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Herding Futures: A Revolutionary Utopia

Exploring Threatened Entanglements of Pastoralists and Herds

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Disclaimer:

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List of Acronyms

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
VSF	Vétérinaires Sans Frontières International
PSN	Strategic National Plan
UAA	Utilized Agricultural Area
SPE	Single Payment Scheme
PE	Payment Entitlement
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health
ACCAA	Associazione delle Casare e dei Casari di Azienda Agricola (<i>Association of Dairy Farmers and Farm Cheesemakers</i>)
CEJA	European Coalition of Young Farmers
ELO	European Landowners' Organisation
FACE	European Federation for Hunting and Conservation
WWF	World Wide Fund for nature

Abstract

The mainstream narrative about livestock production portrays the latter as responsible for the meatification of diets, the exploitation of humans and animals, and a large part of agriculture aggregate emissions. Yet, it lumps together all systems of production, failing to acknowledge the persistence – and immense ecological, political, and social value - of models of animal farming other than the livestock industry. Among these, is pastoralism. Building upon such observation, this paper zooms in on Italian agro-pastoral systems, wondering how pastoralist practices are transforming in response to the capitalist logic of the corporate food system, and what are the main challenges they are facing in producing and socially reproducing. Touching upon several, intertwined phenomena, such as CAP speculations, pastoral-tourist economies, human-wildlife conflicts, the labor conditions of migrant shepherds, and unpacking anti-farming arguments, this paper argues that the overarching political strategy deployed to counter de-pastoralisation and de-ruralization, is one that treats the most tangible symptoms of the multidimensional crisis currently unfolding, while leaving the cause – the capitalist logic underlying the corporate food regime and inducing the marginalization of Inner Areas – essentially intact. Relying on multi-species ethnography, the analysis elaborated in this paper builds upon data collected in Central Italy through participants’ observation and informal conversations with pastoralists and their families, anthropologists, experts in animal husbandry, veterinarians, community workers, artists, and historians. The outcome is a more nuanced picture of what living and working with animals looks like in agro-pastoralist systems, and how these represent an ecologically viable and territorially grounded model of food production.

Relevance to development studies

The Agrarian, Food, and Environmental Studies Major proposes a set of analytical tools and critical theories to investigate and critically unpack development models concerning the transformation of agrarian landscapes, food systems, and socio-environmental issues unfolding globally. Within the field of critical agrarian studies, the struggles and challenges affecting small-scale producers have been widely researched, especially within the framework of food sovereignty. Yet, little attention has been paid to other categories of food producers, among which pastoralists, whose practices and livelihoods are increasingly threatened by a crisis of crises that sees the convergence of environmental, social, political, and economic factors. Zooming in on the pastoralists of Central Italy, this paper attempts to shed light on the (induced) processes of economic, social, and geographical marginalization affecting agro-pastoral systems, and on the industrialized, urban, and dualist development model underlying such transformations.

Keywords

Pastoralists, Inner Areas, environmental crisis, wilderness, migrant shepherds, environmental reproduction, multispecies relations, paper pastures, capitalist food system

To the mountains I go

To the mountains I go
To the rattling, crumbling, rambling rocks
To the green pastures
And the whispering brooks
That give life
To the herds
To the humans
To the nature that breathes with me
In me

To the mountains I go
Naked
Dressed of the white blanket
Lulled by the grassy coats
Filled by the cheese that melts on my tongue
Guided by the childhood memories
Hands caressing the rocks
Awaken and free
And I let it all in

To the mountains I go
To the smell of wild berries
To the prickly thistle under my fingertips
Pick it, strip it, dip it in oil and salt
Eat it under the midday sun
While legs lie weary on the turf
Just like grampa told you
Just like *nonno* showed you
When your blond braids mingled with the wheat

To the mountains I go
Following the tracks of the grazing beasts
Keep them together
Entrust them with your deepest fears
They will keep them warm in their woolen cloaks
As they hold each other tightly
Pick a blade of grass
Bring it to your lips
Call them back to you

To the mountains I go
To the sounds that are fading away
The buzzing of bees
The whispering brooks
The bleating of sheep
The tinkling cowbells
The chirping of birds
The chattering of people sharing and caring
The sound of life flowing through the cracks

To the mountains I go
To the sound of the landslide flowing down the mountainside
To cow horns banging against empty tanks
In search of water they will not find
To the exhausted barking of dogs guarding against the wolves
To the sound of nature struggling
Resisting
Fighting with me
Through me

To the mountains I go
To the invisible geography *del Belpaese*
To the empty squares and wrinkly faces
To the frozen silence of the weeping rubble
To the hundreds, thousands of projects
Sowing hopes destined to be dashed
To the watchful glances and suspicious whispers
To the sense of guilt tormenting those who leave
And the consuming pain of those who stay

To the mountains I go
Wondering, pondering, ripening
Cannot stop my mind from spinning
Cannot keep my legs from moving
Cannot keep my heart from aching
Cannot keep my hands from mending
Cannot keep my guts from feeling
Cannot keep my body from being
Cannot keep my being from caring

To the mountains I go
Hoping they are still there

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. The Puzzle

“All my life I’ve been a pastoralist, and now not only they are telling me that I’m useless, but also that I do not exist. (My) land has been taken from me, the herds, and the barn. But I am the land, I am one with the herd, I was born just above that barn. It is my body they are taking, my soul they are entrenching, trampling, tearing apart. We are empty shells that survive in the cracks, at the margins, in this land that is everyone’s and no one’s.” (F., sheep shepherdess)

In the Italian language, the word *zecca* loosely translates to both tick (the animal) and mint (the money factory). Precisely because of its twofold meaning, I will use the term to describe the nature, and functioning, of the livestock industry, defined by Jocelyne Porcher (2017) as “one of the most greedy and harmful off-shoots of industrial capitalism” (p. xii). Miles and miles of dark sheds, of pleading bellowing, of bodies rubbing against one another, searching for a ray of sunshine they will not find. The livestock industry is a *zecca*, in which animals and workers are forged, coined, polished to perfection through cold, aseptic, lifeless procedures. It’s a place of profound suffering, of violent exploitation, of death. It’s a money factory, one where “animals have no place; they are things to be technically and physically manipulated to optimize production” (Porcher, 2017, p. 5). One where emotions, intimacy, and humanity are stigmatized and banned. It’s a tick of our own making, one that we have designed, implemented, celebrated, and that is now growing, spreading at an unprecedented pace, sucking the lifeblood of the Earth, altering life-long balances between animal farming and environmental reproduction, revolutionizing – and annihilating - human-animal relations. It is separating animals from land, acting upon an ontological understanding of nature as an aggregate of things, that can be “taken apart and then rebuilt in various ways” (O’Connor, 1998, p. 22). Ways that are pursued and justified in the name of social betterment, progress, and economic efficiency, and unfold within a system, the capitalist system, which is by design inherently alienating and ecologically destructive. One that has contributed to the uprising and affirmation of “a crisis of ecology, to be sure, but also one of economy, society, politics and public health—that is, a *general crisis* whose effects metastasize everywhere, shaking confidence in established worldviews and ruling elites” (Fraser, 2021, p. 2). However, while there seems to be a – more or less – collective acknowledgment of the gravity of the situation and of the urgency to address it, the whos, whats, hows, and whens generate stirring dissensus. What does the future of livestock production look like? Should there be one? And if so, who will be part of it?

The mainstream narrative about the livestock sector seems to build upon three pillars, which are called upon, at times in isolation, at times in combination, by an enlarging group of stakeholders that includes but is not limited to, multilateral organizations, corporate actors, governmental institutions, animal rights activists, environmentalists, and an increasing slice of the general public. The first pillar concerns the meatification of diets, or else “the movement of meat from the periphery of human consumption patterns, where it was for the vast majority of agricultural history, to the centre” (Weis, 2015, p.1). At the European level, per-capita meat consumption increased by 60% between 1961 and 2020, and meat production augmented by 117% over the same period, largely driven by the poultry industry (Ritchie et al., 2019). Facilitated by the mechanization of labor, the introduction of chemical feed, and the enclosure of animals in warehouses, our society has witnessed a significant shift in production and consumption patterns, which have raised health-related questions, both in relation to human and animal wellbeing. Concerning the latter, the animal rights debate has seen the affirmation of two main positions. The welfarist approach, largely supported by Garner (2013), Plumwood (2012), and Porcher (2017), advocates for a more *humane* interaction between humans and animals, one that is collaborative and ethical, while the abolitionist position, whose main exponent is Francione (2008), calls for a

complete rupture of human-animal relations, to be understood as inherently exploitative. So, whereas welfarists uphold the practice of animal farming, the latter dismisses the idea of animal labor altogether, calling for a “liberation” of animals, a shift in consumption habits away from animal-sourced food, and a definite dismantlement of the livestock sector.

But is it even possible to talk about a single livestock sector? Or should we instead talk about livestock sectors? This seems to be the question that an increasing body of literature is bringing forth, and that directly links to the third pillar of the mainstream narrative, concerning the environmental externalities of livestock production. In 2017, the EU-28 agricultural sector was responsible for 10% of the region’s GHG emissions, but when factoring in the production, transport, and processing of animal feed, livestock production accounted for about 80% of total agricultural GHG emissions (European Coordination Via Campesina, 2023). No wonder, then, that livestock systems have been subject of numerous reports and policies aimed at the reduction of environmental externalities, especially in relation to climate change (Steinfeld et al., 2006; Greenpeace, 2020; Garnett et al., 2017). Yet, what emerges from a critical analysis of the mainstream narrative is a tendency to lump together all systems of livestock production – conceiving, and addressing, only one – unique - branch of animal husbandry, namely that of the livestock industry, and failing to acknowledge the existence and resistance of other – peasant - models of animal farming (European Coordination Via Campesina, 2023; Houzer & Scoones, 2021; IPES-food, 2022)¹. Models to which these critiques do not apply, or apply only partially, leading to a series of projects and policies that intervene on a quite inaccurate and limited conception of animal husbandry, and translate, then, in an overt focus on the commodity sector of animal-sourced foods. But is the latter to be analyzed and blamed for its contribution to the environmental crisis, the exploitation of animals and workers, and the meatification of diets? Or should the conditions of production and social relations intrinsic to an expanding livestock industry be investigated instead?

Jocelyne Porcher (2017) talks about animal husbandry as a tree, one that has been part of human and non-human nature for over 10.000 years, and that only recently – in the mid-Nineteenth Century – has been infested by a parasite. The bug, which set off a disproportionate and accelerated growth of a single branch and started sucking out the sap from the others, is the livestock industry. But knowing that this represents only one branch of the tree, is it worth sawing the trunk in half and turning it into firewood? What would happen to the creatures that inhabit its foliage, to the organisms that feed on its roots, to the cultural traditions and billions of livelihoods that depend on its survival? What would happen to the naked land left behind? Do we plow it, build on it, poison it with chemicals and fertilizers? In the 2006 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report *Livestock’s Long Shadow*, the authors claimed that “there is a need to accept that the intensification and perhaps industrialization of livestock production is the inevitable long-term outcome of the structural change process that is ongoing for most of the sector” (Steinfeld et al., 2006, p. 283). But what is happening in the livestock industry - the industrialization, intensification, specialization of animal production - is not natural, is not inevitable, it is human-made and can be countered. Also, and especially, because it represents only one form, an exploitative, violent, deathly one, of animal husbandry. When stepping closer to the tree, indeed, other systems of practices, multispecies relations, and beliefs become visible – they collaborate, transform, and become on the other branches, the shrinking – but enduring – ones. Animal husbandry is an ensemble of multiple, conflicting worlds, upon which a specific doctrine of progress has been imposed, following a model of development that enforces sedentarization (of humans and animals), standardization (of procedures and products), and linear growth (Bindi, 2022). A model that has prioritized *moving* goods to *moving* people and *moving* animals, through the fragmentation and enclosure of land, the separation of herds from meadows, and the ultimate prioritization of

¹ See also Assouma et al., 2019; Zhuang et al., 2017

crop production over permanent pastures. And yet, the most mobile, *uncapturable* branch of animal husbandry, namely pastoralism, has endured. Not easily, not without struggle, but its persistence in a paradigm that, by definition, does not allow for its survival, let alone for its thriving, makes it worth exploring.

In the common imaginary, the shepherd tends to be perceived as either a mythical figure, one that is romanticized and commodified, or an outcast, illiterate, backward, and economically worthless, doomed to disappear. The pastoralist is the ultimate, distant, Other. And so are the territories pastoralists inhabit, the so-called marginal areas, the antithesis of the city, time capsules, places to mark in guidebooks and print on postcards. Places to be sold to the tourists, to the urban dwellers. This process of Othering, opportunistic commodification, and hyper-romanticization has taken root in the economy *del BelPaese*, where the Italian countryside has become the city's playground and the shepherds' symbols of 'the world as it used to be' (Barbera & De Rossi, 2021). There is no room, in the common imaginary, for the symptoms of abandonment, for the struggles, rubble, and tangible manifestations of social inequality that distinguish these territories and hunt the local population. No room for the enormous contribution that pastoralists and their millenary identity, represent for the notion of territory – to be understood as an ensemble of people, traditions, animals, landscapes –, for the preservation of biodiversity, for the viability of our food system, and that of marginal areas. Yet, the so-called “Inner Areas” cover 60% of the national surface, and host 52% of the Italian municipalities and 22% of the population (Cohesion Policy Department, 2021). These are characterized by significant depopulation, demographic aging, a lack of primary services, and, generally, geographical marginality (Vendemmia et al., 2021). These are the regions where socio-economic disparity and the implications of an industrialized, urban, and dominant economic model of development are visible to the naked eye, and yet actively invisibilized and crushed by a narrative that is nostalgic, opportunistic, and inauthentic. These are sites where the increasing infiltration of capital and neoliberal ideology is preventing pastoralists and herds from accessing the pastures, more and more often allocated to large livestock industries speculating on the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (Mencini, 2021; Nori, 2022). Places where the coexistence with the “wilderness” is spurring tensions and conflicts – between herds and wolves, between pastoralists and tourists, among locals (Nori & Berzi, 2021; Russo et al., 2014). But who is benefiting from such tensions? Who's bearing the burden of human-wildlife coexistence? People slide from the mountains to the plains, to the cities, letting the woods take over, making space for construction projects aimed at tourism. But are pastoralists abandoning the meadows or are they being forced out of them? Why are they leaving pastoralism altogether? Pastoralists are being constrained to standardize to keep up with an industry that demands predictability and consistency, that seems to have forgotten the food *is* produced and not just sold, and to comply with health regulations that are incompatible with extensive animal husbandry. Their practices are torn between autonomy and dependence, as Thiemann (2022) would put it, for, as peasants, pastoralists too are managed by “a system of economic, ethical and social balances that is re-calibrated over time to adapt to changing circumstances imposed by nature, but also markets, elites, and institutions” (p. 7). But how can processes of socio-ecological reproduction perpetuate in a profit-oriented economic model? How are human-animal-territory balances and cycles altered by external pressures to produce at all costs?

Pastoralism is in crisis. Its defining features - *mobility, uncertainty, uncapturedness* – are being threatened and “ruled out” by a coalition of diverse actors and arguments that build upon a partial – and incorrect – conception of the former. But instead of investigating the whys and wherefores, there is a tendency to justify and render technical such a process, explaining it as a necessary and inevitable transition within the livestock sector, while at the same time exploiting and showcasing what's left of it. The strategies implemented to counter processes of de-pastoralisation and de-ruralization – such as the introduction of migrant shepherds in the labor force, the reproduction

of pastoral-tourist economies, and the development of flawed compensation schemes to cope with wildlife conflicts – seemingly treat the most tangible symptoms of the precarious conditions of production and social reproduction of today’s pastoralists, which are essentially left unaddressed. But how are pastoralist practices transforming in response to the capitalist logic of the corporate food system? What are the main challenges pastoralists and herds are facing in producing and socially reproducing, and how do these materially manifest in *their* everyday?

1.2. Research Questions

Research Questions

- How are pastoralist practices transforming in response to the capitalist logic of the corporate food system? What are the main challenges pastoralists and herds are facing in producing and socially reproducing, and how do these materially manifest in their everyday?

Sub-questions

- How are agro-pastoralist systems impacted by the infiltration of capital in the Italian countryside, especially within the framework of CAP subsidies and pastoral-tourist economies?
- How are agro-pastoralist systems coping with the crisis of social reproduction affecting pastoralists as a social category? And what role do migrant shepherds play in such process?
- How do human-animal relations unfold within agro-pastoralist systems, and how are these impacted by human-wildlife conflicts and anti-farming arguments?

1.3. Methodology and Positionality

“True, anatomical knowledge is not usually a precondition for “correct” walking. But when the ground beneath our feet is always shaking, we need a crutch” (Burawoy, 1998, p.1)

Following the lead of Michael Burawoy (1998), I’ve decided upon a qualitative methodology with an ethnographic orientation, one that builds upon a reflexive scientific model², and relies on participants’ observation and informal conversations, to investigate, analyze, and engage with agro-pastoral systems from a cross-cultural perspective that situates pastoralists in more-than-human entanglements. Specifically, I relied on multi-species ethnography, for this “has begun to explore the more intimate ‘contact zones’ [...] where human and animal lives biologically, culturally and politically intertwine” (Aisher & Damodaran, 2016, p.2). Moreover, this has been repeatedly addressed as the most appropriate way to go beyond the technical and scientific dimension of livestock production and engage with what decolonial scholars refer to as the critical intimacy of the everyday. Because that is exactly, this paper argues, where the key difference between the livestock industry and agro-pastoral systems originates, persists, and evolves. To grasp that intimacy, and engage with it, I decided on the “case” of Italy – one that I feel personally connected to because of my origins, but that I intend to expand beyond the *specific* and *concrete*, to the *general* and *abstract* by elaborating on themes and patterns that are increasingly relevant to global pastoralists and peasants – economic, geographical, and social displacement. Moreover, the reason I’ve decided to focus on the Apennines and surroundings is that this research aims to – among other things – explore and move beyond the dichotomy between urban and rural, between cities

² “A model of science that embraces not detachment but engagement as the road to knowledge” (Burawoy, 1998, p.2)

and mountains. So, while “the Alp protects but separates, precisely because it created a land, the Po Valley, fertile and protected, and therefore autonomous, [...] the Apennines [...] radiate the surrounding lands, shaping them in economic rhythms and ways of life” (Barbera & De Rossi, 2021, p.7).

My body and senses – those of a hiker, wayfarer, consumer and never producer, partial knower of fir forests³ - were my main research tools and field companions, as I engaged in a co-learning process with shepherds and herds, attempting to go beyond the discursive dimension of interspecies relations, to reach “the nondiscursive, that is the unexplicated, unacknowledged, or tacit knowledge, sometimes referred to as practical consciousness” (Burawoy, p. 15) of pastoralism. I lived with the pastoralists, walked and worked alongside them for 14, at times 16 hours a day. I observed them interacting with the animals, mirroring their moves, learning by doing, absorbing the passion, struggle, tiredness, frustration, rage, and disbelief that filled the stables and spread across the pastures. I ate with them in the kitchen, milked the herds, helped with chores, sang folk songs and watched old-time movies that helped me gather much more information about the historical reality of pastoralism. I approached the field in a totalizing, overwhelming, and always, continuously, transforming way. I tried, as much as possible, to compensate for, without ignoring nor dismissing it, the temporary nature of my presence and unfamiliarity with the dynamics and sites I was engaging with, by fully immersing myself in ‘the field’. One could say that I got a sense of what cultural anthropologist Johannes Fabian meant when he wrote that “Field research, because it requires personal presence and involvement in multiple learning processes, implies a certain economy of Time” (2021, p.173). So, I am very much aware of the thousands of shades, details, and stories that I am missing and that who knows if I – or anyone – will ever catch. I am aware of the limited sample of people I’ve engaged with, which excluded, for instance, state representatives and migrant shepherds, and surely had an impact on the information and stories I’ve gathered and here reported. However, as Yuval-Davis (1997) wrote, “I do believe [...] that ‘unfinished’ is not the same as ‘invalid’, and this has given me the courage to actually write this book” (p. 1). In my case, this research paper.

1.4. Fieldwork

I left for fieldwork in July 2023. I was ‘out in the field’ for four weeks, until the very end of August. Starting from Tuscany, from the *Crete Senesi* (literally Siennese Clays), I then proceed to the province of Arezzo, before crossing the regional border with Abruzzo, adventuring myself through four different locations across the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise and the Sirente-Velino Regional Park. In Figure 1, a visual representation of my journey is displayed.

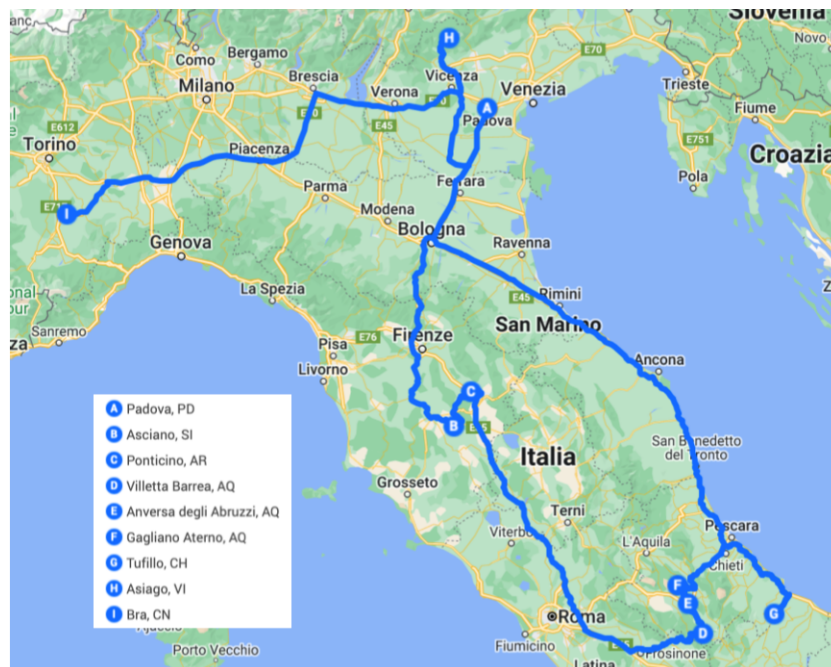
I worked and lived on five different farms for periods ranging between 3 to 6 days, conducting participant observations, engaging in informal conversations with pastoralists, their families, and networks, participating in the organization of local events, walking with the herds, and simply letting myself get absorbed by what decolonial scholars would refer to as the critical intimacy of the everyday. I actively and consciously decided to engage with a limited number of farms both due to the limited time I had at my disposal (about forty days) and because it allowed me to establish meaningful, hopefully long-lasting, and reciprocal relations with the people I’ve encountered. Such a methodical choice forced me to dive in, to immerse myself in the often-overwhelming reality of things, to feel on my skin the rage, frustration, passion, dedication, tiredness, loneliness, energy, kindness, and immense strength of the pastoralists of central Italy. The result of such experience, which I would refer to as the first step of a much longer journey, is an encounter of fleshed, embodied, inspiring memories, dreams, struggles, and wounds that come

³ For a more thorough reflection on my positionality, see Appendix A. Also, for a critical reflection on temporary dwellers, see Rizzo’s (2022) political and emotional manifest for the survival of Italy’s Inner Areas.

together in “the bearing witness, in the naming of trauma and in the grief and rage and defiance that follows” (Morales, 1998, p.16). But it is also a commitment to demonstrate how rather than marginalized realities destined to disappear, although affected by an undeniable demographic decline, aging population, and a lack of primary services, Inner Areas are sites of resistance, of transitions, basins of glowing lava. And such a realization would have hardly come had I not spent a month living in those places, with those people, and those animals. Such a methodological choice was also made in line with what Borrás and Franco (2023) express, or else that any theory, regardless of its ideological moorings, risks being irrelevant, or worse, even dangerous to working people or those who are exploited and oppressed, if it is or becomes detached from social realities and practical politics or is agnostic towards issues of justice. (p. 8)

This is also why this paper intends to constantly shift between theory and empirics, triangulating, unpacking, questioning, bringing to light the controversies of extensive livestock production systems, striving not to fall into dogmatism or empiricism.

Figure 1: My journey through Veneto, Tuscany, Abruzzo, and Piedmont



Source: this author

According to the classification of agro-pastoral systems elaborated by Farinella and Nori (2021), I engaged with transhumant systems, which are “based on seasonal mobility of livestock, which are grazing outdoors and get nutrients from the natural pasture” (p.4) and semi-extensive systems, “where animals spend most of their time in pastures nearby or at short distance. These farms have small or medium size, with some of their land partly devoted to their own production of feed, forage, and cultivated pastures” (p.4). I also visited the Transhumance Museum of Villetta Barrea (AQ), attended the 11th edition of *Made in Malga*, in Asiago (VI), and the 14th edition of *Cheese*, organized by Slow Food Italy, held in Bra (TO), and dedicated to “The taste of the meadows”. Finally, while traveling from one farm to the other, I spent two days in Gagliano Aterno (AQ), a small village of 250 inhabitants, where *Montagne in Movimento* (MIM - Mountains on the Move), a cultural association of young scholar-activists (mostly anthropologists) promotes the repopulation of mountain territories through collective processes of ecological transition. Overall, I had informal conversations with over twenty people among pastoralists and their families, farmers,

anthropologists, experts in animal husbandry, veterinaries, community workers, artists, and historians. In Appendix B, an overview of key informants is provided, as well as a schematic summary of their characteristics. Lastly, because detailed fieldnotes were handwritten in Italian and only later translated, the quotes in this paper are not all direct citations.

Chapter 2: Analytical Framework

2.1 Definitions and Terminology

Before proceeding with the rest of the paper, I deem it necessary to provide an overview of the terms I will be using to analyze the contemporary configuration of pastoralism in central Italy. To begin with, animal husbandry will be used to describe any work relation with animals – specifically sheep and goats in this research paper –, as it seems to put “the relationship with animals, the notion of responsibility, the connotation of care, and its historical character at the forefront” (Porcher, 2017, p. 9). Affected by social relations and deeply engrained in the nature economy, animal husbandry cannot be perceived as static, but rather as continuously evolving. In Italian, this loosely translates to *allevamento*, which encompasses several models of livestock production. Among these, is the livestock industry, or else the industrialized, specialized, and standardized model of animal farming that originated in the middle of the Nineteenth Century and calls for the alienation of animals from land, the mechanization of labor, and ties livestock bound to crop production (Weis, forthcoming). With the establishment of the corporate food regime, characterized by the financialization, concentration, deregulation, and industrialization of the agri-food sector (McMichael, 2009), the livestock industry expanded and flourished to the point where in the mainstream debate, the terms animal farming, animal husbandry, and livestock industry are – mistakenly – used as synonyms. Wrongly because such interchangeability leads to unnuanced conclusions, generalist legal frameworks, and the erasure of other, viable, models of animal husbandry, such as pastoralism.

According to pastoralists and extensive livestock breeders attending the 2016 Farmers’ Forum organized by IFAD⁴ and VSF⁵ International, pastoralism “is more than livestock production; it is a way of life, a culture and an identity” (*Statement of the Special Session with Pastoralists and Extensive Livestock Breeders*, 2016). Pastoralism is a knowledge-practice system, one that goes beyond the mobile and seasonal rearing of domesticated animals in pasturelands or cultivated lands, and encompasses the cultural, political, and social dimension of the most mobile branch of animal husbandry. In this paper, the term pastoralism comprehends agro-pastoral systems, which are conceptualized as the most technical, tangible manifestation of the former, including a multi-functional set of services carried out by a diverse array of human and non-human actors. Finally, in line with existing literature on the topic, the terms herder, pastoralist, and shepherd are used interchangeably in the upcoming Chapters, with apposite specifications in relation to ownership (wage shepherd/herd owners) and sex (shepherd/shepherdess) where necessary.

2.2 On the Practice and Future of Animal Husbandry

The notion of animal labor has received quite some attention among critical scholars belonging to a diverse range of disciplines. Emerging from the literature on animal labor and rights are two opposing stances. The abolitionist approach, whose main exponent is Francione (2008), claims that the only right animals – sentient beings – need is that of being freed from their status as human property. Such a theoretical position, named Ontological Veganism by Plumwood (2012), calls for a complete rupture of human-animal relations, which they understand as inherently exploitative. According to Francione (2008), the notion and framework of animal welfare, which advocates for a more humane interaction between humans and animals, inefficiently attempts to tame animal exploitation, making animal labor, use, and killing morally acceptable to the public. When it comes to animal farming then, Ontological Veganism opposes any model of animal husbandry. In

⁴ International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

⁵ Vétérinaires Sans Frontières International (VSF)

proposing an alternative theory of animal rights, namely Ecological Animalism, Plumwood (2012) claims that

Ontological Veganism insists that neither humans or animals should ever be conceived as edible or even as usable, confirming the treatment of humans as ‘outside nature’ that is part of human/nature dualism, and blocking any re-conception of animals and humans in fully ecological terms. (p.78)

In other words, Plumwood (2012) points out the essentially dualist and anthropocentric nature of the abolitionist approach and proposes a paradigm shift in which nature and culture dialogue, collaborate, and shape one another. Scholars such as Garner (2013) and Porcher (2017) can also be situated within the framework of Ecological Animalism. In particular, Porcher (2017) argues that specifically and exclusively through work, animals and humans – belonging to distinct worlds – come together in a shared world, one in which these engage in collective, collaborative, caring processes of co-production. Similarly, Van Der Ploeg (2018) also argues that “agriculture needs to be understood as co-production, since it involves the ongoing encounter, and permanent interaction and mutual transformation of the social and the natural, or more specifically: of man and living nature” (p. 19).

This paper builds on Porcher’s (2017) understanding of animal labor and interspecies relations and sets off to explore animal-human-land relations as unfolding and reproducing within pastoralist models of animal husbandry. In doing so, I intend to advocate for pastoralism as an ecologically viable, non-exploitative alternative to the livestock industry, one that incorporates and looks after environmental reproduction⁶, and that, in Thiemann’s words (2022)⁷ “see[s] the means of production as patrimony, a category that seamlessly includes physical as well as social and ecological assets, as well as knowledge” (p. 14). In the last Chapter, indeed, I will elaborate on the shortcomings and controversies of the vegan ideology reproduced by the mainstream environmental movement, unpacking the plant-based alternatives envisioned by the latter, and questioning the effect of such a transition on pastoralists, animals, environmental reproduction, and the viability of marginal areas.

2.3 Nature Unpacked

As elaborated by James O’Connor (1998), the conceptualization of nature dramatically transformed with the emergence and affirmation of industrial capitalism. In particular, this occurred through the establishment of a series of ideological dualisms, that

[...] shape the way in which we think about and experience nature: nonhuman nature in terms of the parts that make it up as separated from human beings; human nature in terms of the split between mind and body and also between the individuals who “make up” society. (O’Connor, 1998, p. 22)

Such a re-conceptualization of nature unfolded along with its capitalization, and specifically with the creation of “fictitious commodities”, namely human capital (e.g., labor), nature capital (e.g., land, farm animals), and community capital, “that is, cultural features of community life that can be valorized by capital” (e.g., Transhumance Festivals) (O’Connor, 1998, p.145). Throughout the centuries, then, two opposite, and yet almost equally problematic definitions of nature emerged, both of which fail to acknowledge the interactions and overlapping of nature economy and human

⁶ Environmental Reproduction can be “theorized as the work of making nonhuman nature fit for human reproduction while also protecting it from exploitation, and securing the conditions for nature’s own regeneration, for the needs of present and future generations” (Barca, 2020, p. 32)

⁷ Thiemann (2022) extends such observation to the artisan mode of production, or else that applying to what he refers to as the third class (next to capital and proletariat), the artisanat, who’s conditions of labor unfold in “relative autonomy, providing livelihoods rather than jobs. Artisans aim at subsistence rather than profit and wage, and conceive of the means of production as patrimony rather than capital or assets” (p. ix)

economy through social labor. The first one is closely connected to Enlightenment thinking (nature as a passive aggregate of things) and the other to the Romantic movement (nature as human Other, pristine, virgin, and untouched). The latter is specifically associated with the proliferation of urban cores and fuelled the exploitative divide between urban and rural, understood as ontological and material opposites. This then resulted in two intertwined phenomena: the metabolic rift – or else the disruption of the equilibrium between human and non-human nature – and the outflux of labor from the countryside to the city, where industrial production concentrated (O'Connor, 1998). The outcome of such a twofold process is uneven capitalist development, which resulted in the political, economic, and social marginalization of farmlands and mountains – in the context of Italy, the so-called Inner Areas. In relation to this, Farinella and colleagues (2017) wrote:

Market deregulation and liberalization, and changes in the production systems and policies aimed at rationalizing public expenditure have all contributed to increasing precariousness in these areas and to a growing social vulnerability, which is general to many local groups and various sectors of the local economy. (p.1)

On the ground, this decoded the uneven distribution of the population, now largely concentrated in urban centres, which have become sites of power and foci of a development model that pushed for a gradual “sliding” of peoples, resources, and opportunities to the valley, where urbanization, industrialization, and specialization reign supreme. “Italy is the country whose most pervasive unifying trait is its territorial diversity and polycentrism” (Berbera & De Rossi, 2021), and yet it is also where a polarizing development model that neglects mountainous and hilly territories in favor of plains, has been politically imposed and pursued in the name of social betterment, progress, and economic efficiency. This translated, then, in the artificial configuration of a rural periphery, one in which “the gradual erosion and dismantling of basic public services, such as education, health, employment, transportation, and the ability to use hospitals, does not guarantee effective equality with people living elsewhere” (Rizzo, 2022, p. 27).

The process of uneven capitalist development also results in the marginalization of modes of production that unfold in these regions, deemed unsuitable for agricultural modernization and, therefore, economically inefficient (Farinella et al., 2017). Among these, are extensive models of animal husbandry, and namely pastoralism. These are threatened by the exposure of pastoralists to the competitive, standardized dynamics of the corporate food economy, the concentration of labor in industrial zones, and the infiltration of neoliberal ideology and practices in the countryside, which is leading to a systematic reconfiguration of the agrarian landscape.

2.4 Expanding the Agriculture-Migration Nexus

The uneven distribution of labor across industrial and “raw material” zones generates significant labor shortages in farmlands and mountains (O'Connor, 1998), which is one of the most pressing challenges facing today's pastoralism. The re-organization of agricultural labor is yet another major implication of the establishment of a corporate food regime, one in which “the massive movement of food around the world is forcing the increased movement of people” (Via Campesina, 2000). As a result, the notions of mobility and migration have gained prominence in academic debates as well as political agendas, particularly with regard to the so-called agrarization of migrant labor, or else the agriculture-migration nexus (Bloem, 2014; Corrado & Zumpano, 2021; Palumbo et al., 2022). Policymakers and researchers showing interest in migration trends in agriculture are proposing a win-win perspective, in which the agrarization of migrant labor is perceived as tackling two issues at once. On one hand, the ongoing influx of immigrants affecting European countries and their concentration in urban settings, and on the other the almost parallel depopulation of rural areas, where the survival of agricultural activities and the viability of local communities is

threatened by a shortage of labor (Bock, 2018). In other words, the increasing number of migrants employed in the agricultural sector is understood as a potential strategy to counter the rural exodus and the crisis of generational renewal affecting the reproduction of family farming. Yet, increasing attention has been paid to the working and living conditions of migrant workers, for although “Rural areas [...] offer degrees of non-visibility and informality that help accommodate migrants with different types of legal status, [...] this simultaneously paves the way for irregular practices and situations of harsh exploitation” (Palumbo et al., 2022). Such observations resonate with Castles’ (1995) model of differential exclusion, which describes “a situation in which immigrants are incorporated into certain areas of society (above all the labour market) but denied access to others (such as welfare systems, citizenship and political participation)” (p. 2).

In the context of pastoralist systems, migrant workers are increasingly hired as substitutes for family labor and represent one of the main sources of resilience and persistence of extensive animal husbandry in marginal areas. Indeed, the precarious livelihood and working conditions affecting pastoralists as a social category, largely generated by the latter’s integration into global agri-food chains, led to a reorganization of labor regimes, which now strongly depend on waged workers, and more precisely migrant shepherds (Nori, 2021). Although several studies have explored the exploitative dimension of migrant employment in the agricultural sector in intensive systems of production, little attention has been paid to the working and living conditions of migrant shepherds, and to the specificity of the Pastoralism-Migration nexus (Corrado & Zumpano, 2021; Farinella & Nori, 2021). Initial work has been conducted by Nori and Farinella (2021) in the context of Mediterranean Europe, as they elaborated on the increasing dependency of today’s pastoralists on CAP subsidies and migrant workers. Yet, they also elaborated on the complexity of labor relations in agro-pastoral systems, for “the stockbreeder [herd-owner] works alongside the wage worker, merging exploitation with self-exploitation” (Nori and Farinella, 2021, p. 2). It is in relation to this last remark that this paper will elaborate, although quite briefly and from the sole perspective of employers, on the presence of migrant shepherds in Italy, which is under-researched, but not at all “new”. I intend to unpack and question the above-mentioned win-win perspective, reflecting on the multi-layered exploitative dynamics characterizing today’s extensive models of animal husbandry, as well as on migrant workers’ role in the social reproduction⁸ of pastoralists.

⁸ Defined as “the process of reproducing labor and social life, characteristically dependent on unpaid work and ecological foundations” (McMichael, 2013, p. 163)

Chapter 3: Producing and Reproducing in Hostile Environments

T. (goat shepherdess) is a pure heart, whose goats are an extension of the self. She suffers, lives, talks, rejoices, grows up with them. Between T. and her goats there is a maternal relationship, in which playful moments are alternated with others of seriousness and cooperation, never coercion. When we walk into the barn it's 7.30 and the goats come rubbing against our bodies. Elisabetta, one of the youngest, has once again managed to climb into the feeder and T. asks me to help her out of it. It takes me a good ten minutes to convince her to jump over the iron bars, onto the floor covered in hay. She walks behind T., staring at her as she medicates one of the elderlies, who injured herself while head-butting Simona, the dominant one. There is a social hierarchy within herds, one that is established through horns-locking, pushing, and kvetching. "They are no different than humans, sheep and goats" (S., sheep shepherd). I watch Elisabetta as she carefully approaches T. and rubs her head against her legs - "You are such a pimp".

As we start milking the goats, T. explains to me that when her grandparents owned the herd, it was normal for multiple generations to coexist within the same flock, to live, grow, become together. It was, as Weis (forthcoming) addressed it, one of "the key conditions supporting animal health" (p. 6), together with "social interactions with fellow members of their species [...]; having diverse diets and regular exercise; breathing fresh air; and being exposed to the sun's rays" (p. 6), all of which are still generally pursued in pastoralist systems but have been suppressed and stigmatized within the expanding livestock industry. Just like natural rhythms of reproduction are consciously and 'strategically' overseen by the latter, in the name of economic efficiency and profit maximization. For instance, when a sheep or goat gets pregnant, she "dries out", meaning that for a few months, there will be no milk. However, farmers that engage in intensive animal farming make it so that animals are calved in rotation, to ensure milk production all year long, and maximize yield by supplying animals with feedstuff (largely imported and produced through monocultures) and hay. This strategy belongs to a range of "intensive reproduction technologies (three lambings over two years or five lambings in three years) that aim to increase animal productivity through an increment of off-season lambings" (Bernués et al., 2011, p.4).

In intensive systems, quality and quantity variations in labor units, procedures, and products are minimized, and any notion of variability is factored out by maximizing control over as many variables as possible (e.g., nutrition, reproduction, interactions with other species). Adapting to the natural rhythm of production and reproduction of herds (e.g., by letting animals graze outside, allowing mothers to suckle lambs and kids) infers a certain degree of variability in terms of the quantity, flavor, and texture of both milk and cheese. Indeed, these are impacted by "what flocks eat, what they drink, how they feel on a specific day, and the other species with which they interact while out in the pastures" (S., sheep shepherd). This notion of unpredictability and variability, then, clashes with the logic of the industry, which requires a standardized product, one that is not affected "by mood swings - of herds and pastoralists -, tantrums, and animals being animals, not machines" (Z., sheep shepherd). To cope with such a clash, those who have the competencies and capacity to do so, tend to transform the milk themselves, and directly sell the final products either on-site or at farmers' markets, shortening the food supply chain, setting the price themselves, and attempting to 'mend' one of the largest rifts in the industrial food system, namely that between producers and consumers.

The conditions of production of Italian pastoralists are ones of extreme precarity and struggle, deeply affected, as they are, by the establishment and consolidation of a corporate food system that calls for the sedentarization, specialization, and industrialization of animal husbandry. These processes, highly impractical in the territories inhabited by pastoralists and herds, undermine

the bargaining power of the latter, which find themselves navigating between skyrocketing production costs, purchasing prices that are far from remunerative (increasing their dependency on EU subsidies), and the need to comply with market rules and strict animal welfare regulations tailored to the livestock industry (European Coordination Via Campesina, 2023; FACEnetwork, 2016). This is also reinforced by the externalization and ‘dumping’ of socio-environmental costs by intensive dairy farms - for “nature is a point of departure for capital but not a point of return” (O’Connor, 1998, p.123) - in inner and mountain areas, where pastures are becoming, therefore, more and more inaccessible (Nori, 2022).

Among pastoralists, there is an awareness that the land we cultivate to produce clover, alfalfa, and oats is the same land on which our animals will graze. Using pesticides would mean turning the fields into graveyards. Which is exactly what the industry is doing, only they don’t do it on their fields. They do it on ours. (S., sheep shepherd)

At the core of such a differentiated struggle, is a clash in the logic of production that distinguishes peasant and industrial models of animal farming (European Coordination Via Campesina, 2023). In the livestock industry, engrained in the neoliberal logic of the market, the pursuit of economies of scale and the hunger for profit, have led to a systematic reconfiguration of animal-human relations (nearly absent) and animal-animal relations, “with lambs and kids separated from the mothers right after birth, and often destined to never see them again” (S., sheep pastoralist). In livestock factories, animals are alienated “(i) from the product of their labour, (ii) from the act of production, (iii) from their own nature, and (iv) from fellow workers” (Blattner, 2020, p.40). In pastoralist systems, however, it is humans that adapt to the cycle of production and reproduction of the animals, engaging in co-production and relationships of care, stigmatized and economically neutralized by the capitalist logic of the corporate food regime.

The need to compete in overtly standardized markets and the downward pressure to cut steadily increasing production costs, is further complicated by a legal framework hostile to agropastoral systems, “meaning that although discursively our ‘doing’ seems to be appreciated, or at least acknowledged, in practice, we are outlaws swamped by paperwork and outdated laws” (V., sheep shepherdess). The complexity of bureaucratic procedures is amplified by the different scales of governance affecting the conditions of production and reproduction of pastoralists, in that these need to navigate within a web of contradictory (European, National, Regional, Municipal) laws, lumping together all systems of livestock production, and addressing – if at all – pastoralists in footnotes and appendixes. One example of such disproportionate burden is the ensemble of policies concerning animal welfare, which are tailored to an intensive system of livestock production, in which animals are mostly kept inside, fed with foodstuffs, and as a result, exposed to high risks of epidemic outbreaks (European Coordination Via Campesina, 2023). “Paradoxically, an extensive, small-scale farm that keeps local breed in valuable natural environments and makes high-quality products might score lower than a conventional intensive farm [...], just because many questions on the check-list [...] are not applicable” (Pescador et al., 2023, p. 7) Because, often enough, the compliance with these regulations is required to access certifications, subsidies, or simply to pursue one’s activity, pastoralists are increasingly forced to adopt – expensive and unnecessary – measures, to “legally ensure” the wellbeing of their animals.

“We rely more and more on external figures, supposed ‘experts’ that come in, check a few parameters, prescribe antibiotics and vaccines, and check out. [...] But these people do not *know* the animals, not like we [pastoralists] do. My father used to say that ‘only the master’s gaze fattens the horse’, but I’m not sure that’s the case anymore.” (Z., sheep shepherd, personal emphasis)

⁹ In Italian, “Solo lo sguardo del padrone ingrassa il cavallo”

The increasing dependency on external figures is deeply intertwined, indeed, with a loss of pastoralists' know-how, within a broader phenomenon that "has placed farmers in the position of receiving science and techniques, and effectively becoming "operators" themselves" (Porcher, 2017, p. 50).

The complexity, often outdatedness, and highly bureaucratized nature of legal frameworks operating across multiple scales of governance results, then, in blurry lines between legality and illegality, no-man's-land in which an enlarging system of actors and organizations operates (Mencini, 2021). 'Paper pastures', on which I will elaborate in the next section, are a great exemplification of the lucrative and fraudulent activities that result from such grey zones, complicit with the political, economic, and cultural marginality – or better marginalization – of pastoralists, herds, and the territories in which the small ruminants sector operates.

3.1 Milking the CAP

As previously mentioned, the need to navigate between skyrocketing production costs, purchasing prices that are far from remunerative, and the highly competitive market economy of the corporate food system - which ignores the ecological, social, and health cost of production and social reproduction - leads Italian pastoralists to fundamentally depend on European subsidies, and especially on direct payments scheme issued through the Strategic National Plan (PSN) of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The latter represents about 30% of the EU budget, and Italy (10.4%) is the fourth CAP recipient after France (17.3%), Spain (12.4%), and Germany (11.2%) (Milicevic & Dupont, 2023). As Nori (2022) wrote, "the degree of dependency on CAP measures, mechanisms and funding is high and also implies that any change in policy framework has a significant impact on the survival of the [agro-pastoral] sector" (p.8). In conversation with the pastoralists of central Italy, the material implications of such reforms on their ability to produce were repeatedly addressed, especially in relation to the infiltration of external capital in pasturelands, unfolding within the frame of the CAP. But let's proceed step by step.

In the introductory Chapter, I've explained that I've engaged with two typologies of agro-pastoral systems, namely (semi)extensive and transhumant. Pastoralists engaging in the latter, such as those operating in the Apennines, generally participate in public tenders to access alpine pastures, which constitute, together with permanent meadows, approximately 25% of the national Utilized Agricultural Area (UAA) (ISTAT, 2022). These are part of the regional state property, insusceptible to a change of use, and allocated through multiple-year notices to pastoralists, who officially "rent" the land and assume the – temporary - right to use it. In 2003, however, with the so-called Fischler reform¹⁰ of the CAP, things started to change, and pasturelands became less and less accessible – geographically and economically speaking – to local herders. Until then, indeed, EU subsidies were allocated based on volumes or factors of production, assessed in terms of livestock heads or yield. In 2003, however, such a scheme was revisited, to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of European agriculture. The reform implied the decoupling of the Single Payment Scheme (SPE) from produce, and its 'attachment' to farmers' compliance with norms concerning animal welfare, public health, and environmental preservation (Mencini, 2021). In other words, "It didn't matter anymore whether you kept the animals to actually produce food. Because as long as you had some, as long as you figured, on paper, as a herd-owner, you'd get the subsidies" (M., sheep & goat shepherd). With the decoupling of EU contributions, farmers began to perceive subsidies based on so-called "entitlements", conceived as income support and doctored indifferently on any available hectare of land regardless of where the farming – if there is any – takes place. "In Italy, SPE titles can be transferred from one land to another, even across regions;

¹⁰ Named after Franz Fischler, former EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, in office from 1995 to 2004.

there is more room for mobility for CAP entitlements than for livestock, which actually serves the needs of large farmers rather than those of pastoralists” (Nori, 2022, p. 7). This set off a proper market – or better trafficking – of payment entitlements (PEs), and a rush to the pastures, with an increasing number of large-scale farms – often located in extra-regional plains – grabbing grasslands to “back-up” PEs, secure themselves CAP subsidies worth millions of euros, and appealing – often – to land-oriented climate change solutions gaining momentum within mainstream climate politics (Mencini, 2021). “Abruzzo's pastures have become places to spread sewage produced elsewhere, meadows that act as conscience cleansers of large entrepreneurs and politicians” (M., sheep & goat shepherd). In 2022, Grubačić and colleagues wrote that “Many anarchists would agree that the main problem with capitalism is that it allows for nonuser ownership – that is, it enables people who do not actually use resources in a socially beneficial way to still own them” (p.1). When analyzing the above-described phenomenon, although not necessarily through ownership, a similar mechanism is reproduced, with the allocation of pastures and CAP subsidies to actors – or groups of actors – who’s interests and values could not be more different from those of the territory - to be understood as an ensemble of people, traditions, animals, and landscapes.

CAP distortions unfold in multiple ways, but generally build on sporadic and superficial inspections, the overly bureaucratic nature of any related procedure - which lengthens timelines and creates loopholes -, and the lack, often, of a cohesive grasslands management plan (Calandra, 2019; Mencini, 2021). On the ground, this translates into the increasing inaccessibility of pastures to pastoralists, who cannot out-compete the financially massive and expanding capital of livestock corporations participating in public banners (Braccani, 2019). And even if they do, as it happens with few medium-scale herd owners, “they end up spending in rent large part – if not the entire sum – of the CAP subsidies they gain access to” (G., sheep shepherd). At times, pastures are then sub-rented to local pastoralists for much higher prices than those the latter used to pay, with extremely high-profit margins; others, livestock, often sick or no longer productive, is abandoned in these otherwise empty – and therefore potentially suspicious – meadows (Braccani, 2019; Nori, 2022). It’s the phenomenon of “phantom pastures”, “golden pastures”, or “paper pastures”. But it’s also referred to as the “mafia of the pastures”, because of the involvement of Italian criminal organizations, as revealed in the maxi trial of Nebrodi (Sicily), and the recently carried out “Operation Transhumance”, conducted by the Anti-Mafia District Directorate of L’Aquila (Abruzzo) (Ribaud, 2022; Redazione Terra e Vita, 2023).

It’s a peculiarly organized and strategically orchestrated system of scams that builds upon a fallacious implementation of the CAP by the Italian government, but its manifestations should not be confined to Italian grasslands, and its implications be understood beyond economic terms (Braccani 2019; Calandra, 2019). Indeed, this form of land-grabbing is causing immense environmental damage, as the biodiversity of pastures and permanent meadows gets “eaten” by the woods, or even worse burned by wildfires, now that pastoralists and herds are no longer there to preserve them. It also represents a clear violation of the rights of pastoralists and flocks, who are being forced out of the pastures and left with no option but to “settle down”, giving up one of the defining features of extensive animal husbandry, namely mobility, to relocate, or to abandon animal farming altogether (Mencini, 2021; Nori, 2022; Rete Appia, n.d.-a). The phenomenon of “paper pastures” represents yet another blow suffered by Italian pastoralism, whose practices and traditions are being swiped away by a system that seems to provide for “milking the CAP”, rather than milking herds.

3.2 Court Jesters & Museum Pieces: The Reproduction of Pastoral Tourist Economies

Next to the increasing difficulty in accessing land and subsidies, the exposure to the political economy of the corporate system, in which goat and sheep products widely circulate, compels pastoralists to deal with and adjust to the competitive dynamics of a marketplace where local, organic products are proliferating.

Today, raw milk, organic products, and local food are sold as delicacies, exceptional food. What is sustainable and green is professed as the vanguard of the future, when pastoralists have always taken care of the Earth, and yet no one seems to acknowledge that. It would take away the thrill, the money that industrial food producers are making through niche products and niche markets. It's a system that feeds the riches and starves the rest, pastoralists included (Z., sheep shepherd).

The renewed economic, political, and cultural attention given to organic, quality-focused, locally embedded food supply chains, unfolds within a larger phenomenon in which mountains and countryside are increasingly perceived and addressed as “new” frontiers of capital, spaces to consume, colonize, rewrite (Berbera & De Rossi, 2021; Rizzo, 2022). Places to be transformed, reconfigured, filled at all costs. They constitute the “traditional”, “wild” Other, diametrically opposed to the city, in which urban dwellers can reinvent themselves, be someone else, even if just for a weekend. “Disconnected from ecological reality, capitalism continues to deploy its inbuilt tendency to grow and seek new accumulation opportunities, both virtually (financialization) and materially (extraction and production)” (Gerber, 2020, p. 1). So, just like raw milk and organic cheese, the places in which animal products are produced are being “rediscovered”, idealized, commodified, and agrarian landscapes re-configured. And so are the conditions of production of pastoralists, infused with narratives that build on idyllic images of the countryside and its inhabitants, and that through volunteering schemes and experiential tourism, profess that anyone can become a shepherd. It claims that anyone can go back to the land. “And so here come the fed-up engineers, returning to the homes of their ancestors and set out to work the land. A land they have no connection to, and which they will abandon again within a short time” (V., sheep shepherdess). Usually, around the time they discover that the life advertised by media outlets, travel agencies, and politicians concerned with the rural exodus, does not reflect the hard life of shepherds and peasants.

Villetta¹¹ as you see it right now [mid August], full of people, events, life, it's not the Villetta known to the locals. It is a pumped, performative version; a façade constructed for and tailored to a temporary community (R., social worker, activist).

One to which local producers, such as pastoralists, also need to succumb, by opening their doors to the public, showcasing their practices, and offering packages of experiential tourism. F. (sheep shepherdess) tells me that there are times when people call her and ask if she organizes cheese tastings. Usually, they are owners or managers of *Agriturismi* (Farm Holidays Centres) nearby, looking for new experiences to sell to the customers – Americans, British, New Zealanders, but also, and increasingly, Italians. “I often reply that I am a pastoralist, a cheesemaker, not an entertainment agency” (F., sheep shepherdess). She tells me about the time a group of Americans stopped by the small caravan where she sells the cheese, and asked if she was the pastoralist they had heard about, the one who makes electronic invoices. “As if we were movie characters from another era, one in which technology had not yet been invented” (F., sheep shepherdess). The emergence of hybrid, multi-functional farms, which are turned into part-time B&Bs, educational farms, sites of entertainment and only secondarily of production, generates social dissensus. These are not perceived as ‘harmful’ in themselves, for “there is a need to communicate what we

¹¹ Villetta Barrea (AQ), Abruzzo

[pastoralists] do, to share about our history and profession. But not if this hinders my ability to produce, not if it implies sharing only one side of the story” (S., sheep shepherd). In other words, not if this reconfiguration of animal farming implies a complete, or even partial for that matter, rupture with the agricultural practices and socio-cultural heritage of the territory, one that generates rage and frustration for its impact on the decline of the farming sector and the reproduction of folkloristic images of pastoralist practices. These skeptical perspectives are often dismissed as nostalgic, close-minded, incapable of accepting change. But those who are concerned with such a transition are not nostalgic of the past, of things ‘as they used to be’. If any, their positionality at the core of the continuously evolving field of animal husbandry, is what urges them to push for a narrative that goes beyond what’s beautiful, clean, aesthetically pleasing – and therefore economically valuable –, but also encompasses and communicates the struggle. “The issue is, you see, that what is shown is often *not* pastoralism, but an idealized, monetized version of it” (S., sheep shepherd, personal emphasis).

Anna Rizzo wrote on the turisticization of Italian Inner Areas that “By associating art and culture with tourism, heritage becomes a symbol of expendability; it is parceled out, disassembled, to sell pieces of experiences, which simplified become gadgets and thus neutralize any transformative drive” (2022, p.75). This concern seems to be widespread among pastoralists, who find themselves torn on one side by the need to make ends meet at the end of the month, and on the other by the “the fear of being turned into court jesters, or even worse museums. It becomes a choice between dignity and money” (F., sheep shepherdess). In 2019, the millennia-old tradition of transhumance, defined as “the seasonal droving of livestock along migratory routes in the Mediterranean and the Alps” (UNESCO, n.d.) became part of UNESCO’s representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. But the material implications of such a decision generated dissensus among pastoralists, who emphasize how this form of recognition – patrimonialisation - does not represent a long-term solution to de-pastoralisation, but rather sees the proliferation and restoration of Transhumance Festivals, museums, routes, which become seeds of yet another monoculture, namely tourism.

In one of her publications, Donna Haraway (2008) wrote that “we are in the midst of reinvented pastoral-tourist economies” (p.40), ones that seem to represent the contemporary version of the political strategy of *Panem et Circensem*, diverting the attention from the harsh reality of things – the precarious conditions of production and reproduction of pastoralists in territories of socio-economic poverty and induced marginalization. Places and landscapes are being transformed and tailor-made for a transitory community that needs to be entertained at all costs, so that the disappearance of who ensured the socio-ecological reproduction of these territories for millennia, will hopefully go unnoticed. It is a system that threads water on all sides, one that is transforming Inner Areas in Auge’s (1995) non-places, there to be passed through, but not *lived* in.

The space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude. There is no room there for history unless it has been transformed into an element of spectacle, usually in allusive texts. What reigns there is actuality, the urgency of the present moment (Auge, 1995, pp. 103-104).

But the transformation of places into non-places is not irreversible, nor inevitable, and the same applies to the desertification of mountains, the depopulation of rural areas, the status of economic and social precarity of contemporary pastoralism. Yet, the answer to such overlapping struggles cannot be – solely – tourism, regardless of the form it assumes.

I once read in a schoolbook that the municipalities of this area [the National Park of Abruzzo, Lazio, and Molise] live out of tourism. But isn’t tourism just a consequence of the immense value of a territory? If one were to erase the history and culture of these places, to swipe out the people that ensure their reproduction and viability, what would be left then? (P., historian, 2023)

Maybe, only then, inner and mountain areas would be ‘empty’. Or better, they would be emptied.

3.3 At the margins of the margins

As elaborated in the previous sections, the emergence and affirmation of pastoral-tourist economies, the increasing difficulty in accessing land, and the pressure exercised by the integration of pastoralists in global food chains, contribute to the configuration of hostile, unevenly developed settings in which shepherds struggle to produce and reproduce as a social category. In particular, the worsening livelihood and working conditions of today’s pastoralists can – to a large extent - explain “the crisis of the agro-pastoral ‘vocation’ and the relative lack of workforce on pasturelands” (Farinella & Nori, 2021), with significant implications for what Zoe Brent (2022) refers to as the generational, collective, and systemic reproduction of extensive models of animal husbandry. Yet, pastoralists, just like peasants, have so far managed to persist – squeezed at the margins by the corporate food system and uneven capitalist development. Among the reasons for their persistence, is the employment of cheap, flexible, high-skilled migrant labor native to (other) Mediterranean countries, but also and increasingly Asia, North Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa, where there is a long tradition of animal breeding (Farinella et al., 2017). In 2017, Nori published a paper on the presence of immigrants in Euro-Mediterranean agro-pastoral systems, remarking the high percentage of foreigners among salaried shepherds, especially in the Italian regions of Abruzzo (90%), Piedmont (70%), Val d’Aosta (70%), and Sardinia (35%). Yet, the limited formalization of contractual relations leads to the underestimation of the phenomenon.

In line with such estimates, all but one of the farms I’ve visited rely on the permanent or occasional employment of migrant shepherds, native to eastern Europe and Northern Africa. In conversation with herd owners, it was made clear that the presence of migrant workers in agro-pastoral systems is not a new phenomenon, but rather one that is deeply connected to the geopolitical reconfiguration of Italy from a country of emigration (especially in the postwar¹²) to one of immigration, and to the migration of the labor force from the countryside to the city, with the opening of factories and the dismantlement of the mezzadria-systems in the midst of the Twentieth century. A particularly interesting case, for instance, is that of Tuscany, which starting in the 60s and 70s experienced the immigration and settlement of hundreds of shepherd families native to Sardinia, which essentially set off a systemic reconfiguration of both Tuscan and Sardinian agricultural practices (Meloni, 1996). “Tuscan pastoralism is essentially Sardinian. Shepherds and sheep are Sardinian, and so is the language in which they communicate with one another” (C., sheep shepherd). Towards the end of the Twentieth Century, migratory fluxes in pastoralist settings expanded beyond national borders, as the availability of local salary workers diminished significantly, and herd owners began to hire foreign labor, mostly through third parties, to continue their activities.

Aside from the country of origin, there is one other key feature that distinguishes the immigratory fluxes of pastoralists between Sardinia and Tuscany (and across other regions), and those that involve international migrant workers. Namely, the notion of ownership. Indeed, today’s migrant shepherds are wage workers, with very poor socio-economic prospects when it comes to a potential “transition from manual labour to entrepreneurship and livestock ownership” (Farinella et al., 2017, p.9), meaning that the overall impact on generational renewal is essentially null. This was also confirmed by the fact that in discussing future prospects for their activities, and for the agro-pastoral sector, none of my interlocutors mentioned the internationalization of livestock ownership as a possibility. If any, it became clear that, although perhaps more subtle and invisibilized compared to intensive agricultural systems, exploitative relations of labor are also

¹² World War II

perpetuated in pastoralist settings. However, as hinted at by Nori and Farinella (2021), exploitation in agro-pastoral systems seems to unfold in a more complex, multi-layered way, as herd owners and wage migrant shepherds both find themselves squeezed out by the capitalist logic of production of the corporate food system in which they operate. Yet, although benefiting from a seemingly higher degree of independence when it comes to task management compared to migrant workers engaged in harvesting, for instance, the working and living conditions of migrant shepherds are subject to further forms of exclusions, along the lines of race and culture. It is what Castles (1995) refers to as differential exclusion, or else “processes of economic and social marginalization, based on the immigrants’ weak economic position and lack of social networks, which lead to labour market segmentation and residential segregation” (p. 1). Such additional barriers, tied to cultural misrepresentation and socio-economic segregation, however, were seemingly not acknowledged by the non-migrant counterpart, who addressed notions of precarity and exploitation as affecting pastoralists as a homogenous social category, deprived of any political, social, and economic recognition.

The existence and reproduction of multi-layered exploitation is also seemly ignored and reproduced by an enlarging group of policymakers and mainstream national agrarian syndicates – such as *Coldiretti* and *Confagricoltura* –, that are facilitating the insertion of migrant workers in the agro-pastoral systems, relying on the win-win perspective mentioned above. In pursuing such a political strategy, this paper argues, such a coalition seemingly attempts to treat the most tangible symptoms – namely de-pastoralisation and de-ruralization - of the precarious condition of production and social reproduction affecting today’s pastoralists, which are left unaddressed. In a context of social and economic precarity, such as that of pastoralism and Inner Areas, the implementation of such a strategy generates roiling dissensus and spurs social tension, which tends to disproportionately affect migrant workers. To explain such a dynamic, I will elaborate on a discussion that unfolded a few weeks ago in a virtual forum I am part of, which sees a combination of producers, academics, journalists, and representatives of various livestock-related organizations.

The topic of conversation was a new deal between *Coldiretti* and Kyrgyzstan Ministry of Labour. What emerged from such an agreement is a pilot project that sees the arrival and integration in the primary sector of an initial group of 100 young (18-45) Kyrgyz, “to save Sardinia’s livestock and agri-food tradition but also to repopulate towns and countryside at risk of desertification” (Grassia, 2023). Shared on the forum, such news generated heated reactions, especially among pastoralists and sector representatives. There is one message that I will report here below, which seemingly expresses the reason for such a stir.

Instead of addressing the conditions of present shepherds, such as demanding that pastoralism be considered a wearing profession, Italy’s largest agricultural union imports new *slaves* to use in the jobs no one wants to do anymore: shepherds and caregivers. [...] It is simply that those who know this profession [pastoralism] understand that there is not enough turnover to really pay for the work of employees under Italian laws. Contracts are one thing, but actual working hours and working conditions are another. And that’s also why the foreign workers you [another user] mentioned as well as Italian workers are quitting. In order to guarantee fair wages and conditions you need the pastoralist himself to have a turnover suitable for the work he does, the role he represents, what he produces. In pastoralism there is a lack of money, period. Without this you don’t fight wolves, you don’t find employees, you don’t live with dignity, you struggle to produce and maintain flocks. (F., sheep shepherdess, personal emphasis)

What seems to emerge from such a quote then, is perhaps a partial acknowledgment of the disadvantaged living and working conditions of waged shepherds (not necessarily migrants), which is seemingly “justified” by the overall lack of economic, social, and political recognition affecting the agro-pastoral sector. By addressing exploitation and precarity as extending to pastoralists as a

social category, indeed, herd owners seemingly recur to a mechanism of self-victimization that perhaps “cancels out” the additional burden weighing on the shoulders of waged (migrant) shepherds. “It’s a war among poor. Everything and everyone are against you. It’s a life that doesn’t teach you how to live, but how to survive” (C., sheep shepherd).

This paper argues, then, that in a context of economic, social, and political precarity, the introduction of migrant shepherds cannot be understood as a long-term solution to the crisis of generational, collective, and systemic reproduction affecting pastoralism. Especially if this is not accompanied by a process of structural change that aims at the reconfiguration of power relations in the market economy, the improvement of the precarious conditions affecting Inner Areas, and the recognition of agro-pastoral systems as usurious forms of production that guarantee environmental reproduction. If all of the above remain unaddressed, the contemporary processes of de-ruralization and de-pastoralisation will not be halted nor reversed, for “migrants cannot and should not be used as stopgaps” (I., goat shepherdess). If any, what will be reproduced is a global food system in which structural racism is perpetuated, and migrant shepherds are doubly exploited at the margins of the margins.

Chapter 4: Pastoralist Ecologies

We are living in a historical moment in which the politics of animal welfare and climate change are determining the future of animal husbandry, and in which a growing coalition¹³ of animal rights activists (abolitionists but also, and increasingly, welfarists) and anti-meat consumption movements, is pushing for a complete rupture of animal-human relations, especially work relations, which they understand as, by definition, abusive, violent, and exploitative. An enlarging slice of the general public and the mainstream environmental movement is also aligning with such a stance, which tends – this paper argues – to lump together different systems of livestock production and ‘sins’ of compassionate capitalism. In other words, the anti-farming coalition seems to be pushing for a reform of the global food system that would leave ‘the industrial’ intact, or better expanded, ignoring the existence of models of animal husbandry where animals and humans collaborate and engage in a triple relation of giving-receiving-returning (Porcher, 2017). Models in which, if animal-human ties were to be suspended, the ‘Five Freedoms’ framework¹⁴ embraced by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) would fall short. What emerges from the field, then, is a paradox, in which pastoralists, whose condition of production and social reproduction are embedded in a collaborative relation with more-than-human entities, are being swiped away by a narrative that fails to understand how the ecology of pastoralists-herds-territory unfolds, and which values underpin it. This becomes particularly evident when analyzing the ongoing debates on animal labor, human-wildlife coexistence, and plant-based diets. All of which I intend to unpack, question, and challenge in the upcoming sections.

4.1 Herd-herders’ relations: why love is not enough

Porcher (2017), reporting Caillé’s words and expanding his gift theory to peasant models of animal farming, writes: “the tie means more than the commodity, [...] it is of more importance than the value of the usage and the value of exchange” (p. 104). When looking at the way in which pastoralists and herds interact and collaborate through work, how the formers ensure that animals have access to water, to vast and heterogenous vegetation on which they can feed, to a natural, intimate, and safe environment, it becomes evident that herders “through work, transform a predatory relationship with animals into a gift relationship, situated as we are between interest and disinterest, between constraints and liberty” (Porcher, 2017). And in exchange animals provide pastoralists with milk, manure, and affection, all of which are necessary for the reproduction of animal farming. In other words, they engage in a reciprocal, gift relationship in which animals and humans take care of each other.

This is not to say, however, that human-animal relations in pastoralist systems are devoid of any kind of economic interest, for it can be said that pastoralist practices pledge to both *primary sociality* (ties based on love) and *secondary sociality* (ties based on collaborative work)¹⁵. Indeed, as argued by a representative of the Association of Dairy Farmers and Farm Cheesemakers (*Associazione delle Casare e dei Casari di Azienda Agricola - ACCAA*) in one of the conferences I’ve attended at *Cheese*, pastoralists and herds do not *only* interact out of passion and love, although that is what tends to be communicated and conceived by a mainstream folkloristic narrative – at times reproduced by pastoralists themselves – that simplifies, weakens, and “justifies” the economic and

¹³From here on referred to as the anti-farming coalition

¹⁴At the European, but also at the global, level, legislation concerning the protection of animals kept for productive purposes is based on the pursuit of the “Five Freedom” framework, which includes the freedom (1) from hunger and thirst, (2) from discomfort, (3) from pain, injury, and disease, (4) to express normal behaviour, (5) from fear and distress (European Commission, 2023; WOAH, 2023).

¹⁵For a detailed elaboration on Caillé’s dimensions of sociality, and how these apply to animal husbandry, see Porcher (2017)

social marginalization of the pastoralist. This is because, just like pastoralists, animals too participate in the market economy, meaning that while economic interest might indeed not be the primary motive to engage in pastoralism, “love must not take up all space if the farmer is to earn [his] living” (Porcher, 2017). This misconception of pastoralists as driven by passion and nothing more,

banishes the concept of remuneration from our field, because it seems to imply that if a pastoralist loves her animals and profession, there is no reason for her to fight for her effort, and that of her animals, to be recognized and financially rewarded. But one does not feed on passion. (A., cattle shepherdess)

Economic remuneration, just like social and political recognition, is fundamental for the reproduction of extensive systems of animal husbandry, whose disappearance would also entail the end of farm animals, for these cannot survive without a herder (Porcher, 2017). Indeed, by engaging in working relations with pastoralists, herds are guaranteed a good life, free from fear, hunger, thirst, discomfort, and suffering, and not the life of a ‘wild’ animal, which is what the anti-farming coalition seems to be advocating for, failing to understand that farms animals are preys, and not predators, whose chances of survival in the ‘wild’ are extremely low, especially due to the increasing presence of large carnivores, as elaborated in the next section.

4.2 (Co)Existing With the Wolves: Who Bears the Burden?

Among the common denominators of the diversified landscape of European animal husbandry is the increasing number of human-wildlife conflicts, especially between pastoralists and wolves (Nori & Berzi, 2021; Russo et al., 2014; European Commission, 2023). The increasing volume of wolves in southern Europe, led by ‘rewilding’ and conservation schemes, their noticeable adaptability to anthropized environments (Nori & Berzi, 2021), and their wandering in powerful backyards, have inferred a certain urgency to revise the ‘rules of the game’. When it comes to wolf protection, two are the main directives that attempt to ‘harmonize’ human-wildlife coexistence in Europe. Namely, these are the Bern Convention of the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, signed in 1979, and the Habitat Directive, adopted in 1992, to which all Member States must adhere (Linnel & Cretois, 2018). According to both frameworks, the legal status of the wolf (*canis lupus*) is one of ‘strict protection’ (Annex IV of the Habitat Directive and Annex II of the Bern Convention), meaning that “a strict protection regime must be applied across the entire natural range within the EU [...], both within and outside Natura 2000 sites¹⁶” (Vinci, 2023).

The increasing number of wolves in the European Union, estimated to range between 13.000 and 14.000 in 2018¹⁷ and likely to have increased significantly in the past 5 years, has sparked social conflicts between different stakeholder groups detaining diverging views on the conservation status of the wolves. In particular, a joint statement by the European Coalition of Young Farmers (CEJA), together with the European Landowners' Organisation (ELO), the European Federation for Hunting and Conservation (FACE), and the European Association for Farmers and Agri-cooperatives in the EU (Copa and Cogeca) was released in November 2022, demanding for the downlisting of wolves from Annex IV to Annex V of the Habitat Directive, which would allow Member States greater flexibility in the management of the species (for example through the easier application of derogations), as long as the maintenance of a favorable conservation status is preserved. The motion was strongly opposed by seven environmental and animal protection organizations, among which WWF and Pro Wildlife, who claimed that “the slight recovery of large carnivore populations does not [...] provide sufficient reason to downgrade legal protections for

¹⁶ Natura 2000 sites “include several strictly protected nature reserves, and habitat types such as forests, grasslands, wetlands and coastal and marine habitats” (European Commission, n.d.) and are protected by EU legislations.

¹⁷ Last assessment

these species” (Swabe et al., 2022, p. 2). This divergence of views, which outplays at different governance levels, and is receiving increasing media and public attention, has a huge material impact on the ground, where the already precarious state of the extensive livestock sector is further aggravated by the increasing number of wildlife attacks, the incapability to move freely across pastures, the additional costs associated with preventive measures, and the dissemination of narratives that are marginalizing pastoralists even further.

I spent a bit longer than a month in the field, witnessing realities that differed quite significantly from each other, but the burning and pressing “wolf problem” touched – although to different extents – them all. When the shadow of the wolf descended upon us, tones became heated, terminology soured, and a range of mixed and overwhelming emotions crossed shepherds’ faces. Yet the recipients of their resentment were hardly ever the wolves themselves, but rather the array of supporters that advocate for the absolute protection of the species, blinded by a partial understanding of such a delicate matter and facilitated by the lack, at least in Italy, of a national management plan for the wolf¹⁸. These observations emerged from several of the conversations I have had with pastoralists and technical advisors active in the livestock sector, and serve well in showing how the increasing number of human-wildlife conflicts is far more complex than a case of mere overkill by pastoralists. While it may be true that “co-existing with wildlife is always a matter of tension and contestations” (Nori & Berzi, 2021), the economic, political, and cultural dynamics shaping those tensions are strongly relevant and quite diverse across afflicted areas.

4.2.1 Protecting the wolf at all costs, but whose costs?

If a wolf attacks the herd, I see years of hard work, sacrifices, dawns spent milking, days spent threshing hay in the sun, feeding the animals, mounting the guard, making sure the sheep are doing well - often better than I am – going down the drain. And it’s freaking painful. Last year, my dad’s flock was attacked. Twelve sheep were killed, fifteen had an abortion, ten stopped eating and died of starvation. So, when they [the local authorities] compensate you for a third of the damages, you feel anger and desperation running through your body. One night I came out of the barn and my dad was sitting there, crying. It was a punch in the stomach, but also a huge relief. I sat down next to him and cried for hours. I don’t think we had ever been that connected. (C., sheep shepherd)

When C. tells me this, we are sitting outside the barn. I can see on his face, and on the faces of the many other pastoralists I’ve talked to in the past few weeks, how difficult and overwhelming the increasing presence of the wolves is, and how much of an impact it has on extensive animal farming. C. explains to me that when a wolf attacks the flock, the effect on the herd is a bit of a domino effect, in which the damage takes multiple forms and unfolds over time. It’s not only the bites and killing that harms the animals, but also the emotional trauma that often leads to miscarriages, a halt in milk production, or a loss of appetite. By nature, sheep, goats, cattle, poultry, pigs, and farm animals at large, are prey and not predators, but when a work relationship is established between flocks and pastoralists, the “vulnerable” position of the former in the animal hierarchy is partially suspended. The wolf attacks can be diverted by the presence of the herder¹⁹, who upholds his end of the contract by protecting the animals and alleviating their fears, but when

¹⁸ A National Action Plan for the Conservation of the Wolf (*Piano d’Azione Nazionale per la Conservazione del Lupo*) was published in 2002, but ever since its expiration in 2012, no coherent framework of action has been developed nor implemented at the national level.

¹⁹ This is becoming more and more difficult as wolves adapt and familiarize with anthropogenic environments, and become less intimidated by humans. On top of that, the presence/absence of the pastoralist is increasingly used as a tool to individualize responsibilities and socially marginalize herders, while diverting attention from the extent and transformation of human-wildlife conflicts.

the predator gets to the prey, the triple obligation at the heart of animal husbandry – giving, receiving, returning – is interrupted (Porcher, 2017). So, while animal-rights activists, environmentalists, and an enlarging slice of the urban-based public firmly position themselves against the revisitation of the wolf protection status, who is there to ensure that the survival of one species doesn't imply the extinction of others? For there is no herd without a herder, especially when the estimated wolf population in Italy counted more than 3000 heads as of 2021 (La Morgia et al., 2022) but, according to the experts, is likely to have reached around 5000 specimens by now.

When I posed such a question to a technical advisor for the non-profit Italian group *Canislupus*, he underlined how there are several factors that lead to a seemingly irreconcilable rupture between the two factions, whose representatives shift along a continuum. Firstly, he underlined how the wolf has somehow become the scapegoat of the long-coming dichotomy between the countryside and the city, of the ideological clash between two development models perceived as symmetrical and unreconcilable. Not surprisingly, those environmental and animal protection organizations that firmly oppose any revisitation of the regulatory framework of reference, are champions of a form of *urban* activism that is radically detached from the challenges, activities, and social dynamics of rural areas, driven by “moral sense” and a deep misunderstanding of the nature of multispecies relations in pastoralism. In relation to this last point, a member of Rete Appia²⁰ explained to me that because the “animal liberation” stance perceives animal-human relations in animal husbandry as exploitative by nature, the growing number of farms that are forced to close because lacking the resources to protect themselves from the wolves, and to cope with the other difficulties undermining the extensive livestock sector, is seen as calling for celebrations, rather than sorrows. But if farms close, or worse shift towards more sedentary farming models that entail the overgrazing of certain areas and the undergrazing of others, whose interests are being pursued? The ones of the wolves, of the nature that needs to be protected but at the same time kept at a distance, or rather those of the livestock industry that steps in and takes over? Because this is the kind of transformation that is unfolding on the ground, as herders find themselves forced away from the pastures, compelled to barricade inside the stables, recur to self-exploitation to keep up with longer working hours, and often incapable of paying for the implementation of technical protections (e.g., electric fences, dogs, acoustic bollards). It is leading to a transition towards more intensive systems of animal farming, in which the relation between animals and land, and between pastoralists and their herds, is fundamentally reorganized. Flocks are being subtracted from the meadows and closed into barns, “binding livestock bound to crop production” (Weis, forthcoming, p. 15), which is exactly how the rise of the livestock industry set off in the mid-19th Century.

Z. (sheep shepherd), whose family has owned sheep for generations, told me, People who argue how at the end of the day the wolf is just a predator doing its part in the ecosystem, fail to understand that there are livelihoods of entire families endangered by their doing. And that what is being undermined by a single predator – supported by a public fed of half-truths and champion of compassionate capitalism – is a system that by definition preserves biodiversity.

So, who benefits from the preservation of a strict conservation scheme? Certainly not the wolves, who are increasingly exposed to episodes of deliberate killings (e.g., through shootings or poisoned bites) (Musto et al., 2021). Not the dogs, who spend the nights barking and the days protecting the grazing flocks – why isn't their well-being discussed? Not the goats and sheep who are being prevented “access to where they belong: to earth, grass, the sun and the rain, birdsong, wind and

²⁰ Founded in 2017, Rete Appia is the Italian network of pastoralism, which “seeks to improve the visibility of pastoralism among citizens and consumers, enhancing and supporting its operators, also in context of a discussion of agricultural policies” (Rete Appia, n.d.-b)

snow” (Porcher, 2017, p.15). And not the pastoralists, whose livelihoods are threatened daily. In an article published by the PASTRES community, Nori and Berzi (2021) wrote that

Data and accompanying narratives can hide very different and differently vested interests, from tourist agencies that include wildlife in their packages, to environmental organizations and technical agencies that rely on public funding to protect animals – some of which in reality are no longer under threat of extinction. Indeed, in some areas it is pastoralists that are on the verge of extinction.

4.2.2 The flaws of compensation schemes

Although not sufficient to fully alleviate human-wildlife conflicts in the long run, compensation schemes, if properly implemented, can function as a deterrent, especially if combined with investments in preventive measures and if their development entails the active participation of farmers and rural actors in decision-making processes (Berzi, 2014). In 2021, the annual compensation damage due to large carnivores in the EU amounted to EUR 28.5 million (Berzi et al., 2021), while between 2015 and 2019 the compensation figure in Italy corresponded to approximately EUR 9 million (Gervasi et al., 2022). Although a reimbursement system is in place at the European level, its activation and implementation are delegated to the single member states, which may in turn delegate to local administrations – in the case of Italy to regions, National Parks, and autonomous provinces. In Italy, compensation schemes are carried out in three forms, namely through direct compensations (*indennizzi*), insurance plans, and prevention funds, and are paid retrospectively (Gervasi et al., 2022). The lack of a national action plan for the conservation and management of the wolf, and the marked fragmentation and unevenness of regulations, result in many flaws and shortcomings. Among the main reasons for discontent is the complexity and lengthiness of settling compensations, which may take up to 90 days when the damage occurs within National Parks (although the corresponding national law – LN 394/91 - is routinely ignored, with timelines of up to 400 days) and up to four years – depending on the region – when compensations are managed by regions and autonomous provinces (Gervasi et al., 2022). When one considers the immediate emotional and economic impact that wolf attacks have on agro-pastoral systems, and the precarious conditions of the sector, that explains the general discontent. Another aspect that contributes to the increasing frictions and cases of omitted reports, with a consequent underestimation of the phenomenon, is the fact that the disposal of carcasses, mandatory and granted only after the appropriate checks carried out by the veterinary services of ASL, is often performed at the expense of the farmer, who’s required to storage the preyed animals in cold rooms and wait for them to be collected (see Figure 1).

Thirdly, as illustrated in the quote above, it’s not only the bites and killings that harm the animals, but also the emotional trauma that often leads to miscarriages, a halt in milk production, or loss of appetite. Yet, a systematic analysis of compensation schemes reveals that these tend to cover exclusively – and often only partially – direct damages (fatalities and injuries), and leave out indirect (e.g. halt in milk production, miscarriages), managerial (e.g. costs for preventive measure, additional labor), environmental (e.g. sedentarization, abandonment of pastures, loss of autochthonous species), cultural (e.g. closure of farms, loss of biocultural heritage), and emotional (i.e. human-animal ties) damages (Berzi, 2014). As F. (sheep shepherdess) put it, “We are given a content and left to our own devices”. Lastly, another topic of discussion is the lack of coherence in how technical solutions to mitigate and prevent wolf attacks – mostly fences, guardian dogs, and acoustic bollards - are funded, implemented, maintained, and monitored. This is extremely relevant as the presence or absence of preventive measures makes a significant difference in whether – and in what amount – compensations are distributed. Tuscany, for instance, has recently made available EUR 400.000, accessible through public notices, for farmers that suffered predation damages between November 1st 2022 and October 31st 2023 (Bini, 2023). When analysing the announcement together with a technical advisor for the non-profit Italian group *Canislupus*, it was

pointed to me that compensation will only cover direct damages (fatalities and injuries), and that funds will only be available to farms that have implemented at least one technical solution for prevention. Given the effective impact that these measures have in preventing and reducing the extent of damages, this last clause might seem quite reasonable, were not for the fact that the Region does not provide any economic contribution for their implementation.

See, if I don't protect myself, I won't get compensated. But look at him [points to the Caucasian shepherd sleeping on the floor] – he needs to eat and kibble costs money. Vaccination costs money. So fine, I can get dogs, build fences, pay extra attention, but if the wolf is considered community heritage, why is that I am the only one paying for the damage it causes? Let the community pay! Make the state pay! (C., sheep shepherd)

Figure 2: *Preyed sheep waiting for disposal (Tuscany, August 2023)*



Source: this author

Resulting from fragmented, short-sighted, and highly unbalanced policies characterized by complex bureaucratic processes and excessively long waiting times, is a general lack of confidence in the capabilities of public institutions and their representatives²¹, increasing tensions among pastoralists – at times living a few kilometres apart - who face different treatments, and an even more radical separation of the urban and rural dimension, whose perspectives diverge on how to manage human-wildlife conflicts (Berzi, 2014). By elaborating on the short-sighted arguments brought forward by animal-rights activists, environmentalists, and an enlarging slice of the urban-based public, and illustrating some of the flaws of compensation schemes, this Chapter aims to remark on how the current state of affairs cannot be reduced to a mere pastoralist *vs* wolf conflict, especially because the perceived “enemy” is hardly ever the wolf in itself, defined by Z. (sheep shepherd) as “a worthy opponent”, but rather the system of power failing to understand that the ones bearing the burden of a dysfunctional wolves-humans coexistence, next to the pastoralists whose ability to produce and socially reproduce are being undermined, are the animals (both farm animals and wolves) and the biodiversity of our planet, deprived of one of its main protectors.

²¹ In relation to the role of the state in the supply of production conditions, O'Connor (1998) wrote that “Given the politicization of the conditions of production, if these conditions are neglected, and/or their productive powers damaged, these arises the possibly not only of an economic crisis of capital but also a legitimation crisis for the state or a political crisis for the ruling parties and government” (p. 150).

4.3 The Pretentious Consciousness of Compassionate Capitalism

On August 4th, Z. (sheep shepherd) spent the morning telling me about what being a pastoralist means to him – early mornings, late nights, hitches, and “sheep blood running through the veins”. We talked about niche markets, economic competition, wolves, but the main topic of discussion was the global call for a dietary transition away from animal-sourced products to plant-based food. In particular, the main cause of dissensus appeared to be the alternatives proposed by a growing coalition of anti-farming actors, most of which pertain to the vegan movement, and specifically to the ethical (i.e., concerned with the ethics of animal labor and killing) and environmental branches (i.e. concerned with the aggregate emissions of the livestock sector) of the latter. Among the different alternatives to animal farming and meat consumption proposed by such a coalition, is in-vitro meat²² (IPES-food, 2022; Roy et al., 2021). When discussing such an alternative, two major points were raised by my interlocutors. On one hand, they expressed serious concern for what this would imply in terms of food culture²³ and food knowledge. In relation to the latter, a broader discussion on the misinformation of the public when it comes to food production was brought up on multiple occasions. For instance, C. (sheep shepherd) pointed out that in order to produce milk animals need to spin, and yet “You’d be surprised by the number of people that do not make the connection. People often do not understand that there is no difference between drinking a glass of sheep milk and eating *arrostiticini*²⁴”. Next to the cultural loss and the further alienation between producers and consumers that in-vitro meat may cause, pastoralists also expressed strong concerns in relation to the material implications of a definite rupture of human-animal relations, which is exactly what their livelihoods depend on. The reconfiguration of meat and dairy production in laboratories represents a severe threat to the survival of pastoralism and the reproduction of herders’ know-how, as well as a major ally of the livestock industry (Porcher, 2017). Indeed, the underlying objective of both the industrial livestock sector and in-vitro production seems to be the pursuit of standardization, causality, and economic efficiency. It follows, then, that the ultimate sources of unpredictability are animals and workers, which calls for the elimination of both categories – largely achieved by in-vitro meat production. In other words, while the anti-farming coalition, composed of both mainstream environmentalists and members of the vegan movement, professes itself as a defender of animals and nature, in practice, this paper argues, these are reproducing a system that hinders both.

When discussing in-vitro meat, Porcher (2017) wrote that “the de facto alliance of industrialists and animal rights activists is the result of a common vision of modernity as a wrenching away from nature” (p. 99). It is also, this paper argues, the result of a capitalist conception of nature as separate from culture, one that has been amply criticized by the environmental justice movement, for it “ineffectively made the connections between the survival of humans and the survival of the environment” (De Chiro, 2008). As Nancy Fraser (2021) wrote: “In a nutshell: capitalist society makes ‘economy’ *depend* on ‘nature’, while *diving* them ontologically” (p. 8). Such entrenched binary inevitably clashes with agro-pastoral models, which originate and operate at the juncture between nature and culture, and whose persistence depends on the preservation of such collaborative interaction. In one of his books, recently turned into a movie, Paolo Cognetti (2016) tells the story of two friends, one of whom is a cattle pastoralist. One passage goes like this,

And he [Bruno, the cattle pastoralist] said: it’s you from the city who call it nature. It is so abstract in your head that even the name is abstract. Here we say forest, pasture, stream,

²² Also known as cultured or synthetic meat, produced by culturing stem cells subtracted from live animals.

²³ Understood by my interlocutors as the meanings, values, and traditions associated with food production and consumption.

²⁴ *Arrostiticini* are skewers of mutton or sheep meat, typical of Abruzzo’s cuisine.

rock, path, things that one can point with the finger. Things you can use. If you can't use them, we don't give them a name because they are useless. (Cognetti, 2016, p. 140)

Now, although I would be careful to relegate this conceptualization of nature to urban dwellers, I do find this quote to synthesize the ontological clash that underlies the increasing tensions between the anti-farming coalition and pastoralists. This might also explain why during my fieldwork I've discussed dry streams, fractured soil, sheep exhausted by the heat, but not climate change. This is not to say that pastoralists are not aware of the ongoing environmental crisis, or that they are not actively contributing to counter it, which is exactly what mainstream climate politics seemingly argues, but rather that the inherently different ontology behind their practices seems to translate into a different - and in a way more *concrete, grounded* - understanding of it. One that is imprinted on the pastures, along the transhumant routes, and in the fatigued, worn-out bodies of the shepherds.

Returning to the set of alternatives envisioned by the anti-meat coalition, Z. (sheep shepherd) summarized the issue like this:

At the end of the day, it boils down to one simple question. Is it better to kill a lamb that was raised out in the field, that was nursed by his mother and lived quite a life - however "short" this might have been -, or clear half the Amazon rainforest to make way for soybean plantations? You tell me.

This is to say that it is undeniable that an enlarging branch of animal husbandry, namely the livestock industry, plays a significant role in aggregate agricultural emissions, the exploitation of animals and workers, and the meatification of diets. Yet, the land-oriented, plant-based solutions proposed by mainstream climate politics and largely supported by the anti-farming coalition, are pushing for a reform that would leave the corporate food system essentially intact. In other words, they are simply pushing for a "vegan" - but highly industrialized, mechanized, and polluting - food system, whose inherently alienating and ecologically destructive core is left unchanged (European Coordination Via Campesina, 2022; IPES-food, 2022; Luneau, 2020). Yet, compassionate capitalism does not limit itself to ontological veganism, for the narrative of the "poor little lamb" is also widespread among the slice of the population consuming meat and dairy, whose carnist ideology²⁵ is deeply engrained in culture. Because symbols, traditions, and culture are dynamic, eating habits also shift and continuously transform, pushing more and more people to classify animals that were regularly consumed by previous generations (ewes, lamb) as "inedible", with huge economic and social repercussions for the sectors involved, like agropastoralism. "I use kid rennet to make cheese, but there are people who decide not to buy it once they find out. And then maybe they buy 1 kilo of *pecorino*, as if slaughtering was in no way related to cheesemaking" (F, sheep shepherdess). And what's more, often and willingly, systems of production are not "factored in" the decision-making process, meaning that while the "poor little lamb" is defended by a host of protectors, animals in intensive farms are left to fend for themselves, and the environmentally destructive logic of the corporate food system goes unquestioned.

²⁵ Carnist ideology can be understood as the system of beliefs that makes eating certain animals morally acceptable while condemning the consumption of others (Joy, 2009)

Chapter 5: Conclusion

“We have seen that living with animals is not obvious. It is a utopia and it is a revolutionary utopia, for to continue to live with animals, we must change the world’s foundations” (Porcher, 2017, p.122).

In the opening Chapter of this paper, I’ve posed a series of questions concerning the transformation of animal husbandry in response to the capitalist logic of the corporate food system, and the set of challenges affecting and hindering the conditions of production and social reproduction of pastoralists and herds. Throughout the following sections, I’ve mapped out a web of dialoguing theories and empirics in witnessing, questioning, and making sense of the continuously transforming landscapes in which shepherds, herds, wolves, tourists, migrants, and financial capital travel, interact, clash, and struggle. I intended to show that the array of challenges agro-pastoral systems are exposed to goes well beyond environmental factors - although these arguably play a significant role, especially in the midst of the climate crisis – and expand to the social, administrative, and economic spheres. Whether it is large-scale livestock industries speculating on the CAP and limiting pastoralists’ access to the pastures, market regulations imposing standardization, or anti-farming coalitions calling for a definite rupture of animal-human relations, “we understand that the ‘attack’ is, in its logical essence, repetitive in its variants” (Thiemann, 2022, p. 3). It is led by capital as a social force that manifests in multiple forms, whose functioning heavily depends on the production and exploitation of peripheries, and even more so on the formation and reproduction of margins of the margins (O’Connor, 1998).

Pastoralists and herds, for one cannot exist without the other, find themselves squeezed by processes of economic, geographical, and social marginalization, pursued by a growing coalition of actors that acts upon a dualist understanding of nature and a cursory, undifferentiated narrative of animal husbandry. Such processes of marginalization, however, are not mutually exclusive, but in fact interact and overlap, affecting and affected by a diverse range of human and more-than-human actors that come together in asymmetrical relations of production and social reproduction. The overlaps result at times in seemingly “improbable” alliances (e.g., between industrialists and animal rights activists) and others in frictions and tensions (e.g., between herd owners and migrant shepherds, between tourists and pastoralists), but overall reproduce dynamics of oppression and exploitation that affect peasant-like farmers as a whole. Indeed, this paper has elaborated on notions of patrimonialization, displacement, and dispossession that “are also increasingly relevant to more settled agrarian ‘peasant’ contexts” (Scoones, 2021, p. 30). Hence, although key debates on agrarian change tend to approach peasants and pastoralists as fundamentally separate categories of food producers, I agree with Scoones (2021) that there are multiple overlapping features, and that “insights from studies of pastoral settings can be useful in recasting questions, perspectives and approaches more broadly” (p.30). Especially if these studies are carried out through methodological approaches that are grounded in the everyday of pastoralists and herds, for it is there, at the juncture of nature and culture, entangled in multispecies relations, imprinted in the social relations of animal labor, that the essence of animal husbandry lies, and the drastic differences with the livestock industry emerge. By situating this paper in the intimate reality of pastoralism and Inner Areas, I, therefore, aimed to show that the rural plays “a much bigger role in the contemporary confrontation with global capitalism and in building an alternative future than its current population size and economic contribution in relative terms” (Borras, 2023, p.6).

Analyzing the (partial) series of schemes – and actors – deployed to counter and reverse the crisis of reproduction affecting pastoralists and Inner Areas, an overarching political strategy emerges – one that unsuccessfully treats the most tangible symptoms of “a crisis of hegemony” (Fraser, 2021) while leaving the cause – an uneven capitalist development model – essentially intact. This is a strategy that assumes various shapes, but that overall ignores that “communities cannot

be built, they already exist or are created” (Rizzo, 2022, p. 79). This is to say that repopulating Inner Areas through tourism and migrants should not be conceived as a long-term solution to depastoralisation and de-ruralization - both of which are unfolding on a global scale. Especially if this is not accompanied by a structural, grounded, participatory transformation that entails the provision of basic services and a drastic improvement of the conditions of production and social reproduction of pastoralists. This line of action is not only relevant to policies addressing depastoralisation and de-ruralization, for systemic change is also required to counter the capitalist logics of a corporate food system whose (mal)functioning is based on environmentally destructive processes that reproduce ontological, and increasingly material, alienations between producers and consumers, nature and culture, rural and urban (Robbins, 2015). Yet, what is being proposed is a set of alternatives - firmly supported by the mainstream environmental movement and backed up by industrialists and governmental institutions – that calls for a definite rupture of human-animal relations, a global transition to plant-based diets, and which “has been preoccupied with protecting uninhabited wilderness areas, or on saving endangered species” (Di Chiro, 2008, p.11), rather than fundamentally transforming our food system. By providing a more nuanced picture of pastoralist practices, then, this paper advocates for pastoralism as a *desirable, viable, achievable* alternative²⁶ to the path laid out for animal husbandry by capital logic and actors, one that incorporates and looks after environmental reproduction, as well as the viability of Inner Areas. In doing so, I portrayed herding futures as a *revolutionary utopia*, for its realization calls for a systemic transformation of our food system and the set of principles upholding society. As such, pastoralism is certainly imperfect and not sufficient to counter the multitude of crises affecting life on Earth, but it provides valuable lessons on how to produce *living* food in *living* territories, through *collaborative, mobile, uncapturable* practices, that re-center environmental reproduction, while transcending what Fraser (2021) refers to as the ‘merely environmental’. In other words, this research paper argues for pastoralism as a fundamental ally in the struggle “for a world that is more just, fairer and kinder” (Borras and Franco, 2023, p. 7).

²⁶ For a further elaboration on “real utopias” and viable, achievable, desirable alternatives see Wright (2012)

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Appendix A

On my positionality

Growing up, I moved around a lot, across cities, regions, and then later countries and continents. My dad was recently telling me how when my siblings and I were younger, there was a time when people would ask where we lived, and we would reply “in the mountains”. Even if it wasn’t true, even if we were staying in Rome at the time. But knowing that no matter what, that place full of memories and warmth, was the one place that had never moved, that was enough to call it home. Years later, it is still to the mountains that I go when everything else seems to be falling apart or moving too fast. Or when something is happening, shifting, moving, there or here (wherever *here* is), that makes it necessary to dive in and try to make sense of it, retracing old paths and discovering new ones. And this is exactly what urged me to embark on this journey along pastoralists and herds in this historical moment, as they exist, shift, and resist in a tumultuous, hostile, and changing environment. One that I had always experienced, and still do, from a completely different perspective, that of a hiker, wayfarer, consumer and never producer, partial knower of fir forests.

Appendix B

Typology of Research Participants

Those classified as key informants are the ones who's farms I've visited and worked at throughout fieldwork.

Participant's Initials	Profession	Region & System	Livestock population	Labor	Land	Production	History	Remarks
F. & S. (key informants)	Pastoralists, Herd Owners, > 50yrs old	Tuscany, semi-extensive	530 Sarda sheep (Sardinian breed) (rams and ewes)	Family labour (2 people), 1 permanent hired-in migrant worker from Moldova	116 ha, fenced off, grazed by the herd, cultivated biologically with cereals and hay, fed to the sheep	Mixed: combining subsistence with the market economy Production of milk and cheese (primarily) and meat (secondary); subsistence, sale to the industry, transformation and direct sale (of dairy products), animals are delivered alive to the abattoir	Family native of Sardinia, pastoralists through generations, migrated to Tuscany in the 60s, C. took over the farm from his father in 1989	Members of a dairy cooperative since 1997, members of Rete Appia
C. (key informant)	Pastoralist, Herd-Owner, <35yrs old	Tuscany, semi-extensive	70 Lacaune sheep (French breed) (rams and ewes)	Family labour (1 person), additional migrant hired-in labour (for shearing)	40 ha, fenced off, pastureland	Mixed: combining subsistence with the market economy Production of milk (primarily) and meat (secondarily); everything is sold to the industry, animals are delivered alive to the abattoir	Family native of Sardinia, pastoralists through generations, started the farm in 2020, previously working with the father	Certified Pecorino DOP supply-chain
T. (key informant)	Shepherdess, Herd-Owner, >50yrs	Abruzzo, semi-extensive	36 Chamois Coloured goats (Swiss breed)	Family labour (1 person), Periodical volunteer labour	3ha, pastureland + hay crop, permit to graze in abandoned land and municipal undergrowth	Mixed: combining subsistence with the market economy	Family native of the region, migrated to the North, she went back to Abruzzo and opened the farm in 2022 (initially co-owned)	T. also grows vegetables, fruits, and medicinal herbs for self-consumption

Participant's Initials	Profession	Region & System	Livestock population	Labor	Land	Production	History	Remarks
				(mostly WWoofers)		Production of milk and cheese (primarily) and meat (secondarily); subsistence, transformation and direct sale, animals are delivered alive to the abattoir		
G. (key informant)	Pastoralist, Herd-Owner, >50yrs	Abruzzo & Apulia, transhumant	610 Altamura x Langarola (hybrid) sheep	Self-employed, 2 permanent hired-in migrant workers from Romania	300 ha of summer pastures accessed through 5 years notices; 106 ha of property in Apulia, 23ha olive groves, 86ha for oat, alfalfa, and barley, threshed in June, and grazed by the sheep.	Mixed: combining subsistence with the market economy Summer: production of cheese sold directly or delivered to local stores and restaurants. Winter: Milk is sold to Caseificio storico Petrucci of Amatrice (RI), animals are delivered alive to the abattoir	Pastoralists through generations, only family member to practice pastoralism himself, others rely on permanent hired-in labor to look after the animals, so that they can take care of the olive groves and crops	G. is one of the last ones to still perform the Transhumance between Abruzzo and Apulia, along the historical <i>Tratturo</i>
M. (key informant)	Activist, Herd-Owner, >50yrs	Abruzzo, transhumant	>1500 among sheep and goats of different breeds	19 permanent hired-in workers, of which some migrant shepherds from Romania, additional periodical volunteer labour (Wwoofers)	Summer pastures accessed through 5 years notices	Mixed: combining subsistence with the market economy Multi-functional Cooperative: Farm Holidays Center, Camping site, Educational Farm, "Adopt a Sheep" initiative. Production of cheese, marmalade and juice, legumes and	Founded ASCA coop in 1977, as part of a project that aimed at the revitalization of inner areas through pastoralism; in 1987, ASCA opened the farm holidays centre; to reduce costs, ASCA internalized most of them, opening a dairy and a slaughter house, that became available to other animals farms in the region, through ARPO (Associazione Regionale Produttori Ovi-Caprini) (176 farms, 40.000 heads); products	Member of Rete Appia, directly exports to the US

Participant's Initials	Profession	Region & System	Livestock population	Labor	Land	Production	History	Remarks
						cereals, organic wool, meat, liquor, honey	of all members of ARPO are then sold with the trademark "Parco Produce".	
Z.	Pastoralist, Herd-Owner, >50yrs	Tuscany, semi-extensive	60 Sarda sheep	Family Labour (1 person)	-	Subsistence (milk and cheese)	Family native of Sardinia, pastoralists through generations, migrated to Tuscany in the 60s, use to produce and sell cheese on the market; he was required to pasteurize milk in the 90s, but refused and decided to close the farm instead; now he works on other farms + keeps a small flock for his subsistence	-
R.	Social worker, activist	Abruzzo	-	-	-	-	Born in Campania, moved to Abruzzo 20yrs ago, now is part of cooperative that combines artisan food production, wool processing, and crafts. She carries out workshops at the Transhumance Museum of Villetta Barrea.	-
A.	Cattle shepherdess, herd-owner	Piedmont	-	-	-	-	-	President of Association of Dairy Farmers and Farm Cheesemakers (<i>Associazione delle Casare e dei Casari di Azienda Agricola - ACCAA</i>)
V.	Sheep Shepherdess	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	-	-	-	-	-	Co-founder of Rete Appia