local situation.

“Kommunal” Forest Management (not to be confused with the communal management, which refers to community management, rather than municipal management (Bruce 1999), refers to the situation where the forest ownership, as well as its management responsibilities and exploitation benefits belongs to the local government unit. The management responsibility does not necessarily involve that communes or municipalities have their own forest services for forest exploitation. For instance, in France, the National State Services (Office National des Forêts) is managing “kommunal” forests on the behalf of the communes and municipalities. In Albania, this option is partly implemented in some municipalities, but no permanent “kommunal” forest domain exists as such. It can be an option adopted by the municipalities and communes who are currently undergoing the registration process under IPRO agency, to secure land title for each forest and pasture plot transferred.

Community Forest Management is another option for forestry management in Albania, where the local community plays a central role in forest management with the facilitating support of the government. Management responsibilities and benefits from wood exploitation are managed by the communities to a certain level, depending on the local context, whereas the forest land tenure can be either private or public. In Albania, this option has been introduced through the World Banks forestry projects, since 1996. It started with the creation of *Forestry Village Commissions*, and *Forests and Pasture Users Associations*, at municipal and communal level, to managed and exploit forest resources at the benefit of its participants, according to the *Communal management plans*, and the yearly *Operational Plan* done by the municipal forest engineer (or a forest consultant), with the support/and approval of the State Extension Services. Under this option, supported throughout the two consecutive World Bank forestry projects (AFP and NRDP) the land ownership remained public, even if forest land property was afterwards, transferred from the State level to Commune or Municipalities.

Private forestry refers to the forest management and exploitation on private lands. In Albania, private forestry only represents 4% of the total forest area, which outlines an original forest ownership structure for Albania, compared to other national situations all over the world, where private forestry is much more developed. After the collapse of communist regime, recognition and restitution of private forest land to the former owner started slowly in 1996, and the 1998 Constitution of the Republic of Albania, officially recognized the restitution of property nationalized between 1945 and 1990 in its articles 41 and 1981. This restitution process is a slow process, and some claims are still ongoing cases. Nowadays, the private forestry option is undergoing various debates, and is foreseen as a second step of the devolution process, which could be continued by the ultimate property transfer from *kommunal* forests and pastures to end users. To date, the *Forest User National Federation* is advocating this option.

Figure 23: Typology of the three forest management options possible for communal forests in Albania.

Management of forests and pastures	Examples in the world	Legitimacy	Property	In charge of the management	Making profit from exploitation
<i>Kommunal</i>	France	Representative democracy	Local government units		
Community	Mexico	Human right	State/Private	Community	
Private	France	Rule of Law	End users		
State	France	Regalian Right	State		

Each kind of local management has drawbacks and advantages. It is interesting to foresee what could be the environmental issues for each kind of local management.

Figure 24: Potential or proven environmental impacts of each forest management type

Management of forests and pastures	Potential/Proven Environmental impact
<i>Kommunal</i>	Biodiversity loss, due to priority given on silvicultural productive activities at the expense of a multi-functional uses of forests
« Community »	Biodiversity loss, due to priority given on silvicultural productive activities at the expense of a multi-functional uses of forests
Private	Degradation, due to pressure transfer on wood resources from privatized forest areas (<i>Fis</i>) toward common forest areas (<i>Hali</i> and <i>Korije</i>)

Conclusion

To conclude, we would like to highlight some “take home” messages, based on this field study:

1/ Tools and environmental diagnostic: It is important to recognize the difficulty to mobilize tools of diagnostic available in Albania (forest inventories, satellite images, management plans, etc.) in order to frame the environmental question. They are very different, sometimes contradictory, highly politicized for some, and technically limited to develop comprehensive environmental diagnostic. It is also important to recognize the role of “**practionners’knowledge**” in the diagnostic building process, as a way to include in the understanding of environmental dynamics, customs and practices on forested areas.

2/ Environmental dynamics: based on these field studies, it seems that the environmental doxa only takes into consideration deforestation and degradation dynamics occurring in Albanian forests. It seems important to also tackle **afforestation issues as environmental dynamics** occurring in most of rural territories in Albania (transformation of pasture in scrub forests). These dynamics can also leads to a loss of biodiversity, increase forest fires occurrence, degradation of pastoral landscapes, etc.

3/Devolution process and its complexity should be clarified by distinguishing more clearly, three different issues: Ownership – Uses and Practises – Management/institutional design.

- The **ownership and property rights issues** regarding recently transferred forest and pasture lands. From a binary approach in terms of “public property” (state or communal) versus “private property” ownership, we advocate to recognize a wide range of land use strategies. These uses and practices are organized primarily to the village level - versus forest and pasture transferred at communal level. They are different from a village to another, progressive, in evolution and subject to anticipations or expectations, particularly when it comes to recompose rights of use, access, extraction, exclusion or management into full property rights.
- **The use and practices:** it is important to recognized intertwining activities in forest and pastures lands, depending on the available resources (fodder, chestnut, firewood, coal, aromatic and medicinal plants, etc.). From this multi-functionality it should be inferred different management patterns of these natural resources. In the context of forestry projects, it appears important not fold forest and pastoral areas on a property type/management design in particular, but take into account the multiplicity of statutes to develop more sustainable funding strategies for the management of these areas.
- **Management and institutional design** of the transferred lands in a short, medium and long term. Three ideal type of forest management have to be distinguished: community, kkommunal and private forest management. It is important to identify, in each model, the multiplicity of interests: self-consumption, commercial use, environmental services, landscape conservation, etc. How to set up priorities, and make some choices among different options (social, economic, environmental) which do not have the same time horizon or the same scale of action?

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1991 : Loi n°7501 sur la division des terres agricoles et loi n°7491 sur l'enregistrement des biens immobiliers

Création de ZVRPP financé par l'USAID
1996

1992 : Création des communes

Signature de la charte européenne de "l'autonomie locale"
27/05/1998

Loi n°8652 : Organisation et fonctionnement des "LGUs"
01/10/2000

Loi n°8743 et n°8744 pour l'inventaire et le transfert des "biens publics" aux communes
22/02/2002

Création des listes d'inventaires des "biens publics" par chaque commune avec plusieurs aller-retours éventuels entre le niveau local et national

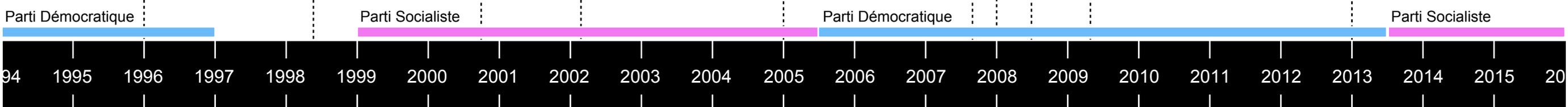
Fin supposé du processus du transfert
2005

Accélération du processus concernant les forêts et pâturages, selon les listes disponibles

Paquet fiscal
2008

L'Albanie dépose sa candidature d'adhésion à l'UE
28/04/2009

Une dizaine de communes ont enregistré leurs terres à ZVRPP
2013



1992 : Loi n°7223 sur les services forestiers

Régulation n°308, transfert de l'usage et l'administration des forêts et pâturages aux communes
16/06/1996

"Strategy of the Forest Sector" annonçant la volonté de céder 40% des terres aux communes
1998

30 communes ont un plan d'aménagement

Création du ministère de l'environnement
2001

Révision de "Strategy of the Forest Sector"
2003

138 communes ont un plan d'aménagement

Loi n°9385 : identification des forêts étatiques, privées, et communales
04/05/2005

Les forêts passent au ministère de l'environnement
01/09/2005

Nouvelle stratégie liée aux problématiques environnementales
01/09/2007

Décret n°22
09/01/2008

Création de NFCFP
2006

SIDA menace de sortir du projet
01/06/2007

Contractualisation de SNV par PMT pour renforcer les associations d'usagers

Travaux d'entretiens des forêts communales par les associations d'usagers

218 communes ont un plan d'aménagement

Création des "extensions services"
2011

Albanian Forestry Program (AFP)
\$\$ WB, italian government...
09/08/1996 à 30/06/2004

- 1. Développement institutionnel (5,1 millions \$)
- 2. Gestion des forêts (8,1 millions US\$)
- 3. Construction de routes forestières (2,4 millions US\$)
- 4. Gestion des forêts communales (2,3 millions US\$)
- 5. Gestion des aires protégées (0,4 million US\$)

Natural Resources Development Program (NRDP)
\$\$ WB, GEF, SIDA...
29/11/2005 à 30/11/2010

- 1. Gestion des forêts et pâturages (13,2 millions US\$)
- 2. Gestion des bassins versants (4 millions US\$)
- 3. Évaluation et suivi (2,2 millions US\$)

Prolongement de NRDP

Début prévu de Environmental Services Program (ESP)
01/07/2014