Perseverance of Eastern European Peasant Landscapes

Ingolf Vogeler
Department of Geography
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

sabbatical research
Post-1989 Eastern European Peasant Literature

These publications use the term “peasant” only as a catchy label; they actually discuss re-privatization land reforms, farm structures, and agricultural policies since 1989.

http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/19/romania-peasants-land-market-local-farming-economy

I deal with the contemporary peasantry directly, their material culture and the resulting cultural landscapes. I took 2,307 photos on my 15 day trip in June 2017 or 154 photos per day.
Eastern European Peasant Landscapes
Eastern European Peasant Landscapes
Eastern European Peasant Landscapes
Topics on the Peasantry

1) Making of the Peasantry
2) Destruction of the Peasantry
3) Re-Emergence of the Peasantry
4) Census Data on the Peasantry
5) Romanian Peasant Landscapes
6) Slovenian Peasant Landscapes
7) Future of the Peasantry
8) Bibliography of the Peasantry
Making of the Peasantry

Differentiation between Serfs, Peasants, and Farmers in Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Elements</th>
<th>Serfs</th>
<th>Peasants</th>
<th>Farmers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>labor</td>
<td>![Arrow]</td>
<td>![Arrow]</td>
<td>![Arrow]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>land ownership</td>
<td>![Arrow]</td>
<td>![Arrow]</td>
<td>![Arrow]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>markets</td>
<td>![Arrow]</td>
<td>![Arrow]</td>
<td>![Arrow]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Serfs** during the Middle Ages used their labor to work the land of their lords and the land assigned to them for their own subsistence. Local markets played minor roles in the lives of serfs.

**Peasants** used/use their labor for subsistence on leased (contracted) land from landlords or their own land, frequently mortgaged. Trade with nearby towns is used to sell their surplus and to buy a variety of personal and farm related items.

**Farmers** use their labor for profit maximization, not self-sufficiency. They cultivate owned, mortgaged, or rented land and their outputs are geared to regional, national, and indeed international markets.
## Making of the Peasantry

### Differentiation between Serfs, Peasants, and Farmers in Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serfs</th>
<th>Peasants</th>
<th>Farmers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forced labor</strong> to work the land of lords and to provide for their own survival. Worked for landlords.</td>
<td><strong>Self-sufficient</strong> (subsistence) but pay taxes, if any, to the national states (these taxes replaced labor levied by landlords); <strong>labor intensive</strong></td>
<td><strong>Market</strong> (profit)-oriented and pay taxes to various levels of governments; <strong>capital intensive</strong> for machinery, buildings, land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legally tied to the land</strong> of specific lords; medieval towns only way to “escape”</td>
<td><strong>Often own land,</strong> * used as a resource for traditional lifestyles; smaller-scale</td>
<td><strong>Own/rent land;</strong> produce for commercial markets; larger scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western Europe during the Middle Ages (up to 14th century); Eastern Europe until mid-19th century (1864 in Romania)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Western Europe until 19th century, even 1930s in some regions; Eastern Europe mostly until 1940s and again after 1990s</strong></td>
<td><strong>Western Europe largely after 19th century; Eastern Europe mostly until 1940s and again after 1990s</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In **pre-WWII Romania,** landlords made annual contracts with peasants which specified payment in cash, products, “gifts,” and penalties for the land peasants leased and labor requirements for the land of the landlords which the peasants worked.*
Making of the Peasantry
Serfs become Peasants in Eastern Europe

- Serfdom appeared only at the end of the 15\textsuperscript{th} and especially during the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries in Eastern Europe.
- Serfdom tended to be introduced in Eastern Europe by governmental decrees rather than spreading piecemeal as a result of the policies of individual landlords.
- Eastern European serfdom was more oppressive than its western counterpart. (18\textsuperscript{th} century Romanian serfs: 4 days/week worked for landlords, plus tithes to landlords and church)
- Serfdom lasted much longer in Eastern than in Western Europe, and was only abolished during the nineteenth century, beginning in Prussia (1807), later in Mecklenburg (1820), Russia (1861), and Romania (1864).

Which led Mitrany (1968) and others, to say: "[Romanian] peasants reached the worst degree of economic and social bondage after their emancipation [1864]" (xxxiii). "Not until 1918 [for example] did peasants have the formally recognized right to till their own fields before the landlord fields. Until then the mass of peasants had in practice remained bound to the landlords" (xxxi). Neo-feudalism in all its forms, except legally.
Making of the Peasantry
Serfs become Peasants in Eastern Europe

When serfdom was abolished, serfs became
1. **landless peasants** working on previous or other large farms/estates
2. **tenant (contract) peasantry**, who in many countries often became **hereditary peasantry** through laws – **common in Romania**
3. **gradually acquired land to farm on their own** – Eastern Europe today
4. **or moved to towns** to find employment

**PERSONAL NOTE:** Although serfdom in **Mecklenburg** was officially abolished in 1820 after 166 years (1654 decree), aspects and practices of serfdom were still being practiced by the landed elite in much of Eastern Europe for another 110 years after the emancipation of the serfs.

As a young teacher in the **1930s** on the island of Rugen in **Mecklenburg**, my mother observed near serf-like conditions (poverty, illiteracy, in-breeding, illness) and total dependence (for employment, shelter, food, income) on large estate owners (**Junkers**) who still dominated eastern Germany. These large estates were only eliminated when the Communistic government of the DDR (Deutsche (German) Democratic Republic) nationalization these estates after World War II.
## Making of the Peasantry

### Characteristics of the Serf-Peasant-Farmer Continuum in Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Middle Ages (up to 14th century)</th>
<th>Serf Emancipation (15th century to 1864)</th>
<th>Industrial Era (19th century)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agricultural</td>
<td>serfs</td>
<td>peasants (folk)</td>
<td>farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultivators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban places</td>
<td>administrative</td>
<td>market</td>
<td>industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>energy sources</td>
<td>animate (human, animal, wind, water)</td>
<td>animate (human, animal, wind, water)</td>
<td>inanimate (steam, electricity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
<td>collective</td>
<td>individual</td>
<td>factories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trading</td>
<td>barter goods</td>
<td>bargain over prices</td>
<td>fixed prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scale</td>
<td>local</td>
<td>regional</td>
<td>national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economy</td>
<td>agrarian</td>
<td>agrarian</td>
<td>industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>survival</td>
<td>communal land</td>
<td>private land</td>
<td>private land, jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social change</td>
<td>slowest</td>
<td>slow</td>
<td>faster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Eastern European Peasant Landscapes**

**Making of the Peasantry**

12
Making of the Romanian Peasantry

Farm size before and after the Romanian land reform of 1918

During the Great Peasant Revolt of 1907, at least 10,000 peasants were killed by government soldiers and police. The 1918 land reform* was to address the demands of the peasantry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farms size</th>
<th>Up to 1907 Pop</th>
<th>Up to 1907 Arable Land</th>
<th>1918 Reform * Arable Land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peasant (&lt;10 ha; 25 acres)</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>40.29 % (poorest land)</td>
<td>81.43 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (10-100 ha; 25-247 acres)</td>
<td>6.01%</td>
<td>11 %</td>
<td>10.80 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large# (&gt;100 ha; 247 acres)</td>
<td>0.86%</td>
<td>48.68 % (best land)</td>
<td>7.77 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# dependent on peasants to work their land
* Expropriation of two million hectares from large landlords to peasants.

Source: Mitrany 1968, 87-89
Making of the Romanian Peasantry

Based on the **Romanian 1917-21 land reforms**, almost all peasants got possession of arable land, even though relatively few of them had economically sufficient holdings; thus, requiring them to contract with landlords to survive. **In 1927 about three million peasant families existed in Romania, about the same number as in 2017!**

As more land was cultivated by peasants, corn replaced wheat as the major crop. Landlords had been interested in extensive wheat production as an export crop, but **peasants preferred corn** which was **labor-intensive** and immediately **beneficial to people and livestock:**

1. more complete food for people
2. easier to prepare than bread
3. better fodder than wheat straw
4. fewer seeds per area
5. lower cost for seeds
6. planted later, less interference with other farm tasks

Source: Mitrany 1968, 374
Making of the Romanian Peasantry

Just before World War II, 8 percent of landowners still owned about 50 percent of the agricultural land and the remaining land was held in very small units.

### Romanian Farm Structure Just Prior to World War II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Sizes</th>
<th>Farms</th>
<th>Agricultural Land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 ha (2.5 acres)</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 ha (2.5-7.4 acres)</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 ha (7.4-12.3 acres)</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5 ha (12.3 acres)</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sabates-Wheeler 2005
Ironically communist governments created, destroyed, and preserved peasant farms! These governments initially used land reform to create private farms; later they consolidated peasant and other private farms into collectives and state farms. After the Fall of the Iron Curtain former peasants and other private farmers claimed their land holdings and thus peasant farming re-emerged as a significant phenomena in Eastern Europe, particularly in Romania.

Source: Vogeler 1996 and field work June 2017
Destruction of the Romanian Peasantry

Romanian communist land reform in 1945
• expropriated land owned above 50 hectares (124 acres) and distributed to landless farm workers and farm households with less than 5 hectares (12.4 acres).
• 1.4 million hectares were expropriated and 1 million hectares were distributed.
• but by the 1950s, most land was collectivized; cooperative and state farms replaced private property.
• only peasants in mountainous regions escaped collectivization, where the average farm size was 2.3 ha (5.7 acres)

Sources: Davidova 2013; Knight 2010; Micu 2016; Verdery 2003; Vogeler 2017, personal conversations with peasants
Destruction of the Peasantry

After the Fall of the Iron Curtain, post-1989

*Governments in Eastern Europe:*  
Re-established private farms, including *peasant holdings* (re-privatization, re-peasantization)

*National & European Union (EU) policies:*  
Farm policies, food standards, and taxes are *destroying* (or ignoring) small private farms, including *peasant holdings* (de-peasantization, de-modernization)

*Capitalist institutions:*  
Banks and markets are *destroying* small private farms, including *peasant holdings* (de-peasantization, de-modernization)
Destruction of the Peasantry

As many peasants emerged out of serfdom to finally own their own land and live their own lives without external inferences, the modern states and economies of capitalism, then communism, and now capitalism again fundamentally doomed/doom the peasantry to extinction!

Ironically, while communist governments helped create many peasant holdings initially (1940s-1950s), they than dissolved them (1960s). Capitalist governments restored peasant holdings again (1990s) but without the agricultural supports to make them viable; hence, dooming peasants permanently!

Peasants don’t want to become more “efficient” or produce for markets. They are content to be self-sufficient, to provide for their families, cooperate with other peasants for work and trade, and minimize their dependence on governments, as much as possible. Subsistence production provides households with important buffers for survival in the short and long terms.
Destruction of the Peasantry

Peasants and Anarchism

Peasants practice anarchism, even if they neither know what it is nor accept the label. Anarchist principles are quite compatible with traditional peasant aspirations and behaviors.

Anarchist concepts

- Balanced communities: human-nature, physical-mental, work-leisure
- Face-to-face decision-making
- Voluntary participation
- Humanistic (appropriate) technologies
- Decentralized society, economically and geographically
- Rejection of exploitation (capitalism and state communism) and domination (governments)
- Independence in work: ownership of land, free labor, and control of one’s produce

The overwhelming power of the state (military, police, courts, laws, regulations, and taxes) eventually destroy(ed) peasant communities.

Re-Emergence of the Romanian Peasantry

Results of 1991 Land Reform:
(de-collectivization, re-privatization and re-peasantization)

• Romanian farmers represents 20 % of the entire EU farm labor force.
• 32 % of the population is involved in agriculture – by far the highest percentage in Europe (USA 1 %, Germany 2.2 %, France 3.4 %).
• 5 % of all farm holdings were under one hectare; 82 % were under 5 ha -- a larger percentage than after the land reforms of 1918 and 1945! Field fragmentation resulted in 23-45 million parcels for the restituted 9.2 million hectares in the 1990s, with an average number of parcels per holding ranging from 3-4 to 7-8 across Romania.
• 43 % of the recipients owning 40 % of the land now lived in towns.

• 57 % of the new owners are over 65 years.
• 41 % of the rural population are pensioners.
• 65 % of the land is owned by pensioners.

Sources: Davidova 2013; Knight 2010; Micu 2016; Verdery 2003
Re-Emergence of the Romanian Peasantry

decomollectivization and re-privatization
returned private property after post-1989 land reforms

re-peasantization
re-established very small and small farms with many plots

de-modernization or re-traditionalization
fossilized small farms with 1930s farming (peasant) practices
for lack of support from Romanian and European Union agricultural policies
Re-Emergence of the Romanian Peasantry

Land has been the obsession of peasants since the Middle Ages; de-collectivization in 1998 was to make land ownership “finally” a reality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romanian Farm Structure Change Pre-1989 and 1989</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>land &amp; size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arable land (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>average size (ha)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: household survey data from Mathijs and Noev 2004, Table 1, p. 75.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postsocialism Subsistence Farming in Three Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>share of all individual farms:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subsistence farms %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subsistence cultivated land %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: household survey data from Mathijs and Noev 2004, Table 2, p. 78. Mathijs and Noev (2004) used statistical analysis to create indices without providing specific values which defined subsistence farms.
Re-Emergence of the Romanian Peasantry

- Romania's *farm population* increased from 28% in 1989 to over 40% in the next two years – largely small subsistence peasant holdings (Verdery 2003)!

- Romanian government introduced **capitalist land reform in 1991 and 2000**: restituted land up to a maximum limit of 50 ha (124 acres) of arable land per household. 1991 decollectivization redistributed 9.2 million hectares to many previous owners (Verdery 2003).

Most subsistence farmers did not insist on recreating inter-war peasant farming rather than use complex inputs; but they have no choice. They use **horses** because they can not afford tractors; they use **manure** to fertilize their crops because they can not afford chemicals. They got their land back, but lack the necessary agricultural inputs of sufficient land, labor, machinery, and chemicals. If they had received adequate prices for their commodities (based in part on EU and Romania farm policies), most would not have returned to farming practices of the 1930s (von Hirschhausen 1997).

Verdery calls this process “demodernization” rather than “retraditonalization” (Verdery 2003).
Re-Emergence of the Romanian Peasantry

Romania’s communal grazing areas persist.

• Peasants still graze their animals on common lands as they did before enclosure laws; one of the earliest being in the 16th century in England.

• In Western Europe, enclosures drove peasants off the land to towns leaving the land free for landlords to work directly, but in Romania enclosures tied peasants to the villages and to work the land of landlords, not directly as serfs but indirectly through annual contracts.

Despite the loss of some common lands, communal land persists in Romania:

• 2 million ha (4.9 million acres) is communal pasture meadows.
• 25% of all land is communally grazed.
• 90% of farmers graze their cattle and particularly their sheep on communal lands.

Source: Dale-Harris 2014; Mitrany 1968, 474.
EU Census Data on Peasants

Importance of agriculture in the economy

Map showing the percentage of GDP contributed by agriculture in different European countries. The map indicates the significance of agriculture in the economy, with a color key for percentage ranges. Source: European Commission.
EU Census Data on Peasants

Percent of Farms for Four Eastern European Countries by Farm Size (ha/ acres)

- **Poland % Farms**
- **Hungary % Farms**
- **Slovenia % Farms**
- **Romania % Farms**

The smallest Romanian farms account for 71% of all farms, second highest only to Hungary among the EU member states.

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Agricultural_census_in_Romania and other countries
EU Census Data on Peasants

Percent of Farmland for Four Eastern European Countries by Farm Size (ha/acres)

- Poland % Land
- Hungary % Land
- Slovenia % Land
- Romania % Land

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Agricultural_census_in_Romania and other countries
Romania has 20 million people, 36 percent are “farmers”.

EU Census Data on Peasants

Romania has a large percentage of pensioners who operate subsistence farms. “Older landowners in general have little incentive to transfer their land to more “efficient” users but do prefer to continue pre-collectivization practices” (Mathijs and Noev 2004).
Subsistence (peasant) farms are defined by having less than 1.3 hectares (3.2 acres) in cereals, or 1 dairy cow, or 25 ewes, or any combination.

The **European Union** has 6.7 million subsistence farms; 5.7 million, or 86 percent, are located in Eastern Europe countries.

**Romania** has the largest number of subsistence farms (3.02 million) in the European Union.

**U.S. has only 2.2 million farms**

According to the European Union, officially peasants are called "subsistence farmers". Although three other Eastern European countries have slightly larger percentages of subsistence farms than Romania (72%), their absolute numbers are much lower, ranging from 1.4 million to 56,000. The persistence of peasantry continues in Romania: in 1907, peasants represented 81 percent of the population.

Source: Thurton 2008
Subsistence and Peasant Farming

The subsistent and peasant farming are closely related.

- **Peasants practice subsistence farming.** In “Developed Countries”, the term subsistence is substituted for peasant. For example, what in Canada and the United States is called subsistence farming is called peasant farming in Mexico and “Less Developed Countries”.

- **Anthropologists** commonly use the term “peasants”; **economists** use “subsistence farming”.

- **Peasant farming is described by economists and others in largely negative, indeed pejorative, terms:** being historical, simple (primitive) technology, inefficient, not economically viable, low productivity per worker.

- **Peasants as a class have largely disappeared as societies industrializes, while persisting in “Developing/Third World/Majority” countries.**
European Union (EU)  
Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

**EU farm policy is bias against peasants.**

**Peasantry:**
- 70% of Romanian “farmers” are NOT eligible for CAP subsidies.
- 80% of eligible Romanian “farmers” get between 98 ($110) and 490 Euros ($546) per farm per year, a very small amount even in Romania.

**Large-Scale Farms:**
- 0.9% of 100-500 ha (247-1,236 acres) farms get 51% of subsidies.
- 0.2% of >500 ha (1,236 acres) farms receive 30% of subsidies.

Peasant and Subsistence Farming

Structure of Current Romanian Peasant Holdings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Holdings #</th>
<th>Holdings</th>
<th>Farmland</th>
<th>Romanian gov.</th>
<th>EU CAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 ha</td>
<td>2.8 millions</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>not classified</td>
<td>excluded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10 ha</td>
<td>1.04 millions</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>classified</td>
<td>CAP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Farms under 4 ha (10 acres) represent 75% of all farms and 50% of all farmland in Romania.

- About 80% of “individual holdings” consume more than 50% of their output.
- Over 50% of Romanian farm holdings sell less than 50% of their produce.
- These peasants also provide food to relatives and friends in nearby towns.
- 41% of all “farmers” process their own farm products (in the EU, only 8%).

Sources: Page and Popa 2013; Knight 2010
Peasant Landscapes in Romania
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Peasants are concentrated in the Carpathian and Sub-Carpathian Mountains

**Maramures region**
- Hungarian region
- Saxon region

**Study areas**

- **Nord-Vest**: average farm size 3.1 ha (7.6 acres), which is the average size for the whole country; **1.2 million “farmers”**

- **Nord-Est**: average farm size 2.3 ha (5.6 acres), smallest in Romania; **1.8 million “farmers”**

- **Centru**: average farm size 3.4 ha (8.4 acres); **1 million “farmers”**

**total 4.0 million “farmers”**
Peasant Landscapes in Romania
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

“Peasants are the greatest sanctuary of sanity . . . when they disappear, there is no hope for the [human] race.” – Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Horses per 1,000 people

- Belgium: 47.80
- Romania: 36.5

Romania: 50 horses per 1,000 farm population; 2.5 horses per peasant unit
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

The color of hay is mirrored in the color of women’s stockings!
Key Peasant Landscape Features in Romania

labor intensive features
# Peasant Landscape Features in Romania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Landscape Feature (major = bold)</th>
<th>Frequency (20 %tile)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field</strong></td>
<td>crops on lowlands: corn, wheat, potatoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>meadows on slopes with <strong>hay stacks</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmstead</strong></td>
<td>log houses, particularly log barns; wooden gates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kitchen gardens, firewood piles, all kinds of farm gates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fruit brandy stills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wells and privies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>livestock: <strong>horses</strong>, cows, sheep, pigs, chickens, ducks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Village</strong></td>
<td>blacksmiths &amp; water mills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>sheep with shepherds</strong> on uplands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cow milk collection sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wooden or fortified churches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>whirlpools for cleaning woolen rugs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dance circles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region</strong></td>
<td>periodic weekly markets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bee-keeping and honey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Cross Section of Carpathian Mountains

Mountain peaks, 2,500 feet

Forests: walnuts, beech, pine; wild strawberries, mushrooms, herbs

Alpine plateau villages & meadows: lush sheep pastures & sheep stations on communal lands

Cultivated strip crops on south-facing slopes, up to 1,200-1,300 feet: millet & rye; high, age-old stone walled fields

Villages & cultivated strip crops on valley floors: wheat, maize, barely, oats; orchards

Transhumance already documented by the early 15th century

Source: modified after Giurescu and Vogeler June 2017 field work
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Field sizes
The patchwork of field strips on hillsides are just about the size of a day's worth of fieldwork.

Vogeler, ground photo June 2017
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

**Field sizes**

Small 2-5 acre plots spread across valleys within a day's horse ride from the villages.

Google Earth photo 2017
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Field crops
Corn and winter wheat; villagers eat corn and feed it to livestock and use wheat for bread and sell the rest. Other minor crops are barely, fodder beets, and potatoes.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Field fragmentation
9.45 ha farm with 12 parcels

Map 3 The fragmentation of holdings. Map made by a Vlaicean whose 9.45 hectares are in 12 parcels (drawn much larger than they actually are). He indicates the area, dimensions, and neighbors for each parcel, locating them by the name of the larger field that contains them.

Source: Verdery 2003, 134
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

- Sheep grazing
- Meadows
- Hay barns
- Field crops
- Village
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Field meadows for hay
Hay is cut on the lower elevations and the uplands are used for sheep grazing. Hay fields are rarely fertilized; only crop fields are. Wild flowers abound regardless of location.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Field meadows for hay
Peasants expend consider labor and time during the three months of summer cutting, tossing, staking, and hauling hay for their horses, milk cows, and sheep. Men and women, and often children and old folk, prepare hay from the natural wild flower meadows from narrow strips and rough surfaced hillsides. 10-20 strokes of cutting grasses, then scythes must be sharpened with stones for 15 strokes.

“You need a Russian scythe, a Hungarian whetstone, and Romanian sweat.”

Only the traditional folk clothing has changed since the 1930s.

Vogeler, field work in June 2017

National Geographic, April 1934
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Field meadows for hay
Tools of hay making: handmade wooden rake and fork, and scythe.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Field meadows for hay
Newly cut grass (green) is being tossed to dry and later to be piled onto the wooden platform and around the wooden pole to be stored until winter, or even the next year.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Field meadows for hay
Cutting hay, tossing, and piling it into hay stakes are the most characteristic of peasant landscapes, and are the most distinctive labor intensive activity of peasant activities.

three empty hay rakes and one large pole hay stack, just beyond the village of leud
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

For forty years of communist rule, the valleys in Maramures escaped collectivized farming because of poor soil and hilly landscape. In the post cold-war period, peasant farming continues.

Hay is cut on very small private strips of land and on common lands, which may be assigned different areas to each family; hence, the absence of permanent hay-drying rakes, as found in Slavonia for example.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

“One hay cart for each leg” – one cow is said to eat 4 cartloads of hay over the winter.

Hay stacks can last ten years or longer; they can be traded or handed down by inheritance.

Grass and then hay must be handled at least 10 times before it is eaten by livestock – intensive hand labor indeed!
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

The color of hay. The quality and age of hay can be seen by its color; the quality of work by the time it takes peasants to bring one stack home.

One large hay stack lasts 1 week for 5 cows.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Hay stacks and adjustable-hay sheds in hay fields near Hoteni, Romania

Road signs like this one are only found on major highways.

ground photos from Google Earth; close ups, Vogeler June 2017 field work
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Pole hay stacks and adjustable-hay sheds in hay fields near Hoteni

air and ground photos from Google Earth
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

In the open countryside between Breb and Budesti, Google Earth shows in a randomly selected area, shown in yellow, about 64 pole haystacks (green) in 8.64 acres, or **7.4 haystacks per acre**! Notice the many strips of hay fields and the absence of adjustable-roof hay sheds here; these permanent structurers are only found close to and in the villages.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Hay meadows

- lower, more level hayfields are typically cut in June and July, and again in September by small hand-held machines and by hand with scythes.
- steeper upland meadows are cut once a year by hand with scythes.
- photo: newly cut grass is hauled to farmsteads to feed horses, cows, and sheep during the summer. Hay stakes will be used in the winter.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

*Hay stacks define the peasant landscape.*

Hay stacks by type and age

- **pile**
- **small or large pole**
- **single or double rack**
- **adjustable roof**

- current year (green)
- last yr (light brown)
- 2 yrs (dark brown)
- 3+ yrs (almost black)
Peasant Haying

Haying hand-tools-small-tractor equipment continuum

- cutting
- tossing
- drying
- gathering

Hand tools: more common in Romania
Hand-held equipment: more common in Slovenia
Small tractors:
Peasant Farming in Romania

Farmstead gates

Hungarian region

Saxon region
Peasant Farming in Romania

Farmstead wooden gates, particularly in Maramures

A new hand-carved wooden farm gate in the Maramures region
Peasant Farming in Romania

Farmstead hand-carved wooden gates in Maramures
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Restored traditional peasant farmstead: log buildings, wooden shingles, woven wooden fence with wooden shingle top, and wooden carved gate.
Peasant Farming in Romania

1. **farmsteads**: houses, cows & sheep hay-barns, pig pens, chicken coops, hay stacks
2. **farmstead orchards**: apple, pear, plum; edged by walnuts
3. **fields near villages on valley floors**: small scattered plots (corn, wheat, potatoes), often 0.3 ha
4. **common hay-meadows on valley slopes**: closest to villages for cows; farthest from villages, sheep
5. **common forests**: firewood, tools, building supplies

Source: Vogeler 2017, June field work
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Traditional peasant farmstead: log buildings, wooden shingles on house and thatched roof on outbuildings, chickens, hay stack, and drying squash and grain.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Log houses, often covered with siding or plaster today, and log barns in particular are very common in peasant communities, outside of the Saxon villages where stone and stucco prevail.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Often log houses are covered with siding or plaster. In this photo the plaster has fallen off.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Log houses and particularly barns define peasant landscapes.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Log houses and particularly barns define peasant landscapes.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Log barn with hay door and manure window for a small herd of cows

two metal milk cans, wooden hand tools, sack of pig feed
Because log buildings are scattered throughout villages, peasant landscapes are not as obvious as you might think!
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Farmstead milk cows
They are hand milked in the early mornings before going out to pastures
• locally elected cow herders take cows out of the villages to graze on communal pastures starting in May
• cows are returned to the villages in the each evenings when they are milked again by hand

For peasants (subsistence farmers), the sale of cow’s milk is an important source of income.

Peasants sell their produce at local markets and on roadsides if they are not prevented by police. Livestock markets in particular are for peasants, not urbanites. Informal trading was tacitly tolerated until the end of 2006. Subsequently, police checkpoints were strengthened in order to meet EU food requirements.
Festivals are for the peasants, not for tourists and the “sale of culture”.

For how peasants are coping in post-socialist societies, see Fox 2011.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Farmstead Animals
Horses, milk cows, chickens, geese or ducks, pigs, sheep. Milk cows are frequently kept in barns all day; occasionally they are herded to pastures between milking on communal lands. **One cow eats four or more tons of hay in the winter**, which requires up to 5 acres of hay land; communal lands are also used to harvest hay.

**Wooden-carved tombstones show the importance of dairy cows.**
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Farmstead animals
Horses are the draft power for peasants; milk cows provide milk for sale; chickens, geese, ducks, and pigs are raised for personal consumption; sheep are kept for cheese and wool.

As the number of peasants declines so do the number of horses. Breb, in the heart of Maramures, had 400 horses before 1990, now only 40 are left.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

**Farmstead horses**

Horses are the draft power for peasants. They plow fields, weed crops, haul hay for themselves and the cows in the summer and for all livestock, including sheep, during the winter.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Farmstead horses

Horses are the draft power for peasants, as shown on wooden carved tombstones (top right). Yet some peasants are using hand-held gas-driven grass cutters (circled in red) instead of scythes.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Farmstead wells
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Farmstead outdoor baking ovens and firewood
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Farmstead privies and corn cribs

privies are often found next to manure piles by the barns.

traditional corn crib for livestock feed
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Farmstead landscape features: privy, hay stake poles, firewood, cloth drying.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Gardens and Orchards

Gardens near farm houses (about 0.5 ha in area):
- vegetables -- potatoes, beans, cabbages, carrots, tomatoes, peppers, rhubarb
- flowers -- white and pink peonies, love-lie-bleeding, busy-lizzies, zinnias

Orchards (about 1 ha) in back of farmsteads:
- fruit trees and vines, such as apples, cherries, plums, grapes
- wild walnut trees, beyond are the arable fields or the common grazing lands
1930s Peasant Landscapes in Germany

- Horse-drawn plowing
- Peasant farmstead
- Village blacksmith
- Winter sledging logs out of forests

Source: Janßen 1939
498,019 (almost a million) farms, or 8.3 percent of all farms, were classified by the USDA as subsistence farms in 1930.

Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Village churches
A. Lutheran (German), Roman Catholic (Hungarian), Eastern Orthodox (Romanian)
B. fortified (walled) in the Saxon villages and wooden churches elsewhere
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Village Cemeteries with many wooden carved grave markers
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

**Village Cemeteries** with many wooden-carved grave markers, Merry Cemetery
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Village stills to make fruit (plum or apple) brandy

The Romani, as they prefer to be called in Romania (otherwise known as Roma or Gipsy) collect metal, recycle it, or make metal objects, like stills, which they trade or sell to peasants in the villages.
The village of Breb with a population of 1,500 has 30 stills! Peasants bring their fermented fruit and firewood to a still operator, who keeps a percentage of the production. No money is exchanged and making alcohol is of course illegal!
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Village blacksmiths for shoeing horses and metal work for farm equipment
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Village public wells, particularly in the Saxon and Hungarian regions
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Village troughs for livestock and public wells in the Saxon villages
Eastern European Peasant Landscapes

**Peasant Landscapes in Romania**

**Village communal dairy cow pastures**

In some peasant villages (particularly in the Saxon villages) dairy cows are taken by shepherds to nearby pastures during the day and returned at night for milking. In other villages (particularly in Maramures) cows are kept in barns all year long. **More than 60 percent of milk in Romania comes from peasants with two or three cows; most of the milk never leaves their farmsteads.**
Peasants bring their twice daily hand-milked milk by hand cart (bottom right-hand corner) to the village milk collection site, from hence it will be picked up by truck and taken to a dairy. Cows’ milk is one of the few farm products sold by these peasants.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Village whirlpools in mountain streams for preparing wool for garments and cleaning woolen carpets and clothing
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Village dance circles for festivals and village gatherings, rarely found today. Mesendorf restored this one for its young Romanian folk dance group.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

**Village handicrafts**
- painted walls and ceilings in houses with flora motifs
- wool and hemp woven rugs, blankets, tablecloths, curtains
- felt (woolen) hats and coats
- hand-made tools: wooden rakes & baskets; metal-wooden plows & wagons
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

**Village sheep**

Milk ewes are the most dominant livestock in Romania.

EU-28 = 23,481
(Most popular type of dairy orientation)

![Map showing distribution of milk ewes in Romania](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/1/13/Dairy_livestock_specialisation%2C_by_NUTS_level_2_region%2C_2013_%28%29%28thousand_dairy_cow_equivalents_for_the_most_popular_type_of_dairy_orientation%29_RYB15.png)

- **Dairy cows**
- **Buffaloes (all animals)**
- **Milk ewes**
- **Goats**

EU-28 = dairy cows
(Most popular type of dairy orientation)

- < 20
- 20 – < 50
- 50 – < 100
- 100 – < 200
- >= 200

[Link to data source](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/1/13/Dairy_livestock_specialisation%2C_by_NUTS_level_2_region%2C_2013_%28%29%28thousand_dairy_cow_equivalents_for_the_most_popular_type_of_dairy_orientation%29_RYB15.png)
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Communal wild flower meadows are used for sheep grazing and milk production.

Up to 50 different grasses and flowers are found in a single square yard of meadow!
Although still numerous, sheep and cattle numbers are declining. Csikborzsova, in the Hungarian region of Romania, had 3,000 cattle and 5,000 sheep in 1990 which decreased to 1,000 and 3,500 in 2016, respectively.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

**Village sheep**

Peasants in the Carpathian Mountains rear sheep in common. They hire shepherds to herd and milk their sheep and rent mountain pastures collectively from villages.

During the summer shepherds milk and sleep in log huts, *tarle*, throughout the mountains. In the winter the individual herds of sheep are kept in the village farmsteads.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Sheep and goat milk are used to make cheese at the sheep stations.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

**Village sheep**

Locally elected sheep herders take large flocks of village sheep (200-700) to upland communal pastures located several kms from villages in early May and stay there until November:

- 4-6 sheep use on average of 1 ha (2.5 acres) of grazing land
- sheep are hand milked two or three times a day in the mountains

For peasants (subsistence farmers), sheep cheese is important for food and sale.

In 2015, about 4,000 shepherds protested outside of Romania’s parliament against a law that regulates the number of sheep dogs they can use to herd and guard their flocks and bans winter grazing -- another intrusion into peasant existence by the national government.

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-3360776/Romanian-shepherds-protest-law-number-sheepdogs.html
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Region open-air periodic weekly markets
Peasants buy farm supplies, food items, such as, sunflower oil, refined sugar, white rice, and red paprika; and "luxuries," for example, rubber boots, white shoes, women's stockings, and Jesus wall clocks.

There are four weekly markets around Breb alone, in the heart of Maramures region.

Thursday market in Ocna Sugatag
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Region open-air periodic weekly markets

Two milk cows can produce about $50 per month, some of which is used to buy farm, food, and personal items at markets.
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Region open-air periodic weekly markets
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Region open-air periodic weekly markets
Peasant Landscapes in Romania

Region third largest number of beehives in the European Union; the largest producer of honey (35,000 tons); and exports over half, 80% goes to Germany.

Beehives are moved as the wild flowers bloom. Bee keepers sleep with the hives against theft.
# Peasant Landscapes in Romania

## Characteristics of Peasant-Farmer Region Continuum

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<th>Farmer Regions</th>
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<td>post-WWII, scattered</td>
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<tr>
<td>building materials</td>
<td>more logs, wood, stones</td>
<td>bricks, concrete</td>
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<tr>
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<td>folk: wooden-carved farmstead gates</td>
<td>absence of decorative gates</td>
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<tr>
<td>fields</td>
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<td>consolidated, larger</td>
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<tr>
<td>crops</td>
<td>more diversity</td>
<td>less diversity; monoculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>livestock</td>
<td>more diversity</td>
<td>less diversity; monoculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>machinery</td>
<td>more hand tools, horse-drawn, smaller machinery</td>
<td>larger machinery, diesel-gas operated</td>
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<td>electric wells</td>
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<tr>
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<td>more market</td>
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<tr>
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<td>standardized materials &amp; styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>church styles</td>
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<td>standardized materials &amp; styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cemeteries</td>
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<tr>
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<td>mainstream, mass-produced products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social structure</td>
<td>more communal</td>
<td>more individualistic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, **subsistence peasant landscapes** are complex and interconnected; **capitalist farmer landscapes** are about simplification.
Peasant Landscapes in Slovenia
Peasant Landscapes in Slovenia

Alpine hay-dairy peasant farming
I spent six days in June 2016 studying small-scale (peasant) alpine dairy farming in the Julian Alps, Slovenia, where I took 2,300 photos or 177 photos per day.

Slovenia with Italy and Austria, with only 20 percent of their farms classified as subsistence, fall on the lower end of the peasant-farm continuum.

- Some of the largest farms only have 10 milking cows and most of the rolling valley lands in this mountainous region are used only for hay.
- Very little acreage is used for crops, such as corn and winter wheat.
- Whole families (men, women, and children) still participate in the hay harvest, from cutting, tossing, gathering, and storing.
Peasant Landscapes in Slovenia

mountainous setting

hay-drying rack

natural pasture

small strips of fields

hay drying

very few fields of crops

hand tools

small machines
Peasant Landscapes in Slovenia

- **All hay is produced only from wild meadows** with all the variety of plants, grasses, and wild flowers. Farmers here do not plant grasses, such as clover and alfalfa, for hay, as they do in Wisconsin for example.

- **Permanent hay racks** indicate that communal pasture land no longer exist here.

- **Many hay racks**, regardless of their location in the village ecosystem, **are no longer being used**, rather they are used to store firewood and other stuff.

- **At higher elevations**, grasses are no longer being cut and the hay racks are falling into disarray.

- **Yet many hay racks are clearly being still used**. Hanging hay on the racks requires hand labor: the hay must be handed-up to a person standing on the poles on which the hay is hung.
Peasant Landscapes in Slovenia

Hay-drying racks, called *kozolci*, reach densities of 37 per square kilometer (0.38 miles) south of Bled -- a most striking cultural landscape feature of the Slovenian alpine countryside.

Hay-drying racks, are primarily located on private plots near villages, but are also found in open fields. The number of racks range from single to several units in various configurations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the fields, hay is stacked on:</th>
<th>In the villages, hay is stacked on:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• on single poles</td>
<td>• hay racks clustered near farmsteads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• on hay-drying racks</td>
<td>• farmstead hay racks attached to barns and in cow-hay barns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• in hay barns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hay-drying rack in the open fields

Hay-drying rack attached to barn
Peasant Landscapes in Slovenia

Hay-drying racks

Eastern European Peasant Landscapes

the longest hay-drying racks we saw on our June 2016 trip
Peasant Landscapes in Slovenia

Hay barns are found in isolated valleys away from villages, where they reach densities of 38 to 79 per square kilometer (0.38 miles), south and north of Bohinjska Bistrica for example.

There is even an open-air museum of these racks: [http://www.slovenia.si/culture/tradition/the-land-of-hayracks](http://www.slovenia.si/culture/tradition/the-land-of-hayracks).

Peasant Landscapes in Slovenia

The **air photo** shows the same area as the topographic map on the previous page, at an elevation of 3,557 feet. The **many shades of green** indicate different hay field sizes and shapes reflecting ownership patterns and various stages of uncut, drying, or harvested hay.

Hay barns appear as white rectangles.
Future of Eastern European Peasants

Romanian small farms, with less than 1 hectare (2.5 acres) of farmland, decreased by about 76,000 farms or 3.8% from 2010 -2013. **Every hour three small farms disappeared.**

What is the future of peasants in Eastern Europe?
Organize and protest their decline.

**RIGHT TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**
Public peasant consultation
**24 April, starting at 11:30 BUCHAREST**
The Conference Center of the National Statistics Institute of Romania (Libertății Bvd, no. 16, sector 5)

corporalis.ro

conferences

protests
http://www.arc2020.eu/2015/07/romania-3-family-farms-disappear-every-hour/
Future of Eastern European Peasants

What is the future of peasants in Eastern Europe?

North America: where the Amish thrive!
Ironically, North American peasants, such as the Amish in particular, who immigrated (starting in 1737) to neo-European countries (e.g., Canada and United States) outlived their antecedents in Western Europe and will probably outlive those in Eastern Europe. The strict Christian beliefs of the Amish preserves, indeed increases, their numbers in North America. In contrast, the young people of peasant communities in Eastern Europe lack similar religious beliefs and behaviors to keep them in rural areas and are leaving to work and live in cities in Romania or elsewhere in the EU.
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**Bibliography of Peasants and Related Topics**

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