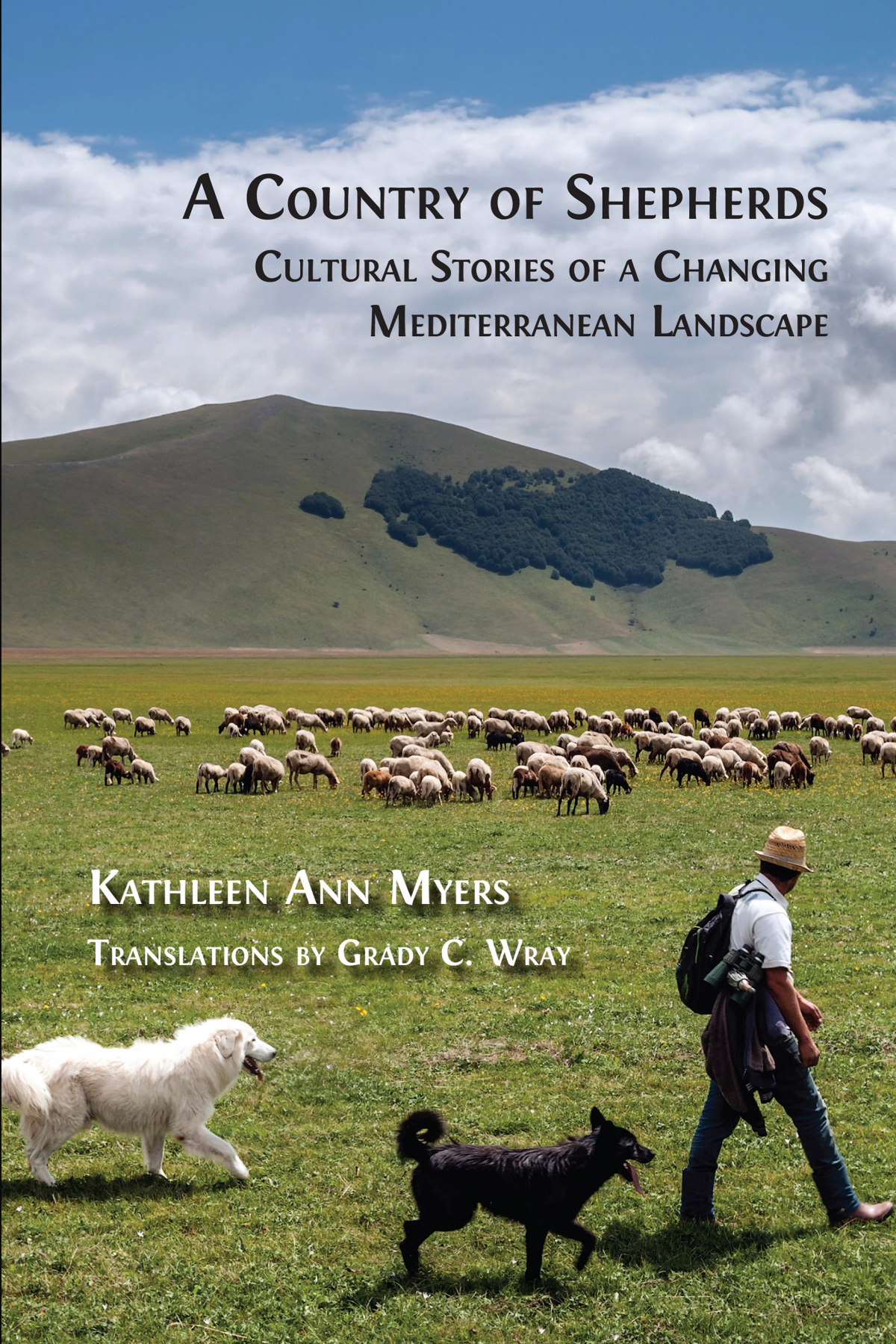
A Country of Shepherds

Cultural Stories of a Changing Mediterranean Landscape



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Introduction

Pastoralism in Spain

Every fall, Spanish shepherds herd thousands of sheep along ancient droving rights of way that pass directly through the busy Puerta del Sol in downtown Madrid, the urban heart of the city and symbolic center of Spain (marked as kilometer "0" for national highways). First granted as a system of royal rights of way throughout the Iberian Peninsula in the thirteenth century, many of these droving routes, known as *vías pecuarias*, have fallen into disuse. Routes have often been paved over as urban development has spread through the country. Today in Madrid, the celebration of this ancient practice of transhumance, the seasonal migration of sheep and shepherds from summer to winter pastures and back again, occurs only on one Sunday a year.

The practice dates back about 7,000 years in the Iberian Peninsula, and, in 1994, environmental activist Jesús Garzón Heydt helped bring the ancient practice of transhumance and these droving rights of way to national and international attention by establishing this one-day Festival of Transhumance in Madrid. More than twenty years later, I attend the popular festival and meet Jesús Garzón. To find him, I must wind my way through thousands of tourists and a host of international reporters who witness the lively scene. This day, over 2,000 sheep are herded by shepherds who whistle to highly trained dogs and carry the traditional walking stick, the *cayado*. Along the way, I see an exuberant group in striking black and white costumes with red accents dancing the traditional *jota*. Further down the Gran Vía, a handful of women from León wear woolen green foot-liners in their raised wooden shoes, made for the damp weather in the fields. Here, in the oldest

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part of Madrid, the president of the ancient shepherd guild from the Middle Ages, La Mesta, pays the symbolic fifty antique Iberian coins (*maravedís al millar*) to the mayor in exchange for the continued use of the rights of way.

When I finally see Jesús Garzón, he stands nearly a head taller than most of those around him and easily engages them all. For our interview, Jesús — known to everyone as Suso — suggests we move further along past the Puerta de Alcalá. He chooses a bench next to a carved stone marking the royal droving right of way at the entrance to Madrid's central park, *El Retiro*. As founder of Spain's largest cultural and activist organization dedicated to pastoralism (*Asociación Trashumancia y Naturaleza*), he strives to bring environmental, cultural, and political groups together at both the national and pan-European levels but also helps with concrete logistics and legal challenges faced by individual transhumant shepherds. Cultural outreach, Suso explains, is also key to the mission of making transhumance sustainable. People need to know that it helps the environment as a "*máquina de sembranza*" (seed-sowing machine) and an "*ecosistema andante*" (mobile ecosystem) by sowing biodiverse seeds, cleaning underbrush, and fertilizing land. The public can play an important role with their votes and consumer power. Public visibility facilitates policy changes.

The festival has become so successful in its public-facing mission, Suso reveals, that this year a few government officials have tried to coopt it for their own political agendas, going so far as to even change the festival date. Later, when I interview two brothers who herd their flock through the streets, I learn that the change in the festival date, and the requirement to transport their sheep out of Madrid by truck instead of by foot, means they will arrive to Córdoba ahead of the fall rains, and water will be scarce. Nevertheless, Suso insists that this Sunday is still a time to celebrate the progress of putting transhumance back on the map — both literally and culturally. Spain is the only country in the world that conserves 125,000 kilometers of droving rights of way. In a recent interview with the BBC, Suso underscores his basic view: "The planet is facing a situation of real social and economic catastrophe, but pastoralism is going to survive" (Walker 2021).

Fig. 0.2 Jesús Garzón Heydt (right) with festival participants, Madrid (2017).

Transhumance is an ancient solution to the challenge of maintaining sustainable grazing practices. It is central to the traditional practices of animal husbandry, known as pastoralism, and more specifically as extensive grazing, a system that distributes grazing and water across a given landscape. In Andalusia, it is practiced on both public lands and private pastures, including the *dehesas*, which are large multifunctional farms that mix extensive grazing with cleared forests of cork and olive trees. The movement of livestock from summer to winter pastures along extensive droving routes not only benefits the pastures and aids with water retention; it also promotes biodiversity through the fertilization and dispersion of seeds, as well as with cleaning underbrush and overgrowth. Thus, pastoralism is one of the most sustainable food production systems, and transhumance was the primary form of animal migration for millennia. (Definitions and further information about specialized terms within Pastoralism can be found below in "Contextual Background and Terminology.")

Even as the traditional practice wanes, public awareness of the need to protect and preserve the official droving roads and transhumance itself has proved invaluable. Although very few individuals in Spain are still directly involved with these practices, even the average person has likely heard of or enjoys the recreational use of the *vías pecuarias*, or else appreciates the traditional foods created by shepherds that have

been popularized in the national cuisine. Many Spaniards also know something about the ecological benefits of transhumance. While most of the population is now urban, rural family roots still tie individuals to their towns (*pueblos*) that their grandparents or great grandparents inhabited, and many return in the summers or for holidays. These visits maintain and strengthen a connection with the land, the animals, and this traditional livelihood. And there still is a major romantic appeal: the outfits, the food, the music, the walking!

During the last twenty years, new policies protecting the traditional ways have been introduced, and related cultural production has exploded. Spanish society has embraced the ancient practice of transhumance and shepherding in general as foundational to Spanish national heritage. Museums and festivals devoted to shepherding practices, like Madrid's Festival of Transhumance, have sprung up everywhere. Best-selling novels, traditional music, news stories, new rural museums, and documentary films about traditional practices underscore how socio-cultural memory, place, and practice are deeply intertwined. This decades-long boom of cultural production has contributed to a more widespread visibility of Spanish pastoralism.

When I first began research for *A Country of Shepherds* in 2015, I surveyed the extent of these cultural activities in Spain and found that there are more than twenty-three museums and interpretative centers fully or partially related to transhumance. Nearly forty festivals occur either annually or biannually. Hundreds of videos, from feature-length documentaries to shorter informational clips, are easily accessible on the web. More than twenty associations related to transhumance and extensive grazing practices have been formed, some with a significant web presence. In June 2016 alone, more than fifty magazine and newspaper articles were published about the movement. And, while the traditional oversized wool pullovers and giant leather leg protectors may not be used by most shepherds now, this traditional dress retains an important place in Spanish cultural memory. In February, during Carnival, young children choose costumes, and inevitably there are a few traditional shepherds in the mix. The children "play shepherd" for a day, donning the trademark wide-brimmed hats, leather accessories, and wooden shoes (see Fig. 7.1).

The cultural resurgence of interest in pastoralism and transhumance has also attracted widespread interest across Europe and the U.S. Popular journals and media events held in France, England, Germany, and the U.S. have brought this tradition to international audiences. In the U.S., for example, such magazines as *The Atlantic* and *Bloomberg* and other leading media outlets, such as *The New York Times* and the BBC, have published articles and produced programs on transhumance. This parallels a more widespread Western interest in grazing practices and the popularization of materials about it, such as James Rebank's *New York Times*-Bestseller *The Shepherd's Life: Modern Dispatches from an Ancient Landscape* (2015). The revitalized pastoral narrative, combined with environmental programs and government initiatives, has amplified a new awareness of traditional grazing practices. Andalusia's Shepherd School (*Escuela de Pastores*), for example, received the European Union Award for best use of funds for rural development (2015). In 2023, UNESCO added Spain to its list of representative countries in which transhumance is Immaterial Cultural Heritage of Humanity, stating:

> An ancestral practice, transhumance stems from a deep knowledge about the environment and entails social practices and rituals related to the care, breeding and training of animals and the management of natural resources. An entire socio-economic system has been developed around transhumance, from gastronomy to local handicrafts and festivities marking the beginning and end of a season. Families have been enacting and transmitting transhumance through observation and practice for many generations. Communities living along transhumance routes also play an important role in its transmission, such as by celebrating herd crossings and organising festivals. The practice is also transmitted through workshops organised by local communities, associations and networks of herders and farmers, as well as through universities and research institutes. Transhumance thus contributes to social inclusion, strengthening cultural identity and ties between families, communities and territories while counteracting the effects of rural depopulation. (https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/transhumance-the-seasonal-droving-of-livestock-01964)

Pastoral Practices and Shepherds' Narratives

Indeed, this cultural interest in an ancient way of life is how I first came to the topic. As a college student studying history in Spain in the late 1970s, I was fascinated by shepherds herding sheep and goats, sharing roads and hiking trails with me as I traveled around the Iberian Peninsula. But it was not until twenty years later in the 1990s, after becoming a scholar of how life stories reveal cultural practices from early modern times, that I first stopped to talk with a shepherd. As we hiked along a trail in the Northern Picos de Europa, he seemed to appear out of nowhere. He spoke poetically about the mountains and how they seem to hide behind clouds and mist, seeing fit to show themselves only on rare occasions as they did on this hot cloudless day. He also spoke of the trials of solitary life in a field living in his traditional shepherd's hut, suffering from a fever with no one to take care of him, much less his sheep.

Many years later, I came back to his story with a desire to learn more. While doing archival research in Seville in 2015, I had seen shepherds moving flocks through semi-arid land on the outskirts of town in the intense early spring sun. I watched frequent television programs and read nearly weekly articles that focused on transhumance. I listened to a few friends talking about their transhumance vacations in Northern Spain. What had been a distant, rural attraction for me as a student-tourist had now become part of a popular cultural scene forty years later. As I mused about these stories and the growing cultural interest in them, a friend offered to introduce me to a shepherd she knew from the Sierra Norte, about an hour from Seville.

Juan Vázquez Morán practiced transhumance along the *vías pecuarias* for decades, but he recently left the practice to work in extensive grazing, which continues traditional ecological and seasonal use of lands and water but does not necessarily involve migration of livestock for long periods of time to other areas. Juan spoke of growing up as a shepherd and loving his work but also of facing endless challenges that society and governmental policies add to an already difficult vocation. "They ask for this form, that form, and more forms on top of that. You've got to get a guidebook before you start doing transhumance, or they don't let you do it." What is more, over time,

the droving routes leaving from Constantina became impassable, overgrown with underbrush and spiny bushes from lack of use. He reports: "The routes are all going away because livestock doesn't come through here anymore to eat any of the brush; you just don't see any animals come through to clear anything." In another interview, long-time transhumant shepherd Fortunato Guerrero Lara added to Juan's list of challenges. Markets for sustainable wool, meat, and milk have weakened with modernization, globalization, and climate change. And all too often, regional, national, or EU regulations and bureaucracy challenge the ability of people who work with livestock to make ends meet. Few young people want to become shepherds because of the long hours and hardships involved. These are realities that simply supplying cell phones and GPS to shepherds cannot mitigate. Not only are transhumance and pastoralism themselves in transition, but so are a host of other factors: rural depopulation, consumers who abandon local products for supermarkets, new EU methods of calculating pasture lands and funding, conflicts in regional restrictions on marketing local products, and access to public pastures.

Yet as Juan and Fortunato weigh the current challenges and look toward the future, they, like the founder of Madrid's Festival of Transhumance, both see educating society as the key to changing these patterns. They even suggest that a foreigner — from a country infamous for exterminating many ancient practices and peoples — might give the story a fresh, more urgent perspective. As I began interviewing more widely, this message was repeated frequently. María del Carmen García, a veterinarian who travels often with Jesús Garzón to photograph shepherds on long treks across Spain, comments: "We're lacking a global view, someone who can share our heritage beyond what's typical folklore." An alumnus of the *Escuela de Pastores* who has also trained in France, Paqui Ruiz observes how working from an outsider's perspective is key to transforming things from within. Ana Belén Robles Cruz, a researcher at *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas* (CSIC), believes outsiders can help "raise public awareness" by breaking the stereotype of shepherds as "the ones who always make the sacrifice" or "the village idiot." She argues: "You have to put them in the spotlight." Whether shepherd, activist, or scholar, all urged me as an outsider to get the word out, especially

about Andalusia. Far fewer stories and campaigns have focused on Andalusia, yet it is at higher risk than many other parts of the peninsula for dramatic climate change. Every person I interviewed delivered the same message: a resurgence in pastoralism as a sustainable food system can help mitigate climate change and rural depopulation, but, to achieve this, consumers need to be better educated and support the true value of shepherds' products, while governments need to greatly reduce subsidized industrial farming.

As I interviewed shepherds and their advocates, it became clear that they are also trying to reverse a trend set in motion between 1970 and 1990, when Spain witnessed the decline of Franco's dictatorial policies and saw the rise of an experimental young democracy. During this transition, Spain's borders opened increasingly to global capitalism, bringing a flood of tourism and, with it, new models of consumption. Over the decades the supermarket model of more prepared foods and cheaper prices has edged out neighborhood markets and hurt the small-scale production economy. People who work with livestock and shepherds say they now depend less on neighbors and more on tourists and elite consumers in the cities: those willing to spend more to know where their food comes from and how it was produced. Two themes recur in nearly every interview I conduct, whether with a shepherd, farmer-owner, or advocate: the need for government regulation to help local sustainable farms and *dehesa*s thrive instead of hindering the marketing of their goods and the need to educate consumers about the "added value" of these products.

Talking with shepherds, I began to realize that another story — not just about the waning practice of transhumance — needed to be told. Larger issues, such as rural depopulation, and broader agricultural and land management practices provide a fuller picture of pastoralism today. While transhumance is the most ecologically sustainable model, broader perspectives show how low-impact grazing practices can help agriculture and pastoralism establish more resilient models. Beginning to correct my own misconceptions about shepherding, I decided to collect contemporary narratives about the practice from the point of view of both practitioners and advocates and to place them in dialogue with the trajectory of historical practices and narratives about pastoralism. The interviews flesh out four general gaps in our knowledge: they provide a

fuller portrait of Andalusia (a region often overlooked in pastoralism); of the extensive networks required for pastoralism today (family, collective organizations (*plataformas*), government, scholars, consumers); of the changing role of landowners in this picture; and of the trend toward shepherds becoming entrepreneurs working for themselves instead of either for or along with farm owners. This more complete picture allows us to glimpse both the power of tradition and the call to innovation and resiliency. The future of rural life in an environment that has benefitted from millennia of sustainable grazing practices now hangs in the balance.

Historical Practices and Cultural Narratives

For centuries, shepherding and the movement of flocks has held great historical, economic, and cultural importance in the Iberian Peninsula. As early as 1273, King Alfonso X appointed the first association, La Mesta, to try to regulate it, and over the centuries shepherding evolved into a complex legal, economic, social, and cultural practice. Precious Merino wool became a staple for an emerging market economy in fifteenth-century Iberia. By the late medieval times, the figure of the shepherd had also become central to the formation of emerging socio-cultural identities. Shepherding was the main economic activity in early modern Iberia as the low population density of the peninsula, the skirmishes between Christian and Muslim-ruled regions, and the semi-arid environment in parts of the south made raising livestock more profitable than establishing permanent agriculture. Later, with the expulsion of Muslims, Jews, and other "racially impure" others, cultural narratives turned to pastoralism as a symbol of a collective identity for Christian Iberia in a time of racial anxiety about religious and ethnic difference.[1] This process continued to evolve throughout the nineteenth century as pastoralism became conflated with the idea of national culture, reflecting a certain nostalgia.

1 Javier Irigoyen-García notes in *The Spanish Arcadia: Sheep Herding, Pastoral Discourse, and Ethnicity in Early Modern Spain* (2013) that the popular Renaissance pastoral romance is paradigmatic of this new way of how the elite imagined an ideal collective identity for early modern Castile. It is no coincidence that this genre emerged with the birth of more cities, producing a longing to return to nature as a lost paradise.

Fig. 0.3 Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *Adoration of the Shepherds* (ca. 1650), Prado Museum, Madrid, photograph by Abraham (2010), Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shepherd_adoration.jpg; Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *The Good Shepherd* (ca. 1675), Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, public domain, https://sammlung.staedelmuseum.de/en/work/the-good-shepherd

While twentieth-century processes of modernization like the transportation of livestock by train and by trucks and the mass production of cheeses and meats drastically reduced the practice of transhumance, the symbolic importance of the shepherd persisted. Often following an early modern pattern recorded by Miguel de Cervantes in *Don Quijote* (1605; 1615), the image of the shepherd vacillated between idealization and marginalization. During the Spanish Civil War and the first decades of Franco's dictatorship, for example, the "humble shepherd" was re-appropriated in cultural production to essentially turn back the clock on modernization and pan-European processes. Later, as the state discourse of Francoism promulgated developmentalism and promoted modernization, this trend reversed again. The push to modernization then accelerated the abandonment of rural areas and pastoral traditions, which fueled the stereotype, in Ana Belén Robles Cruz's words, of the "shepherd as the village idiot."

Even in the first years of Spain's rapid transition to democracy (ca. 1975–82), pastoralism and the movement of flocks along traditional routes continued to be viewed as anachronistic and an impediment to the modernization of waterways, highways, and urbanization, yet

this attitude would soon change. As the new democracy matured into the late twentieth century, the past was "repackaged" for the 1992 Quincentennial. New socio-political movements looked again to autonomous regional traditions in the face of globalization and entrance into the European markets. The year marked a symbolic turning point for Spain as it emerged on the international scene as host of the Olympics (Barcelona), the World's Fair (Seville), and the Cultural Capital of the European Union (Madrid). New debates, political actions, and cultural narratives about Spain's pastoral past and present emerged. A movement emerged and began to revitalize ancient shepherding practices and narratives about pastoralism, identifying them as integral to national culture.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, this transformation gained increasing influence over policy making and environmental activism. The raising of traditional Iberian livestock began to be celebrated for its contribution to the preservation of rural landscapes, biodiversity, and ways of life, to the point that the Spanish state now welcomes shepherds into national parks as a strategy for conserving the Iberian wolf, vultures, and other endangered "natural enemies" of sheep that were all once ruthlessly targeted by the Franco regime for extermination. Regional governments also began to fund programs to train a new generation of shepherds and recognize new justifications for grazing sheep and goats, such as fire prevention. National policies established new protectionary laws for rights of way. Supporters in non-government sectors also joined a larger movement fighting for the survival of sustainable, small-scale agriculture and greater regional autonomy.

Yet even as local, national, and international interest grows, the challenges continue. Many shepherds I interviewed are retiring without replacements. Recent EU regulations about the movement and sale of animals restrict the viability of the practice by making it more costly to compete with large-scale production. Consumer tastes continue to shift, with the consumption of more pork and beef instead of lamb, and more cheeses manufactured and marketed by industrial agricultural interests. In addition, the use of wool has declined as preferences for synthetic "high-performance" fabrics increase. Even as the population generally understands the deep cultural and environmental benefits of traditional practices, there is still the gap just like the one Cervantes depicted in

Don Quijote between the idealized and real shepherd. Shepherds are no longer portrayed as symbols of Christian humility but rather as defenders of a valuable cultural geography integral to the national Spanish patrimony.

Nevertheless, these same guardians of tradition and sustainable practices are often still the targets of social prejudice, as we will hear in many of the cases studied below. Indeed, the gap between urban and rural remains. Until recently, city dwellers, who love visiting pueblos and enjoy a countryside dotted with shepherds and their flocks, often balk at interacting with locals or at the thought of making a life for themselves and their families in a small pueblo. For their part, the rural residents often complain of the lack of respect they get from visitors, which aggravates their own frustration of dealing with limited social services and economic opportunities. Small-town residents also experience resistance from their own neighbors to changing gender roles in shepherding. The country-city divide accelerates the loss of traditional shepherding practices and exacerbates the already widespread depopulation throughout Spain.

Still, some positive changes are observed by my informants. They often remark on the promise of a new generation of *neo-rurales*, young people leaving the city to live and work in the countryside, who are exploring new ways to work within traditional vocations like pastoralism. One shepherd we will hear from below (and who prefers to simply be called Daniel) expresses "the need to get out of the city, the fast-paced rhythm of today's society, and everything that has to do with urban life." He decided to try out shepherding, a profession his uncle had to abandon years ago, because "it motivates me to live out his dream." One of the shepherds we will hear from remarks that he enjoys the psychological challenge of working with animals and the environment and of acquiring the in-depth knowledge necessary to carry out his work. It allows him to "honor the values of people who live freely, far removed from the 'usual' expectations."

This is where my project and experience as an outsider interviewing practitioners and advocates of pastoralism comes in. As people sought to explain to a foreigner what they did and why, I began to piece together a more complex picture of a dynamic, resilient practice that may help suggest a way forward.

Life Stories and Pastoralism: Method and Scope

The centerpiece of *A Country of Shepherds* are the oral histories that provide a glimpse of how the people working in pastoralism articulate the meaning of their work as shepherds, farm owners, and advocates. Although this project draws on extensive scholarship about pastoralism in Spanish Iberia, my focus is the living archive created by dozens of informants who reveal their deep connections with the ongoing practice, regulation, and celebration of both traditional and innovative practices in Western Andalusia.[2]

To date, no study has closely examined the shepherds' life stories within the context of pastoralism in Andalusia and its broader relevance to the more critical role of extensive grazing. While transhumance has been a topic of historical and anthropological study since Julius Klein's foundational study of the practice (1920/1981), more recent scholarly production has tended to explore the important ecological impact of transhumance and its intersection with society (Gómez-Sal, 2004; Manzano Baena 2010; Garzón Heydt 2004). Just a handful of articles study pastoralism and cultural narratives (Alenza García 2013; Acuña Delgado 2012; Cruz Sánchez 2013; and Rodríguez Pascual 2001). Most recent work, such as that by such scholars as Yolanda Mena Guerrero and her collaborators, focuses more broadly on specific practices and benefits within pastoralism to raise awareness about it through public education (2015), national patrimony (2010), and rural development (2007). Elisa Otero-Rozas studies the notion of traditional ecological knowledge that is integral to pastoralism in Spain (2019). Although *A Country of Shepherds* has strong ties to work being done by scholars and government agencies on sustainable practices and the long-term benefits of extensive grazing in Spain, it locates itself within the particular Andalusian social and geographical context. I argue that hearing individual life stories and placing them in dialogue with the broader work on pastoralism reveals a dynamic movement that at once illuminates a rich heritage and suggests sustainable ways forward.

2 The Western part of Andalusia tends to be more humid and have a much greater number of *dehesa*s than the Eastern region (Granada, Almería, etc.), where the geography can change from the dramatic heights of the Sierra Nevada to the semi-desert of Cabo de Gata within a one- or two-hour drive by car.

The main interviews offered here were carried out onsite at various farms and pastures from 2015–2018 (with updates in 2021–2022) and took place with my cultural interpreter, María del Mar Torreblanca. I collected the narratives in five different regions of Western Andalusia — within a couple hours' car drive of Seville — which presents a special case within the larger study of pastoralism in Spain. The mountainous terrain creates greater climatic diversity than other regions. Although there are many semi-arid regions, in general it is more verdant than areas of Eastern Andalusia. The ancient landscape is dotted with unique areas of public mountainous pasturelands of the Mediterranean area (*monte mediterráneo*), as well as private *dehesa*s. In addition, the whole region has generally been overlooked by people studying the tradition. The cases I study highlight a range of land types, land uses, and livestock breeds across five provinces in Andalusia. We move from the *monte mediterráneo* of the Sierra Norte (Seville) and the Sierra de Grazalema (Cádiz), to the Sierra de Cardeña y Montoro (Córdoba-Jaén), the Sierra de Jaén, and the Sierra de Aracena (Huelva). We also visit three *dehesa*s in these areas. Here, we see the breeding and raising of protected species that have been developed over centuries to adapt to the highly specific microclimates, including traditional Merino and *Segureña* (Esguerra) sheep breeds and endangered *Payoya* goats.

At the core of this study is a "living archive": the nearly sixty interviews of shepherds, policy makers, educators, community organizers, and landowners. I have distilled these interviews into a handful of in-depth life stories in which we see how none of these Andalusian farms, families, and endeavors exist in isolation. The six case studies offer a glimpse into how those most involved in the ongoing practice, regulation, and celebration of shepherding articulate both traditional and innovative ideas about their work. While most scholarship on the subject maps the routes, economic patterns, and specific historical events or practices related to transhumance, this book presents the varied people, places, voices, and landscapes reflective of a broader pastoral past and present that focuses, in particular, on the Western Andalusian geographies. It is a snapshot in time filtered through the lens of my own experiences and my own process of discovery. At times, it was my very "outsiderness" that seemed to allow people to tell their stories more fully. They often

filled in information that may be common knowledge to someone who grew up in the region. They mentioned feeling freed from preconceived notions about their work and lives. Indeed, my presence — and my curiosity as well as my ignorance — often were the source of a good deal of laughter and light-hearted teasing.

I open each case study with an overview of current practices exemplified in the section before inviting readers to join our visits to the places and people who live and work as farmers, shepherds, and landowners. During each visit, we hear how experiences from early childhood influence their chosen vocations today. These personal stories reflect larger forces and constraints, including family heritage, social norms, economic opportunities, and even global climate change. In each chapter, I include short selections that highlight my informants' concerns in their own words. Key to this process, however, was my decision not to carry out formal interviews in a question-and-answer format but to allow farmers and shepherds to show us around their own pastures and farms and talk about their life stories and practices. As we moved about, I recorded our conversations and transcribed them later in order to maintain a strong sense of "walking about" and interacting with other people, the animals, and the landscapes — hiking to an outcrop to see if the goats arrived to the valley, returning to the barn for milking time, driving to remote grazing areas, helping catch a squealing pig that escaped, stopping dead in our tracks when a pair of dead day-old lambs are spotted, and returning to a working farmhouse for a beer and a tapa in the heat of the day.

In each visit, the informants explore fundamental questions, such as: What is my role in keeping this practice alive? What do we gain from it and, just as interestingly and increasingly, what does society gain? And perhaps the most important question of all: How do we see the future, and what do we need to do to keep pastoralism alive and attract new generations to it before it is too late? Finally, every case study ends with a brief update carried out by phone or Zoom eighteen months into the COVID-19 pandemic (November 2021) and, in some cases, a final in-person meeting to go over the manuscript with each contributor in June 2022. The pandemic only further underscored the essential role of these workers and their vulnerability in the current system.

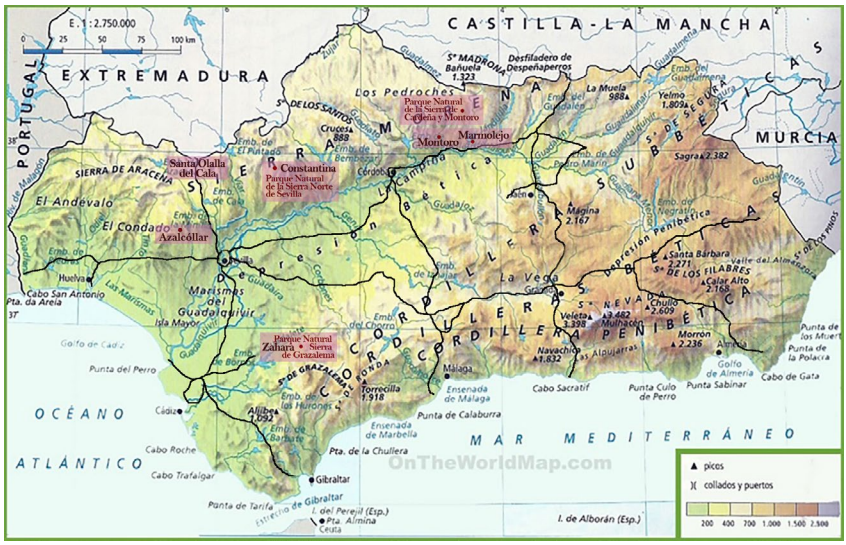

Fig. 0.4 Topographical Map of Andalusia highlighting the regions featured in our case studies. "Andalusia physical map" (2023). OntheWorldMap.com, CC BY-NC, https://ontheworldmap.com/spain/autonomous-community/andalusia/andalusia-physical-map.html Labels added by Licia Weber.

New Pathways: Overview

The six case studies highlighted here reflect an overarching story of people grappling with changes in traditional agricultural practices, changes felt not just regionally but nationally and even globally. Within these limits of time and geography, a surprising richness emerges of both common denominators among people working in pastoralism and the variety of new and innovative approaches to the traditional practice. Taken together, we see transitions from traditional to new models of transhumance, as well as a turn to the importance of extensive grazing in general. We meet a full range of participants, from shepherds to farm owners and their families, and see examples of both generational and gendered change.

The first three cases focus on men who have worked in shepherding for decades, often as an inherited profession. Each has found ways to keep their ancestral practices alive and to bring in family members and others along the way. These cases illustrate entrepreneurial skills that these men and their families use to move in new directions, such

as expanding into agrotourism, taking advantage of European Union funds, and exploring new roles with landowners. The two cases that follow focus on women who own *dehesa*s but come from very different backgrounds. One woman is working with her inheritance of a functioning *dehesa*. The other is a foreigner now working in Andalusia on local and pan-European initiatives to protect the natural heritage of the *dehesa* and pastoralism. Each describes the steep learning curve she faced and, in some cases, the challenges of working and gaining respect in a traditionally male profession. The final chapter surveys the collective story told by a wide range of people involved in the social movements and platforms that support pastoralism in myriad ways, including financial backing, knowledge, partnerships, and — ultimately — resiliency. These interviews help us understand the larger context for the individual life stories of the first five chapters.

The first case study explores the story of Juan Vázquez Morán, a traditional shepherd who adopted his own father's profession and practiced transhumance on foot outside of Constantina (Seville) and now has his own small sheep and goat farm. For both of our interviews, Juan's retired shepherd friend Manuel Grillo joins us. Their dynamic banter reveals the tremendous challenges faced over three generations. Even as they often joke with each other, they share stories of the sacrifices they both made — decades of economic hardship, living alone in the countryside for months at a time, and the social marginalization of tending sheep for rich landowners — even as society, in theory, praises the shepherd. The two friends also note, however, the many changes to their way of life. After years of saving his earnings, Juan has been able to buy a small parcel of land on a hilly outcropping where he tends his own animals each day before and after working as a shepherd for a nearby farm owner. He remarks happily: "I'm free, kinda like a snail that carries everything on his back and needs very little. It's not so much that it's good land, but it's your own, and no one around here is gonna tell you to leave." Further, he and his family are now able to live year-round in town, and his daughter is studying for a nursing degree. Juan recognizes how society both depends on his work and often disdains it. While Juan stayed with the family profession, his youngest brother, Patricio, did not grow up with shepherding but loves the landscapes and community they both grew up with. As an ambitious entrepreneur,

he has established a gourmet preserves company with the abundant local fruit, which he markets in Seville and London — and to weekend tourists in Constantina. A few years ago, Patricio opened a coffee shop that now serves Juan's cheeses, and he currently has plans for an agrohotel. This current venture will include a partnership with his nephew's family, who recently began raising goats. They hope that within a year they will have enough goats to be eligible for EU subsidies and to dedicate themselves full-time to the business. Taken together, the sons and grandsons of a transhumant shepherd reveal how they have stayed attached to their home region but also made a living for themselves through new practices.

The second case study takes us to an area just outside Parque Natural de la Sierra de Grazalema, near the tourist destination of Zahara de la Sierra. Here we visit Pepe Millán and family, who raise both Merino sheep and *Payoya* goats native to Grazalema. The family demonstrates the highly-developed skills perfected over hundreds of years needed to succeed at shepherding in a challenging environment, as well as the cost — both economic and social — of continuing to work in the profession. Their stories also highlight new roles for people working with livestock. Pepe is now a mentor and spokesman for a new generation of shepherds-in-training and for a broader public that views programs in which he is featured, such as the documentary *La buena leche* and the popular television program *Volando voy*. On the day of our visit, we follow the daily milking routine and the process of resettling the herd through the rocky terrain. We also hear about the challenges the family has faced to keep afloat economically, as well as how things have changed for the next generation. Pepe's daughter Rita did not initially want to continue in the profession, but she is now an entrepreneur in her own right. She has secured government subsidies for their operation, which includes the endangered *Payoya* goats, and has launched a local cheesemaking and delivery service. We hear about the past and the future as the family expands and the world changes.

The third case study focuses on a shepherd, Fortunato Guerrero Lara, who continues to practice transhumance and works alongside his father and son. He also wears many other hats. Fortunato's family raises *Segureña* sheep on public and private land and practices transhumance by truck, moving the flocks from winter pastures of Sierra de Cardeña

y Montoro (Córdoba) outside Marmolejo to the summer pastures of the Sierra de Segura outside of Santiago-Pontones (Jaén). On the day we visit, he welcomes us, saying he hopes we get word out "so society will understand what a shepherd does nowadays. We manage land that has high environmental value." As we follow him around during birthing season, we see him working his flocks and meet his own father, as well as his son who intends to stay in the family profession — a highly unusual choice today. We also visit a man Fortunato calls his "collaborator," the landowner Rafael Enríquez del Río, who hires Fortunato to manage and protect his *dehesa* and area of forest. During our visit, we talk with an array of other people Rafael and Fortunato work with to develop a multifunctional *dehesa* beyond shepherding: beekeepers, lumber thinners and harvesters, and hunters. As we listen to their discussions onsite, we hear of the economic-environmental vitality and balance involved in multi-functional land use. Fortunato himself is also a valued advocate and spokesman for shepherds and others in livestock entrepreneurship, and his case highlights the many other tasks that livestock workers take on now because they often can't make a living for a family without outside work. And Rafael, as a conscientious landowner, plays a critical role in stewardship, creating opportunities for professionals with expertise and a shared vision for a sustainable future.

After these first three case studies of livestock professionals (*ganaderos*), who not only tend to flocks of sheep and goats but recently have created their own small livestock businesses, we look more closely at the role of the owners in keeping extensive grazing and pastoralism viable. These cases also highlight a newer trend of women taking a more active role in the profession.[3] Marta Moya Espinosa, the subject of our fourth case study, inherited a *dehesa* in the Sierra Norte and large flock of Merino sheep from her father, but for years she left it in the hands of others while she raised a family and managed one of Seville's prestigious private country clubs. Recently, she made the monumental decision to leave this lucrative, sixty-hour-a-week job and now devotes an equal amount of time to understanding her inheritance and learning

3 A recent phenomenon are also studies on women who work in pastoralism and more recently the role of women in pastoralism (Fernández-Giménez et al. 2021, 2022).

to become a conscientious, knowledgeable farm owner. She helps to oversee the day-to-day operations by working alongside her shepherd-manager from dawn to dusk and is exploring new initiatives to revitalize the ecosystem. As we tour this working farm, Marta discusses the many challenges she faces with learning about the daily care of animals, finding shepherds, helping the *dehesa* recover from a damaging forest fire, and understanding often volatile government policies — all while working as a woman in a traditionally male world. Marta works to train and keep farmhands in a radically different society than when her mother was helping run the farm in the 1950s as the new wife of a landowning farmer. To get a sense of life on the *dehesa* in the mid-twentieth century, Marta introduces us to her eighty-year-old mother, Carmela Espinosa. While Marta talks about learning how to work with livestock, finances, and shepherds today, her mother reminiscences about the hardships and triumphs of running a large household with eight children on a rural rustic farmhouse during the difficult postwar years. Both women experienced the privileges of the traditional landowning class of these farms and *dehesa*s, as well as the challenges of trying to both harness and change traditions.

Another farm owner with a very different background and a broad European resonance is the focus of the next chapter. Ernestine Lüdeke was born in Germany, but she has adopted Andalusia as her own. Ernestine began working in Spain shortly before the 1992 World Expo in Seville and soon became involved in environmental issues. By about 2000, she and her husband had established the "Fundación Monte Mediterráneo", an organization dedicated to protecting Andalusia's delicate ecosystem and to championing new initiatives based on traditional practices. They decided to house the Fundación on a nearly abandoned *dehesa* they bought outside of Santa Olalla de Cala in the Sierra de Aracena in the westernmost side of the Sierra Morena (Huelva). As Ernestine walks us around the Dehesa San Francisco, we hear how they have coaxed the *dehesa* back to life with a variety of plantings and raising livestock, centered around a flock of Merino sheep that are raised with transhumant practices. As part of the tour, we visit the educational center on the property and hear about regional and international teaching initiatives. The work of Ernestine and the Fundación showcase the intersection of land and livestock, as well as of

traditional and innovative practices with public and private initiatives. Later, we hear from one of her trainees, Daniel, whom she has now hired as her manager-shepherd. Ernestine has the resources, knowledge, and drive to influence a wide circle of farm owners, shepherds, policy makers, and consumers. Her broad-reaching work focuses on practical applications rather than naïve romanticism and resonates throughout the region and even internationally.

Our last chapter shifts gears to follow a narrative thread suggested by Ernestine with her "Fundación Monte Mediterráneo", as well as everyone we interviewed. Here, we take a closer look into the many collective organizations, or *plataformas*, that support the shepherds' work. In our interviews, we hear from people in three main areas: 1) *ganadero*s and other professionals working with collective organizations to support transhumance and extensive grazing; 2) university-trained professionals based at public institutions and working to promote pastoralism through, for example, the use of grazing for fire prevention and the teaching of skills for cheesemaking; and 3) primarily government-sponsored programs, such as the popular shepherd schools, which train a new generation. Among the people interviewed here are a few of the individuals who have been on the forefront of these movements for decades, including Jesús Garzón Heydt, Paco Casero, and Yolanda Mena Guerrero, along with newer voices, such as Maricarmen García and Paco Ruiz. Each works collaboratively with a host of shepherds and *ganadero*s, government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and grassroots collectives striving to ensure the resiliency of pastoralism in Andalusia and beyond.

Overall, these case studies offer multiple points of view from both traditional shepherds and the new model of *ganadero*-shepherds, and their families, as well as from farm owners trying to be conscientious stewards of their land and from advocates creating new resources for practitioners of pastoralism. They all play key roles in the functioning and longevity of pastoralism. Together, their stories reveal the hope and frustration, the nostalgia and excitement, of working in a profession dating back millennia and now in the process of profound change. We learn how those working closely with pastoralism are concerned equally about the people, animals, and landscape itself — the elements for sustainable pastoral systems. As they describe their work and lives,

they dialogue with cultural narratives about shepherds and Spain that increasingly link them to discussions about environmentally sustainable practices and food systems. All articulate a sense of urgency related to their situation, as well as a set of possibilities for the future.

This project began with myriad preconceptions (mostly my own misconceptions) about pastoralism in Spain. I share here how my perspective has broadened over time — a process that is still ongoing. For this reason, I often use the present tense and a plural form to invite the reader along with me in my journey through different pastoral spaces over a period of about five years. My goal is to bring the human face of pastoralism to a broad audience, allowing the informants interviewed and the images gathered to tell the story of an ancient practice in the midst of transition. My hope is that, as we hear the complex dynamics and practices involved in traditional pastoralism as well as glimpse the broad social movements that support it, we will see how the stereotype of a solitary shepherd working in isolation — or at best with his family — does not provide the full story. A broad range of supporters and organizations have emerged to help sustain the practice. We all have a part in how this story will unfold over the next couple of decades, and as world citizens — and consumers — we will have powerful input into its outcome.

Since many of the first interviews were conducted, life has taken its own twists and turns. In spring 2018, as I was checking back in with informants and planning my final interviews before finishing *A Country of Shepherds*, both my parents died within weeks of each other. I hurried back to Wisconsin and helped my siblings sort through a house full of antique furniture, photos from the early twentieth century, books from our Irish-American grandparents, and a barn full of tools from the original 1880s icehouse and caretaker's cottage my parents had lived in for forty years. Everything else faded into the background as I grieved. Two years later, eager to return to the project, I booked a flight to Seville, only to have it cancelled as the world locked down as the global COVID-19 pandemic erupted in spring 2020. We all waited anxiously inside our homes and miniscule social "pods" for nearly eighteen months. Another plan to return in fall 2021 was dashed to the ground as the deadly Delta variant spread, and the EU placed the U.S. back on its list of countries with travel restrictions. In the end, like much of the world, I turned to FaceTime and Zoom to conduct my work, completing the last formal

follow-up meetings with my informants in November 2021. By May 2022, I was able to travel to Spain and share the final draft of this book with them and get their feedback. Once again, I got to see first-hand their resiliency in the face of new challenges with severe climate change and changing markets. Their lives and practices continue to make a strong case for sustainability.

The process of shepherding this book project to completion only further underscores the rapid changes in the world since I first began. The starts and dramatic halts in my work come through in the narrative, reflecting processes of life and dramatic historical change. The uneven narrative threads in *A Country of Shepherds* suggest the on-going impact of individual, regional, and global losses and crises, while also offering examples of the resiliency of individual shepherds, *ganadero*s, and their practices.

Pastoralism: A Contextual Background and Terminology

Pastoralism refers to a wide variety of traditional livestock systems found worldwide and is prevalent in certain regions in the Iberian Peninsula. This study focuses on the specific case of Western Andalusia, which shares characteristics with other regions in the Mediterranean world, and on a pastoralism that includes both cases of transhumance and extensive grazing. For readers less familiar with the subject matter and special terms used in the Introduction (particularly outsiders like me), this section contextualizes terms and concepts used by our informants as they talk about their work. Yet further information about the vitality of pastoralism, both as an agricultural practice and as a cultural phenomenon, can be found in the bibliography.

Andalusia: Cultural Geographies

The southernmost region of the Iberian Peninsula, Andalusia, is rich in cultural and geographical diversity. The province is Spain's most populous, with eight million inhabitants representing around 18% of the national population. Foreigners often think of it as an arid region associated with sunny beaches, olive groves, and flamenco, but it is far

more varied than this popular image. A road trip through Andalusia is akin to traveling across several countries: high snow-capped peaks, towns and cities that flourished under Arab and Roman occupation, kilometers of intensive greenhouse vegetable production, and the crowded beaches of the Costa del Sol all exist side-by-side. Two significant mountain ranges run through the region. Outside the city of Granada, the Sierra Nevada boasts the highest peak on the Iberian Peninsula (Mulhacén, at 3,578 meters). The Sierra Morena, meanwhile, runs through the regions of Huelva, Seville, Córdoba, and Jaén. Farther southwest, the Sierra de Grazalema rises from the Costa del Sol to humid Grazalema, which has the most rainfall of any region in Spain. Between the Sierra Nevada and Sierra Morena lies the Guadalquivir River, one of the largest and longest in the peninsula, which flows from the high peaks in Jaén through the ports of Cádiz to the Atlantic Ocean. In the fifteenth century, it was the only navigable river in Spain, famous for transporting early explorers out of Seville on their way to the Americas. Many of Andalusia's cities and towns have rich Muslim, Christian, and Jewish histories. This complex cultural history is still visible in many of the towns we visit in our case studies: we still see evidence of Moorish city planning in the white-washed village of Zahara de la Sierra, and Constantina's and Santa Olalla's medieval castles perched on commanding hillsides reflect an era when this was frontier land between warring regions.

Abundant sunshine has allowed Andalusia to develop widespread intensive farming zones and become the breadbasket of Spain, providing agricultural products to consumers across the European continent. These areas are often known as *campiña*. The lack of water in most parts of Andalusia, however, favors the ancient practices of "dry" farming, in which less water is used to produce a flavor-packed product. In Andalusia in particular, the practice known as extensive grazing (*ganadería extensiva*) utilizes larger pastures for a relatively small production per acre, as opposed to intensive farming practices, which use a small amount of land with large inputs of feed, fertilizer, and labor for a greater yield. Extensive grazing relies on livestock appropriate to the region, primarily smaller livestock (*ganado menor*), such as sheep and goats. These flocks are often moved many kilometers from one area to another based on seasonal climate conditions: the practice known as transhumance. There are various names for the people involved in

pastoral practices, including the shepherds (*pastores*) who tend to the livestock, *ganadero*s (a broader term for livestock professionals who often own their own flocks), and landowners who own the pastureland and sometimes the herds as well. As one of the most sustainable food systems in the world, extensive grazing — and especially transhumance — also preserves biodiversity and helps to maintain rural populations.

Migratory Shepherding and Public Lands

Transhumance maximizes the efficiency of shepherding activities since grazing occurs during the seasonal peak productivity of pasturelands. In Spain, the typical movement of shepherds across seasons involves a northern journey to summer pastures with a return to the south in the winter. Transhumance differs from other forms of pastoral non-sedentary systems because people and livestock perform circular movements between specific summer and winter pastures. Thus, transhumance is distinct, for example, from nomadism. Depending on their location, some shepherds only practice transterminance, a shorter movement of flocks (fewer than one hundred kilometers) from low valleys in the winter to high mountain passes in the summer months. There are also *ganadero*s who practice extensive grazing without moving their flocks and herds long distances.

Recently, transhumance has been designated as UNESCO Cultural Heritage of Humanity for over nine countries in Europe, including Spain. UNESCO defines transhumance as a system of people, animals, geographies, practices, and culture:

> Transhumance, the seasonal droving of livestock along migratory routes in the Mediterranean and the Alps, is a form of pastoralism. Every year in spring and autumn, thousands of animals are driven by groups of herders together with their dogs and horses along steady routes between two geographical and climatic regions, from dawn to dusk. In many cases, the herders' families also travel with the livestock. Two broad types of transhumance can be distinguished: horizontal transhumance, in plain or plateau regions; and vertical transhumance, typically in mountain regions. Transhumance shapes relations among people, animals, and ecosystems. It involves shared rituals and social practices, caring for and breeding animals, managing land, forests, and water resources, and dealing with natural hazards. Transhumant herders have in-depth knowledge of the environment, ecological balance, and climate change,

> as this is one of the most sustainable, efficient livestock farming methods. They also possess special skills related to all kinds of handicraft and food production involved. (https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/14.COM/10.b.2)

In Spain, the northern territories in the traditional transhumance are known as *agostaderos*. They are generally higher-altitude terrains and are defined by widely spaced trees or shrubs that are often covered with snow in the winter and are moist and green in the summer. The southern territories, known as *invernaderos*, are used in winter. In the case of Andalusia, these pasturelands are often part of the public *monte meditérraneo* or of private *dehesa*s. If the owners of these large-scale farms follow the traditional multifunctionality, the *dehesa* will often combine pastures for flocks, the sale of meat, the use of space for private hunting, and the strategic management of native crops, such as olives and cork. While Andalusia's often hot, dry climate means the farms cannot support crops meant for human consumption, the land provides a wide array of flora nutritious to ruminant species. Even as the pattern of land ownership in Spain is constantly adapting and changing with new social systems and laws, many old patterns of land use still hold when it comes to the practice of transhumance. In this sense, the northern territories used in summertime are, for the most part, still run communally, generally administered by the local province's forest service, while private *dehesa*s host many of the more southerly wintering grounds.

With the rise in cultural interest in transhumance, shepherds have begun to use social media to document their movements and to invite tourists and journalists to join them (see Chapter 6). The last few decades have seen a remarkable growth in public awareness and appreciation of these ancient practices.

Transhumance: Historical Overview in Spain

Transhumance has its roots in the natural migration patterns of many animal species. The practice certainly originated before organized agriculture itself, as hunters made the transition from simply following their prey to directing and shepherding the herd animals, beginning the long process of domestication. Transhumance has been an essential

element of the Iberian Peninsula economy for millennia. As early as the twelfth century, when the production of Merino wool became an important commodity, the *vías pecuarias* were formalized under royal mandates. Other products of shepherds and their flocks, namely dairy and fresh meat, also became essential to many local communities. In some especially mountainous or arid regions of the peninsula, shepherding was the only viable economic activity. Due to its cultural, economic, and environmental importance, the organization of land, labor, and trade routes evolved to fit the needs of this activity. As far back as the medieval period, legislation enacted by organizations such as the Mesta offered protection to the systems of transportation and land organization developed by shepherds.

As Spain's infrastructure began to modernize in the nineteenth century, forms of mass transit began to replace the on-foot transhumance. Many shepherds welcomed the ability to send their sheep by rail, relieved from weeks of walking with flocks over mountain passes and across rivers. Without the foot traffic, however, conditions on the ancient droving routes began to decline. More recently, newer legislation has contributed to further declines in traditional modes of transhumance, such as the 1993 law regulating flock management to avoid disease spread. These laws may help maintain livestock and human health, but they add cost and layers of bureaucracy that shepherds and farmers must contend with.

Despite the widespread transition to intensive farming and the abandonment of rural land across Europe, some families in Andalusia have continued the tradition of transhumance. Whether by foot or by truck (train service ended in the 1980s), they have safeguarded this tradition — and with it the trails, the clothing, and even the songs. Yet, while these transhumant shepherds remain culturally relevant, their economic influence has decreased. In the 1990s, there were an estimated 1.3 million transhumant sheep in Spain by 2011, these numbers had fallen to about a quarter of a million. Today, the practice depends largely on trucks. Jesús Garzón estimates that, while are still about 600,000 transhumant livestock and 6,000 transhumant families, only a small percentage move their livestock on foot. He believes that with the steep rise in petrol prices and fodder as well as increased

subsidies available for the practice, more people will return to the traditional transhumance by foot (Walker 2021).

As the cost of technology decreases, transhumant shepherds, whether transporting flocks by foot or by truck, have taken full advantage of cell phones to coordinate transport and track weather conditions, as well as to allow communication with teams who organize locations for rest and water. The shepherds and aid groups share information about fences and other obstructions on the *vías pecuarias*. In addition, with the aid from larger organizations, some transhumant shepherds have begun to use GPS trackers on their flocks, and even drones to oversee larger areas. Specialized monitors can help locate missing animals, assess nutritional needs of the flock, and create a digital record of routes and resources for other shepherds, as well as for ecologists working on the restoration and conservation of *vías pecuarias*. The trackers can even monitor an individual animal's temperature regularly and communicate this data back to veterinary teams.

Vías Pecuarias: History and Ecological Benefits

Spain is the only country in the world that has a network of legally protected *vías pecuarias* for transhumance, and they are critical to the long-term viability of the practice and its ecological benefits. While these trails often began by following waterways, they widened as flocks grew. Many date to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and continue to provide rights of way for shepherds to move their flocks from north to south, or between elevations. In the 1990s, the *vías pecuarias* regained their old legal status as a public good. This means that they cannot be developed for other commercial purposes and are protected for primary use by transhumant shepherds. These laws also render each province responsible for the regulation and maintenance of the stretches that fall within its borders. Today, there are about 125,000 km (78,000 miles) of protected droving roads throughout Spain owned by the state: in Andalusia alone, there are over 32,000 kilometers of *vías* covering more than 45,000 hectares (112,000 acres). This vast network includes *cañadas reales*, which are 75 meters wide, *cordeles*, at 37.5 meters wide, and *veredas*, at 20 meters wide. Much of the background and regulation of

these roads is set out in an important, lengthy government document, *El libro blanco* (1993), which is by far the most referenced legislation in the protection of the *vías*.

Since use of these ancient rights-of-way by shepherds has dramatically declined in the twenty-first century, the *vías* have suffered greatly. Shepherds who continue to use them often find that, although the droving routes are nominally protected, neighboring roads, gardens or wilderness have begun to encroach upon them; in some cases, landowners plant along them or even build fences that shepherds must cut to continue their journey. The *vías* have also become popular spaces for outdoor recreation: hikers, joggers, and cyclists use them more and more frequently. Most conservationists acknowledge that tourism, while it can occasionally disrupt flocks in movement, also helps protect the *vías* and ensures ongoing support for their maintenance.

Scientists have begun to study the environmental impacts of the on-foot practice. The *vías pecuarias* act as biological corridors, allowing for the movement of small animals and plants, which hitch a ride between natural areas on passing flocks. Migrating animals transport seeds, facilitating the exchange of species between different parts of the Iberian Peninsula, thus conserving biodiversity. According to Márquez and García (2008), one square meter of a droving road can contain more than forty distinct species. Each sheep transports approximately 5,000 seeds and feeds the soil with about three kilograms of manure each day (Walker 2021). The decrease in traditional on-foot migrations has led to a loss of ecosystem resilience (Manzano et al. 2010). Because of the ecological importance of the *vías pecuarias*, environmental groups have become involved in the protection of traditional transhumance. Some advocacy organizations focus on the practice of transhumance itself, while other groups focus on the ecological health of the *vías* (with an understanding that the primary protector of these routes is the rights-of-way granted to shepherds). The *Asociación Trashumancia y Naturaleza*, for example, advocates directly for transhumant workers, while environmental organizations like *Ecologistas en Acción* focus on the restoration and protection of *vías pecuarias* in general.

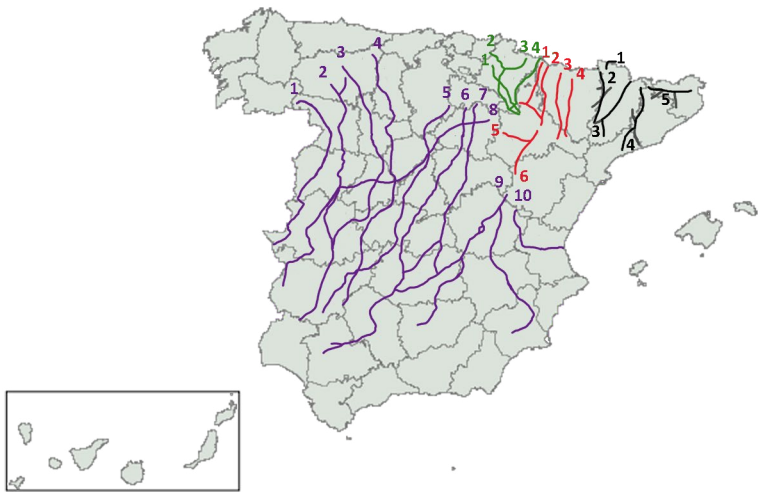

Fig. 0.5 Map of the *vías pecuarias* throughout Spain. Map by Diotime, "Principales vías pecuarias españolas" (2009). Wikimedia, public domain, https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/V%C3%ADa_pecuaria#/media/Archivo:Principales_vias_pecuarias.png

The *Dehesa* and Multifunctionality

In addition to the ecological benefits of transhumance for the protection of public lands, the system of extensive grazing in Andalusia includes the key role of the mostly privately-owned *dehesa*s — a farming land-use system that helps both to maintain both a vulnerable ecosystem and to stem rural depopulation. In contrast to intensive monoculture farms typical of industrialized modern farming, the *dehesa* follows a multifunctional model in which the land is managed to support both production and ecological conservation. The *dehesa*s focus on animal products since the dry, hot environment will not sustain most crops without irrigation. Most *dehesa*s raise Iberian pigs, sheep, and some cattle for their meat, but they also produce valuable agricultural specialties, such as cork from the cork oak and oil from native olive trees. Appropriate land-use practices help prevent fires and erosion while also protecting native flora and fauna. The *dehesa* is typically home to a variety of animal species (such as the Iberian lynx, the

imperial eagle, and black vulture, among others) and, consequently, draws hunters. The area also attracts tourism thanks to its dramatic landscapes and is a reservoir of traditional cultural knowledge held by the communities that have stewarded these lands for generations.

With the so-called "green revolution" of the 1960s, the transition from extensive to intensive agriculture, as well as a more urbanized workforce and economy, has led to stress on and even abandonment of southern *dehesa*s. In response to this strain, environmental activists, policy makers, landowners, and farmers are looking to revive sustainable agricultural traditions of the past. There is more support for landowners to re-invest in multifunctional farming to restore the health of their land and help sustain the local community as well as the environment. Multifunctionality can create jobs and strengthen the economic viability of rural landscapes, and it has been promoted by politicians, scholars, and farmers alike as the only option for sustainable land use.

Despite these broad-ranging benefits, the *dehesa* system is threatened by the overuse of land and soil, the abandonment of rural lands due to changes in economic conditions, and the devastating effects of climate change. There is insufficient investment to support ongoing maintenance and combat fully the effects of these changes. Government policies and European Union Common Agricultural Policies often fail to recognize the complexity of the *dehesa* system and its special importance to Andalusia. This has led scientists, farmers, and NGOs, as well as some policy makers in the Junta de Andalucía (the executive branch of the government of Andalusia) to found working groups, such as *bioDehesa*, and even to publish a comprehensive document on the land system entitled "*Dehesas de Andalucía: Caracterización Ambiental*" (2006). Along with the *vías pecuarias*, the *dehesa* is a focal point for conservation in Spain. If this sustainable system of land use can be preserved, there is a chance to preserve the ecosystems and livelihoods that have developed along with it.

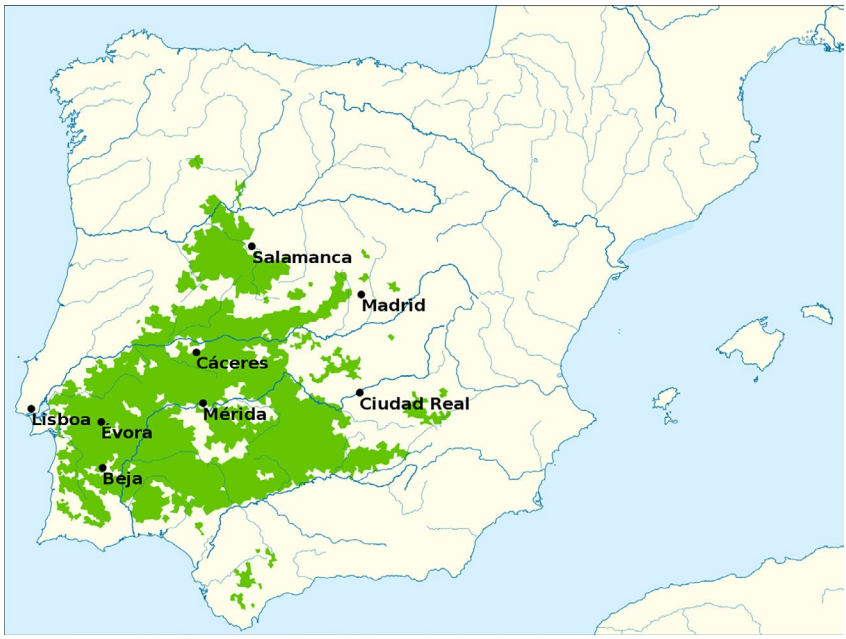

Fig. 0.6 Map of the *Dehesas* in the Iberian Peninsula. Map by El Mono Español (2015), Wikimedia, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dehesa_in_Spain_and_Portugal.svg

Landscapes and Animal Breeds

Just as pastoralism is linked to specific landscapes and ecosystems, the regional breeds of sheep and goats are deeply intertwined with these geographies. The famous Merino sheep have a long history in Spain, dating from at least the thirteenth century and the important wool trade with Flanders, and have now spread to many other parts of the world. In our case studies below, we will hear about other varieties of sheep and goats, breeds that have been developed not only for the quality of their meat or milk, but also because they adapt well to the terrain, climate, and vegetation of the region. Andalusia itself has six distinct sheep breeds and six goat breeds. There are many more breeds registered for all of Spain. *Ganaderos* who raise these native breeds often receive government subsidies because they help to maintain biodiversity. There is often an official association for each breed that supports the shepherds who raise them. In our case studies below, we

hear from each *ganadero* about the importance of the breed, or *raza*, he or she raises, the animals' adaptability to the local conditions, and the high quality of meat or milk they produce. Regional varieties include those raised primarily for meat that adapt well to transhumance, such as *Segureña* lambs, as well as sheep raised for both meat and milk, such as the endangered *Merina de Grazalema*. In the latter case, we see the close link between the place and the breed, which has adapted to the colder humid climate in the Sierra de Grazalema and is not found outside this small region. We will also hear about two local breeds of goats used primarily for their milk to make cheeses: the *Sevillana Florida* and the *Payoya*. The *Florida* is considered a *raza de fomento*, that is, a breed that has been identified as having genetic characteristics that are ideal for helping to maintain delicate eco-systems but is also known for its hardiness and productivity. The *Payoya*, meanwhile, is an endangered breed critical for the continued production of the popular *Payoyo* cheese.

Key to all successful shepherds' practice are their dogs. They are companions and coworkers, ensuring the health and viability of the flocks. The large, often ferocious mastiffs weigh over ninety kilograms (around two hundred pounds) and are trained to guard the sheep at night and to protect the lambs from wolves, wild pigs, and other predators. Herding dogs, usually intelligent and limber breeds such as Australian Shepherds or Border Collies, help the shepherd to guide and manage the flocks as they travel to and from the pastures. After years of training, these dogs acquire valuable herding and communication skills. Traditional *ganadero*s often keep track of the herd and direct the dogs by listening to the *cencerros*, the traditional bells of varying pitch placed on animals at the front and back of a flock. The shepherds can also communicate with their dogs from a distance with a system of complex whistles and calls. Puppies can sell for hundreds of euros and trained young-adult dogs for many thousands. Breeding and training sheepdogs to master these skills is a career in itself.

Changing Markets: Wool, Meat, and Dairy

Wool

The Merino sheep that originated in Spain was bred for its soft wool, which became a key export across Europe in the Middle Ages, and, later, to the Americas and the South Pacific. Centuries before Pacific Island shepherds became experts in its production, Spain and the United Kingdom were the leading suppliers of this variety of wool. Today, most Merino sheep are raised in Australia and New Zealand, which has cornered the global market for Merino wool. China also now exports wool to Europe and beyond. And, as mentioned earlier, many consumers have replaced wool with synthetic fleece for their wardrobes. All these changes have led to a dramatic drop in value and production of Spanish Merino wool (especially since the early 2000s), and recent economic crises continue to slow the growth of this market. Despite the drop in demand, sheep still need to be sheared—at a cost of about €1.50–€3 each. When the wool cannot be sold, everyone involved loses money. Nonetheless, there is a growing demand for high-quality products from a clientele who see social, economic, and environmental value in "buying local" and shepherds working for projects such as "Made in Slow" (http://madeinslow.com/proyecto/transhumance-by-made-in-slow/). Jesús Garzón, director of the Asociación Trashumancia y Naturaleza, credits this trend for the 7.5% increase in Merino wool sales in the last five years.

Meat

Meat and dairy are the primary export products from goat and sheep production, especially since the devaluation of wool in the last few decades. Most meat from sheep and goats is destined for export to the European market. While more than 90% of production is consumed outside of Spain, *ganadero*s who practice extensive grazing often depend on sales of their product to consumers near to home that are looking for a specific origin, freshness, and quality. Within Spain the consumption of meat in general, and lamb specifically, is higher than the EU average. Yet, the cost of production versus the market price over the last two decades has made it hard to make a living. For example, the cost of

raising a sheep is about one hundred euros, and the price per lamb fluctuates between six and fourteen euros per kilo, depending on the cut and the time of year. The margin calculations become more complicated depending on whether the shepherds practice transhumance and the number of sheep births per year.[4]

Dairy

Spain is famous for its milk-producing ovines and caprines, and many of the most famous Spanish cheeses come from specific sheep: the *Manchega* sheep produces the renowned Manchego cheese, the *Churra* sheep produces *Zamorano*, and the *Payoya* goat produces the increasingly sought-after *Payoyo* cheese. Even the Merino sheep, best known for their warm wool, are also well-loved in Spain for the creamy *Torta del Casar* and *La Serena* cheese varieties produced from their milk. In addition, many pueblos have their own cheese varieties. The rich history of place-specific food is now protected by European law labeling regulations, such as the European certification known as the Protected Designation of Origin (DOP), which allows producers from certain regions exclusivity rights over some of their most famous culinary products. When it comes to shepherding, a certain percentage of *ganadero*s benefit from the DOP label, but they still compete with industrial production of these foods. *Ganaderos'* local cheese production was severely curtailed by government regulations for some time; however, a recent change by the Andalusian authorities have eased these regulations. Despite the

4 Ernestine Lüdeke (see Chapter 5) gives us her numbers: "An organic lamb, for example, that is 26 kilos live weight will be 46% dressing and produce 12 kilos of meat, which the cooperatives pay to *ganaderos* at about €9.-/kilo, but this price can oscillate a lot depending on the time of the year and market demands. Raising a lamb costs about €100, which includes food, manpower, vet, land, etc. Keeping the ewe 'mother' for a year (in our case the ewes lamb once a year only—other farms have three lambing seasons in two years, but then cannot do transhumance with all their ewes; some farmers rotate the transhumance herds and send, for example, only 30% or 60% of their ewes north: the ones who are in a gestation period or the ones who go north with the rams) is €120 in food, not counting the investment of the ewe itself. Market price for various cuts of meat (*'Precios EA group Cordero Eco Semana 2-23 y hasta nueva comunicación'*): *Cordero eco* 10,5/11 kg 10,30 €/kg, *Paletilla de cordero eco* 15,90 €/kg, *Pierna de cordero eco* 12,40 €/kg, *Carré de cordero eco* 13,90 €/kg, *Falda de cordero eco* 5,30 €/kg, *Pierna deshuesada eco* 14,90 €/kg."

subsequent development of a small-scale cheese industry, many say that more and more bureaucracy is limiting its expansion.

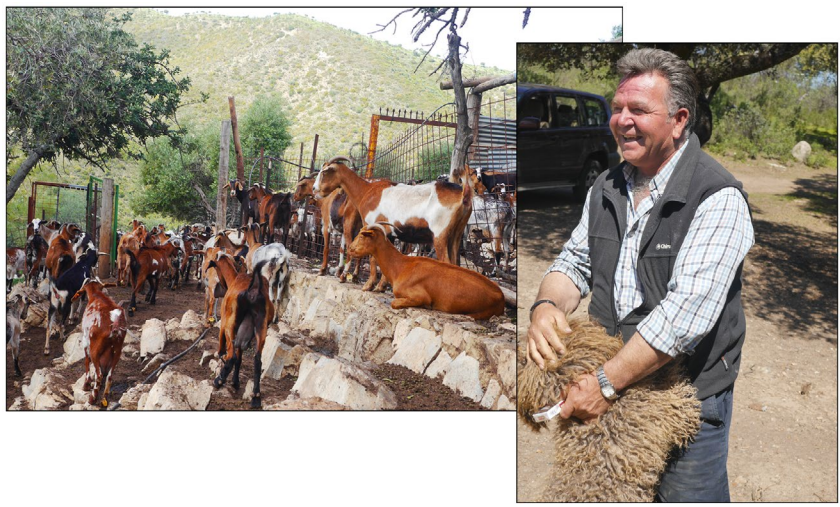

Fig. 0.7 *Payoya* goats in the Sierra de Grazalema (2019); Fortunato Guerrero Lara with his Portuguese water dog, Sierra de Grazalema (2019).

The European Union and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Given both the changing market and needs of those actively working in pastoralism and extensive grazing, both public lands used for transhumance grazing and private *dehesa*s are now often highly dependent on outside funding and subsidies. The broadest reaching of these is the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): the European Union program that regulates, sustains, and determines agriculture and rural development among the twenty-seven member states. The CAP policy itself accounts for a large portion of the EU's total expenditure, making up approximately 40% of a €145 billion annual budget.[5] Due to the broad remit of the CAP, many shepherds and farmers in Spain rely

5 See European Parliament, 'Financing the CAP', April 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/106/la-financiacion-de-la-pac; European Commission, 'Market Measures Explained', (n. d.), https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/market-measures-explained_en

on it to one extent or another. Either they receive rural development grants for maintaining vitally biodiverse ecosystems, or they receive direct payments for food production. *Ganadero*s and shepherds often find their yearly incomes are impacted by even small fluctuations in payouts from this program. Every shepherd, no matter the scope of their operation, has a story to tell about the payments granted (or withheld) by the CAP.

The market-setting practices throughout the European Union attempt to maintain a difficult balance between vastly different political, cultural, and ecological environments, and these are not always successful. Reforms to the CAP in 2013, for example, failed to incorporate extra subsidies for "High Nature Value" (HNV) farmland. These are spaces where extensive maintenance supports biodiversity and contributes to ecological health and sustainable production; most traditional shepherding land thus falls under the HNV category. As a result of this omission, many farmers in Andalusia lost valuable subsidy monies, threatening the economic viability of their ongoing efforts. NGOs and activists who support shepherds have been pushing for the inclusion of HNV farmland into the CAP, but it has been an uphill battle. Recent revisions, now in force (2023–2027), address some of the concerns about the environment by including new eco-schemes and greening strategies while also continuing preexisting measures and funding to facilitate generational renewal in rural areas in the European Union. Along with this direct income support, the new CAP has attempted to implement a fairer distribution system more generally.[6]

Applying for CAP subsidies is a long bureaucratic process that often takes months to complete and then must be repeated annually. Despite the many criticisms of this unwieldy policy, many view it as a necessary evil. Few shepherds can afford not to petition for these funds, as the changing economy has made it increasingly difficult for them to make a living only from selling their wool, meat, and dairy products on a free global, national, regional, and local market.

6 European Commission, 'The Common Agricultural Policy: 2023–27'(2023), https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cap-2023-27_en

Depopulation

In addition to understanding the geography, extensive grazing practices, and economy of pastoralism, it is crucial to understand the complex history of rural depopulation and its relationship to sustainable pastoral practices. A national-identity narrative linked to an idyllic rural existence dates back to early modern times and is featured in many popular pastoral novels of the time. These cultural productions, however, also reveal an emerging discourse about race, culture, and animal husbandry (see Javier Irigoyen-García, *The Spanish Arcadia*, 2013) that continued to develop over centuries. In the twentieth century, this traditional narrative came under scrutiny by the Franco administration, which portrayed the Spanish countryside and its inhabitants as in need of "redemption." Franco's movement only exacerbated flight from so-called "backward" rural areas.

The continuing debate about rural Spain can be seen in the reaction to Sergio del Molino's best-selling book *La España vacía* (2003). The book has sparked intense national debate — and even government action — around the long-term issue of depopulation of the countryside. More recently, rural areas have experienced a "brain drain" as better-educated young people leave home, either to find work in nearby cities such as Madrid and Barcelona, or to leave the country altogether. This global phenomenon has hit hard in Spain, where changing cultural values and economic incentives have made population retention difficult. Young Spaniards increasingly find themselves pulled in multiple directions as their expectations of a role in the new economy are frustrated by limited employment opportunities.

In 2008, as world markets went into freefall, all Spanish citizens, especially those who had made small investments in homes or the stock markets, felt the monumental shift of the recession. Just before the housing bubble burst, many people had invested in extensive development along Spain's sun-drenched coast to reap the benefit of the thriving tourist industry. Much of this infrastructure and building work then stalled for years: buildings remained empty due to high mortgage prices, and the region went into debt trying to pay off the money owed to developers. Soon after this, the unemployment rate began to skyrocket. Within one year, unemployment had doubled, and within a few more

years, nearly a quarter of the population was unemployed, double the rate for Europe in general. In Spain, this financial crisis continued for years and is often referred to as "La Crisis."

This long economic crisis hit young people (*jóvenes*, which often refers to people well into their thirties) especially hard, despite this generation having a higher level of education than ever before. Today, some younger Spaniards, forced from their hometowns, families, and traditions that rooted people to place, are working to rebuild connections and systems that will allow them to stay, or even to return to the places of their ancestors that they may have never personally known. This movement, often referred to as *neoruralismo*, increasingly includes people from all walks of life who seem to understand the urgent need to bring a new generation into traditional practices and lifestyles that have been rapidly disappearing. Pastoralism can combat rural depopulation by creating jobs as well as protecting traditional landscapes, culture, and food sources.

Fig. 0.8 "Transhumancia." Photo by María del Carmen García, *vía pecuaria*, Spain (n.d.).

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