

A large herd of sheep and goats is grazing on a hillside. Several people are visible among the animals, and a white tent is set up in the foreground. The background shows a hilly landscape with trees and mountains under a clear sky.

Transhumance

A Way of Life Truly Sustainable

Summer School on
Mountain Eco-systems

24.9.2021

Ilse Köhler-Rollefson



LEAGUE FOR
PASTORAL PEOPLES
AND ENDOGENOUS
LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT

Transhumance is a subset of pastoralism



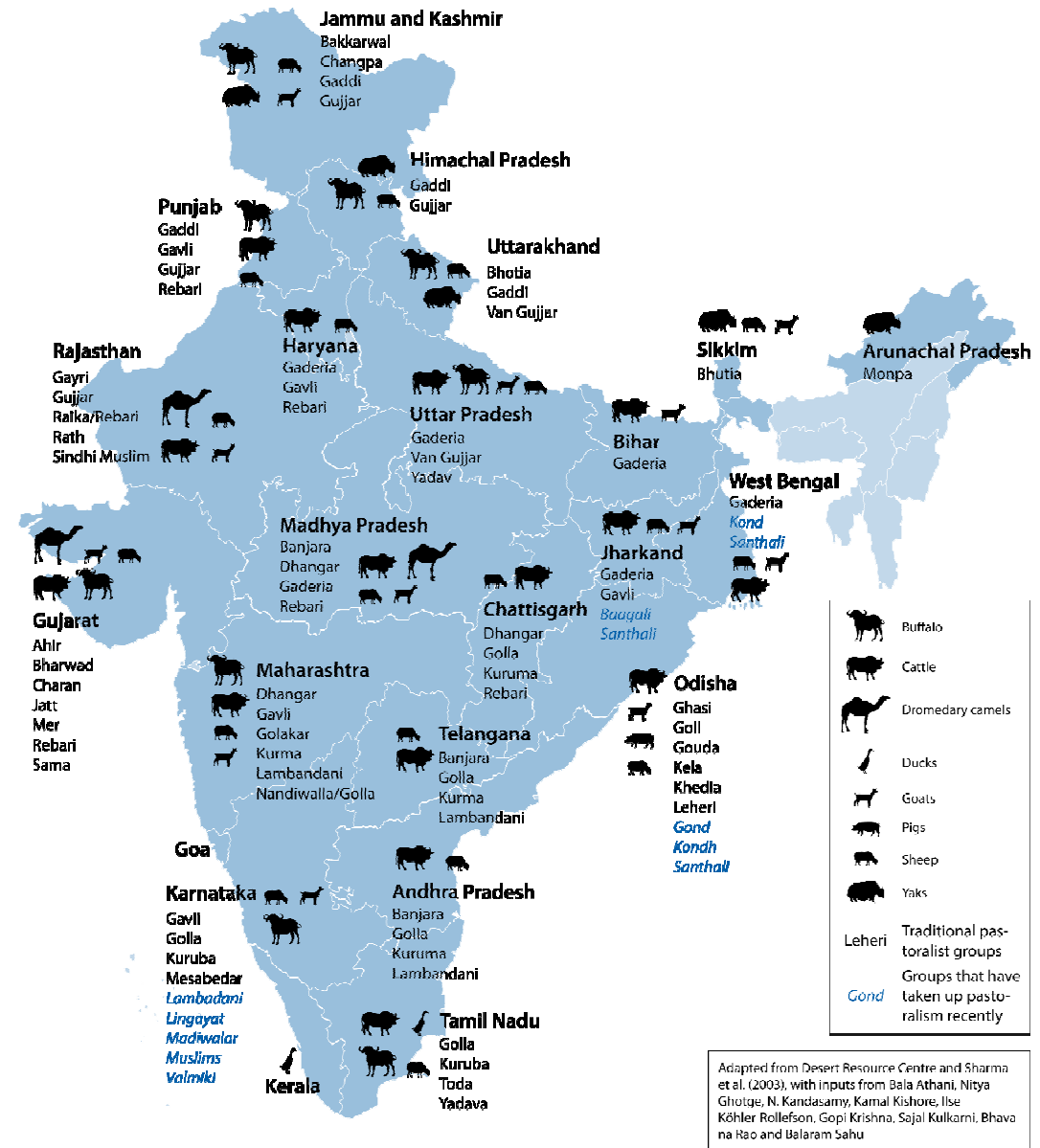
Pastoralism is ubiquitous and present on all continents, but often remains invisible...



<http://www.pastoralpeoples.org/pastoralist-map/>

India is a collage of pastoralist cultures, most of them agro-pastoralists

Prevailing perception:
„India is land of ‚farmers‘.“



What distinguishes transhumance?

- Derived from ,Trans' (across) and ,Humus' (earth)
- Seasonal movement of people and herds between summer and winter pastures at different altitudes – in mountainous areas
- Or between monsoon and dry season grazing areas



- It involves ,Multi-Species Co-existence' of human and non-human animals (sheep, goats, buffaloes, cattle, horses, camels, yaks, llamas and alpacas) , often together with transport animals and guard dogs



- The migratory group is a team, usually with an elected leader, in which everybody has a role. It is a complex social system in which all duties are shared.

- Distances vary, can be up to 1000 km.

Why do people go on transhumance?

- Increased herd productivity (more milk and higher fertility). Intervals between births is less in transhumant herds than in sedentary herds.
- Enables higher number of animals than if kept year-round in sedentary systems.
- Low production costs
- Products of animals that walk and exercise are healthier and taste better.
- Herds want to move and become difficult to restrain in one place.

Example: Spain

- The country with the best documented system of transhumance.
- Herds move on 'drove roads' ('vías pecuarias' or Canadas) that were established ca eight centuries ago and protected by royal decree. They are between 20 and 70m wide, cover about 1% of Spain's surface and are 124,000 km long or 8-9 times the length of Spain's current railway system.
- They fell into disuse in the early 20th century, when it became possible to transport flocks by train.
- In 1995, Spain passed new legislation to protect the network.

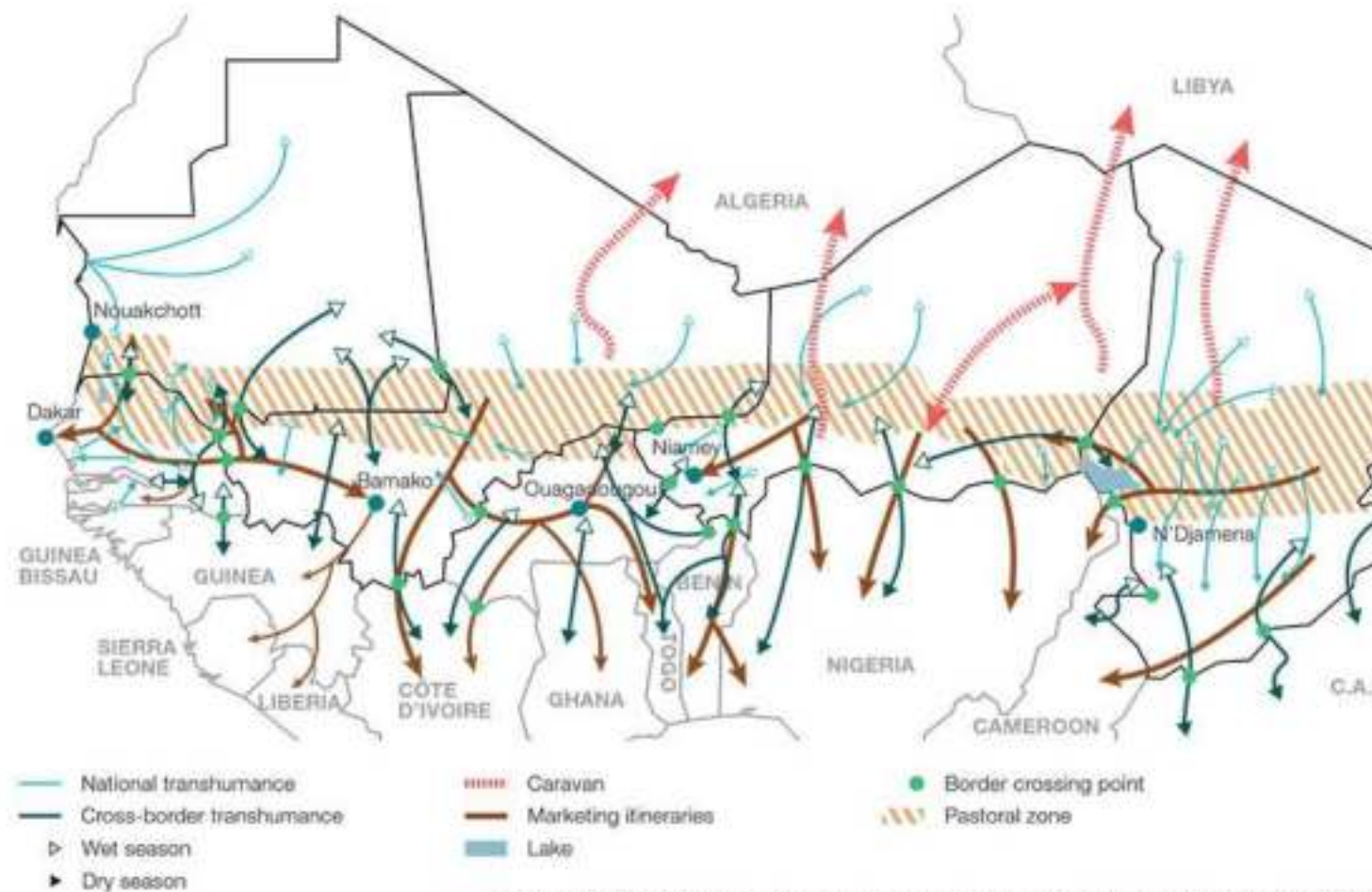


Example: Himalayas



Transhumant pastoralism in the Sahel and West Africa

- involves 70-90% of the Sahel's cattle and 30-40% of its sheep and goats. It is the only activity that valorises the area.
- protects the environment and is profitable and supplies about 65% of cattle meat, 40% of mutton and goat meat and 70% of milk.



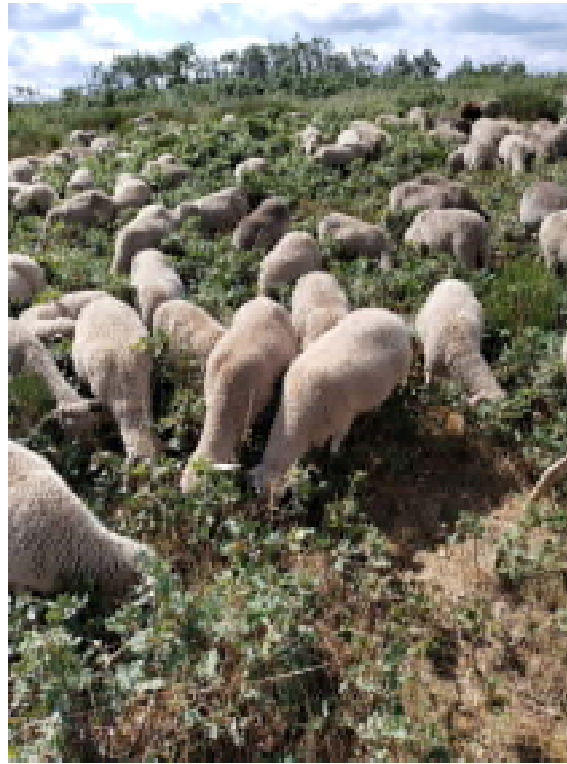
Sources: FAO-CIRAD, Atlas of trends in pastoral systems in the Sahel 2012; OECD/SWAC

Extract: OECD (2014), An Atlas of the Sahara-Sahel: Geography, Economics and Security, OECD Publishing, Paris.

© 2014. Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD)

Ecological benefits

- Follows ancient routes of wild herd animals
- Connects ecosystems for genetic exchange
- Transports seeds, insects and other small animals, so enables adaptation to climate change.



Our most loved landscapes have been created by pastoralists.

- Source: <https://reisen-nach-spanien.com>



Dehesas in Spain and Portugal



By Willow - Own work, CC BY 2.5,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2579877>

Lüneburg Heath in Germany

Manure is hugely important at the bottom of the food chain



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flightless_Dung_Beetle_Circellium_Bachuss,_Addo_Elephant_National_Park,_South_Africa.JPG <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Kay-africa>


An aerial photograph showing a circular pastoral settlement in a savanna landscape. The settlement is a dense cluster of small, dark, circular structures, likely huts, arranged in a roughly circular pattern. The surrounding landscape is a mix of brown and green grasses, with some patches of bare earth. The settlement is situated in a slightly elevated area, possibly a glade or a nutrient-rich patch.

Photo credit:

CSIRO_SciencImage_4419_Village_on_the_Manyatta_El_Bata
_Plains_in_Kenya_Africa_1981

- *“Historic pastoral settlements stand out in wooded African savanna grasslands as high nutrient patches often visible as fertile open grassy glades that are frequented by zebra, wildebeest and other wildlife, as well as cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys. Over time these nutrient hotspots attract communities of insects, rodents, reptiles and birds.”*
Marshall et al, 2018. go.nature.com/2woZR02



Pastoralism is the only way of maintaining biodiversity rich meadows

Insect conservation

- Mechanical mowing kills up to 80% of cicadas
- Grazing conserves insects

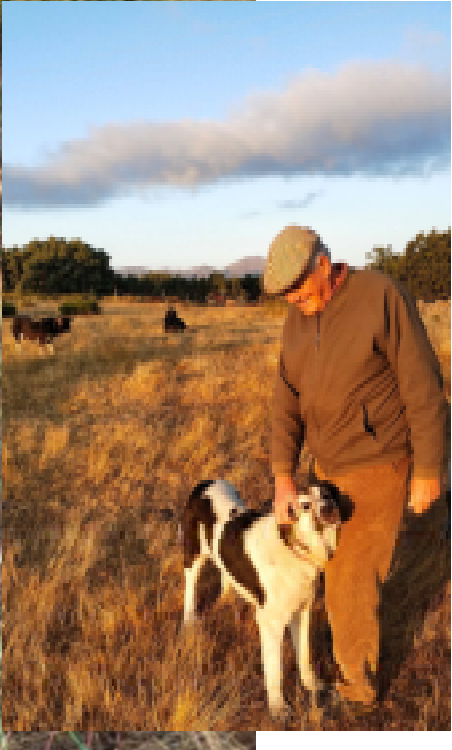
Recent research in Germany makes the mowing of grasslands responsible for the dramatic loss of insect, bird, amphibian and reptile populations

Nickel, H. 2017. Evolution im Naturschutz: Von der Weide zur Wiese und zurück?

https://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/BfN/ina/Dokumente/Tagungsdo ku/2017/02_Nickel_Wiese_oder_Weide.pdf

Transhumance Revival

The pioneer of reviving transhumance: Jesus Garzon Heydt – coming from the perspective of nature conservation



Carpathians



Transhumance 2013 was inspired and founded by a shepherd Piotr Kohut from Koniaków village in the Silesian Beskids, Poland.

Dreamed up by one person, the Transhumance became a massive event with shepherds wandering with their sheep



Nomination file No. 01470

- Nomination form: [English/French](#)
- Consent of communities - Austria: [German/English](#)
- Consent of communities - Greece: [Greek/English](#)
- Consent of communities - Italy: [Italian/English](#)
- ICH inventory - Austria

Decision

Inscription: [14.COM 10.b.2](#)

Periodic reporting

Transhumance, the seasonal droving of livestock along migratory routes in the Mediterranean and in the Alps



Austria, Greece and Italy

Inscribed in 2019 ([14.COM](#)) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity



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





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Transhumance as Antidote for Modern Sedentary Stock Raising[☆]

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A B S T R A C T

Few grazing themes so endure yet are so difficult for outsiders to document with certainty as historical and current-day livestock grazing routes: stock driveways. Excursions from one biome, ecotone, or landscape to another—in general, undertaken to seasonal cues—allow livestock owners and their hired herders to exploit different environments that offer notable advantages in terms of freeing livestock from unwavering diet, overtaxed grazing grounds, common diseases, and cycles of drought or drenching rain. Movement at whatever scale permits herders or shepherds an escape from monotony when they shift grazing grounds to montane woodlands or back to lowland environments in travel that benefits both jaded humans and husbanded animals. Significant economic and ecological advantages accrue from the shifts of seasonal silvopastoralism, but the terrain, and in particular the routes animals travel, often stretch across varied land ownerships, and siting out rights of passage is an ethnographic adventure requiring longstanding observation and consistent fieldwork. Formal scholarship about the road between is less established than literature of “the trail,” which is a staple feature of folklore, film, and fiction. As concern grows about the energy costs of using highways or railroads to move livestock, attention returns to traditional practices and legal accommodations that make possible trailing livestock under their own power. Across Europe are 4 million ha of land associated with livestock driveways, once widespread in the United States as an item of Spanish-Mexican heritage. This synthesis focuses on livestock driveway establishment in two landscapes: Spain and, secondarily, the western United States of America, with an overarching theme of how stock driveways can connect ecosystems and, by sustaining customary use, knit together silvopastoral society.

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Pastoralism goes with the flow and adapts to availability of resources



Photo Mark Michel

It keeps groundwater clean and integrates with wildlife



It is animal welfare friendly and animals in pastoralist systems have longer life spans than in the wild...and in industrial systems.





Thank you
for your
attention!

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