
Afterword

Desire for Transhumance

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In the social sciences, there is nothing quite like transhumance. It is unique in that it comprises so much: mobility, human-animals relations, rurality, traditions, mountains, shepherds, cheese making, local economy, authenticity, nostalgia, tourism, international comparisons, conflict over land, *longue durée*, territoriality, know-how, and, obviously today heritage-making. Since it allows us to investigate a large number of human practices and human-nonhuman relations, transhumance represents a classic object of study for a broad range of disciplines, such as history, anthropology, geography, or biology to name but a few. In many regional contexts, a significant number of studies and investigations have been carried out over the years, some considered reference works in their respective fields.

We must now consider a triple revision of the literature. The first aspect to address is related to the Anthropocene and climate change dynamics, which notably transform the very material conditions of shepherds and their animals. The second aspect, the ontological turn, especially the field studying human-animal relations, puts transhumance, and more generally pastoralism, into full view, and invites us to reconsider the widespread contemporary opinion that transhumance is just a disappearing rural practice in a more and more urban world. Thirdly, approximately a decade ago, transhumance was entered onto the long list of activities classified as cultural heritage in Europe and the Mediterranean region. In 2019, Greece, Italy, and Austria completed the inscription of transhumance onto the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity under the title of “Transhumance, the Seasonal Drovers of Livestock along Migratory Routes in the Mediterranean and in the Alps.”

It is true to say that the heritage domain is still in expansion and has incorporated no end of social, spiritual, biological, and (other) cultural items. It is thus no surprise to see transhumance competing for official interna-

tional heritage status. Transhumance is a phenomenon that can readily encourage, challenge, and generally play a role in tourism development, cultural investigations, territory mapping, and symbolic representations of identity. In turn, the very heritagization process of transhumance offers a vivid and fascinating point of view on heritage processes, mixing social, environmental, and biological dimensions that rarely merge so intimately in the field of critical heritage studies.

One could say that many types of cultural heritage, such as a religious site, a musical performance, or an industrial building, could also open the field of heritage to various other domains and stand at the intersection of several thematic studies. In that respect, transhumance is not a unique case and can be analyzed as an ordinary heritage object. Nevertheless, something uniquely fascinating does set transhumance as heritage apart from the rest. The fact that transhumance entered the artistic domain very early on is a sign of this peculiar re-enchantment of the world we are seeing today (Isnart and Testa 2020). Countless writers, musicians, painters, and documentary film makers use ethnography of transhumance as a means and pretext of expression and turn transhumance into the object to be documented, shot, described, and preserved.

To recall one artistic production among many images and writings involving transhumance, the work of Jean Giono (1895–1970) took a prominent place when he described and poeticized peasant life in rural Southern France. The novel *Le Grand Troupeau* (1933) depicts two parallel views of, on the one hand, the retreat of injured and exhausted World War I soldiers leaving the front line, and, on the other, numerous sheep and cattle left in poor health due to the low number of shepherds looking after them during an instance of transhumance. Linked to the antiwar convictions of the author, who suffered as a soldier in the trenches, the evocation of transhumance exemplifies the pain and distress of men impacted by the war. Another novel, *Le Serpent d'Étoiles* (1931) includes an immersion into the daily life of a shepherd's family, a play enacting the creation of the world performed by the family and a somehow mysterious and magical contemplation of a spectacular transhumance passage in the bottom of a valley. Giono's writings on transhumance merge an ethnographic perspective of the material conditions of peasants in Southern France, with antiwar and pre-ecological claims through the poeticization of the presence of livestock and the imaginary of local people. Today, the legacy of Giono's interpretation of transhumance is a key element in a wide range of heritagization processes. Different agents and institutions borrow from it to create festivals, develop activities for school children, or carry out photographic and ethnographic surveys. Such heritage actors continue

the artistic transformation of transhumance into new and original ways and contribute to the re-enchantment of this agricultural activity today.

In sum, what we seek to find answers to is not so much why transhumance has survived so-called modernity, but better how the fascination for transhumance is vivified, experienced, and transmitted, and what the arguments for a continued or even strengthened attachment to transhumance are today. There are many questions to ask in order to better grasp why transhumance has been selected as cultural heritage in our societies: Why do people and institutions choose to defend transhumance in a mainly urban Europe? How do they materially and ideologically respond to the complicated process of heritage bureaucracy, while promoting a declining rural activity? What motivations move them and what kind of opportunities can they seize through transhumance? What are their arguments, their strategies, and their representations of transhumance? These questions change the direction of the analysis from an ideological rationale opposing “tradition” and “modernity” and lead us towards a more emotional and representational function of transhumance. The new orientations could drive us to a more nuanced and profound understanding of its characteristics.

In many of the cases described in this book, we find a type of strong desire, a sort of profound attachment to transhumance beneath the movement of heritage-making. There is also a sincere determination to overcome the multiple difficulties, dangers and risks of heritage bureaucracy and constraints. The theme of desire is not usually linked to heritage-making in its formal and organizational dimensions. Power, domination, conflicts and diplomacy are the major and more common themes in the vast literature on cultural heritage. However, a recent trend of literature has begun to examine and question emotions, attachment techniques, and the role of individuality in heritage activities, especially when looking at small-scale local projects (Smith 2006; Fabre 2013; Tornatore 2014). Clearly, desire is not the definitive concept to use to think about transhumance, but it takes its place in the picture and deserves to be addressed.

The following paragraphs underline some of the preliminary thoughts perhaps necessary for drawing such a pluralistic picture of transhumance as heritage. These considerations are a partial synthesis of the many ideas put forward by the authors of this book. They also represent an attempt to comprehend transhumance and its appeal in our societies, by addressing the following: the way we, as social scientists, perceive this phenomenon; the combination of politics and policies that transhumance involves; the narration of the past it carries; and lastly, the question of desire. Each of these themes leads to questions that could help to better grasp the tangible and imaginary presence of transhumance in our world.

Reconfiguring the Perception of Transhumance

This concerns the *way* we look at transhumance. The authors of this book provide us with new perspectives on transhumance and describe and analyze how people, institutions, NGOs, and communities participate in the heritage transformation of transhumance. One can read in these chapters about cultural heritage, art, politics, role-playing games, ethics, human-nonhuman relations, tourism, health of cattle, EU as policy maker, conservation practices of nature and culture, and education. Today, transhumance is no more and not only a simple matter of geography, history, or economics. We cannot ignore the many social, scientific, and cultural domains in which transhumance is embedded and with which transhumance exists as a human activity. If transhumance is not only a rural or farm folk phenomenon, then it is possible to think about it and examine it out of the classical frameworks of environmental studies or peasant studies.

Changing our focus and tools implies, on the one hand, changing the way we see actors and institutions of transhumance and the way they modify the spectrum of our interest; on the other hand, a complete social approach to transhumance involves complementing the most classic devices that previous scholars used before, and maybe inventing others. Once more, this sophistication of the methodology is not only necessary in the case of transhumance. Performances of traditional music, for instance, are certainly studied by musicologists and ethnomusicologists, who work on musical structures with musicological tools to understand melody, harmony, rhythm, or instruments. However, anthropologists or geographers can also question music making and social influence on music with their own concepts and apparatus, like power, identities, kinship, policies, or even culture.

So, as transhumance indeed enters other fields, it could be interesting to add new instruments to the toolbox, but also to compare this particular case with other emblematic objects of various disciplines. Thus, the question is: how could we implement a more composite approach to transhumance?

Politics of Transhumance

The second point of investigation that emerged when speaking about transhumance deals with frictions and conflicts, *politics*, so to speak. Many of the chapters have demonstrated that transhumance is a human and landscape regulator that can be included in sustainable development plans and celebrated as a virtuous and ecological practice. Nonetheless,

this activity is not easy to carry out. Moving with cattle from one space to another comes with difficulties, strategies, oppositions and conflicts, with landowners, state or local authorities, and with other users of the landscape like tourists or natural park administrators.

The same or similar areas of conflict can be found in any project of heritage-making. Such difficulties come from the fact that many stakeholders are involved in the management of the item selected as heritage and this often prevents a smooth process. The causes of rifts are numerous: some people are owners of the item and others do not want the item to survive; those who need it to survive complain if some practical restrictions are imposed on them; or simply, some people love the item and don't want other people using it. One could list a broad and contrasting range of relations between people and the item, as well as between people themselves. These different modalities of attachment to or dislike of the item provoke tensions and conflicts. The stakes could be power, property, legitimacy, money, social status, honor, or economy but all encompass competition and conflict as a substantial and significant dimension of social life.

In sum, a second avenue for transhumance studies could be how tensions and conflicts shape its practices and its social world. In fact, transhumance is not a consensual object, and perhaps, the essential conflictual nature of transhumance deserves to be addressed as a central topic of the field. Why are contestations and conflicts so crucial to address in transhumance and what is the role of agonistic dimensions in transhumance as a social practice?

Nostalgia, Conflicts, and Transhumance

As the readings on cultural heritage underline, heritage-making always relates to a certain version of the past. A museum, an archive, or a monument never carries all the narratives of the past, but the version of the past that some people and some institutions in particular want to maintain, in society and in the community. Usually, cultural heritage is a national one, in the hands of public cultural administrations. With the UNESCO ICH convention of 2003, with cultural diversity policies, with regionalization processes of Europe, and with the empowerment of minorities, we are facing an increasing transformation of heritage actors and modalities of involvement in heritage matters. Therefore, the question now becomes not only what does the state want to transmit through cultural heritage but who is telling the story of the past? What is the rhetoric and what are the narratives used? What groups are fighting for the past? And, why do actors use a certain past and a certain cultural element?

The plurality of narrations of the past transmit various and often contradictory idealized images of the past that shape the present of the social agents. The fact that transhumance's past is today used for tourism, economy, heritage, and rural development purposes, and the fact that conflict always features in the transhumance landscape, both evoke the concept of *structural nostalgia* of Michael Herzfeld. In Herzfeld's book *Cultural Intimacy* (1997), we encounter shepherds on the island of Crete whose conflicts are regulated by the invocation of rules coming from a partly imaginary past in which the community existed peacefully. In short, the pastoral past legally frames the present relationships.

This is merely an intellectual and theoretical intuition, but the presence of the past and the permanent dimension of conflict in transhumance could be analyzed through the lens of structural nostalgia. This would allow us to appreciate why and in which ways people and communities living off transhumance continuously recall the past to experience and talk about their activity. And then comes a third general question: to what extent could specialists on transhumance apply Herzfeld's structural nostalgia concept in their analysis?

Sharing Desire for Transhumance

The last point is not a small question; it deals with scholars' engagement and involvement, and directly relates to desire. In my own fieldwork as an anthropologist, I do not make numerous formal interviews; I prefer to cooperate for certain tasks, chat during informal occasions, share moments with the people I work, and let them state, defend, and explain *in situ* what their worldviews are. This methodology, definitively not a new one in the history of ethnography, acknowledges people's ability to state and argue their point of view, as well as their individual or community coherence or inconsistencies. In the field of cultural heritage, the aim of my methodology is to enter the heritage-making process and to drop myself somewhere in the assemblage of people who work and act for heritage. This is not always easy, and sometimes actually impossible, but that is part of the fieldwork challenge of entering the heritage system (Isnart 2020). This methodology makes me sometimes a collaborator, sometimes an expert, sometimes an activist. In any case, I am thus able to understand and experience the fight for the cultural good, at the side of the people. Above all, this situates me as a person among the others, a voice among the others, engaged in conflict, alliances, and negotiations. I share at least the interest, or at most the will, to see the element celebrated. In fact, people often ask me to demonstrate my engagement with their cause.

In my role as investigator with this methodology, I am neither an external expert appointed by UNESCO, nor a national administrator of culture, nor a cynical scientist searching for weaknesses or paradoxes. This particular ethnographic position avoids the blind implication of the “heritage believer” or the judgment from the top of the “heritage atheist,” as well as the difficult neutral position of the “heritage agonistic,” as Christoph Brumann defined the three potential approaches in heritage studies (Brumann 2014). Alternatively, I try to build anthropological knowledge of a heritage experience according to the people around me, in order to understand what caring for the heritage means from their point of view. Today, and until a further reflexive reorientation of this ethnographic methodology emerges, I will argue that engagement in heritage activity—or collaborative ethnographic presence—remains the most adequate way to critically think about heritage-making. Such an engagement implies sharing the desire that animates the people we study, and here for this book, the desire for transhumance.

In sum, if there is nothing quite like transhumance, then heritage actors, shepherds, artists and scientists should consider, reflexively, why and how their paths will cross on the fields of transhumance.

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