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Pastoral Commons: a tale of beauty and destruction

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Communities

Ecosystem

Needs

Sinjajevina

Conclusion

MEDITERRANEAN MOUNTAIN PASTORAL COMMONS

Pastoral commons are at the same time natural and cultural. They are pasturelands conserved by local populations through **community governance system** implying that access to and use of these ecosystems have to follow a series of **rules** set up by the local communities themselves (e.g. prohibition to graze during the most sensitive moments of the year like in spring), in order to:

- Give a rest to the plants in their key periods of growth and/or reproduction.
- Maximize annual production.
- Ensure the continuity of the ecosystems.
- Make human activity sustainable while benefiting communities and biodiversity.



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HIGHLANDERS

Traditional mountain communities are the first to be interested in **conserving the ecosystems** and natural resources on which their survival depends and to which they are deeply **culturally connected**. This mutual interest they share, guarantees greater conservation outputs and diminishes agro-territorial conflicts.



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Introduction

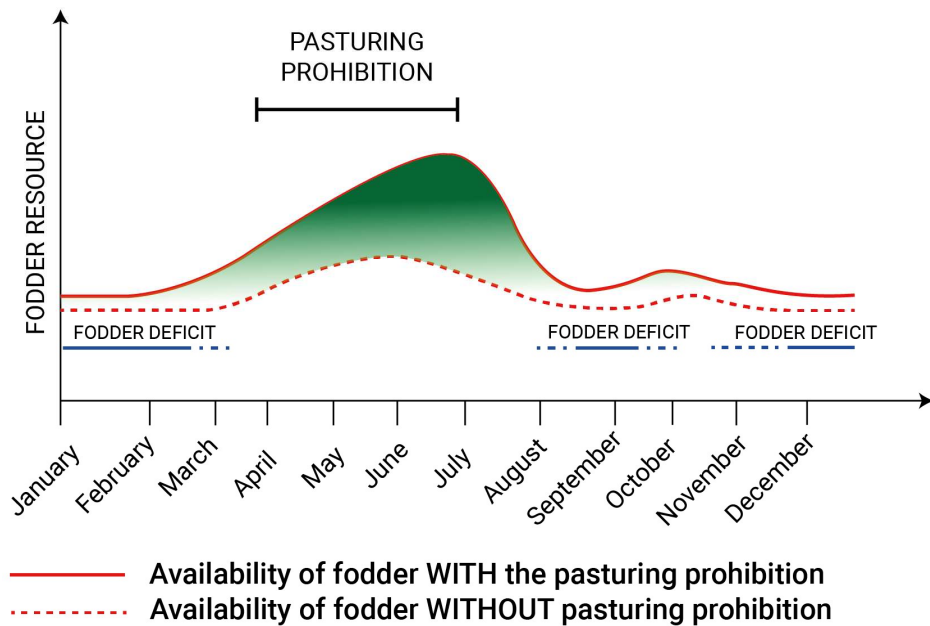
Communities

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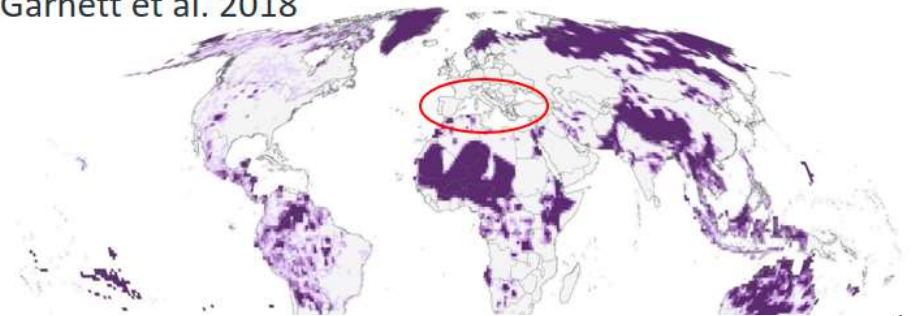
Sinjajevina

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Hypothetic presence of pastoral commons in the Mediterranean within the current research gap.

Garnett et al. 2018



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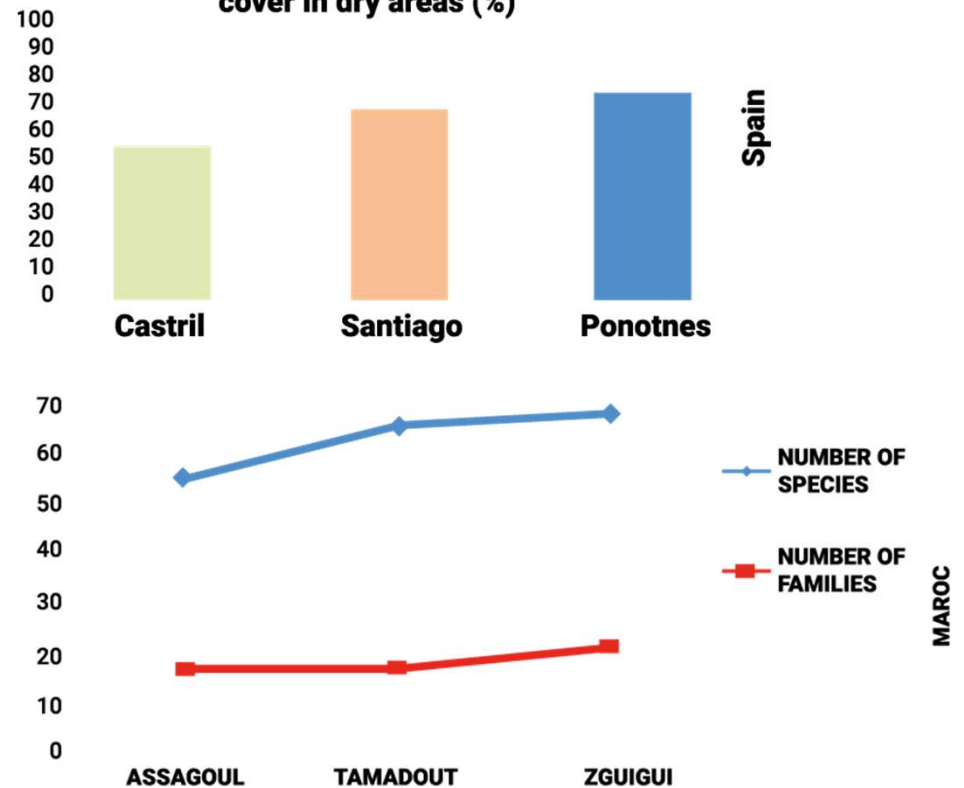
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ECOSYSTEMIC ROLE

From a minimum (left) to a maximum (right) of the communal management system, we can observe the increase in vegetation cover (upper graph), in species and in families (lower graph). At the same time, among others, pastoral commons favor:

- Pools for seed conservation and diffusion.
- Soil retention against erosion.
- Availability of water.
- Carbon sinks against climate change.
- Diversity of landscapes.

Transhumant vegetation cover in dry areas (%)



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URGENT NEEDS

It can be assumed that there are **hundreds of thousands of commons** in the Mediterranean region and that they could cover more than half a million km².

But it's impossible to know their exact range, as well as their precise global environmental, socio-cultural and economic role, unless a **major comparative research** on these is launched.

This would also be the first step towards elaborating an **effective protection and promotion plan** that can no longer be postponed, since most of these systems are **threatened or in degradation phases**. In fact, all over the Mediterranean and for many centuries up to our own days, abusing them is a generalized pattern that must be reverted.



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THE EXAMPLE OF SINJAJEVINA

Sinjajevina is a cluster of pastoral commons in Montenegro, the biggest mountain pasture of the Balkans, the second in Europe and a vital ecosystem against climate change and in favor of biodiversity conservation. People here have not forgotten they are one with the land they live in. They synchronize with the rhythm of nature and nature with them. Around them, undegradated slopes reach as far as the eyes can see, unbearably green in summer, unbearably white in winter. In many senses a heavenly place. But as it always happens, some see heaven and feel like eating the apple.



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In 2019 the government of Montenegro supported by NATO, decided to inaugurate a military training ground in Sinjajevina without measures against the damage this would represent to the land, to its people and to these socio-ecologically invaluable commons. Once we destroy these systems, it is very hard (to not say impossible), to reconstruct their thousands of years' living heritage, so we should think on protecting them rather than destroying them.

This military training ground stands as an example of the generalized state of constant threat on most commons in the Mediterranean basin, as they are rarely legally recognized, and of how urgent it is to address them and to work to protect them at the Mediterranean scale.

Saving Sinjajevina is a first step towards preserving all Mediterranean pastoral communal ecosystems. And it's one worth taking.

