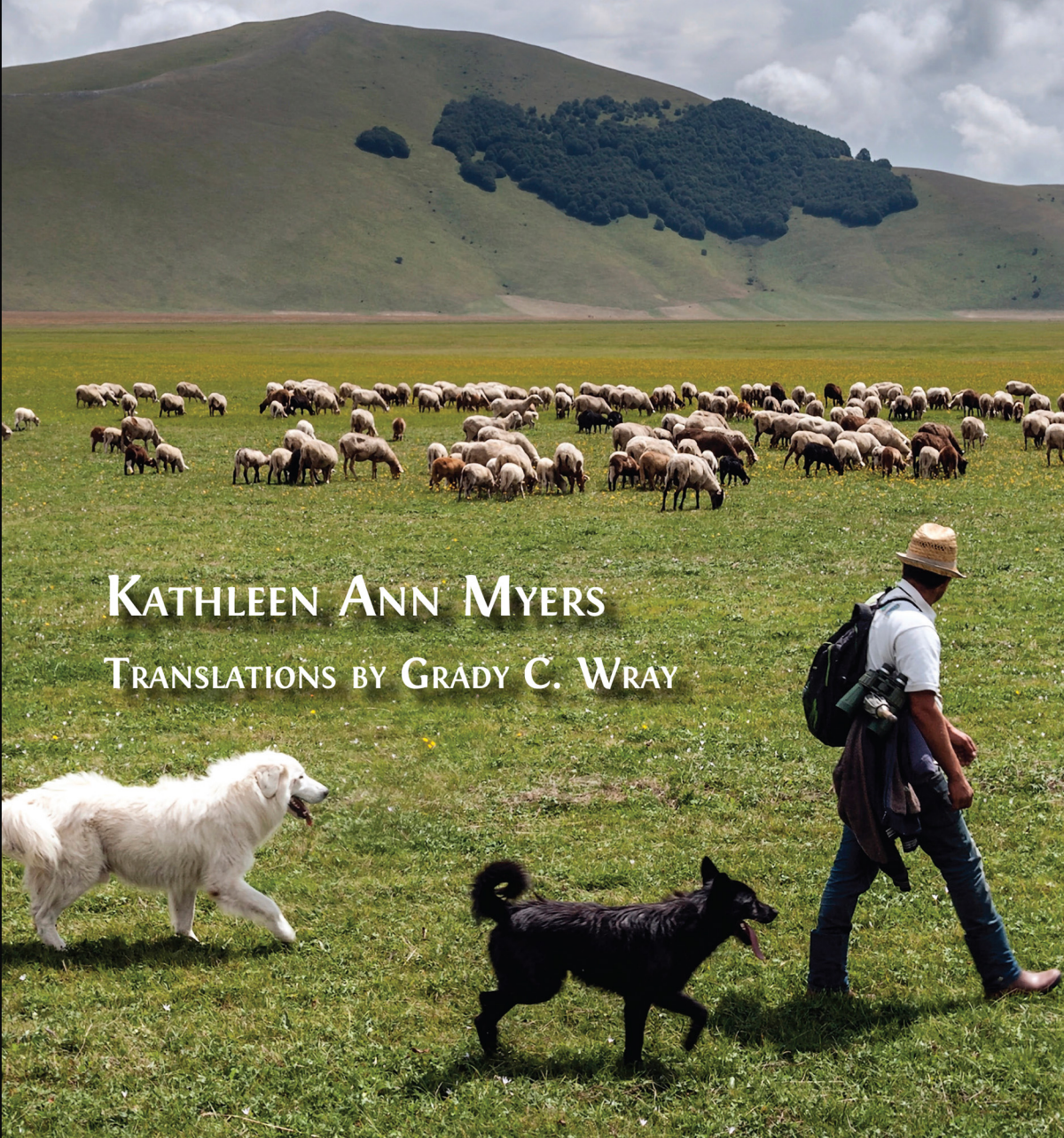


A COUNTRY OF SHEPHERDS

CULTURAL STORIES OF A CHANGING MEDITERRANEAN LANDSCAPE

KATHLEEN ANN MYERS

TRANSLATIONS BY GRADY C. WRAY





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6. The Scaffolding for the Future of Pastoralism: Collectives and Training

Will the next generation know what a green Andalusia looks like? Will they know how important it is for people who live in the cities to support sustainability? Or will our grandchildren inherit the beginning of a new Sahara Desert?

Paco Casero

We need society and people living in cities to understand what shepherds do today. They manage environmentally high-value lands. They care for these high-value biodiverse spaces.

Maricarmen García

While carrying out the interviews for the life stories we have just heard, I quickly discovered that the story of pastoralism in Spain today involves more than just shepherds, *ganaderos*, and their flocks. I was struck by the impressive number of people and organizations that repeatedly came up in my conversations. We have just seen (Chapter 5) how Ernestine Lüdeke's organization works on many fronts to fortify extensive grazing. We also heard how Fortunato Guerrero Lara worked as president of a land reform collective (Chapter 3), and how Pepe Millán mentors shepherds-in-training with the Junta de Andalucía (Chapter 2). A variety of governmental programs, NGOs, and social movements often collectively referred to as "*plataformas*" provide an essential scaffolding underneath the individual family stories we have heard. While our informants often discuss the importance of outside factors, such as market forces, climate change, and politics, they also weigh how networks, policies, and organizations can help or hinder how well they can navigate complex and time-consuming socio-political,

economic, and agrarian structures. In fact, nearly everyone I interviewed was involved with at least one governmental organization, educational project, public research institute, or local organization that advocating for or otherwise supporting extensive grazing practices. These *plataformas* often receive government subsidies and work with research programs throughout Andalusia. Many of them are integrated into national and even international organizations.

In this chapter, I include a brief sample of my interviews with dozens of people who work in predominantly Andalusia-based organizations and initiatives, in three general areas: collective associations, university- or government-sponsored professional programs, and direct shepherd-training programs. These areas often overlap, bringing together traditional shepherds, university-trained specialists, and activists working for pastoralism and environmental sustainability. Unlike the more detailed case studies of the families that work directly with animals, this chapter offers thumbnail sketches of some of the many actors involved in ensuring the success — and even the survival — of sustainable pastoralism. Here, we outline the work of scholars, activists, and NGOs and provide bibliography and links in footnotes for readers who would like to explore these areas further.

Collective Organizations, or “*Plataformas*”

Although it was an outsider’s fascination with shepherds and their livestock that first captured my interest in pastoralism, I now realize that the work of Jesús “Suso” Garzón Heydt and his collaborators ensured that my interest would grow. As we saw in the introduction to *A Country of Shepherds*, Suso has had an outsized impact on the preservation of modern transhumance in Spain, successfully amplifying over decades his work on conservation, ecosystems, and sustainable practices.¹ As

1 Suso’s name features in many of the recent news articles, events, and relevant organizations, especially dealing with extensive grazing and transhumance. See, for example, interviews with him (all in Spanish): ‘Jesus Garzón Heydt’ (Vimeo, 10 November 2010, <https://vimeo.com/16715640>), ‘Jesús Garzón: la trashumancia y la red Natura 2000, en perfecta armonía’ (YouTube, 26 November 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGHoztdRNAY>), ‘Trashumancia: “Andando y sembrando” un futuro sostenible’ (YouTube, 16 October 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vygf3u3HCzE>), and ‘Los beneficios de la actividad ganadera’ (Radio

Ernestine Lüdeke notes (see Chapter 5), Suso is probably the reason so many people continue to talk about transhumance. Since the early 1990s, he has led political and social movements to protect and promote pastoralism, including the founding of the highly visible national collective, the “Asociación Trashumancia y Naturaleza” (ATN).² When I interview Suso at the Festival of Transhumance in Madrid in 2017, the energetic activist is still practicing transhumance on foot with his own flock of about 1,000 sheep and several hundred goats. He recalls helping found ATN after participating in the UN’s “Earth Summit” in 1992. He explains that the collective focuses on transhumance as a means to an end: a more sustainably managed Iberian Peninsula with protected natural areas. At the same time, Suso underscores the even broader focus of the ATN to raise awareness of how “the gains in Spain can help the rest of Europe’s work on sustainable systems like transhumance.” ATN helps to organize the Festival of Transhumance; makes the *vías pecuarias* more accessible by providing watering troughs and maps, as well as sponsoring conservation and clean-up projects; and offers experienced trekkers to aid shepherds in navigating the challenges of a modern transhumance. The group also advocates for policy changes and protective laws, such as Law 3/1995 protecting the *vías pecuarias*, or the 2017 declaration of transhumance as immaterial cultural heritage in Spain. Their work, along with that of other national collectives and hundreds of volunteers and staff, ensures a widespread awareness of transhumance as valuable living heritage and key for achieving environmental sustainability. As this book went to press, Suso had also broadcast a program on how transhumance could help stem the July 2022 crisis with wildfires breaking out in over fifty sites across Spain.

In October 2022, ATN joined forces with a handful of collectives, including the influential “Plataforma Ganadería Extensiva y Pastoralismo” (GEyP), which was launched in 2013 with the help of the activist organization “Entretantos”.³ In collaboration with the Spanish

Televisión Española, 5 February 2022, <https://www.rtve.es/play/videos/para-todos-la-2/los-beneficios-de-la-actividad-ganadera/6342201>).

2 Asociación Trashumancia y Naturaleza, 2021, (in Spanish:) <https://www.pastos.es> and https://www.facebook.com/TrashumanciayN/?locale=es_LA

3 Plataforma por la Ganadería Extensiva y el Pastoralismo, 2014, (in Spanish:) <http://www.ganaderiaextensiva.org>; Fundación Entretantos, 2012, (in Spanish:) <https://www.entretantos.org>.

government (always referred to as *la Administración*), these organizations helped to draw up the first-ever strategic plan for extensive grazing in Spain. At 150 pages, the *Propuesta de bases técnicas para una estrategia estatal de la ganadería extensiva* (Proposal for Specialized Strategic Governmental Support of Extensive Grazing) diagnoses the current state of extensive grazing, outlines specific objectives, and proposes a series of actions to support pastoralism more widely.⁴ Among these is the need to understand and support extensive-grazing practices and how they provide a unique set of benefits on multiple levels. A better understanding of these practices will help create policy that supports good land use and socio-economic sustainability.

Many of the researchers I interviewed are active in the GEyP and contribute to their broad-reaching work. Their website highlights this work and even includes an informative, accessible publication on extensive grazing. For example, it offers succinct explanations of the vital, multifaceted role of pastoralism: “This activity is essential for the land and for society because it not only produces quality products, but it also shapes the landscape, helps control forest fires, regulates water cycles and soil quality, helps to strengthen biodiversity and to preserve cultural heritage and territorial identity” (*Propuesta* 12). It also reminds readers that pastoralism supports the “Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment” (“*Desarrollo sostenible del medio rural*”) law (Ley 45/2007), which mandates the need to “preserve and restore the heritage of the rural environment as well as its natural and cultural resources” (Art. 2.1). The publication puts forth four general areas that need to be addressed. These include the need to highlight the benefits that extensive grazing for the environment and rural development, especially in contrast to intensive grazing; this differentiation would help government officials create policies to support pastoralism. Another key area it identifies is the need to work on developing sustainable,

4 The actions outlined include the following: the “definition and distinctions of extensive grazing”; the “betterment of governance related to extensive grazing”; the “betterment of socioeconomic sustainability for extensive grazing”; “optimization of the relationship between extensive grazing and the land”; and the “promotion of research, training, innovation and information sharing about extensive grazing”. See Silvia Zabalza et al., *Propuesta de bases técnicas para una estrategia estatal de la ganadería extensiva* (2021), WWF España and Transhumancia y Naturaleza, pp. 50–110, https://www.wwf.es/nuestro_trabajo/alimentos/estrategia_estatal_para_la_ganaderia_extensiva/

high-quality, and distinct products for the market and to strengthen the social, political, and collective connections that allow these products to do well on the market (*Propuesta* 24).

Another individual working closely with these initiatives in the extensive grazing movement is the man who introduced me to Fortunato Guerrero Lara (see Chapter 3), Francisco (Paco) Casero Rodríguez, a life-long advocate for Andalusian agrarian reform and collective action. My neighbor in Seville had suggested that I contact Paco, and, to my surprise, Paco was eager to meet with me. Considered a national hero by many, Paco has been an environmental activist as far back as the Franco regime, organizing day laborers and leading regular hunger strikes to protest environmental degradation and human-rights abuses. He was a founder of the “Sindicato Obreros del Campo”, created the “Confederación Ecológica Pacifista Andaluza”, and has authored dozens of essays and several books. His recent work focuses on ecological challenges facing southern Spain, including topics such as the role of the *dehesa* system and the need for a more inclusive CAP to protect traditional, sustainable practices and rural livelihoods.⁵

When I call Paco, he invites me to the headquarters for the NGOs he founded, “Fundación Savia” and “Ecovalia”,⁶ which promote the value of natural systems at local and national levels. Although it is Holy Week and most of Seville is on holiday, the office buzzes with dozens of young volunteers. As we talk, he points to his active postings on social media⁷ and passionately demands that we consider what legacy we are leaving for our descendants: “Will the next generation know what a green Andalusia looks like? Will they know how important it is for people who live in the cities to support sustainability? Or will our grandchildren inherit the beginning of a new Sahara Desert?”⁸ As we saw earlier, Paco is a man who practices his own principles: he sent his grandchildren

5 Francisco Casero, ‘La ganadería extensiva seguirá siendo víctima con la nueva PAC’, Portal de Andalucía, 15 December 2020, (in Spanish:) <https://portaldeandalucia.org/opinion/la-ganaderia-extensiva-seguira-siendo-victima-con-la-nueva-pac/>

6 Fundación Savia, 2018, (in Spanish:) <https://www.fundacionsavia.org/>; Ecovalia, 2013, (in Spanish:) <https://www.ecovalia.org/>

7 @paco_casero on X (formerly Twitter).

8 See also, Paco Casero, ‘¿Qué pensarán de nosotros nuestros nietos cuando vean lo que les hemos dejado?’, *El diario de Jerez*, 30 November 2020, (in Spanish:) https://www.diariodejerez.es/jerez/Paco-Casero-Fundacion-Savia-nietos_0_1523247952.html

to Ernestine Lüdeke's rural summer camp (see Chapter 5). Paco urges me to help get the word out and even sends me home with a T-shirt and book bag to help advertise the movement for a green Andalusia, suggesting that my daughter might want to wear it to school.

By fall 2022, Paco's activism on behalf of extensive grazing and its land-use systems had culminated with a well-informed, passionate brief about the urgent need to intervene in the restructuring of the new European Union's CAP that will affect subsidies through 2027. Writing to the Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Luis Planas, Paco underscores the Spanish government's historical record of failing to understand, recognize, and fight for the fundamental role of extensive grazing in Spain: "There is no extensive grazing without pastures, and no pastures without extensive grazing... 65% of Spanish land can't be cultivated, but you can use it for grazing... [but] 70% of Spanish pastures are excluded from the CAP." In theory, the CAP's restructuring of the "Ecoesquema" ("Ecoscheme") is going to save pastoralism from near extinction, but in fact, Paco argues, it only "masks" a new system that will penalize further these land-use systems. He points out that the "*pago básico*" (basic unit of subsidy from the CAP) is unfair. One only has to look at other Mediterranean countries to see this. In Spain the *pago básico* is 60 euros/hectare, but in Italy it is 229 euros/hectare, and in Greece it is 258 euros/hectares. The *pago básico* in Spain needs to at least be doubled in order to make pastoralism viable. Paco suggests restructuring the way extensive grazing, pasturelands, and the *dehesa* have been defined and categorized, which would affect 40% of the land in Spain.

One of the most influential collectives in Andalusia — a group that shepherds like Pepe Millán (see Chapter 2) belong to — is "Asociación de Pastores por el Monte Mediterráneo" (APMM).⁹ Currently led by Rogelio Jiménez Piano, the APMM was founded in 2009 and promotes pastoralism and its benefits to the agricultural ecosystems of Southern Spain. The organization publishes maps and guides, offers opportunities for knowledge-sharing between professional specialties, facilitates networking between shepherds, and aids in the production and sales of products. One of their most widely publicized programs, the fire-prevention program "Red de Áreas Pasto-Cortafuegos", popularly

9 Asociación de Pastores por el Monte Mediterráneo, 2010, (in Spanish:) <http://pastoresmonte.org>, and on Facebook.

known as the “sheep as firefighters” (*ovejas bomberos*) mentioned by Ernestine in Chapter 5, teams up with shepherds, the Junta de Andalucía, and a research group at CSIC-Granada (“Pastos y Sistemas Silvopastorales Mediterráneos”, see below).

Pressed for time between his own work in shepherding, the collective, and his government position, Rogelio suggests we meet up during the 2016 inaugural round table, “Retos sobre el pastoralismo del siglo XXI”, (“Twenty-First-Century Challenges for Pastoralism”), at the *Escuela de Pastores* (Shepherd School). Wearing an “Asociación de Pastores por el Monte Mediterráneo” t-shirt and talking in a booming voice, Rogelio makes clear that he dislikes “the whole picturesque notion that society has about our profession”. He is much more interested in the reality of the challenges that student-shepherds see ahead of them. Rogelio addresses their concerns about access to pastureland, licenses, and funding, and about how to run a cheese-making business before moving on to a lengthy discussion about a far less-common topic: the importance of knowing which breeds have been developed over many centuries to flourish in specific microclimates and topographies. He asks each student: “What breed will you raise? Why?” As Rogelio speaks, I recall Fortunato Guerrero Lara (see Chapter 3) and Pepe Millán (Chapter 2) emphasizing how the native breeds they raise, adapted to local conditions, are essential to success in their profession.

Ever practical, Rogelio moves on to two other cornerstones of success that often are not publicized. Future shepherds and *ganaderos* need to know that, as markets change, more profit comes from quality than from quantity. He predicts that Spaniards, as they increasingly embrace responsible consumerism, will demand high-quality products and develop a loyalty to their producers. The final cornerstone is also essential: these aspiring *ganaderos* need to start building support networks now. Collectives, government agencies, mentors, and colleagues will be critical to successful outcomes — not to mention in gaining competency in traditional practices, new technology, and knowledge of the vast bureaucracy that increasingly governs pastoralism. “We don’t have to follow the sixteenth-century model”, he jokes. “We have GPS, cars, WhatsApp. Will drones be next?!”

These collectives and their leaders highlighted here all help to bridge the gap between *ganaderos*/shepherds, markets, researchers,

government agencies, and the public. As we have seen, they offer support for transhumance, apply for subsidies, create networks among shepherds, and advocate for extensive grazing as part of a holistic vision to ensure the sustainability of delicate ecosystems within the modern marketplace. Their work is also vital to the promotion and the valuing of extensive-grazing practices and pasturelands at the level of European Union policies. As of 2022, all of the aforementioned *plataformas* are involved in advocating for better CAP subsidies for the type of pastoralism practiced in southern Spain.

Each of these *plataformas* also has a highly public-facing mission and employs social media — primarily X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and Facebook — to promote pastoralism. The national “Asociación Trashumancia y Naturaleza”, for example, has over 12,000 Facebook followers, while the regional “Asociación de Pastores por el Monte Mediterráneo” has about 1,700. Social media are particularly useful for sharing key information about recent policy developments with an engaged public.¹⁰ Whether supporting an NGO, government-funded group or grassroots collective, social media inform a diverse audience about sustainable shepherding and amplify their voices to thousands of followers.

University-based Training, Research, and Projects

As we have seen in our snapshots of collectives like the “Asociación Pastores por el Monte Mediterráneo”, publicly funded universities and government research agencies play an important role in the scaffolding of pastoralism. Some of the most active research groups are based at the Universities of Seville and Córdoba and the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC-Granada). Two of the most widely publicized projects, the *ovejas bomberos* and the *Escuela de Pastores*

10 In March 2021, for example, ATN posted a wide range of news articles and blogs about issues related to rural life and shepherding, an invitation for an academic conference, an online event for women in farming, an update about animals and shepherds the organization is collaborating with, a workshop for people working with livestock, a post about Earth Day, and a few re-posts from partner organizations. Some individual shepherds even track their own flocks or transhumance on social media to share with curious public. See for example, *bordamatiasfarm* on Instagram and *@felipemolina73* on X (formerly Twitter).

(discussed below), come out of this collaboration, so I decided to interview several of the university-trained people involved.

When I interview the CISC-Granada researcher Dr. Ana Belén Robles Cruz,¹¹ who led the 2003 working group “Pastos y Sistemas Silvopastorales Mediterráneos” (Mediterranean Pasture and Silvopasture Systems) that developed the fire-prevention program “Red de Áreas Pasto-Cortafuegos de Andalucía” (Andalusia Pasture-Firelane Network Area),¹² she talks in practical terms about the popular “*ovejas bomberos*” (sheep as firefighters) program she helped to develop. The benefit of grazing animals in different sites, she explains, is that it provides a source of income for shepherds and, simultaneously, serves as a cost-effective tool for maintaining public lands. Ana draws on her scientific botanical training — in particular, her studies of the impact of sustainable shepherding on the soil, plants, and vegetation in southeastern Andalusia, one of the driest regions in Europe. Her group obtains funds from the Junta de Andalucía and works directly with shepherds from collectives like the “Asociación Pastores por el Monte Mediterráneo”.

Notably, Ana’s group was also instrumental in revitalizing the *Escuela de Pastores* (School for Shepherds) to refocus it after the initial years and provide more practical applications for the aspiring *ganaderos*. She hopes that this support and activity will spur more young people into wanting to work with livestock but admits that, despite her team’s success in modernizing some extensive-grazing practices, she has not yet seen a corresponding increase in the practice of shepherding: “The future is not good. Despite the fact that there are more *plataformas*, scholars, and aid, it is still a very demanding job, and there aren’t many young shepherds.” Nonetheless, Ana and her collaborator, Dr. María Eugenia Ramos Font,¹³ emphasize that giving *ganaderos* more agency and tools is

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- 11 ResearchGate, ‘Ana Belén Robles’, <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ana-Robles-4>. See also her research group’s page: Pastos y Sistemas Silvopastorales Mediterráneos, 2014, (in Spanish:) <https://www.eez.csic.es/evaluacion-restauracion-y-proteccion-de-agrosistemas-mediterraneos-serpam>
 - 12 Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de Medio Ambiente y Ordenación del Territorio, Proyecto RAPCA, 2015, (in Spanish:) https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/medioambiente/portal/documents/20151/591684/6_triptico_rapca_con_sangria.pdf/e8b9d60b-f81a-cb3b-41f7-5e8c80affca8?t=1655287442732.
 - 13 Google Scholar, ‘María Eugenia Ramos Font’, <https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=yQG681gAAAAJ&hl=es>

still the key to the future of pastoralism. Ana insists, “you have to spend time with the people: the *ganaderos* and the shepherds. You have to give them the attention they deserve, talk to them, get close to them and involve them in research and practice. You have to restore their worth and their role.” Ana and her team continue to work alongside local and regional government to organize shepherds and give them a voice in the management of their affairs. Many of their initiatives — including fire control, working with native breeds, and interviewing practitioners to brainstorm new solutions — are part of their collaboration with the collective research group “Open2Preserve”.¹⁴

As I finish my interview with Ana, another of her collaborators, Fidel Delgado Ferrer,¹⁵ joins us with an important comparative perspective on how to develop more markets and roles for shepherds. He, like others we have heard from, is interested in the ways France is moving toward a national commitment to its ecosystems and biodiversity. Fidel mentions that a new law has been proposed there that would require all state-funded institutions to use a percentage of locally sourced food.¹⁶ In addition, France offers a system of professionals to care for livestock so that *ganaderos* and shepherds can take some time off. Fidel notes with irony that Spain sells much of its sheep and goat milk to France, which then produces and sells its internationally famous French cheeses. Echoing the complaints of shepherds and *ganaderos* we have interviewed, he notes that Spain’s often restrictive laws have inhibited the development of a vital cheesemaking industry and closed off a potential avenue of revenue. Spain, Fidel argues, needs to invest in measures like France does, “so that there’s a better quality of life for the *ganadero*; you have to recognize that extensive grazing produces more than just food... and recognize its benefit for society.”

14 Open2Preserve, 2018, <https://open2preserve.eu/en/>

15 See also Alto Minho FIRECAMP, ‘Fidel Delgado Ferrer – AMAYA/Junta de Andalucía’, YouTube, 8 January 2018, (in Spanish:) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ep8KBVISE5k>

16 France’s parliament has passed a law requiring all of the nation’s “collective restaurants” (school cafeterias, hospital cafeterias, senior living communities, prisons and other state institutions) to source at least 40% of their food locally. The proposal will need to be approved by the French Senate before it becomes law. See (in French:) <https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/propositions/pion3280.asp>

Another highly influential researcher, Dr. Yolanda Mena Guerrero,¹⁷ multitasks by working actively with goat farmer Pepe Millán to teach a new generation of university-trained professionals how to collaborate with each other and with those who care for livestock, as well as by helping to draft new agro-pastoral policies. Based at the University of Seville, she has published widely on extensive-grazing systems and sustainable goat-milk production. When we meet at a small office in the Center for Agroforestry (*Ciencias Agroforestales*), she is surrounded by team members working on a grant that is due within days. She suggests that we sit outside for the interview so she can enjoy the spring day. As Yolanda begins, she admits to being stretched thin by the number of research projects she works on and by the urgency of the situation for Andalusia's extensive grazing. Trained as a veterinarian, she collaborated with Pepe Millán on the documentary *La buena leche* in the hopes of promoting goat ranching, the outstanding nutritional value of goat milk, and the usefulness of goats for land management in mountainous regions (see Chapter 2). "There is little recognition of this pastoral tradition", she explains. "Most people focus on the more picturesque sheep." Yolanda has deep respect for Pepe, insisting that she learns far more from him than he does from her. Her role, she clarifies, is to be a catalyst connecting a whole gamut of people and agencies with those who keep Andalusia's pastoral traditions alive — the shepherds themselves. She facilitates "communication among all actors, among *ganaderos*, researchers, specialists and the government in order to sensitize and raise public awareness". Yolanda believes that talking directly with the *ganaderos* "helps sell you on sustainable pastoralism and allows you to step away from large *supermercados* (supermarkets) filled with intensive farming products. It also improves the quality of the food you eat and the environment." One of her newer initiatives is the creation of "a collective brand, a brand-name quality seal" to help consumers easily identify the products the *ganaderos* produce.¹⁸ In a recent project, Yolanda teamed up with Ernestine Lüdeke and the "Fundación Monte Mediterráneo" (see Chapter 5) to work with "AgriTrain"—an organization training

17 Prisma, 'Yolanda Mena Guerrero', <https://bibliometria.us.es/prisma/investigador/2657>

18 Federación Andaluza de Asociaciones de Caprino de Raza Pura "CABRANDALUCÍA", 2005, (in Spanish:) <https://www.cabrandalucia.com/>

teachers to educate students about sustainable pastoralism.¹⁹ She is also an active member of “Entretantos/Plataforma de Ganadería Extensiva y Pastoralismo”, where she contributes to the new strategic guidelines for national policy regarding pastoralism.

Just as nearly everyone mentions Suso Garzón when talking about transhumance in Spain, nearly everyone also mentioned the Andalusian veterinarian, María del Carmen García Moreno.²⁰ While Yolanda and Ana lead university-based projects and training, Maricarmen highlights the significant role trained professionals can play in promoting pastoralism in their daily practices and beyond. In 2020, she became director of the Sierra de Castril Natural Park in Granada, but, when I interview her, she is still working for Oficina Comarcal Agraria (“Agrarian District Office”) and as a veterinarian while also traveling throughout Andalusia and Extremadura to document traditional transhumance, photographing and gathering information about this fast-disappearing practice. When I first call her she is on the trail in Extremadura helping Suso and others with a spring transhumance. She invited me to join them, but instead we met in Seville a week later where she was delivering a talk on transhumance as cultural patrimony. Soft-spoken and highly focused, Maricarmen explains that she is in a race against time to document “every transhumance, every native breed, and every transhumant shepherd and his traditions. Photography helps transmit the emotional part, the human side of transhumance.” She remarks (only half-jokingly): “See this gray streak in my hair? It’s been a difficult year!” Her traveling photography exhibitions, recorded interviews, and videos are reaching a broad public. Yet this may not be enough to make significant changes, she says, tearing up with emotion.²¹ “We’re losing our heritage. I’m pretty

19 AgriTrain, 2016, <https://www.agri-train.eu/?lang=en>

20 Gescan, ‘María del Carmen García Moreno, veterinaria, fotógrafa y directora de un Parque Natural’, 12 March 2020, <https://gescansl.com/maria-del-carmen-garcia-moreno-veterinaria-fotografa-y-directora-de-un-parque-natura>

21 Her story and message have been broadcast on popular TV shows, such as *Tierra y Mar* (Tierra y Mar & Espacio Protegido Canal Sur, ‘María del Carmen García Moreno, veterinaria, fotógrafa y directora de un Parque Natural’, YouTube, 9 March 2020, (in Spanish:) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OstSaUzOa-o>) and through her traveling photography project (Turismo Caravaca, ‘La visión de la trashumancia a través de los ojos de la fotógrafa Mari Carmen García Moreno’, 5 June 2018, <http://www.turismocaravaca.com/blog/>

pessimistic about the future of transhumance, but with photography, we document the tradition, and that's enough to give me some inner peace." Still, Maricarmen continues to fight for the future and has even begun work in a new area — organizing *ganaderas*, the women who work in this traditionally male profession.²²



Fig. 6.1 Veterinarian María del Carmen García presents information on the benefits of transhumance to students at the *Escuela de Pastores*, Andalucía (2016).

When I attend the *Escuela de Pastores* the following year, I am not surprised to see Maricarmen there delivering material to students and fielding emergency veterinary calls on her cellphone at the same time. Somehow, she manages to provide a comprehensive presentation on the history, practice, and benefits of transhumance and pastoralism while simultaneously texting with a *ganadero* who is birthing a ewe. In her closing remarks, the vet urges her young audience to consider the benefits of transhumance and to stick with their desire to be shepherds. "Come join in on the transhumance this spring and find out how it works", Maricarmen encourages. "Hands-on training and good comradery come with it!" Later, she summarizes her views: "We need society and people living in cities to understand what shepherds do

la-vision-de-la-trashumancia-a-traves-de-los-ojos-de-la-fotografia-mari-carmen-garcia-moreno/).

22 *Ganaderas en Red*, 2016, (in Spanish:) <http://www.ganaderasenred.org/>

today. They manage environmentally high-value lands. They care for these high-value biodiverse spaces.”²³

This preservation activity among professionally trained university researchers and other specialists — and their increasing insistence that work must be done in close connection with the *ganaderos* themselves — has been one of the biggest changes in pastoralism in the last decade or two. The results include a recent improvement in the social status for shepherds, the emergence of new researchers who focus on practical solutions, and increased national attention on the benefits of pastoralism. And yet, despite this newfound appreciation and activity, each of the people I interview notes that there remains a long road ahead before these initiatives make a significant impact on the ability of shepherding as a profession to attract a new generation. It is this bottom-line reality that ultimately led me to the *Escuela de Pastores*. I wanted to interview students and teachers and see the impact this training outside of traditional knowledge handed down from one generation to the next might be having in filling the widening gap in the profession as long-time shepherds retire without replacements.

Shepherd School for a New Generation

Sooner or later, every person I interview over the course of a year mentions the *Escuela de Pastores* as a point of reference for their own ideas about the future of pastoralism. While *dehesa* owner Ernestine Lüdeke (Chapter 5) tried without success to sponsor an *Escuela* intern, Marta Moya (Chapter 4) hopes to contact the school, and goat farmer Pepe Millán (Chapter 2) mentors several students every year. Transhumant shepherd Fortunato Guerrero Lara (Chapter 3) still participates in some of their educational projects, despite some skepticism.

The idea of a dedicated school for shepherding began in the Basque Country, but now at least six provinces, including Andalusia, have their own programs.²⁴ This *Escuela de Pastores* is sponsored by two arms of

23 Tierra y Mar & Espacio Protegido Canal Sur, ‘María del Carmen García Moreno, veterinaria, fotógrafa y directora de un Parque Natural’, YouTube, 9 March 2020, (in Spanish:) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OstSaUzOa-o>

24 Plataforma Ganadería Extensiva y Pastoralismo, ‘Las escuelas de pastoreo en España’, 25 July 2019, (in Spanish:) <https://www.ganaderiaextensiva.org/>

the regional Andalusian government — the Junta de Andalucía and the “Instituto Andaluz de Investigación y Formación Agraria” (IFAPA) — but it also benefits from the participation of collectives, research centers, and members of the shepherding community. Each spring, the *Escuela de Pastores* sets up in a new location in Andalusia, hoping to reach the broadest number of candidates. The year we visit (2016), the initial events are taking place at the “Estación Experimental del Zaidín”, a research center in Granada.²⁵ As my colleague, María del Mar, and I turn down a small lane to the agricultural campus, the Sierra Nevada sparkles in the distance as the early-morning sun illuminates its highest peaks. When we enter the building, the on-site coordinator, Yolanda Mena’s former student Dr. Francisco (Paco) de Asís Ruiz Morales,²⁶ extends a warm welcome. Dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt, he will oversee twenty students who will live, study, and work together for a month at the center before heading to their practicums all over Andalusia. Paco, like his mentor, believes in bridging the academic and real worlds. He blends hands-on work with *ganaderos*, such as helping to establish a local cheese shop, with research projects. And, rather than teach behind closed doors, he makes an effort to include the public. Today he has invited scholars, journalists, leaders of associations, and government officials to join the students. Indeed, it was at his urging that I attend these opening days.

For the next three months, students will split their time between the classroom and the fields, learning an impressive range of skills that highlights the complex nature of the profession, including knowledge needed to care for livestock from birth, selection of appropriate breeds for their specific geographical areas, animal nutrition, grazing practices and land use, and veterinary care. They will also learn the importance of navigating local, regional, and European Union regulations; obtaining funding for biodiversity initiatives; and successfully marketing their

escuelas-de-pastoreo/; Escuela de Pastores de Andalucía, X Escuela 2021, (in Spanish:) <https://escueladepastoresdeandalucia.es/es/x-escuela2021>

25 Estación Experimental del Zaidín (2014, <https://www.eez.csic.es/>) in Granada, is a branch of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC-Granada) funded by the Spanish government and part of a larger organization: Pastos y Sistemas Silvopastorales Mediterráneos.

26 *ResearchGate*, ‘Francisco de Asís Ruiz Morales’, <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Francisco-De-Asis-Morales>; ORCID, ‘Francisco de Asís Ruiz Morales’, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0905-4481>

products. After weeks of classroom sessions, internships will provide hands-on experience with different breeds, farm practices, and diverse geographies. Just as importantly, as we heard the APMM president Rogelio Jiménez note, their experiences here will help students establish networks for the future.

Twenty students — twelve men and eight women — selected from a pool of forty applicants come from all over Andalusia: Tarifa, Alpujarras, Almejar, Cádiz, Málaga, Córdoba, Sierra Norte, and Huelva — as well as from a variety of backgrounds. As one student, Sergio, explains, although he has no background in shepherding, he is eager to go back to the land. He has worked all over Spain but, after helping a friend with his *explotación* (large flock), wants to join the *neo-rurales* even as he wonders if the idea is crazy because he is not sure if he can adapt to the lifestyle it requires. In fact, one of the Junta de Andalucía officials who helps with the program later explains to me that this year there are fewer students like Sergio who do not already have a connection to pastoralism because it is hard, otherwise, for them to access land and obtain a license for owning a flock. With each passing year, the school has enrolled more students who grew up around livestock and attend because they want to master new skills — both bureaucratic and practical — to secure their own *explotación* and learn new ways to make it economically sustainable.

A half-dozen students gather around me, enthusiastic to talk about the new venture they are embarking upon, and eagerly share their individual goals and concerns. María's family in Tarija has a pair of goats now but wants to establish a full herd. Belén will inherit her grandfather's flocks, but she is concerned about the effects of climate change and decreased access to pasturelands. Paula works with her grandfather's livestock but wants to learn how to establish a cheese shop with the goat milk to make it more profitable. Sonia, having first studied law, now wants to return to her family farm and the *Malagueña* sheep they raise. She is eager to learn the economics of the business and how to access government subsidies so they can make a living. Sonia comments: "This is a traditional way of life; however, it can only be viable — maintained and transformed — if the government supports us." Her comment sparks a heated debate among the students as they discuss new regional restrictions and CAP requirements. Sonia clearly

has struck a chord: in the end, if they are to be successful, each of them must be able to make extensive grazing cost-effective. Still, in the damp morning chill, their energy fills the room and fills observers like me with optimism for the future.



Fig. 6.2 Francisco Bueno Mesa, *ganadero* and student at the *Escuela de Pastores*, Andalusia (2016).

An older student about to turn thirty, Francisco Bueno Mesa, brings an experienced point of view to the discussion, noting how access to pastureland is increasingly difficult as intensive agriculture has grown exponentially in Southern Andalusia. After graduating from school and

working in the tourist industry for nearly ten years, he is returning to his family tradition as a goat farmer. He reports that, growing up on a goat farm outside of Málaga, he personally experienced the feeling of marginalization many shepherds speak about: "It used to be that the shepherd was the lowest of the low. An illiterate. He didn't know how to read or write. Only in the country was he worth something, and then it was only for farming, for raising livestock and things of that sort. Only that." After ten years in the booming tourist industry, however, Francisco returned to shepherding, even though, like Fortunato's son Javier (see Chapter 3), he felt pressured by society to use his education for a different vocation:

It seems like people expect something different from those of us who have completed some schooling. For example, I did my college prep *bachillerato* and all of that. I studied a lot. I like to read; I love to read. But some say I can't, or I shouldn't, be a shepherd. They say I have to be something more than that.

Nonetheless, Francisco chose to return to the family shepherding tradition:

I want to continue down this road to being a shepherd, a goat farmer. Everybody in my family, my granddad, my great granddad, has raised livestock. They raised goats, and we've always made a living from all this. We've been able to eat thanks to farming.... I realized that I really like taking care of animals, and I want to follow in my dad's footsteps.

Besides learning about new funding and support systems at the *Escuela de Pastores*, Francisco has acquired a new understanding of the importance of shepherding and the value of his own contribution to the future:

I'm learning the benefits of raising livestock. It's good for the forests and for biodiversity. Because of what we're doing, you can now go out in the countryside and see that there's vegetation, seeds are being replanted.... People still say that shepherds or *ganaderos* are the lowest of the low, but people are finally realizing that a lot of people live and a lot of natural diversity thrives because of *ganaderos* and what we do.

Several weeks later, I contact some graduates of the school and begin to glimpse the immense challenges, even after extensive training, that face young people who chose a pastoral profession. One, Paqui Ruiz

Escudero, explains that the inability to obtain pastureland, start-up funds, and a license to own livestock together acted as a barrier blocking her from taking up a full-time profession as a shepherd. Before enrolling, Paqui had already completed a thesis related to new pastoralism and worked with sheep in France. She explains that Spain should learn from French practices: "There's a vision. They value your identity as a shepherd in France. There's a culture that values local products over and above big business and the supermarkets." As part of a new generation, Paqui believes that new models for shepherding need to include the creation of more collectives among multiple family and friend groups who share the daily care of animals and marketing their products: "Society has changed, and you have to recognize new paradigms in shepherding; there aren't a lot of farming families who can do it on their own." Despite this vision, Paqui admits that her own experience in teaming up with a traditional shepherd ended in a misunderstanding exacerbated by gender bias against female shepherds.

Another graduate of the *Escuela de Pastores*, Mamen Cuéllar, echoes these observations. Like Paqui, she had first teamed up with shepherds in a rural area, where she was promised access to pastureland and support. However, her "outsiderness" along with traditional gender bias made collaboration impossible. "Male shepherds of a certain age", she notes sadly, "keep the male tradition of staying all alone with their animals, even though they continue to suffer from so much solitude. They are uncomfortable talking to a woman shepherd. If you don't have a man by your side, your hands are tied." Nonetheless, Mamen believes this attitude will change with more women going into the profession: "We women like being part of a community. We need collectives and a lot of creativity and energy."

Five years had passed since Mamen's experience. By the time we spoke in 2018, she was working at the University of Córdoba, but she was still keeping a hand in the trade, raising a half dozen animals on a small parcel of land. By 2018, Paqui had also given up shepherding as a full-time activity and begun to work at a research center for pastoralism in northern Spain. While both women benefited from the knowledge they acquired at the *Escuela*, officials have registered the frustration of *neo-rurales* like Mamen and Paqui. This is part of the

reason that, as of 2022, the shepherd school has changed its focus to people who already have access to pastures and now, also, provides students who complete the whole course with a license and start-up funding from the Junta.

While attending the opening sessions of the 2016 *Escuela*, I also interview several of the Junta de Andalucía officials there. A middle-aged man dressed in a traditional green woolen shepherd sweater, Luis Jiménez García (coordinator of the *Consejería de la Agricultura, Pesca, y el Desarrollo Rural* (Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development)), tells me that he interviewed and selected each of the twenty students enrolled this year. He chooses, as he says, not to be a “protagonist” in this narrative and urges me to focus on the students instead. Later, when I watch him in action, I see he has the gift of a natural teacher. As the group gathers around him after a session, Luis gently challenges them: “Are you ready for this training, all this information, and learning the logic of so much bureaucracy?” After outlining new laws and penalties for the care and movement of livestock, he jokes about the importance of following guidelines: “We’re not going to take the rogue’s road. Your fame depends on your future.” Luis concludes by connecting the pastoral movement with a broader social context: “We’ve got to spread the good news about what we do and about responsible consumerism. Don’t be pessimists: You can do this!” As Luis finishes, the president of an association that focuses on specific breeds, Juan Antonio Mena, chimes in with a precept passed down from his grandfather, who was also a shepherd: “First you have to dream, and then fight for it.” After more than fifty years as a shepherd, he understands that learning often comes through trial and error, part of the necessary “marriage” between dreams and hard work: “Combine all your dreams together with hard work but seek the support of the people around you. You’ll go farther together, not alone.”

This keen focus on galvanizing the next generation of shepherds for the task at hand is reinforced by José Ramón Guzmán Álvarez (Junta de Andalucía, *Dirección General de Gestión Medioambiental en la Consejería de Medio Ambiente*).²⁷ Instead of agreeing to an interview with me, José

27 This is the arm of the regional government that in controversial political move just a few years later was absorbed into the broader department that also includes intensive

Ramón invites me to attend his presentation. A man who appreciates poetry and culture, he artfully narrates the story of pastoralism. Both humorous and provocative, his presentation weaves together cultural references, history, anecdotes, and visual imagery, including a quote from *Don Quijote* and paintings by Murillo. He evokes both Spain's past "Golden Age" and present reality, observing: "It's one of the oldest professions in the world... there are no master's degrees or doctorates in shepherding, just 10,000 years of experience and tradition." Yet, he continues, "shepherding has changed, and you have to take advantage of the other experts, aid, and information." He offers the students a new narrative, an updated story of a country of shepherds who are neither Biblical holy men nor the "village idiot" but rather essential workers who will play a critical role in the sustainability of pastoralism — both in terms of its environmental impact and its cultural significance for Spain. He leaves no doubt in anyone's mind of the cultural and economic importance of their undertaking in the *Escuela de Pastores*.

The growth of shepherd schools has certainly caught the public eye: these *escuelas* have been featured on the front pages of *El País* and *The New York Times*, as the lead segment on the national RTVE news, and in regional programs on television Canal Sur.²⁸ This media attention taps into a revival of interest in shepherding not only as a symbol of Spanish identity but also as an important contributor to biodiversity. All this promotion helps, but, as nearly everyone I interview says, the greatest need is for young people who are willing to become shepherds, governments that can work rapidly to find effective solutions to the many hurdles they face, and a society that will support them with their purchasing power.

agriculture, the Ministry of Agricultura, Ganadería, Pesca y Desarrollo Sostenible. For an example of his recent work on policy, see José Muñoz-Rojas, José Ramón Guzmán-Álvarez, and Isabel Loupa Ramos, 'The complexity of public policies in Iberian *montados* and *dehesas*', in Teresa Pinto-Correia et al. (eds.), *Governance for Mediterranean Silvopastoral Systems* (2021), London: Routledge, pp. 169–88, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781003028437-10>

28 Lucía López Marco, 'Entrevista a Francisco de Asís Ruiz, coordinador de la Escuela de Pastores de Andalucía', Mallata.com, 27 March 2018, <https://mallata.com/entrevista-a-francisco-de-asis-ruiz-coordinador-de-la-escuela-de-pastores-de-andalucia/>

Resiliency, Outreach, and a Changing Cultural Narrative

As we have seen, advocacy and information-sharing also contribute to (re-)building the cultural narrative about how the life path of a shepherd working in extensive grazing is interwoven with Spanish history and identity. In Spain, the narrative of pastoralism as cultural patrimony is now widespread. Every year, hundreds of videographers produce short-form documentaries about pastoralism and transhumance. These documentaries feature long shots of pastures or mountains, traditional music, interviews with shepherds, and close-ups of everyone's favorite subjects: lambs, goats, and cheese. As Ana Belén Robles notes, "initially many of these videos actually hurt the pastoral movement because they presented practices as an irreversibly dying process, and shepherds as 'non-modern'. However, more recent videos tend to emphasize the adaptability and relevance of these traditional ways in the twenty-first century." Many productions adopt an approach of social commentary and even include a call to action by drawing viewers' attention to the perils of climate change, economic upheaval, and the social marginalization of farmers. In January 2021, for example, the popular show *Tierra y Mar* took on the topic of the new CAP proposal and how it would affect *ganaderos*.²⁹ While the *plataformas* themselves rarely produce videos, their members are commonly featured. Indeed, many of the people I interviewed appear in these short documentaries (see individual chapters) — among them shepherds Fortunato Guerrero Lara and Pepe Millán, *dehesa* owner and foundation president Ernestine Lüdeke, veterinarian and transhumance advocate Maricarmen García, the "*ovejas bomberos*" program, Yolanda Mena, and Paco Ruiz. Jesús Garzón, the president of "Asociación Trashumancia y Naturaleza", shows up in more than a few!

Another popular development in the process of rewriting the traditional narrative of Spanish pastoralism are the more than twenty museums and traveling exhibitions focused on the history

29 Canal Sur, "Tierra y Mar: La nueva PAC y la labor de los ganaderos en la *dehesa*", YouTube, 30 January 2021, (in Spanish:) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXphDIBbP3A>

of shepherding, transhumance, *vías pecuarias* (droving routes), and sustainable livestock practices across Spain. These museums are designed to educate both locals and tourists, but, perhaps more significantly, they contribute to the continuation and innovation of the local/national identity story and promote the role of pastoralism and associated cultural geographies as sites of memory: sites around which people develop a sense of a shared national history. Perhaps the best known is Guadalaviar's Transhumance Museum in Teruel.³⁰ It offers a public-education program and encourages tourism, but it also plays an active role by partnering with organizations to sponsor research projects and hosting meetings for shepherds.

Another popular cultural development includes local celebrations of shepherding that have been revived as part of regional fairs, which were historically linked to livestock sales and the marketing of shepherds' products. Attracting thousands of visitors, they showcase the renewal and repurposing of traditional events. Even more to the point, with widespread access to social media, some shepherds have taken into their own hands the narration of their lives, their experiences with transhumance, and work. More than a few have posted directly on social media, sharing their profession with each other and an interested public.

European and International Support

Although our focus has been on Andalusia, Spain, I cannot leave this chapter without mentioning a few projects and organizations at the European and international levels that some of our informants have cited as being key to our more regional organizations discussed earlier. In Europe, the conversation focuses on the role of pastoralism in big-picture climate-change mitigation and how a practical pan-European approach might support traditional and sustainable livelihoods. There is a vast array of traditional pastoral practices across Europe, each specific to climate and geography, most notably in Italy, the Alps, the Balkans, and across the Pyrenees between Spain and France. Several organizations

30 Museo de la Trashumancia, 2015, (in Spanish:) <https://museodelatrashumancia.com/>

advocate for sustainable pastoralism across Europe, such as the “European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism” (EFNCP), which focuses on policy that affects common lands and extensive grazing. Others, such as the European Union-sponsored project “LIFE LiveAdapt”, collaborate with people like Ernestine Lüdeke and Yolanda Mena Guerrero, scholars at the University of Córdoba, and collectives like Entretantos, FEDEHESA and Goovinnova to study climate change and solutions based on extensive grazing in Southern Europe (France, Spain, and Italy).³¹ Another international organization some Andalusian researchers are connected with is “Pastres”,³² which studies how we can learn from the global challenges that pastoral systems present and facilitates dialogue among stakeholders in government policy, markets, and environment-resource allocation.

International projects supporting pastoralism in general are widespread, but to name a few: the “International Union for the Conservation of Nature” (IUCN), the “Food Crisis Prevention Network”, and the “Food and Agriculture Organization” (part of the United Nations) have all highlighted pastoralism as a key element in systems of sustainable food production and land conservation.³³ It is this connection to sustainability that gives the story of Spanish pastoralism such a strong presence on the international stage. Ernestine’s farm and foundation often collaborate with groups abroad to protect the *dehesa* and to find funding for transhumance, training, and even to develop markets for local, sustainable products that can appeal to consumers both in Andalusia and abroad. The “Fundación Monte Mediterráneo” (see Chapter 5) is just one example of how regional initiatives to protect ecological systems are part of a global effort — including widely separated communities on the Asian and African continents — struggling with the same challenges with transhumance, marketing pastoralism, and the threat of desertification

31 Grupo Operativo Ovinnova, 2020, (in Spanish:) <https://goovinnova.org/>

32 Pastres focuses primarily on China, Kenya, and Italy as test cases in three continents (Pastres: Pastoralism, Uncertainty, Resilience, 2017, <https://pastres.org/>)

33 UN Environmental Program and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), ‘Sustainable Pastoralism and the Post 2015 Agenda’, 2015, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3777unep.pdf>; IUCN and UNEP, ‘Pastoralism and the Green Economy – a natural nexus?’, 2014, <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2014-034.pdf>.

facing whole regions. A more local initiative with international impact is the Festival of Transhumance in Guadalaviar, which invites an international cohort of transhumant shepherds from places like Kenya and Tanzania to share their own local traditions with the wider community of pastoralists.

Highly visible international initiatives like the prestigious (and money-making) UNESCO designation of Intangible Cultural Heritage bring global recognition to transhumance as both a sustainable environmental practice and its cultural heritage. Spain received this designation for transhumance in 2023.³⁴ In addition, the United Nations has announced another way to highlight pastoralism: it has declared 2026 the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

Extensive livestock practices are, by nature, local. Traditions and practices are intimately connected to the land on which animals are born, raised, and prepared for market, but, in our globalized society, local practices can have a universal impact. The struggles in one society often mirror the struggles in another. It is no coincidence that stories of transhumance have been picked up by *The New York Times*, the BBC, and other organizations across the world; nor is it strange that they highlight the threat of climate change to livelihoods and ecosystems. The information about *plataformas* in this chapter has provided us with a broader view of the myriad researchers, activists, organizers, and bureaucrats who dedicate their lives (in some cases, all their available weekends) to extensive grazing. They help us to appreciate the highly interdependent nature of structures, laws, and trends that will allow shepherding to adapt, or allow it to fade away as a relic. They make clear that we all, as citizens and consumers, have a role in the survival — or demise — of sustainable pastoralism. The question remains: can the work of dedicated researchers, practitioners, and *plataformas*, together with the intense international interest generated in local approaches to sustainable agriculture and ranching, lead to real long-term change in habits of consumption and lifestyle that will protect traditional pastoral practices from further decline? While we cannot predict the future, some conclusions may be drawn, as we outline below.

34 UNESCO, 'Transhumance, the seasonal droving of livestock', Inscription 18.COM 8.b.14, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/transhumance-the-seasonal-droving-of-livestock-01964>

