Pastoral mobilities as commons

Pau Sanosa, Francisco Godoy y Pablo Domínguez (PICCAHers)

Pastoralism depends on and thrives on the availability of resources (mainly rangelands) which require different types of mobility to access them, since resources -specially the best pastures- are unevenly distributed along the territories being grazed and also through the year. This can imply short, daily movements within the rangelands (as in high altitude settings) or longer journeys, such as it happens with transhumance, the seasonal movement of people and herds between grazing areas along fixed routes, or nomadism where animals roam searching the appearance of feed depending of more or less random and ever changing climate conditions. Within the different types of mobility, here we will focus on transhumance.

Transhumance, as well as the various mobility strategies employed by pastoralism, is essential for maintaining these ways of life (including the herders, their families and the herds themselves, as much as the rangelands themselves), often involving important collective organizational strategies and common management of certain spaces linked to it during the transhumance period. Without this coordination or regulation, the movement of flocks is hampered or even impossible. This organization occurs at different spatial and social scales, from the family level to the community and beyond, involving dialogue and agreements with other groups of herders and, sometimes, with public administration.

Taking the example of Spain, pastoralism and transhumance are two ancient institutions of great cultural, economic, social, political, and environmental significance, and they still play a fundamental role in rural areas. In light of this, the Spanish government reenacted legal protection for Drove Roads (Ley 3/1995), establishing a system for their protection and regulation, as well as prioritizing livestock transit over other uses. All of it as a revivification and modernization of Law 1273, made by Alfonso X the Wise. That is to say the transhumance corridors of Spain have been protected by law for more than 6 centuries (until around 1860) and now again. This is a pioneer legislative initiative in favor of pastoralism and transhumance, and a model for many countries to look at.

Drove roads constitute a network that crosses and connects pastoral territories all through the country, often called the *veins of Spain*, and therefore has strategic importance in terms of connectivity. Their protection implies both restrictions on use and the recognition of compatible and complementary uses (for example, hiking). In abstract terms, they can be understood as a collective resource that can be managed through decentralized coordination of multiple users (mobile herders) in different sections of the network.

The case of transhumant herders of Santiago and Pontones (Sierra de Segura, Northeast of Andalusia, Spain) can be useful to illustrate some of these collective and community-based organization that exist worldwide around mobility. Every year, around 30.000 animals (mostly sheep, but also goats) and 45 herders move to lower and warmer lands of Sierra Morena during the winter season, in great part with their own families. The different transhumances take place at very specific times of the year and over only a few weeks, so organization and coordination among herders is essential. Establishing a schedule and order of movement collectively, maximizes the availability of rest areas and water sources. As a transhumant herder explains: *We organize ourselves a bit so the herds don't get mixed up, so we can feed the animals, let them rest, and make sure we're all doing well too. We share our departure dates and then we all book our days so we don't run into each other on the trail.* In this sense, there is no competition to be the first to carry out the transhumance. The important thing is to organize well collectively so that the movement unfolds in the best way for everybody in a sort of win-win situation. This is also possible because the location of the flocks in the communal pastures (place of arrival or departure of the transhumance) is predetermined and usually respected. Therefore, the order is generally maintained year after year. And still this is subject to personal needs, which again demonstrates the *commoning*

capacities of the transhumants, since through discussion and negotiation it is also possible to change the dates of departure and resting points of the different flocks.

Support and coordination on a smaller scale are also important when agreements are made between small groups of herders who decide to move their flocks together. These sporadic associations, which can be repeated year after year, allow several flocks to undertake transhumance simultaneously, concentrating the mobility of the entire group of herders and flocks in these short periods. Otherwise, the period of movement would extend over several weeks in a sort of bottle neck resulting in chaotic consequences for all. While no sanctions are defined for this purpose, a shared social and cultural background becomes a de facto pressure mechanism. Herders who do not contribute to this collective coordination would see their status gravely affected within the community. Furthermore, no herder wants to coincide with other ones' flock during transhumance unless doing so coordinated.

Therefore, we can understand transhumance corridors (drove roads) as resources that are collectively used by flocks and livestock farmers that discuss, negotiate and decide collectively, to prevent the socioenvironmental collapse of their own pastoral system. This embodies values such as solidarity, reciprocity, mutual respect and support, as well as collective organization, rules and enforcements, that reduce conflicts among herders, improves conviviality and contributes positively to maintain ecosystem carrying capacity and pastoral sustainability and resilience. On the one hand, transhumance depends directly on the availability of communal pastures, particularly high-altitude summer pastures, without which transhumance would be meaningless. At the same time, transhumance itself involves collective organizations and coordination stemming from ancestral community and customary traditions and know-how, which could make transhumance an act of communalism or commoning. Furthermore, transhumance routes, even if on state property, could themselves be considered as common goods, as they are designed primarily for inalienable pastoral use, serving both as passageways for herds and as grazing and feeding areas for livestock on their journey to summer pastures or wintering grounds. The concepts of transhumance and commons should therefore be more frequently associated and linked, because they are closely related, a relationship that is still not widely explored. Like it is the case in many other countries, drove roads add up to a huge extension, and in Spain concretely over 125,000 km in length and 425,000 ha in area, which is close to 0.84% of the national territory (506.030 km^2). In this context, the communal forms or structures linked to transhumance and other forms of mobility should not be overlooked, as they are a vigorous demonstration of the key role that pastoral commons still have in pastoral mobility and rangeland conservation.