Intimacy within livestock production

More-than-human relational lifeworlds of shepherdesses and shepherds in the Pyrenees Mountains

Radboud University

Janne ten Have
June 2023

Intimacy within livestock production

More-than-human relational lifeworlds of shepherdesses and shepherds in the Pyrenees Mountains

For lamb Jimmy†, goat Jolien and ewe Oeps who were there with me in this "messy" world called life

Janne ten Have
S1019909

Master thesis Human Geography

Specialisation: Conflict, Territories and Identities

Radboud University Nijmegen

Supervisor: Dr. Joris Schapendonk

Picture title page: made by the author on the 13th of July 2022. Shepherdess Josephine is embracing an ewe while milking by hand.

Acknowledgements

Living in the mountains while taking care of a flock of sheep and learning about a world previously unknown to me has been an incredibly enriching and emotional experience. I am grateful to many people who made this experience possible.

First of all, I would like to thank the shepherds and shepherdesses who welcomed me into their cabins and shared their daily lives and perspectives with me, despite never having met me before. In specific, Barbara, Maxime, Lucas, Martha, Marguerite, Melissa and Jon, you are all beautiful people whom I admire. Your hospitality was heart-warming, and I am thankful for the opportunity to have met you all. I miss you, your ewes and the mountains a lot.

Secondly, I would like to thank other local residents in the Pyrenees Mountains who assisted me by offering car rides or providing valuable information. In particular, Matthieu, I still cannot believe how generous of a person you are. Thank you for providing me with shelter and being someone with whom I could share my thoughts and experiences.

Thirdly, I would like to thank my fellow students, friends and roommates for supporting me throughout the writing process. Shepherdess Marisha Maas, it was a pleasure to meet you, gain insight into your perspective on shepherding and share our longing to the mountains. Helen Verploegen, I appreciate your feedback from a more-than-human perspective.

Lastly, but not least, I would like to thank my supervisor Joris for guiding me through the thesis process. I am especially grateful for your open attitude and encouraging words. Your feedback was helpful and it brought a smile to my face to see your passionate comments written in capitals or accompanied by exclamation marks. Your last name, Schapendonk, already explains that it was meant to be that you became my supervisor. Thank you.

Abstract

The current era of the Anthropocene is characterised by the ideology of human exceptionalism, which has led to humans feeling disconnected from the wider natural world. This disconnection poses significant challenges for our understanding of and engagement with the more-than-human. This thesis aims to address this issue by providing valuable insights into our relationship with the natural world through an investigation of the human and more-than-human relationships within the shepherding community of the Ossau-Iraty Pyrenean cheese region. Through ethnographic fieldwork with a non-representational approach, this research delves into the daily lives of primarily salaried shepherdesses, exploring their diverse interdependencies with the natural world that shape their mountain lifestyle. The study sheds light on the potential for re-establishing intimate connections with nature, including livestock.

Table of content

Acknowledgements 3
Abstract 4
Chapter 1. Introduction 7
1.1 The transhumance tradition in the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region 8
1.2 Societal relevance 9
1.3 Scientific relevance 11
1.4 Objectives and research question 12
1.5 Structure 13
Chapter 2. Theoretical framework: understanding shepherding lifeworlds beyond the human 15
2.1 Relational, non-representational geographies 15
2.2 More-than-human theory 17
2.3 Feminist theory 18
2.4 Mobility theory 20
2.5 Conclusion 21
Chapter 3. Methodological choices: applying a nomadic mind 23
3.1 Non-representational ethnography 23
3.2 Bodily and mental preparations 24
3.3 An approach of methodological openness 25
3.4 Collection and analysis of the data 26
3.4.1 Participant observation 26
3.4.2 Interviews and informal conversations 28
3.4.3 Diaries 30
3.4.4 Getting access 31
3.5 Conclusionary reflections 33
An ethnographic vignette- A transhumance journey in the Pyrenees Mountains 35
Chapter 4. The human world: shepherding interactions in the mountains 37
4.1 Neighbour relations 37
4.2 Transport and tourist relations 41
4.3 Labour relations 42
4.4 Gender relations: feminisation of shepherding 45
4.5 Conclusionary reflections 46
Chapter 5. The more-than-human world: intimate shepherding relations beyond the human 48
5.1 Shepherds and the ewes 48
5.2 Shepherd-ewe-landscape relationship 52

5.3 The vital role of cabins 57
5.4 Conclusionary reflections 60
Chapter 6. Shepherding insights in terms of production 62
6.1 Ethical dilemmas: balancing economics and animal welfare 63
6.2 Cheese narratives about human and more-than-human entanglements 65
6.3 Conclusionary reflections 66
Chapter 7. Conclusion: shepherding spaces of care 67
References 71
Appendix 1: Photo series 82
Appendix 2: Information respondents formal interviews 91

Chapter 1. Introduction

Occitan AA

Era sauta de Banassa

Tath ser qu'ei eth depart tà auta montanhada,
Las oelhas e eths pastors son contents de pujar,
Que saben dinc ath som i a tarribla camada,
Mes qui pòt arrestar l'ahida deth bestiar ?

De matin que seram aciu en som d'Aubisa,
Que tornaram trobar la maison d'Augustà,
Qu'ei plan bona maison, brembatz ve que'u ve disi,
Tostemps plan recebuts, qu'èm contents de tornar.

En som d'aqueth hamèu, non i a que brave monde,
Sèi pas si coneishetz la charmanta Marí,
Aquiu tà estar plan vist, cau pas aver vergonha,
Jamès non partiràs shens un veire de vin.

E drin mei endavant, la capana de Pièrra,
Juste abans de traucar eth pont de Barralèt,
I a oelhas en corrau, qu'i deu estar enquèra,
Hè'nse drin endavant, i aurà cafè de hèit.

Si voletz tot saber, uei qu'ei sauta Banassa,
Montanha de Bedós, bèth drin beròi endret,
Esconuda ath bèth som de la valea d'Aspa,
Dus gigants que la guardan, l'Auda e eth Soperet.

Dus grans gigans de pèira, tots abilhats de roi,
Qui de tostemps s'espian com un par d'amorós

English translation

The Falls of Banassa

Tonight is the departure for another pasture in the mountains,
The sheep and the shepherds are happy to climb,
They know that to the summit it's a terrible pace,
But who can stop the desire of beasts?

In the morning we'll be there at the summit of Aubisa
Where we'll come to find the house of Augusta again
It's a wonderful house, remember what I'm telling you
Each time well-met, we're happy to return.

At the top of the village, there are only great people,
I don't know if you know the charming Marie,
Here is where one is well seen, no need for shame,
You'll never leave without a glass of wine.

And a bit farther, the cabin of Pierre,
Just before crossing the bridge of Barralèt,
There are sheep in the corral, he must be there still,
Let's go on then, there will be freshly brewed coffee.

If you want to know everything, today we're in Banassa Falls,
Mountain of Bedos, a very beautiful spot,
Hidden in the tops of the Valley of Aspa,
Two giants guard it, the Auda and the Soperet.

Two great giants of stone, all dressed in red,
That forever have looked like a couple of lovers

Figure 1. *The lyrics of the song "Era sauta de Banassa" in the Béarnese with the English translation.* A song by the band Nadau (Era sauta de Banassa (English translation), 2017).

This song is based on a poem written by a shepherd who spent his summers living in the Pyrenees Mountains. It portrays the day of the transhumance whereby sheep farmers move their flocks of sheep from the farms to higher located mountain pastures. During my ethnographic fieldwork, shepherdess Bernadette sang the song for me while she was making cheese in the very same cabin where the poet once resided [1, 2][1]. In the song different relations come to the fore, revealing a multitude of connections. First of all, the shepherds

[1] The text of this thesis is accompanied by a photo series, which is presented in Appendix 1. Throughout the thesis, the sign "[number]" is used to denote a specific photo in the series.

encounter different humans along the way, resulting in social interactions. In addition, the shepherds establish a bond with their flock as they ascend the mountain together, highlighting the animals desire to climb. Lastly, the song emphasises the distinctive features of the mountain landscape, with a particular focus on two magnificent mountain stones that resemble an affectionate couple. These connections serve as a bridge to the core focus of this thesis. This thesis revolves around shepherdesses and shepherds and their human and more-than-human connections in the Ossau-Iraty Pyrenean cheese region. It seeks to explore the entanglements and intimate relationships that define their lifestyle.

1.1 The transhumance tradition in the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region

The Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region is known for its ancient tradition of sheep farming (Blot, 1990). The mountainous landscape of this region has shaped the practices in sheep raising and managing as it provides rich grazing lands for the sheep. During summer about ¾ of the total flocks at the farms are moved to the higher located and cooler mountain meadows (Ossau-Iraty, 2023). While seeking shelter in mountain cabins, shepherds ensure the well-being of the flock. They guide the sheep, prevent them from straying too far, protect them from predators and sometimes continue to milk them. When it is getting colder in the fall, the shepherds descend the mountains with the flocks for the winter when the ewes have lambs at the farms. This seasonal movement is called the transhumance and is a key aspect of sheep farming in this region (O'rourke et al., 2016).

There is a specific reason behind the movement of the flocks. Traditionally, because of the small-scale characteristics of the farms, the sheep farmers are obligated to work with the mountains. They move their animals to the mountain meadows and produce hay at the farm pastures in order to feed the flock during winter (Ossau-Iraty, 2023). In addition to these economic benefits as they do not have to buy the hay for the winter, the presence of the flocks contributes to sustainable nature management of the mountain pastures. The grazing promotes biodiversity and prevents the landscapes from turning into forests, making them more accessible and less vulnerable to fires (Fernández-Giménez, 2015). The diverse range of grasses, wildflowers and herbs that the sheep have access to also enhance the quality of the ewe's milk (Ossau-Iraty, 2023).

The practice of raising and managing sheep in this region is closely tied to cheesemaking (Whited, 2018). Sheep farmers transform the milk from three specific dairy breeds of sheep -red-faced Manech, black-faced Manech and Basco-Bérnaise, breeds that are

well-adapted to the local environment- into a cheese which is called Ossau-Iraty cheese. The production, processing and refinement of Ossau-Iraty cheese takes place within a region that stretches from the Ossau Valley in the province of Béarn to the Iraty forest in the province of Northern Basque Country (Millet, 2019). The production of milk and cheese is the primary focus of shepherding in this region. The shepherding practices align with extensive methods as the animals are allowed to roam and graze on large mountain pastures and low stocking densities of around 300 ewes are maintained. The limited number of sheep enables sheep farmers to employ manual methods such as milking by hand and shearing with scissors, rather than relying on machinery (O'rourke et al., 2016). Extensive livestock production is often associated with values such as sustainability, animal welfare, traditional practices and landscape management (Bahlo et al., 2019).

This form of production stands in contrast to intensive livestock production, which prioritises large-scale production in confined spaces, aiming for maximum output through the use of machinery (Gunderson, 2019). Over the past century, there has been a significant increase in industrial farming to address global food shortages. However, these intensive methods of raising and managing livestock often result in limited connection with the animals and nature as a whole, posing challenges to animal welfare (Fraser, 2008).

1.2 Societal relevance

The type of livestock production employed by shepherds fosters distinct relationships between human and nature which differs from the approach of intensive livestock farming. Exploring how shepherds connect with nature, including their interactions with the flock, holds the potential to provide valuable insights into our engagement with the natural world. By incorporating these lessons into our lives, we could cultivate a more intimate relationship with natural surroundings and attain a deeper understanding of the world around us.

Such efforts become particularly crucial within the current epoch of the Anthropocene, whereby the more-than-human world often remains underrecognized (Lewis & Maslin, 2015). This approach of anthropocentrism, which sees the more-than-human as a mere resource, leads to a disconnection with nature and human-induced environmental changes and challenges, such as climate change and biodiversity loss (Washington et al., 2021). As Pyle (2003, 207) describes: "in many parts of the world, notably the most developed, contemporary society lacks a widespread sense of intimacy with the living world". In other words, humans tend to be disconnected from nature. However, this

disconnection seems paradoxical when considering that culture, as argued by Descola (2013), is an integral part of nature. According to Pyle (2003), feelings of connectedness are closely related to responsible behaviour towards the natural world. Therefore, the practices and values of shepherds provide alternative models for addressing the challenges posed by the Anthropocene.

Additionally, the mountainous context of shepherding offers valuable insights for the contrasting lifestyle in urban regions (Cronin, 2006). Shepherds, while being nature-oriented, live according to rhythms that contrast with the vibrant and fast-paced nature of urban areas. This lifestyle challenges the consumption and dependency patterns found in urban rhythms. The societal relevance lies in the potential to learn from the shepherds' lifestyle and apply these lessons to address societal challenges such as consumerism, environmental awareness, the pursuit of external stimuli and resilience in increasingly urban societies.

However, the shepherding tradition in the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region has undergone evolution and transformation over the years. In the past, the youngest son of the family or the celibate, was designated to take care of the flock in the mountains and seek refuge in a mountain cabin, while the rest of the family worked at the farm down (O'Rourke et al., 2016). Contemporary shepherding encompasses not only familial ties but also working relations with salaried shepherds (Farinella & Nori, 2020). With improved infrastructure, mobile connection, modern cabins, and the ability to use milking machines, the practices of shepherding have been revolutionised (Fernández-Giménez 2015; del Mármol & Celigueta 2018). Additionally, there is an increasing participation and representation of women in shepherding (O'rourke et al., 2016). These shifts shape the experiences and relationships within shepherding. This research contributes to broadening our knowledge about current developments within the shepherding practices and experiences.

These changes in the shepherding world challenge long-held stereotypes associated with the practice. Traditionally, shepherding is often associated with a masculine context and subjected to romanticised or denigrated portrayals in line with other mobile lifestyles (Mac Laughlin, 1999). However, the reality of contemporary shepherding reveals a more diverse and nuanced nature. This research holds particular value for shepherds and shepherdesses as it seeks to challenge and redefine these preconceived notions. Student shepherd Théo emphasised the importance of portraying the reality of the job, stating:

"In fact, it's good to show the good side of the job, to attract people. Because otherwise there are no more shepherds, no more flocks. But also show the reality, because it's a job that can

be very hard, psychologically and physically. And, if we just say, oh it's pretty, it's great, it's so good in the mountains with the sheep, well, people will go, and it happens often, after two weeks leave crying because it is very hard."

As this quote outlines, it is desired to present the challenges and opportunities existing in the lived experience of shepherding. This research contributes to the understanding of the multifaceted nature of shepherding by showing the diversity among individuals who engage with this profession and their diverse experiences.

1.3 Scientific relevance

This research positions itself in the fields of mobility and livelihoods studies which are important fields in geography. Drawing on more-than-human theory (Whatmore, 2002), feminist theory (Plumwood, 2000) and mobility theory (Cresswell, 2006) it adopts a relational, non-representational approach (Massey, 1994) to analyse the social world of shepherding in the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region.

By employing a more-than-human perspective, this research shifts away from a human-centric view, recognizing that the social world encompasses both human and more-than-human entities. This approach offers opportunities to deepen our understanding of human-nature relations. Shepherding practices serve as a valuable context for expanding our knowledge about our entanglements with the more-than-human world. Incorporating feminist theory, allows for an examination of power relations, particularly regarding gender dynamics within the shepherding world. This is significant considering the increasing participation of women (O'rourke et al., 2016), which challenges the traditionally masculine framing of this context in scientific discourse (Mientjes 2010; Fernández-Giménez et al. 2021). Additionally, by utilising mobility theory, this research highlights the embodied experience of shepherding movement and recognizes the significance of moments of immobility in the cabin, moving beyond the limitations of a nomadic-sedentary binary or continuum.

Specifically, this research contributes by combining non-representational theory and feminist theory. Non-representational scholarship tends to neglect social differences and related questions of power (Cadman, 2009). However, the current research with a non-representational approach does include gender differences. It builds further on the work of Castelló and Romano (2021) and Fernández-Giménez et al. (2021) who inquire about Spanish shepherdesses challenging stereotypes of gender roles in the masculine context of

shepherding. This research continues a line of research by scholars (Colls 2011; Vannini 2015) who argue about more diversity in terms of gender in non-representational theory.

Besides, this research is of scientific value because of the approach of methodological openness (Boas et al. 2020; Wilson Janssens 2019). This flexible methodology allowed me to adapt to circumstances responding to opportunities or challenges during the research process with the goal of coming to new or more nuanced insights. This approach encouraged creativity and enabled me to shift from a local to a translocal perspective, analysing the mountain pasture context as well as the context down the mountains at the farms in the villages. In addition, it gave opportunities to follow the product of milk and cheese instead of only the shepherds with their flocks. These extensions in the methodology gave a more holistic understanding of the field. Also, the methodology led to a co-creation of knowledge which gave more power to the field as it were the respondents who recommended me to make these changes.

Additionally, the geographical focus of this research, the natural border between France and Spain, challenges a tendency of scholarship of doing research within nation state borders (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002; Breines et al. 2021). While studying the nation-state can be valuable in many contexts, there are several risks associated with methodological nationalism in research such as overlooking transnational, global or (trans) local processes that shape social phenomena and perpetuating essentialist assumptions (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002). Therefore, by doing research beyond a nation state perspective allows a more nuanced understanding of social phenomena and helps avoid the limitations associated with methodological nationalism.

Overall, this research contributes to the scientific understanding of shepherding movement in the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region by employing distinct theoretical perspectives and an approach of methodological openness. It offers insights into more-than-human relations, challenges traditional gender narratives, and advances our understanding of mobility within the shepherding context.

1.4 Objectives and research question

The objective of this research is to gain insights into the human and more-than-human relational worlds of shepherds and shepherdesses in the mountains of the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region. By observing their daily shepherding practices, the aim is to enhance comprehension of extensive livestock farming and mountain lifestyle. Through this

endeavour, we could learn lessons about our connectedness to the wider natural world. The following research question supports these objectives:

"How do human and more-than-human relations produce lifeworlds of shepherdesses and shepherds in the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty cheese region?".

In order to answer the research question, three sub-questions have been formulated, and each will be discussed separately in the empirical chapters:

1. *What are the human relations in the shepherding practices?*
2. *What are the more-than-human relations in the shepherding practices?*
3. *What can we learn from these shepherding practices in terms of production?*

These objectives and research questions contain concepts which require clarification. First of all, in this research the concept of *lifeworlds* refers to what Buttimer (1976, 277) describes as "the culturally defined spatiotemporal setting or horizon of everyday life". In other words, it implies an emphasis on lived experiences. Furthermore, *human relations* refers to how humans relate to other humans. Instead, *more-than-human relations* refers to relations which reach beyond human relations, e.g. the wider natural world including animals. This thesis does not delve deep into the relations between more-than-humans, but primarily involves relations between humans and more-than-humans. For more understanding into these relational concepts, consult the theoretical framework of Chapter 2.

1.5 Structure

This chapter has given an introduction to this thesis about human and more-than-human relations within the shepherding world in the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region. The subsequent chapter presents the theoretical framework through which the shepherding practices will be examined offering insights into the ontological and epistemological foundation of this research. Chapter 3 discusses the methodological choices employed in the study.

Chapter 4, 5 and 6 present the empirical findings. Chapter 4 delves into the human relations within the shepherding community, shedding light on social dynamics such as norms, values, interdependencies and cultural traditions. Chapter 5 explores the more-than-human relations within the shepherding world, considering interconnections between

shepherds and the broader natural world such as the flock and the landscape. Chapter 6 examines the valuable insights derived from the shepherding practices, particularly in terms of productions and its implications.

In Chapter 7, the thesis concludes by examining how these human and more-than-human relations shape the lifeworlds of the shepherdesses and shepherds. It finishes with a reflection on the limitations of this research and provides recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework: understanding shepherding lifeworlds beyond the human

The theoretical framework in this chapter functions as a support and foundation to achieve the research objective. The research has an interpretive character and could be centred around debates of relational, non-representational geographies (Massey 1994; Thrift 2008). In addition, more-than-human theory (Whatmore, 2002), feminist theory (McDowell, 1999) and mobility theory (Cresswell, 2006) are important theoretical debates which form together a framework through which I examine and specifically, try to understand, transhumance practices in the Ossau-Iraty cheese region. In this chapter it will be made clear why these are relevant to this research. Moreover, it will be shown how different concepts interact with each other.

The first paragraph discusses the implications of relational, non-representational geographies. The three subsequent paragraphs discuss more-than-human theory, feminist theory and mobility theory. The fifth paragraph gives a conclusion by discussing how the different theories interact with each other.

2.1 Relational, non-representational geographies

A relational approach entails that "rather than thinking about the inhabited world as a set of discrete things with their own essence (this place, different from that place), we can think about the world as formed through the ways in which things relate to each other" (Cresswell, 2013, 218). Simply put, it means that the world is continually shaped by mutual entanglements. Massey (1994), who introduced this relational sense to space, states that spaces are processual, unbound and constantly changing and moves away from global-local discussions. Relational geographies are strongly related to poststructuralist theory which emphasises openness and instability. They contrast in their ontological approach with other theories having an absolute approach whereby fixity is a central element (Cresswell, 2013). The value of this relational perspective is that it frames the social world beyond boundaries and territories (Meeus, 2016). Various scholars have been applying relational theory in order to understand certain social questions such as everyday austerity and the consequence for intimate relations (Hall, 2019), LGBTQ neighbourhoods in Sydney (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2014) and the voluntary sector (DeVerteuil, Power, & Trudeau, 2020).

Relational theory has also been applied to pastoral contexts. For instance Maru (2020) uses a relational lens to examine pastoral mobilities in India focusing on how (im)mobilities

are co-created and dependent on spatio-temporal scales. Moreover, Archer (2018) argues that adopting a relational perspective to analyse the daily life of shepherds in Romania helps to acknowledge the complexity and dynamic character of society which necessarily includes a more-than-human approach. I build on the work of Maru (2020) and Archer (2018) in applying relational theory to inquire about pastoral practices. According to Nori and Scoones (2019), pastoralists are knowledgeable in living with and from uncertainty in a context of rapid change. The scholars argue that this makes uncertainty something which could be embraced. Likewise, relational theory emphasises instability and contrast fixity (Markeles, 2009). Thus, shepherding practices could be viewed as relational themselves and therefore relational theory is a suitable lens to better understand shepherding.

In particular, this research has a non-representational theory approach. This theory moves beyond representation and focuses instead on the lived experience and the embodiment of everyday life (Thrift, 2008). It views the world as processual and in a state of becoming (Anderson & Harrison, 2010). Nigel Thrift (1996) has developed this non-representational theory and other scholars subsequently engaged with the theory. Vannini (2015) differentiates between the concepts of vitality, corporeality, performativity, sensuality and mobility to argue about the foundations of non-representational research. A central concept within non-representational theory is affect (Cresswell, 2013). Affect refers to the result of ongoing processes between bodies while experiencing the world (Thrift 2004; Anderson 2010). Non-representational theory has been used to examine bodily practices such as walking (Wylie, 2002) and dancing (McCormack, 2008), but it has also been used as a lens to examine landscape showing processual body-landscape relations (Macpherson 2009; Waterton 2013). The theory has been criticised for ignoring power relations as it decenters the subject (Cadman, 2009). Likewise, Vannini (2015, 324) argues that "non-representational scholarship is still not sufficiently diverse in terms of gender". This is the reason why current research is enriched by applying a feminist perspective which will be discussed in paragraph 2.3.

Scholars have also been applying non-representational theory to pastoral practices. For instance Pardoel (2020) discusses long-distance transhumance in Spain in combination with cognitive map-making, parting from a non-representational theory seeing map-making as a performance. According to the scientists, the map-making is a result of the many transhumance voyages in the past. Likewise, Sellick and Yarwood (2013) show how non-representational theory could be used to examine livestock and landscape by giving value to landscape-animal interactions. In line with Pardoel (2020) and Sellick and Yarwood (2013),

this research utilises non-representational theory as a useful lens to examine transhumance practices, because the study of movement and practices is at the heart of the theory. Besides, the theory includes the more-than-human and therefore gives possibilities to analyse more-than-human relations which are part of the research objective and the research question.

Drawing on non-representational theory, this research about shepherds in the Ossau-Iraty region focuses on the lived experience and embodiment of shepherding. It acknowledges the complex dynamics in everyday life and sees the shepherding world as relational. In other words, natural factors of the environment and relations between humans and non-human animals are taken into account to explore shepherding lifeworlds. Therefore, the next paragraph will dive into more-than-human theory.

2.2 More-than-human theory

Within studies of human geography the human has always played a central role (Catton and Dunlap, 1978). Scholars have regarded the human as exceptional above other organisms and viewed culture as separated from nature (Descola, 2013). This paradigm tends to go along with how Western societies view humans' relationships with the non-human, namely as something which could be controlled and has less rights than the human. Therefore the current era is called the Anthropocene, the era of the human (Lewis & Maslin, 2015).

However, recently some scholars argue for a paradigm shift by embracing the more-than-human in human geographies (Whatmore 2002, 2006; Lorimer 2006). More-than-human scholars criticise the anthropocentric approach in social science and argue that "human actors are not privileged above object and the nature environment but exist as a part of a living cosmos that connects us to trees, soil, sheep, wind, rock and river" (Nayak & Jeffrey 2011, 511). Tsing (2013) acknowledges that the social world includes both human and more-than-human. Thus, in this approach, nature and culture are not divided but intermeshed with each other (Descola, 2013).

Various scholars have engaged with more-than-human theory in different ways. For instance Knight (2020) analyses human-animal interactions arguing for the complexity and intimacies of the relations. Moreover, Haraway (2008) examines the interconnectivity between species arguing that species always "become-with" each other. She states that therefore kinship could also be made beyond species. In line with this, scientists have examined more-than-human relations by using assemblage theory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988) which highlights the interdependency of separated beings (Tsing 2013; Krauss 2018). In addition, within a more-than-human approach materials matter (Whatmore 2006; Ingold

2007). Ingold (2007) draws attention to the properties of materials and the sensual interactions other beings have with the materials. More-than-human literature about pastoralism inquires the herders' relation and interaction with the landscape and the animals (Archer 2018; Adams et al. 2023). According to Archer (2018) who inquires more-than-human entanglements of shepherds in Romania, silence and solitude in shepherding is certainly not absolute. Moreover, Adams et al. (2023) discusses the complexity of who benefits in human-ewe relations focusing on a volunteer shepherding project in the United Kingdom.

Drawing on more-than-human theory, this research examines not only human relations, but also gives value to more-than-human relations in shepherding. It builds on the concept of "becoming-with" other species of Haraway (2008). Therefore, in order to come close to understanding shepherds, we have to examine the related more-than-human others in shepherding.

Next to more-than-human relations, the research question specifically includes shepherdesses. Therefore, the next paragraph will present feminist theory. Naturally, it would have been an option to disregard this gender lens. However, during the fieldwork it became clear that the increasing participation of women has consequences for the shepherding experiences and including them seemed therefore inevitable.

2.3 Feminist theory

The discipline of human geography has been characterised by its historical association with masculinity and patriarchal perspectives (Nayak & Jeffrey, 2011). Research within the field has predominantly been conducted by men and focused on male-centric issues. In response, feminist scholars advocate for the inclusion of women in geographical research and the exploration of gender inequalities and diverse experiences (McDowell 1999; Rose 1993). Their aim is to bring visibility to women's perspectives and contributions in the field of human geography (Nayak & Jeffrey, 2011).

Feminist theory centres around the examination of gender and power dynamics within society and the pursuit of gender equality. It recognizes that gender is socially constructed and shaped by historical, cultural, and institutional factors (Beauvoir 1949; Butler 1990). The core focus of feminist theory is to challenge and expose systems of patriarchy, which uphold male dominance and subjugate women (Walby, 1989). Epistemologically, feminist scholars argue for the importance of examining lived experiences and conducting ethnography to reveal power relations (Nayak & Jeffrey, 2011).

Notions of care play a significant role in feminist theory, particularly in relation to ethics, politics, and the deconstruction of traditional gender roles. The concept of care as an ethical framework emphasises empathy, interconnectedness, and the responsibility towards others (Gilligan, 1982). It challenges the dominant individualist and competitive values of society and calls for a more relational and compassionate approach to human interactions. It recognizes the importance of care in building and maintaining relationships, fostering social cohesion, and addressing inequalities and injustices. Feminist scholars have applied care theory to the debate about the treatment of animals (Donovan, 2006). In the context of ecofeminism, care is seen as a fundamental principle for achieving environmental and social justice, advocating for sustainability and the well-being of both humans and the more-than-human (d'Eaubonne 1974; Plumwood 2000).

Scholars have examined issues of gender to pastoral context, recognizing the multifaceted dynamics and implications that shape gender roles, relations, and experiences in these settings (Vincent, 2022). They show that, historically, in many pastoral societies, the occupation of shepherding was primarily performed by men (O'rourke et al. 2016; Mientjes 2010). However, it is argued that the association of shepherding with masculinity varies across cultures and historical contexts. For instance, Sami women have played significant roles in shepherding practices in Scandinavia (Kylli, 2021). Literature about pastoralism and gender mainly focuses on the division of labour and power dynamics within pastoral societies, women's involvement in decision-making processes, access to resources, participation in income-generating activities and empowerment (Vincent, 2022).

Recent studies have explored the experiences of Spanish women in extensive livestock production, highlighting diverse experiences and the challenges that they face (Fernández-Giménez et al. 2021; Castelló and Romano 2021). These studies challenge stereotypical gender roles and shed light on power relations within pastoral contexts. Drawing on the work of Fernández-Giménez et al. (2021) and Castelló and Romano (2021), current research utilises a feminist lens to pastoral practices in the Ossau-Iraty region. Although it does not exclude men, the experiences of shepherdesses and their issues with power relations and expected gender behaviours are central.

In the forthcoming paragraph, the focus will shift to the mobility aspect of shepherding practices, as movement is inherently intertwined with the practices of shepherding.

2.4 Mobility theory

Scholars have been examining different lifestyles which are present in society, including the lifestyle of shepherds, by applying it to the binary of nomadism and sedentarism (Maru, 2020). Symanski et al. (1975) criticised this binary thinking of nomadism and sedentarism and replaced it to "mobile-sedentary continuum". This approach offers possibilities to understand the mobile lifestyle of shepherds without falling into binaries. However, as Maru (2020, 211) argues, "every point on the continuum is still seen in reference to the ever-receding horizons of sedentarism and mobility at either end". In the last decades there has been a growing amount of research about mobility which Sheller and Urry (2006) call "the new mobility paradigm". By giving attention to mobilities of bodies and materials, this research challenges social theories of the past with a binary or continuum lens about sedentarism and nomadism. Therefore also current research adopts this approach in analysing movement. Cresswell (2006) frames mobility as socially produced motion and emphasises how mobility is practised, experienced and embodied. Within mobility studies, the scholar argues, there must not be merely a focus on the physical movement, but mobility should be understood holistically paying attention to the representations and practices.

In theoretical debates about shepherding and mobility, scholars point out how the search for pastures or other resources drives the movement of shepherds (Farinella & Nori 2020; Niamir-Fuller & Turner 1999). According to Palladino (2018) mobility is an adaptive strategy to survive which makes the mobility intrinsically connected to their existence. However, other literature shows that the role which mobility plays in pastoralism seems to depend on the type of displacement. For instance Fernández-Giménez and Le Febre (2010) distinguish between nomadism, transhumance, migration and pasture rotation. The scholars define transhumance, the practice of shepherds in the Ossau-Iraty region, as "predictable seasonal movements from one grazing ground to another (359)". According to Markeles (2005) pastoral nomadism and transhumance are often wrongly defined as the same. However, as the scholar argues, the difference is that people practising pastoral nomadism do not have a permanent base in villages.

Mobility and immobility are deeply intertwined, characterised by an interdependence and dynamic interaction (Faist, 2013). As noted by Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013), the mobility enjoyed by certain individuals can simultaneously reinforce the immobility experienced by others, highlighting the unequal distribution of mobility privileges. Furthermore, Sheller and Urry (2006) emphasise that mobilities are never without moorings.

This implies that in pastoralist mobilities, we need to include periods of rests, different forms of staying somewhere and recurrent rhythms. Following the scholars, the farms in the villages and the cabins on the mountain pastures are the moorings that enable the transhumance mobilities. As Vidal-González and Fernández-Piqueras (2021) argue about Spanish shepherds, by moving away from the permanent village bases, shepherds tend to become socially distanced from the community with whom they are living the other half of the year. Consequently, the study of shepherding is explored with a focus on the experience of human solitude (Archer, 2019).

Despite the demonstrable link between shepherding and mobility, scientist Michele Nori (2019) acknowledges in a PATRES seminar about mobility and pastoralism that mobility studies have paid little attention to pastoralists. The scholar argues that the mobility itself has been a challenge for researchers and resulted in a limited focus on shepherding within mobility studies. However, next to Maru (2020) who inquired about pastoral mobilities in India, also Aldred (2012) inquired about the sorting of sheep in Iceland from a mobility perspective. Following Gray (1999), the scholar argues that shepherding mobility is a placemaking process, "but also an identity forming process involving an imbued relationality between other people, animals and landscape (489)". Aldred (2012) points to the changeability of the relations as different practices and circumstances arise.

This research about the Ossau-Iraty region will build on Aldred's (2012) definition of shepherding mobility. Moreover, drawing on mobility theory, this research regards transhumance mobilities as practised, experienced and embodied. It does not only focus on the mobilities but regards immobilities as valuable elements within transhumance practices.

2.5 Conclusion

This theoretical framework delved into the realms of relational, non-representational geographies, more-than-human theory, feminist theory, and mobility theory. These theories form a lens through which the transhumance practices in the Ossau-Iraty region will be examined in order to better understand the lifeworlds of shepherdesses and shepherds. It implies that this research regards shepherding worlds as relational spaces. In other words, they will be approached as complex, dynamic and in a state of constant (re)production. The non-representational character leads to the examination of lived experiences and bodily practices in shepherding. In addition, following more-than-human theory, within this research it is acknowledged that the social world encompasses both human and more-than-human entities, allowing for the exploration of entanglements between them. In this research,

transhumance mobility is viewed as a process that shapes place and identity, involving relationships between human and more-than-human actors. Drawing from feminist theory, the research explores power relations within the context of shepherding. By combining non-representational and feminist theories, the framework responds to calls for greater gender diversity within non-representational research.

Through this particular lens it is examined how shepherds and shepherdesses relate to other humans and to more-than-human entities. Regarding interactions with other humans, the research explores the social connections built by shepherds living in the mountains, focusing on neighbour, transport, tourist, labour and gender relations. Specifically, it examines the norms and values, communication patterns, interdependencies and power relations within the shepherding community. In terms of the more-than-human world, this research investigates the connections between shepherds and their flocks, the mountain landscape, and the cabins they inhabit.

The subsequent chapter will delve into the methodology employed for data collection and analysis, providing further insights into the research approach.

Chapter 3. Methodological choices: applying a nomadic mind

It was my third day with Josephine, a 24 years old shepherdess. In the morning we had already finished the milking and the cheesemaking. We had been climbing the mountain to push the sheep to take care they would not cross the limits and sat down on the mountain. The last days we had spent together and because I did not only follow Josephine during the day, but we were also sleeping in the same room, we were getting to know each other quickly. We chatted a bit and Josephine explained to me what her friendship with Charlotte, a friend who is also a shepherdess, means to her: "There is a huge level of understanding between Charlotte and me", Josephine began. "Last summer, we spent our days on this pasture, learning the tricks of the trade. When I try to explain to my friends in the city about the dense fog, their response is usually a simple 'okay'. But Charlotte understands. She knows what fog is, how it feels and the impact it has on our work. If I were to call Charlotte and tell her about the thunderstorm of this morning during the milking, she would automatically comprehend the additional challenges we faced. The slippery hands, the unease of the sheep- she would understand it all without a need for lengthy explanations." A week and a half later, I was with Charlotte and asked her in an interview how it feels to be a shepherdess. She gave me the words I was unconsciously searching for: "it is a living experience". Something became clear to me. Although I was not a shepherdess, I was there, with my body and experiencing in a way what they were going through. I already had my own interaction with fog on the way to Josephine, when I got lost in the mountains because of the limited view and arrived not, as expected, after two hours, but after more than four hours. I swore to myself never to wear such a heavy backpack in the mountains again (July 6th, 2022, in the high mountains of the province of Béarn).

3.1 Non-representational ethnography

By doing ethnographic fieldwork I strived to come close to experiencing the everyday life of shepherding in the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region and thereby attempted to understand shepherding in this region. This qualitative way of doing research enabled me to grasp the subtlety and complexity of shepherding which will be missed using a more quantitative methodology (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). The explorative character of ethnography fits the research as the research problem was not clearly defined before entering the field (Gobo & Molle, 2016). Specifically, this research has a non-representational ethnographic style which Vannini (2015, 317) describes as "an ethnography [which] seeks to cultivate an

affinity for the analysis of events, practices, assemblages, structures of feeling, and the backgrounds of everyday life against which relations unfold in their myriad potentials". It differs from a conventional ethnography because of the methodological focus on inquiring sensories, performances and practices (Latham, 2003). Moreover, it specifically focuses on the relations that are relevant to the research problem.

Shepherdesses Josephine and Charlotte showed me how shepherding could be understandable in terms of embodiment, affection and feelings and they come thereby close to a non-representational way of analysing the world. They confirmed my impression that in order to understand them, my body had to experience it.

The rest of this chapter discusses how I mentally and physically prepared for this research, the approach of methodological openness, the applied methods, how I got access to the field and concludes with some reflections.

3.2 Bodily and mental preparations

At the time of writing my research proposal I had no experience with working with sheep and had never been to high mountains. I live in an urban area and would describe myself as not very muscled. Before heading to the Pyrenees Mountains, I decided to gain some experience of shepherding by becoming a volunteer for several shepherds and sheep farmers in the Austrian, Swiss and French Alps. In that way I trained my physical strength, but also gained knowledge about important subjects for shepherds. I learned how to milk by hand and with a machine, made cheese, learned the difference between hay and silage and assisted in the slaughtering and butchering of a lamb. In the Austrian Alps I became ‘a mother’ for a newborn lamb which I called Jimmy and took him on daily walks around the farm. Some weeks after I left the farm, Jimmy was killed by a wolf. As a way to honour Jimmy I ended up being a goatherd myself in the Swiss Alps and followed a group of goats for a week to protect them against the wolf.

As a result of these preparations, I was able to assist the Pyrenean shepherds in their work which increased the amount of reciprocity during the actual fieldwork. Moreover, I had a certain understanding of feelings and emotions connected to shepherding. It helped me to better empathise with the shepherds and to be able to exchange about shepherding related subjects. Sometimes I even felt the desire to become a shepherdess myself.

3.3 An approach of methodological openness

From the end of June till September 2022, I immersed myself in the world of shepherds and shepherdesses working in the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region. As shepherding in the Pyrenees Mountains is highly connected to the high mountain pastures where most of the sheep are, my aim was to spend my fieldwork period in the mountains living in the cabins with the shepherds. However, one shepherd changed my perspective on shepherding and thereby also part of my methodology. He questioned me about the function of the transhumance and told me that it happens to free up the land at the farms in order to make hay to feed the flock in the winter. I realised that in order to actually understand what was happening on the mountain pastures, I also needed to observe or perhaps participate in what happens in the valley. Following the insights of Boas et al. (2020) and Breines et al. (2021), I allowed myself to have a certain methodological openness and broaden my perspective to translocal level. From that week on I expanded my focus from merely the mountains to the lower levels of the valleys by visiting a cheese shop, interviewing a shepherdess working there and going to a cheese festival. Furthermore, I learned how to drive a tractor and made the last hay bale of the summer. It resulted in having a better picture of the shepherding lifestyle and the shepherding identity of the region.

In addition, I decided to follow the product (Mintz, 1986) instead of only the shepherds themselves. The reason that I started doing this was because I experienced the importance of the final product, cheese, in the local identity. I already saw how ewes were milked, how the shepherds made cheese and saw how one shepherdess sold the cheese made in spring to tourists who ascended the mountain. However, I wondered what happened to the rest of the cheese and how different actors are connected. I met muleteers, people who transport the cheese with donkeys, visited a collective cheese cave in a village and as icing on the cake I experienced how it is to be a market vendor on a big market. By following the milk and the cheese, I gained insights into the social relations between shepherds and other actors.

Finding a place to stay and knowing what my next step in the fieldwork would be, was not always easy. After three weeks in the mountains, I spent one week on campsites awaiting for shepherds to reply to my messages. While camping alone with no chair, gas and pan, I questioned myself what I was actually doing. Although I am not religious, I spent two afternoons in the village church to have a chair and some privacy. Looking back, this was not actually a strange place to be. Shepherdess Charlotte, a Christian, told me earlier about how

Jesus is often referred to as a shepherd. In the church I read "the Alchemist" by Paulo Coelho, a book about an Andalusian shepherd. A section grabbed my attention:

"'*All is one', the old man had said. He decided to walk at ease and without fear through the narrow streets of Tangier: only in this way he would be able to understand the signs. It required a lot of patience, but patience is the first virtue a shepherd learns. For the umpteenth time he found himself in a strange world applying the lessons he had learned from his sheep. 'All is one', the old man had said."*[2] (Coelho 2007, 49).

After reading it, I decided to see this waiting period as part of the shepherding experience and to have simply patience and trust. The next morning a little girl on the camping site approached me and gave me a peacock feather. For personal reasons, a feather is for me a sign that I am on the right path. Next to the fact that I had this spiritual experience, this period ended up being important for me as I could structure my data, process the experiences, reflect and come up with the first outcomes of my research. It supported the iterative process of my ethnographic fieldwork.

Wilson Janssens (2019) describes this approach of methodological openness as having a nomadic mind. According to her, it implies an attitude of embracing flexibility and going with others instead of only inquiring about others. In addition, as she argues, it leads to a co-creation in knowledge. This current research phrases the nomadic mind as a shepherd state of mind and has been the leading force behind the methodological choices.

3.4 Collection and analysis of the data

During the fieldwork period, the data was collected through a triangulation of methods. A combination of participation observation, interviews and diaries enriched the reliability of the research findings (Clifford et al., 2010). In addition, the different methods tended to mutually reinforce each other. These different methods will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.4.1 Participant observation

In total I stayed in five cabins with a variation in stay of three days till eleven days. Three of these cabins were inhabited by salaried shepherdesses, one was inhabited by a shepherding couple who also owned the flock and another one by another shepherd who owned the flock. Three of the cabins were located in the province of Béarn and two in the Northern Basque Country. Although my research was centred around the people I lived with in their cabins, I

[2] Translated from Dutch

also gained insights while visiting their neighbours and other people who came along. Roughly estimated, next to the shepherds living in these cabins, I encountered fifteen other shepherds or sheep farmers with whom I participated in their practices or had small talks with.

Inspired by scholars such as Marcus (1995) and Schapendonk (2020) who value the methodological practice of following, I followed the shepherds and participated in their daily practices. I took on the role of a Human Geography and Cultural Anthropology student doing her Master thesis, while at the same time being interested in the job for more personal and emotional reasons. These personal and emotional reasons explain my willingness to participate and get to know how to take care of sheep, milk them and make cheese. At the same time, I did not want to be a burden for them, making their job take longer, which made me realise that a more observant attitude was, depending on the situation, more suitable. However, although it sometimes felt that I was doing nothing, I was always included in the situation whether it was by assisting or merely motivating the shepherd and functioning as pleasant company. Other times I took over the role of shepherd by for example pushing the sheep with the dog while the shepherd had some rest or did other things. My aim was to mirror the rhythm of the shepherds and follow them when possible. If they would wake up at six o'clock, I would do the same. By following this research practice, I aimed to experience the lives of shepherds to the fullest. The limited space in the cabins forced me in a way also to do this. I got to know the shepherds and their habits, but they also became acquainted with me and my inner world. Being someone who talks a lot in her sleep, and according to a shepherdess one night it was in French, it felt that the shepherds even got to know some of my subconsciousness. It resulted in pure, close and friendly connections with the shepherds making it hard from both sides to hide emotions. Daily happiness and daily struggles were shared.

Occasionally, I felt the need to have time for myself, process the social situations and to do introspection (Spradley, 1980). Adapting to the habits and the language of others and finding your role is an enriching, but also intense experience as the following vignette illustrates.

"*We will make raclette tonight, do you know that?", asked Alexandre. It was my first day in the Pyrenees and shepherd Alexandre and shepherdess Bernadette, had just picked me up at the train station. They asked if I liked cheese. Even though I am not a big fan of cheese, I said "yes" in order not to cause an awkward moment. "And do you like meat?". I said that at home*

I did not eat meat but I did at other houses'. "Here we love meat", Bernadette told me. A short silence followed. "At least she eats meat in other houses", shared Bernadette optimistically to the others. After dinner Bernadette asked me if I wanted to do the dishes. I said "yes" and that if there were other tasks I could do, she should let me know. She nodded. From that moment on I was the one doing the dishes, which gave me a satisfying feeling, and I ate meat and cheese (July 20th, 2022, at a farm in the province of Béarn).

This insight shows how I tried to adapt to people who hosted me and how I acted towards them. Moreover, there was cultural exchange whereby it was not only me learning about their habits but I also shared my culture and language with them. Next to assisting in daily household tasks, I offered to give financial compensation for the food and the shelter. However, most shepherds did not want money in exchange for their hospitality. Also, during the first days with a new shepherd I emphasised to them that they were not obligated to let me stay and that if after some days they wanted me to leave, they should let me know. It happened that family or friends of the shepherds visited the cabin and I was not able to stay. This was not a problem, since I had my tent with me and was thereby able to take care of myself.

When I physically left a shepherd, the following did not necessarily stop. I kept in contact with most of the shepherds by telephone during the time I was still in the Pyrenees, but also when I was already back in the Netherlands. Via text messaging we keep up to date about our daily lives.

3.4.2 Interviews and informal conversations

During the fieldwork period eight semi-structured interviews were carried out among different kinds of shepherds. Five were salaried shepherdesses, two were shepherds who own the flock (sheep farmers) and the other one was a student shepherd. Four of them were inhabited in the province of Béarn and four of them in the province of Northern Basque Country. More detailed information about the interviewees can be found in the appendix 2.

I recorded the interviews with my telephone, especially since the interviews were in either French or English, which meant that doing the actual conversation needed my full concentration and I was not able to make notes at the same time. The interviews had an average length of about an hour and merely now and then I watched the interview guide on my telephone to check if there were subjects we did not talk about yet. I finished the

interview with the question “what they thought was important to write about in my thesis”, to be open for new themes, but also to let this thesis to a certain extent be in line with their realities and challenges instead of only what I thought was important to write about. By doing interviews the research developed into a collaboration of the research participants and me constructing knowledge together (Breines et al. 2021). It is part of the nomadic or shepherd state of mind of this research.

When I just entered the field, I took the time to participate, observe and question everything that was going on. I had questions in my mind which I asked throughout the day and wrote down almost everything that had been said or what had been done. The first day, I participated in a transhumance and asked a lot of questions. I had doubts about doing a formal interview with them later in the week, as it was the first week for them in the mountains which meant that there was a lot going on. Moreover, I did not yet have an interview guide, so I decided to see this first week as a way of getting to know the field. Although this could be viewed as being unprepared, I prefer to not see it this way as specially this unpreparedness enabled me to have an open mind and to listen to the people around me instead of actively searching for data. Also, according to Boas et al. (2020, 144) strong research designs are not necessarily “pre-planned, fixed and inflexible”. During my stay with the next shepherd in another cabin, I figured that doing interviews would be interesting for a few reasons. It forced me to create an interview guide and shape my research problem. Besides, I realised that the shepherds liked the fact of doing an interview to get a better idea of what I was actually researching.

With the exception of two interviews, the formal interviews took place at least a few days after arrival. During the first days I got to know the shepherds and their situation, which made it easier to do the interview. Mutual trust had already been established and we could use the time for the interview to have deeper conversations and skip the questions I would have asked if I had not met them before. As a result of the participant observation I could adapt the type of questions to the person I was interviewing or in case I was not sure if I had understood certain situations earlier in the week in a correct way, I could re-ask it during the interview. A comment of one of the shepherds shows another advantage of meeting and getting to know respondents in the field:

“If someone would have said to me that a Dutch girl wants to do an interview, I would have said no”.

However, because we met at a shearing event, I was not simply a Dutch student doing research but I was Janne with whom he had sheared a sheep.

The fact that I also spent some days with the shepherds after the interview, was also an advantage for the research process. After the interviews had taken place, most of the shepherds later in the week did later in the week referred to the conversation and added elements to the responses they already gave. They had had the time to process the interview and reflect on their own responses. The interviews intensified what Flaherty et al. (2002, 485) call "ongoing moral dialogue of the researcher with the researched".

In addition to the interviews with shepherds, I carried out a semi-structured interview with a coordinator from the organisation *Bourse d'emploi des bergers Pyrénées-Atlantiques* who matches sheep farmers and salaried shepherds who are searching for a job. This interview functioned to gain more insights into the context of working as a shepherd. It was done online via Zoom in October when I was already back in the Netherlands. However, I already had met the interviewee in person during the fieldwork period. She had visited one of the salaried shepherdesses with whom I was staying to speak with her about her experiences as a salaried shepherdess.

3.4.3 Diaries

Next to participant observation and doing interviews, analysing emotional loaded documents is a valuable way to get a better understanding of shepherding. During my fieldwork I obtained different written and oral documents which were important to the shepherds. Songs, self-written poems and an agenda are examples of the intimate documents I encountered. The most valuable document for this research is the diary of shepherdess Charlotte. She offered to show me some pages of her diary in which she describes her everyday life as a shepherdess. Most of the pages she gave access to were written before she even knew about my existence. In contrast to participant observation and doing interviews, the data were not influenced by my presence. Especially within a non-representational framework the diary is a relevant artefact as she describes her thoughts, emotions and feelings during her time in the mountains (Latham, 2003). It gives an impression of the inner world of a shepherdess. In addition, it gave insights into the impression I left on her. She had written the following about me:

"Janne, a Dutch friend of Josephine, is here. It's nice. She's cute and we speak English".

This insight illustrates how I gradually became part of the network. I became more than just a researcher. Apparently, her friend Josephine, had introduced me as being her friend.

This research does not only include the diary of the shepherdess, but is also based on my own diary fragments. Beforehand, I had in mind to use my laptop to structure observational, theoretical and methodological memo's (Spradley, 1980). However, I experienced that conducting research in mountainous terrains necessitates distinct equipment and preparation in comparison to research conducted in more readily accessible areas. The principal obstacle encountered was the amount of belongings I was able to take with me. It was imperative to fit all the necessary items in my backpack, while at the same time I had to be able to ascend the mountains while carrying the load. Although my plan was to take my laptop and video camera with me, I decided at the last minute not to take it as it was too heavy. Instead of using my laptop, I solely used my diary to write down my reflections and used my telephone to make small notes. The diary material became a mix of my observational notes and my own experiences, including more private feelings such as moments of happiness, doubts and fears. The fact that it was almost impossible to dive into academic literature during my fieldwork, ensured me to stay open to the field and not be influenced too much by theory (Della Porta & Keating, 2008).

Regarding the data which were collected through the diaries, participation observation and interviews, these were not collected before asking for informed consent. Overall, during the research process my aim was to maximise benefits and minimise the potential harm to the respondents. This is also why the names of the respondents in this thesis are pseudonyms. The main analysis of the data took place when I was already back in the Netherlands. I transcribed the interviews verbatim and analysed them by coding, particularly focusing on relations.

3.4.4 Getting access

In January 2022, I started my search by posting a message in the Facebook group "Les passionnés du pastoralisme". There were two serious responses from two salaried shepherdesses who were supposed to be working in the Pyrenees Mountains during summer. I sent Juliette a message in mid-June, asked when I could come and if she already had done the transhumance. The day of the transhumance is an important event for shepherds and I thought it would be interesting to participate in one. She answered that she already did the transhumance, but gave me the telephone number of shepherd Alexandre and shepherdess Bernadette, who were planning to do the transhumance the week after. My fieldwork started

with them in Béarn and eventually we spent one week together in the mountains.

During that time I also was in contact with the other shepherdess, Josephine, who reacted to the Facebook message and I visited her for one and a half week in the mountains. Charlotte, her shepherding friend, came over as a surprise and I decided to join Charlotte and spend some days together on her mountain. There, I met her boss who put me in touch with another shepherd. I descended the mountain and went camping awaiting the response of this shepherd. However, he did not respond to my messages and calls.

From that moment on I started to make more use of the local community in finding respondents and gaining insights in the local shepherding identity. The camping boss wanted to help me, called some friends and gave me the numbers of some shepherds I could contact. Since I had no car and there was almost no public transport in the area, I did a lot of hitchhiking. Later I realised how hitchhiking became a way to meet shepherds and to informally interview them. Namely, all the people I met on the way were in some way related to shepherding. They seemed to know at least one shepherd or were a shepherd or sheep farmer themselves. In conversation with these people, the importance of pastoralism in the local identity became even more clear to me.

Given that the shepherds I contacted did not reply to my messages, I decided to leave the province of Béarn and go to Juliette in Northern Basque Country with whom I had Facebook contact. I spent one week with her and met a lot of neighbouring shepherds during the shearing party of her close neighbour. Shepherd Markel invited me to come to his mountain and after spending one week together I returned to Juliette for some days.

Although it was not a requirement for selecting respondents, it gave me a protective feeling that I could stay with women. I had contact with a shepherd by telephone, but decided not to go, simply because I did not have a good feeling. Especially because there is not always a telephone signal in the mountains, I thought twice before I visited a man staying alone. If I knew someone who knew the shepherd, I had more trust and often decided to go. Living or being in a car with people you do not know requires a certain amount of trust from both sides, but is also about an acceptance of risk (Nieuwenhuis, 2021). By pointing this out I come close to the debate of the geography of women's fear. I took my space as a travelling female researcher trying to what Wilson and Little (2008, 183) phrase as "to move beyond deterministic assumptions which equate fear/danger with stranger/other/darkness", while at the same time not ignoring the reality of women's vulnerability. Fear influenced my experience as a researcher. However, my fear has mostly been increased by other people, projecting their own fears on me, knowing what would be the best for me.

In general, I had the feeling that the people cared about me and were happy to help and get to know me. "*Everyone knows everyone and everything",* a shepherdess explained to me during an interview. It was true. Some people already knew about my presence before I met them. They seemed to be curious about what I was doing and why of all places I chose their region to research, but there were also wait-and-see attitudes, especially with people who did not speak English. One sheep farmer heard from another sheep farmer that I did not speak French -which is not true- and when I introduced myself in French, he directly responded: "I don't understand". When he later realised that I spoke some French, he luckily became more approachable.

3.5 Conclusionary reflections

The approach of methodological openness, or adopting a nomadic mind, proved to be a valuable method for gathering data in the shepherding field, given its emphasis on embracing uncertainty, practising patience, and exhibiting resilience. However, this openness and flexibility also have limitations, primarily because they result in a broad range of research, and, consequently, less depth in this particular case. If specific areas of focus, such as gender and shepherding, had been chosen early in the research process, it could have allowed for a more in-depth exploration. Similarly, limiting the number of locations visited or staying in one place could have provided deeper insights. In line with this, as noted by Breines et al. (2021), it becomes uncertain where the nomadic mindset should draw its boundaries.

Another methodological choice that influenced the research process was my intermediate knowledge of French and the limited English proficiency of most respondents. The fact that I was not fluent in French may have created a barrier and limited the extent of data collection. Additionally, it is possible that certain nuances were not fully captured during conversations. Nevertheless, overall, it appears that conducting fieldwork without complete language proficiency is still feasible.

Additionally, the selection of respondents through a snowball method resulted in a specific group, predominantly consisting of relatively young salaried shepherdesses who did not come from the Pyrenees Mountains. Their interaction with me and the empirical findings were influenced by these characteristics. The ability to connect easily due to sharing a similar life stage facilitated open conversations. However, building close relationships with respondents blurred the line between research and private experiences, particularly regarding

the privacy of the respondents. To address this concern, I actively reflected on experiences and prioritised the principle of doing no harm.

The subsequent three chapters (Ch 4, 5, 6) present the empirical findings that were collected through this methodological approach. To start with, a vignette is included to provide a first-hand experience of a day of transhumance, aiming to evoke more feeling and understanding of what a transhumance in the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region encompasses. This vignette is followed by Chapter 4 which delves into the exploration of human relationships within the shepherding world. It examines various social dynamics such as norms and values, communication patterns, interdependencies, and power relations. The chapter particularly focuses on neighbour, transport, touristic, labour and gender relations.

An ethnographic vignette- A transhumance journey in the Pyrenees Mountains

The local bus arrives at the parking area. Nervous but confident I get off the bus and take my first step in the Pyrenees Mountains. I look around me and right in front of me I see a hotel, built in the old train station of the village of Bedous. It is called "transhumance". After some time a car enters the parking area. Shepherdess Bernadette and shepherd Alexandre get out of the car and greet me enthusiastically. They know the owners of the hotel and explain why I am there: "she will participate in the transhumance of tomorrow". As a response one of the owners jokes: "but the transhumance is here!". After arriving at the house, having dinner together, Alexandre and Bernadette continue their preparations for the transhumance. Bernadette and the mother of Alexandre pack together boots, milk jugs and other stuff which the uncle of Bernadette will bring with the donkeys to the cabin in the mountains. They tell me that a helicopter has already brought stuff earlier. Before I go to bed, they briefly explain the program of the days after. Bernadette tells me that we will sleep in the cabin on the mountain and that when later that week Alexandre will descend the mountain to arrange some last things at home I could join him in descending the mountain. "Take a little backpack with stuff for some nights and be aware that it is not too heavy, because one part will be steep", she emphasises. The alarm rings at 4:30 am. I take my little backpack and eat breakfast. At exactly 5 o'clock we leave the house as there is a strict program. I sit in the back of the car on a milk jug with Bernadette and Théo, a student shepherd, and we drive to the barn where the ewes are. Alexandre and Théo start to walk in the dark over the road with half of the flock while the father of Alexandre and I follow them by car. After around ten minutes, we see a cattle truck parked on the road. They push the ewes in the cattle truck, the truck departs and we go back to the barn to get the other half of the flock. The group has split up, but via mobile phone we keep in contact. We pick up the other half of the flock, and this time I walk behind the flock. With a shepherd's crook in my hand, I try to keep up with the tempo of the rest. The cattle truck is back, we push these ewes in the empty truck and Théo and I have a seat in the truck. Before the truck departs, Alexandre gives the driver a big piece of homemade cheese as a way to thank him. After a twenty minutes' drive we stop, get the sheep out of the truck and reunite them with the other half of the flock [3]. *There we meet some of their friends who would also participate and help in the transhumance. I walk in front together with Bernadette who is in contact with a walkie talkie with the group walking behind. She tells me that she worked the whole year specially for the transhumance and the time in the mountains. The time in the mountains is less heavy for her, also because there is*

less pressure from outside. While walking they scream "cai-cai" to the sheep which means "come" in the Bearnaise dialect. We come to the part where it is getting more steep and we leave the paved road behind. I walk for some time with Alexandre and he tells me that he has been a shepherd for almost 20 years now and has done it in different formations. He is not from the Pyrenees, but from Lyon where he worked with machines in a factory. Just like Bernadette he followed courses at a shepherd school. Bernadette, originally from the Loire region, studied literature and also technical agriculture wherefore she went to the Pyrenees and was surprised by the beauty of the mountains. She had never really heard of shepherds and thought: "Is it a real job?" The two met when Bernadette did an internship at Alexandre's farm and they later became a couple. It is 11 am and it seems that we are almost there [4]. *Alexandre and Théo walk faster than the rest of the group to prepare for the milking as the sheep will be milked directly. Slowly we reach the plateau and I see the cabin. Bernadette asks me if I could help prepare the cabin and make food together with their friends. There is wine and Ricard, a French alcoholic drink with a taste of anis. We take some glasses and go to the milking barn where Bernadette, Alexandre and Théo are milking the ewes by hand* [5]. *Together we bring a toast to the successful transhumance.* (July 21st, 2022, in the high mountains of the province of Béarn).

Upon examining this ethnographic vignette and the introductory song of this thesis, both presenting the journey to mountain Banasse but taking place in different decades, striking similarities emerge. The core elements of both narratives revolve around the presence of the flocks, the mountain landscape, and the appreciation for it. Furthermore, both journeys start during the dark hours of the night or early morning. Along the way, encounters with shepherds or villagers add depth to the transhumance experience, and people also enjoy drinking alcoholic beverages as part of the experience.

However, the march of time has brought forth modern transitions, changing the nature of contemporary transhumance. In the present day, technological advancements have become integral to the process, with the utilisation of trucks, mobile phones, walkie talkies, and even helicopters. As Waters-Bayera and Bayer (2016) argues, new technologies, such as motorised vehicles and mobile phones among others, influence the transhumance practices of shepherds around the world. Moreover, it is noteworthy that shepherdesses now partake in the ascent of these mountains which was uncommon in this region in the past (O'rourke et al., 2016).

This vignette has set the stage for the upcoming chapters which explore contemporary

human and more-than-human entanglements in the extensive livestock production of shepherding. The subsequent chapter will start by exploring human relations.

Chapter 4. The human world: shepherding interactions in the mountains

The image of a shepherd often brings to mind an elderly man with a shepherd's crook, wandering through meadows with his flock, seemingly leading a solitary life. This association with solitude and silence is commonly attributed to shepherding. For instance, Archer (2018) describes how Romanian shepherds often experience an absence of human sound. Vidal-González and Fernández-Piqueras (2021, 391) state that shepherds, due to their lifestyle, are seen as "one of the most socially distanced groups and a symbol of separation from the rest of the community". Shepherds spend their time in remote mountain pastures where human presence is limited, leading to minimal human interaction. There may be days when shepherds do not encounter others. Consequently, shepherds are often described in relation to nature and animals, with scholars adopting a more-than-human perspective when exploring relationships in the shepherding world (Adams 2023; Archer 2018).

However, this chapter aims to shed a different light on the perception of human solitude in the shepherding world by exploring human interactions and their significance in shaping the shepherding community in the Ossau-Iraty region. The focus is on social dynamics such as norms and values, communication patterns, cultural practices, interdependencies, and power relations within the shepherding world. The first paragraph presents neighbour relations of shepherds in the mountains. The second paragraph presents transport relations, in particular the role of muleteers, and tourist relations. The third paragraph presents labour relations, specifically examining the relationship between sheep farmers and salaried shepherds. The fourth paragraph delves into gender relations by exploring the feminization of shepherding in this region.

4.1 Neighbour relations

During summer, multiple sheep farmers in the Ossau-Iraty region engage in transhumance, moving their flocks to the mountain pastures (O'rourke et al., 2016). Shepherds take care of these flocks and share the mountain pastures with their neighbouring shepherds. Some shepherds live together in shared cabins, while others have their own separate cabins. The

cabins I learned to know during my fieldwork, were all located in a way that the cabin of another shepherd was visible. However, there was a variation in the proximity of these cabins. Some neighbouring cabins could be reached in less than a minute, while others took several minutes, with some even requiring a descent time of around thirty minutes to an hour.

The mountainous terrain allows shepherds to visually observe neighbouring shepherds and their flocks. Equipped with binoculars, which are essential tools for shepherds, they keep a watchful eye on each other. An anecdote shared by the sister of one shepherd illustrated the constant surveillance between shepherds. A neighbouring shepherd had informed her that he had observed her enjoying the sun while taking care of the ewes through his binoculars. In response, she had sharply answered:

"Well, I am happy that I did not pee, because you would have also seen that".

Despite the sense of solitude in the mountains, it is important to recognize that someone may always be watching. According to shepherdess Juliette, neighbours sometimes feel like a jury, forming opinions about each other's work. Thus, the mountain pastures become not only a shared space but also a controlled and political space with diverse interests and narratives (Ott, 1993).

To prevent flocks from mixing with one another, shepherds establish routes and boundaries. Although these boundaries are not physically marked, shepherds are aware of where their flocks are supposed to be. If a flock starts to cross a boundary and enter a neighbouring shepherd's pasture, the shepherd is responsible for pushing the flock back. As a result, shepherds do not only engage with their own flock but also interact with the flocks of neighbours, leading to occasional conflicts.

Shepherdess Josephine seemed to struggle with the presence of her neighbour, whose cabin was only a two-minute walk away. Although they were usually in good contact, she had an argument with the neighbour's intern regarding the movement of the flocks during my visit. The intern disagreed with Josephine about the boundaries and suggested that she should have pushed her flock back earlier that day when they had crossed the boundary. Emotions ran high, and harsh words were exchanged. As Palladino (2018, 124) suggests, "the movement of animals across boundaries of regional and national jurisdictions, a movement of animals whose ownership, number and health is not always certain, has also often proven a source of conflict." However, as the example of Josephine shows, conflicts may arise not only across regional and national boundaries but also on a more local level, where the

boundaries between territories of different flocks can lead to disputes between shepherds.

Similarly, conversations with shepherding couple Bernadette and Alexandre shed light on another important point of friction between shepherds: the (re)introduction of the bear. In the Pyrenees Mountains, shepherds perceive bears as a threat to their flock and, consequently, must adapt their shepherding practices such as being more watchful, using protection dogs, and installing electric fences (Herrero et al., 2021). According to Knight (2016) Pyrenean shepherds perceive the re-introduction of the bears as a threat to their transhumance livelihood and identity. However, the perspective of the shepherding couple contrasts with this; they are pro-bear and argue that being close to the ewes could actually strengthen the transhumance livelihood and identity. To make a statement that the bear can co-exist with pastoralist practices they imprint their cheese with a bear paw [6]. Actively promoting their perspective results in friction with other shepherds, including neighbouring shepherds, who oppose the presence of bears.

Nevertheless, having close neighbours also leads to collaboration and companionship. A clear example of this, I experienced in the Iraty region where shepherd Markel had three very close neighbours. The three cabins are so close to each other that it gives the feeling of a very small village. Chickens scratch in the yard. Dogs of different shepherds play together and enter the other cabins without shame. Compared to the ambiance in the village down the mountains where their farms are located, shepherd Markel explains, social contact is less time connected and not bound to an appointment. After having taken care of his ewes in the early morning, he often visits a neighbour to drink a coffee and speak about different subjects, mainly everything connected to shepherding. He described what happens when his flock mixes with a neighbouring flock:

“I'm going to get the ewe and he's going to be happy to see me and he's going to invite me to eat together, for that. And after I will go back to my ewes, nothing happened, we had a good time”.

As the quote illustrates, the presence of the flock increases the contact he has with his neighbours. Living in remote areas gives social contact an additional dimension and proves to be valuable. His neighbours are not only good companions, but also sources of knowledge, as they have been shepherds on the pastures for decades. The shared profession fosters a valuable bond.

This collaboration also becomes evident during sheep shearing. As it is time-consuming to do this alone, shepherds come together for this task. In my diary, I documented my experience participating in a shearing event as following:

Saturday was "la tonte" and I will never forget it. All the tables were put outside to eat under the roof. We had eggs, bacon (from the pig outside), baguette and red wine as breakfast. I realised that there were many shepherds, and I sat next to a vegetable grower. I joined in helping with the cooking together with some friends of the shepherds [7] and later observed the sheep shearing. [..] It resembled a barber shop: more than ten shepherds shearing simultaneously. After finishing, we gathered to eat in front of a cabin. Of course, we drank pastis and they conversed in Basque. We first had pâté with bread, and then soup with potatoes, mushrooms, carrot, and lamb meat. At one point, someone grabbed an accordion, and they played Basque music. The first song was "Xalbadorren Heriotzean"[3].

Figure 2. *Sheep shearing in Northern Basque Country*

[3] The song Xalbadorren Heriotzean is written after the death of the Basque shepherd Xalbador in 1976.

Shepherds meet one another during shearing days, turning these gatherings into social events. They share stories and create memories. Each week, a different shepherd has the flock sheared, and they take turns organising the event. As the diary fragment illustrates, the local culture plays an important role in the shepherding community. Communal meals, conversations in the local language, and singing local songs are all part of the experience. As I noticed, even those who are not originally from the region are actively introduced to the traditional customs. These social interactions and sense of community contrast with the stereotypical image of shepherding as solitary, silent work. Instead, they showcase a lively social community where local traditions take centre stage.

4.2 Transport and tourist relations

Transport plays a fundamental role in the pastoral world of the Pyrenees Mountains, connecting shepherds and their flock to the outside world and facilitating the movement of goods, equipment, and provisions. In accessible areas, mainly in Northern Basque Country, vehicles are a form of transportation. In more remote terrains in the mountains where cabins are located far from accessible roads, traditional methods of transportation, such as mules and donkeys, are still employed. With limited means of transportation, shepherds in these high mountains depend on muleteers to transport their goods.

Muleteers are often seen as vital members of the shepherd's network as they play a crucial role in the mountainous regions. These individuals bring not only essential supplies like fresh food but also transport cheese as not every shepherd has a cheese cellar in the mountains. In the case of Josephine they came weekly to the cabin [8]. Upon arrival at the shepherd's cabin, the muleteers carefully stack the cheese in bags and secure them within transport frames fastened to their donkey. They bring the cheese to a lower altitude where the optimal conditions for cheese ripening can be found.

Beyond their functional role in the transportation of cheese and fresh food, muleteers hold significant social value in the shepherding community, acting as a bridge between shepherds and the outside world. As they traverse the mountainous terrain, their donkeys carry more than just provision; they transport stories and information. Muleteers visit different shepherds and collect thereby information of what is going on. While having lunch with the shepherds, the muleteers share these stories about other shepherds and about the happenings in the village and discuss topics such as the presence of the bear. Gossip is spread across the table and transported to the next shepherds. The muleteers thereby have an

important role within shepherding relations. Muleteers, with their frequent visits to various shepherds, become gatherers of knowledge, becoming aware of the happenings in the surrounding areas.

Charlotte described the relation between shepherds and muleteers as following:

"It is a connection, shepherds are working with the "muletage". The shepherd needs the muleteer and the muleteer needs the shepherd, so it is also like two jobs that co-exist. It is a team".

This quote illustrates the interdependence of the relationship. Shepherds are part of a wider network and because of the muleteers, have access to the provisions which can be found in the villages. The muleteers are dependent on the shepherds in their job. Shepherd Xabier emphasised his awareness of these interconnections within the pastoral world by stating that shepherds do not work alone, but need other people and to those people they need to show respect.

However, the mountain pastures are not only walked by shepherds and muleteers, but also tourists enjoy their days in the mountains. They are often curious, want to get to know the shepherd and ask questions. The engagement with tourists who buy cheese or participate in a transhumance not only provides an economic benefit (Stolton et al., 2019), but also contributes to the preservation of the cultural heritage associated with shepherding as the presence of tourists allows for a sharing of knowledge and traditions. However, the shepherds I lived with did not always like the presence of tourists as they can act invasive and sometimes leave trash behind. According to shepherdess Nathalie, shepherding means only seeing ewes and tourists. On hot days they tap water at the cabin and could buy cheese if the shepherd sells it. As outside the pastoral season some of the cabins are also open for hikers to pass the night, tourists have in mind that it is a public space and sometimes enter the cabin without permission of the shepherd.

4.3 Labour relations

Shepherding is often referred to as more than just a job; it is seen as a way of life (Archer 2018; Palladino 2018). Shepherds consistently devote themselves to caring for their flock, becoming central figures in their lives. However, the concept of shepherding as a lifestyle is challenged by salaried shepherds working in the Ossau-Iraty region. These shepherds often take temporary care of flocks owned by sheep farmers, forming a working relationship with

them. This paragraph explores the presence of salaried shepherds and examines their relationship with sheep farmers.

In the past, in the Ossau-Iraty region, the responsibility of guarding the flock in the mountains and seeking shelter in cabins fell upon the youngest son or unmarried family members, while the rest of the family worked on the farm (O'Rourke et al., 2016). However, as Emma from *Bourse d'emploi des bergers* argues, over the past decades, it has become less common for all family members to be involved in the sheep business or available to stay in the cabin or work on the farm. As a result, the constant observation of the flock, which was prevalent in the past, is no longer guaranteed. Nevertheless, continuous supervision remains desirable.

In recent decades, Emma explains, an increasing number of salaried shepherds have taken over the responsibility of the sheep farmers and stayed in the mountains to care for the flocks. From the five shepherds with whom I lived together during my fieldwork, three are salaried shepherds. These shepherds have different motivations but share a desire to be in the mountains and work with the ewes. According to Emma, there is something unique about shepherding that attracts salaried shepherds to this profession. She states:

"Being a shepherd are gestures, things that have been done for a hundred, a thousand years. The accommodation has changed, the mountains can be different, sometimes there are roads, but being a shepherd means taking your shepherds' crook, going accompanying ewes with your dog and often doing the manual milking by hand. These are things that they did as always".

The fact that shepherding is an ancient tradition, following in the footsteps of previous shepherds, is one reason why people become salaried shepherds. Emma explains that these shepherds often have no previous connection to sheep farmer families and come from regions outside the Pyrenees Mountains. Many of them work as shepherds for only a few years before either establishing their own farms or transitioning to other job sectors. Some of them have attended shepherd schools, while others start without prior experience in herding, milking, and cheese-making. What used to be an annual job and a lifestyle deeply intertwined with family relations now appears to be evolving into a division between the role of the sheep farmer and the seasonal work of the salaried shepherd. Nonetheless, both parties are connected through their working relationship. Once a while, sheep farmers ascend the mountain to give medical care to the ewes and sometimes transport sick ewes to the farm.

Caring for a flock that does not belong to them entails significant responsibility for salaried shepherds. As the flock holds a central place in the lives of the sheep farmers, the shepherds strive to keep the ewes healthy. However, accidents can occur, ewes may fall ill, and cheese production can be affected by unforeseen circumstances. Charlotte, a salaried shepherdess, experienced the impact of her work on her relationship with the sheep farmer when she had an accident resulting in the death of three ewes. She expressed her feelings in a text message to me:

"It was very hard because it made me so sad and nervous because Xabier, [the sheep farmer], loves them so much and was really mad."

Caring for something that is not one's own may entail a greater sense of responsibility compared to caring for one's own flock.

Given the significant responsibility involved in the job of a salaried shepherd, they are compensated for their work. However, as Emma argues, payment can sometimes be a contentious issue. From the perspective of some sheep farmers, being a shepherd in the mountains is like having a vacation compared to the work on the farm. Consequently, paying someone who appears to be on holiday can be challenging for them to accept. Moreover, the fact that salaried shepherds have the right to weekend off, often the sheep farmer will then take care in the meantime, can be challenging for them to accept. Sheep farmers in the Ossau-Iraty region often come from generations of sheep farming families and are accustomed to working seventy-hour weeks (O'rourke et al., 2016). On the other hand, the salaried shepherds, who often do not come from farming backgrounds and require income to sustain themselves, struggle to understand the attitudes of the sheep farmers. For example, shepherdess Juliette questioned her low salary compared to that of other shepherds, and the sheep farmer responded by stating that she was already too expensive.

In summary, the presence of salaried shepherds provides opportunities for sheep farmers in need of individuals to care for their flocks. Salaried shepherds assume responsibility for flocks that are not their own, temporarily live in the mountain, and partake in an ancient tradition. However, due to differences in background and norms between the shepherds and sheep farmers, misunderstandings and tensions can arise.

4.4 Gender relations: feminisation of shepherding

The last three decades have witnessed a remarkable transformation in the traditionally male-dominated profession of shepherding in the Pyrenees Mountains, with the emergence of women participating in the profession (Fleury, 2015). This shift challenges long-standing gender norms and opens up new avenues for dialogue and exploration. Presently, as Emma explains, women constitute 50% of salaried shepherds. This paragraph sheds light on the evolving dynamics of gender roles.

Mobility is a relational and gendered process (Reeves, 2011). Worldwide, pastoralism has often been connected to masculine notions. For example in Sardinia, women tended to stay at one place doing agricultural work and taking care of the household while the men took care of the flock (Mientjes, 2010). However, the case of the Sami in Scandinavia shows that there are examples of pastoral groups wherein the women have a central role in mobility (Kylli, 2021). In the past, in the Ossau-Iraty region, shepherding was commonly undertaken by the youngest son of the family, often a celibate (O'rourke et al., 2016). The circumstances of shepherding have undergone significant changes over time, making it more accessible to women. Improved infrastructure, including larger cabins and modern facilities, along with the use of machinery, have reduced the profession's reliance on physical strength and made it more suitable for women. Furthermore, according to Emma, there is now a communal understanding that women can work as shepherdesses and stay in the mountains.

The feminisation of shepherding has several implications. Women enter a world traditionally dominated by men, and although most sheep farmers and shepherds seem to welcome their presence as Emma argues, the shepherdesses often feel the need to prove themselves due to their gender. They encounter challenges in conforming to shepherding values associated with men, such as speed and perceived hard work. The example of Josephine illustrates this insight: although she did not want to compete, she felt the need to demonstrate that she was working hard and attempted to milk faster [9]. If she would finish milking by hand earlier than her neighbours who milked with a machine but started later it gave her a satisfying feeling. The pressure to demonstrate their dedication and skills can lead to feelings of insecurity and increased efforts to prove themselves. During my visit, her feelings of insecurity about what other people would think of her as a young woman were increased when she heard that people were talking bad about her and her friend Charlotte in terms of their work skills. It made Josephine emotional and we spoke about what it means to be a shepherdess in comparison to being a shepherd. According to her it sometimes means

dealing with misogyny and jokes about women. She extended her boundaries in comparison with how she would react at home to the same comments. Later, in the diary that was shared with me by Charlotte, I found the following passage about this incident:

"While drinking tea I think of Josephine who is finishing milking soon, at 10am. She has really made great progress. My God, bless her and do her good, that she can detach herself from the wickedness that is said about her / us and that she clings to what is true, honourable and worthy".

The two women, who both had not received complaints about their abilities from their bosses, tried to not let these comments impact their work and their self-confidence. In general, shepherdesses tend to get inspiration and support from other women. They see how other women succeed in their jobs which gives them confidence. As Castelló and Romano (2021) argue about Spanish shepherdesses, shepherdesses tend to show solidarity to other shepherdesses.

At the shearing event I participated in, one shepherdess shared how she noticed that there were a lot of women shearing sheep. She told me that in the past shearing was really a men's role, while women did the cooking. It made her happy to meet other women during the shearing. In contrast to Josephine, she emphasised that she felt that women did not have to prove something in comparison to men. She perceived this as a positive, as women can act more calmly towards other people and animals.

In summary, the feminization of shepherding represents a significant shift in the traditionally male-dominated profession. This feminization of shepherding provides challenges, as shepherdesses often feel the need to prove themselves in a male-dominated environment. They may encounter insecurities, criticism, and prejudice based on their gender. Despite these challenges, shepherdesses find inspiration and support from each other, building solidarity within their community.

4.5 Conclusionary reflections

While shepherding is often associated with solitude due to the remote and isolated nature of the work (Archer, 2018), it is essential to recognize that solitude is not the only aspect of human experience within the shepherding community. The human relations within the shepherding community in the Ossau-Iraty region are characterised by interdependence,

cooperation and cultural significance.

Shepherds rely on each other for mutual assistance, sharing knowledge which fosters a sense of interdependence and communal cooperation, but also occasionally friction. Hereby traditional knowledge is transmitted from older generations to younger generations and local cultural practices such as singing specific songs are actively performed. People from outside the Pyrenees, mainly salaried shepherds and shepherdesses are introduced to these cultural habits. The interdependence between shepherds, sheep farmers, muleteers and tourists creates economic and social ties between the groups. The presence of salaried shepherds challenges the traditional concept of shepherding as a way of life, bringing both opportunities and potential tensions between different backgrounds and norms. Furthermore, the increasing participation of women in this traditionally male-dominated profession challenges long-standing gender norms, leading to solidarity and support among shepherdesses.

These human relations within the shepherding community highlight the value of human interdependence. Particularly in the context of shepherding, where human encounters are limited, it is crucial to recognize that these relations play a significant role in facilitating and enriching the shepherding experience. The interdependence and cooperation among the (salaried) shepherds and shepherdesses, sheep farmers, muleteers and tourists create a lively shepherding community. By acknowledging and appreciating the importance of human interdependence, we gain insight into the strength and resilience that can be fostered through collaboration, support, and the preservation of cultural heritage. This understanding challenges the prevailing culture of individualization in broader society by showcasing the strength and resilience that can be nurtured through collective efforts and interconnectedness.

Chapter 5. The more-than-human world: intimate shepherding relations beyond the human

The current era we live in, often referred to as the Anthropocene (Lewis & Maslin, 2015), tends to adopt an anthropocentric worldview where culture is separated from nature (Descola, 2013). This approach places humans at the centre, downgrading the more-than-human world to a mere backdrop (Knight, 2020). Human exceptionalism often leads to the mistreatment and exploitation of the more-than-human (Hodgetts & Lorimer, 2020). When applying an anthropocentric approach to shepherding, it positions the shepherd as the central figure while perceiving the ewes as mere followers and sources of production. Similarly, the mountain landscape is reduced to a mere resource.

However, adopting a more-than-human perspective (Ingold, 2013) unveils a different reality, one where nature and culture are intertwined instead of divided. This chapter responds to Ingold's (2013) call for "studying beyond the human" and explores the more-than-human relations within shepherding. Shifting our perspective to acknowledge the subjectivity and interconnectedness of the more-than-human world offers a deeper understanding of shepherding practices and challenges the prevailing anthropocentric worldview.

In this chapter three different non-human relations within the shepherding world are presented. The first paragraph discusses the relation between the shepherd and the ewes. The second paragraph discusses the relationship between the shepherd and the mountain landscape. The third paragraph discusses the relation between the shepherd and the cabin as the cabin is part of the landscape. These three relations are featured as they seem to stand out in the daily lives of shepherds and differ from each other in their type of relationship. However, also other interesting relations come to the fore, for instance the relation between shepherds and dogs, but those are not included in this study. Additionally, this research does not delve into the relations between more-than-humans.

5.1 Shepherds and the ewes

In the Anthropocene era, non-human animals are increasingly viewed as objects (Knight, 2020). They are seen primarily as sources of production, such as milk, meat or other bodily parts. The relationship exhibits a parasitic character, where humans benefit at the expense of non-human animals (Gorman, 2019). Often, the milk and meat become disconnected from the living non-human animal (Knight, 2020). However, in the Ossau-Iraty region, shepherds

challenge this attitude and form emotional connections with their ewes, showing respect and trust towards the flock. While milk production is an important aspect of their work, they establish intimate relationships with the ewes, which will be discussed in this paragraph.

The shepherds and the ewes have daily encounters influenced by various factors, including guarding, medical care, and milking practices. The shepherd's actions shape the mobility of the ewes resulting in daily encounters (Hodgetts & Lorimer, 2018). It could be argued that the ewes live their days in synchronisation with the shepherd. However, the shepherds themselves admitted that their mobility depends on the flock. When the ewes rise in the early morning, the shepherds also awaken, and they rest together when darkness falls [10]. Thus, instead of solely asserting that the ewes live in the rhythm of the shepherd, one could argue that the shepherds live their days in the rhythm of the ewes. They form a new rhythm depending on each other.

Living in harmony with each other, the shepherd and ewes become interconnected. Haraway (2008) emphasises the interconnectivity in human and non-human animal relationships, suggesting that becoming is always "becoming-with". The shepherd and the ewes become intertwined, and if "what human or non-human animals have become depends on whom they are with" (Ingold 2013, 21), then the shepherd becomes a shepherd because of the existence of ewes, and the flock becomes a flock because of the shepherd. The shepherd shapes the flock and the flock shapes the shepherd.

Moreover, the relationship can be seen as one of mutual dependence. The shepherds are primarily dependent on the ewes for the milk they produce. During summer grazing, the ewes are often milked and impregnated to ensure a supply of milk for the following year. However, the shepherds showed another form of dependency, one where the agency of the ewes comes to the fore. Shepherdess Charlotte reflected on this in her diary, stating:

"*Anyway, I was also thinking today that leading a flock was not a one-way street where the shepherdess guides the ewes because she would know everything, but that she needs to trust the ewes. I mean, that's clearly my case. I need to trust them because they know the mountain better than me".*

She highlights the importance of taking the ewes and their behaviour seriously, acknowledging their knowledge. As she is a salaried shepherdess, it is her first summer on this particular pasture. However, the ewes have grazed on the meadows before and thereby know the pastures better than she. By treating them as knowledgeable beings, shepherds view

the ewes as subjects rather than objects, challenging the anthropocentric notion of the shepherd as central and the ewes as passive followers (Knight 2020; Adams et al. 2023). The ewes are viewed as valued actors in their partnership with the shepherds, making the shepherds to some extent dependent on the ewes' intelligence.

Figure 3. *Charlotte and her flock who she views as knowledgeable subjects.*

Not only the shepherds are dependent on the ewes, but the ewes also rely on the shepherds. In addition to guiding the flock with the help of a dog, shepherds care for the well-being of the ewes. They strive to have healthy, beautiful, and, as one shepherd argued, happy ewes. The shepherd's job involves being close to the sheep and continually observing them. Through this shared time, shepherds become familiar with individual characteristics and habits. They are sensitive to changes in behaviour, observe lameness, and even use other senses such as smell to identify issues such as larvae or infections. Shepherdess Elodie describes how her relation with the flock as a shepherdess differs from her boyfriend's relation with the flock who is a sheep farmer (meaning that he is not continually with the flock) as following:

"I think the sheep farmers are not as emotionally attached. I'm not sure how to say it. It's more like they work with the sheep, but it's not like they will go and pet them or something like that. Maybe they also know less about their habits, like where they will eat or be in the mountains".

She explained that because the shepherds are with the flocks all day, they start to notice habits which are hard to notice if you see the flock once in a while. In line with this, is the experience of sheep farmer Markel. It was his first year as a shepherd and he already started to notice how continual presence influences his knowledge about the behaviour of his flock, stating:

"Previously, my sheep would go to the mountains, and it would rain, but I wasn't there to see them or anticipate any storms. [...] For example, when there was heavy rain, I couldn't see how my sheep reacted, or when it was hot, I could only imagine that they sought shade. But I couldn't directly see my sheep's reactions to the weather".

Emel et al. (2015) argue that close relationships with animals can benefit the animals by improving the shepherds' understanding of their behaviour. By closely observing and interacting with the ewes, shepherds can detect behavioural differences and respond accordingly, which ultimately benefits the ewes (Adams et al., 2023). Shepherds develop skills in observing and knowing how to anticipate what they see. The importance of observation comes also to the fore in the expression "the eyes of a shepherd", which shepherdess Juliette shared with me.

However, shepherds go beyond mere observation to comprehend the needs and desires of the ewes. Shepherdess Charlotte reflects on the communication with ewes, suggesting that one must "*feel them, observe them, almost absorb them, and put yourself in their place*" to develop closeness and understand their needs, feelings, and thoughts. This absorption of the ewes can be seen as a form of assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988), a herding assemblage (Krauss, 2018), where the shepherd strives to transcend the species barrier and comprehend the other. Shepherding entails not only physical proximity but also mental closeness. To paraphrase Ingold (2013a) on pastoral Sami, shepherds have "ewe on the brain".

The interdependency and closeness to the ewes go together with intimate feelings. One shepherd described his relationship with the ewes as a mutual love story, emphasising that love is an essential element of shepherding. Palladino (2018, 124) asserts that shepherds'

care for the ewes is not solely driven by economic or utilitarian concerns; it is also an intimate, personal, and aesthetic relationship. Shepherds pay close attention to the ewes and care for them holistically.

Several shepherds describe their relationship with the flock in terms of family or friends. Markel expresses:

"*It is part of my family, my flock. Maybe not individually, but my flock is something that is mine, and I love them. I think my flock of sheep is the basis of my farm and everything*".

Similarly, Elodie articulates a sense of bonding, stating:

"I think the shepherd is the one who is going to take care of the flock, of all the sheep. It's as if you are the father of the family, almost. The father of the house. After that, they become your children, almost; you'll take care of them".

These feelings can be understood as Govindrajan (2015, 505) describes it: "a sense of shared kinship fostered through the embodied experience of everyday entanglement in relations of care, attention, and subjection." Shepherds consider the ewes as kin and feel a profound responsibility towards them, demonstrating how bonds and feelings of responsibility can extend beyond the human realm (Haraway, 2008).

In conclusion, through their consistent attentiveness and close proximity, shepherds are able to develop intimate relationships with the ewes. The ewes are regarded as knowledgeable beings and are sometimes seen as kin, challenging the boundaries between species. The shepherds and the ewes create what Gorman (2019) defines as a mutual relationship between humans and animals. In the Anthropocene era, where non-human animals are often objectified and disconnected from humans, the shepherds' relationship with their ewes provides an alternative model. It emphasises the importance of trust and care in human-animal relationships.

The next paragraph will make clear which role the landscape plays in the relation between the shepherd and the ewes.

5.2 Shepherd-ewe-landscape relationship

Throughout history, humans have engaged with the landscape, but in recent times characterised by anthropocentrism, human intervention in the landscape has intensified, resulting in rapid environmental changes (Descola, 2013). An anthropocentric perspective

perceives the landscape merely as a backdrop with available resources (Hastrup, 2013). In contrast, this paragraph explores how shepherds in the Ossau-Iraty region form an intimate connection with both the landscape and the weather.

Shepherding entails more than just a relationship between a shepherd and the flock. According to Gray (2014, 221), “human-animal relations occur in a specific location, which is more than a passive background and should be explicitly acknowledged to understand the trinary relationship between place, humans, and non-human beings”. Charlotte explained that shepherding is not only guardianship, but also really working with mountains. In her diary, she writes the following about the entanglements between the flock, the landscape and the weather:

“The thing that seems essential to me in the profession of shepherd and livestock farmer is observation. Not only of the sheep and their characteristics, behaviour, but also of the context, the environment, the landscape, the weather, the grass, the water, etc. Without observation, it seems impossible to me to manage a flock well because understanding and communication are the fruits of observation”.

Thus, shepherding can be seen as an entangled relation between the shepherd, the flock and the wider natural context. According to Despret and Meuret (2016), the flock emerges through the interaction of the shepherd, the sheep, and the landscape, and their interactions mutually transform one another. As Ingold (1993, 156) puts it, "the landscape is the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them." Hence, the landscape is not merely a backdrop for the flock and the shepherd but an essential element in their dynamic relationship.

Shepherding is often discussed in the context of nature conservation (O'Rourke et al. 2016; Scoones 2022). As shepherd Markel shared,

"I know that our work is beneficial for the environment too. By grazing the mountains, there is more photosynthesis, more grass, and better soil absorption”.

He emphasises that this will not change the environmental problems, but he admits that he is at least proud to do something. Unlike machines, sheep can transport seeds, thus promoting biodiversity (Scoones, 2022). Additionally, it fosters a deeper connection between humans, non-human animals, and the landscape, challenging the nature-culture divide (Descola, 2013). However, during conversations with the shepherds, nature conservation did not

emerge as a prominent theme. The primary motivation for grazing the sheep on mountain pastures in the Pyrenees region is to allow the grass on their farms to grow and produce hay for winter feed (López-i-Gelats et al., 2015). Given that most farms in the region are small, sheep farmers must work with the mountains and follow the availability of grass. The shepherds perceive mountain grasses as beneficial for the sheep, resulting in higher-quality milk. Nonetheless, as the shepherds rely on the mountain pastures for their livelihoods, they hold deep respect for the mountains. They possess knowledge about the mountain landscape and nature conservation, considering environmental stewardship as a positive addition to their primary focus on tending to the flock.

However, the relationship with the mountains is dynamic and at times erratic. The landscape conditions significantly impact the experiences of the shepherds. Some mountain pastures are treacherously steep, leading shepherds to move quickly and maintain a controlled pose. They rely on their shepherd's crook for balance, occasionally playing with it as if they were marionettes. On rocky surfaces, shepherds avoid walking on a lower or higher level than the ewes to prevent triggering rock avalanches. The shepherd's role is to guide the ewes safely through the mountain pastures. A text message from shepherdess Charlotte highlighted that this task is not always self-evident. She shared the following:

"I had a sheep accident, and three of them fell from a rock and died. [...] I shed many tears, but I accepted that it is better for a sheep to die than for me. It's also a part of being a shepherd".

This incident demonstrates that shepherding is far more than strolling through meadows; it requires constant focus on the flock, the landscape, and oneself. Through shepherding, shepherds forge closer relationships with the landscape. Hereby they do not only form a physical relationship with the landscape, but it could also strengthen spiritual experiences. Charlotte makes this clear in her diary by stating:

"The mountain makes me so happy, so full of discovery and joy. It is as if it is inexhaustible and eternal. It brings me back to who God is, an inexhaustible and eternal being. The creation of the creator".

This spiritual sense is understandable in the unpredictable, all-encompassing context of the mountains.

Shepherds and the ewes are not only vulnerable within the landscape but also face

risks due to changing weather conditions. Weather in the mountains is unpredictable and can rapidly shift. Thunderstorms and hailstorms are not uncommon. The weather profoundly influences the shepherd's experience, with rain causing discomfort and coldness and too much sun makes shepherds watch out for sunstroke. Weather conditions also impact the behaviour of the flock. On sunny days, the ewes typically rest in the shade of trees, allowing the shepherd to keep a certain distance. However, in rainy or foggy conditions, the shepherd needs to remain closer to the flock, relying on other senses. When thick fog obscures the flock, shepherds actively listen for the sound of the ewes' bells and walk toward the noise.

Figure 4. *Shepherdess Bernadette, shepherd Alexandre and student shepherd Théo try to find their way through the fog to bring the cheese to their cheese cellar in the mountains*

Listening to the bells is not only functional, but can be seen as an emotionally triggering experience. Markel stated the following:

"I put bells, big bells, [making the sound of a bell: deloungdeloun], the sound, I love it! And to see my sheep like that with the sound, it made me very emotional. Really, yes, really".

The fact that the bells are from his great grandparents who also ascended the mountain pastures with their flock, triggered a lot of positive emotions in him. Similarly, shepherdess

Charlotte was intrigued by the tones of the bells, mainly how big mountain rocks could transform those sounds into what resembled a harmonious melody.

The experiences in the mountains shape shepherds as they learn to survive alone in this environment (Vidal-González, 2013). As Ingold (2010, 122) phrases, "Though it may not exactly melt into air, the body certainly walks, breathes, feels, and knows in it. Thus is knowledge formed along paths of movement in the weather-world". This process of acquiring knowledge while navigating the landscape and weather comes to the forefront in Charlotte's diary. She writes:

"Grant my legs the energy they need and my intelligence to find the way through this fog. I realise that being in the fog helps me manage my stress. It's a valuable exercise because it compels me to remember that there is always a way out, always a passage, and always the mountains and the sky, even if they are momentarily invisible".

Orienting oneself in fog is a challenging task, but Charlotte learns and evolves as she walks along. Shepherding leaves no choice regarding going or staying—it forces shepherds to accept the weather, trust in their own survival strategies, and rely on the mountains, even when the path ahead is invisible. The mountainous environment obligates the shepherd to accept what is, adapt, and engage in a symbiotic relationship—what Haraway (2008) calls "becoming-with"—with the landscape and the weather conditions. In a similar vein, shepherdess Josephine phrases her relationship with the mountain landscape as being part of the mountain [11]. She explained that this feeling of being part of the mountain is particularly palpable in the evening, when it is getting dark, the people are leaving and there are more animals. This gives her a sense that everything is good and calm.

In conclusion, there is an entangled relationship between the shepherd, the flock and the landscape. Shepherding is not merely a profession of guardianship but involves observation and understanding of the wider natural world including weather conditions. The experiences in the mountains shape shepherds and contribute to their knowledge formation while forging a deeper connection to the landscape and weather. It includes the attitude of adapting to the conditions of the wider natural world.

As the cabins where the shepherds reside are part of the landscape, the next paragraph will delve into the role of the cabin in shepherding.

5.3 The vital role of cabins

Connection is not only felt to the flock and the mountain landscape, but as shepherds live in cabins on the mountains, they also become related to these. Initially, the importance of the cabin in shepherding may not be immediately apparent. The focus tends to be on the outdoor activities and the beauty of the landscape. Even when shepherds are inside the cabin, they often gaze through the windows to observe what is happening outside. Additionally, shepherding is often associated with mobility, while cabins are linked to immobility. However, the cabin plays a crucial role in shepherding. It serves as a place for rest, warmth, and cooking. Without this shelter, shepherding would be significantly more challenging. One could argue that the cabin acts as a mooring, as proposed by Sheller and Urry (2006), emphasising that mobilities are never without their anchor points. This paragraph discusses the vital role of cabins in shepherding in the Ossau-Iraty region.

There are two types of shepherd cabins scattered throughout the Pyrenean mountain landscape: old cabins once inhabited by previous generations of shepherds, and more modern cabins used by current shepherds. The older cabins, constructed from mountain stones, blend harmoniously into the mountain landscape. Only upon closer inspection does one realise that these stones form a sheltered space. It is intriguing to consider how people lived in these small spaces, particularly during harsh weather conditions. From the inside, they resemble caves and are now either empty, used for storage, or, as in the case of shepherdess Josephine, repurposed as a henhouse for her chickens. On the other hand, the modern cabins are larger, featuring straight walls, separate rooms, and windows. Some even have electricity generated by solar panels. Shepherds have access to showers, toilets, and dedicated cooking spaces, making their living conditions more comfortable than in the past.

Figure 5. *Two shepherds' cabins, with in the middle of the picture the modern cabin and, a bit more on the left, a former used cabin*

However, not all modern cabins offer the same level of amenities, resulting in varying degrees of livability. For instance, in one cabin, I had the luxury of watching Netflix and enjoying hot showers just like at home. In contrast, another cabin required me to mix hot and cold water in a jug to have a shower. In this latter cabin, one could almost sense the lingering presence of previous shepherds. The mattresses were sagging, there were old figurines, and there was a distinct scent that hinted at a history of habitation. On the opposite end of the spectrum, there was the cabin of a shepherding couple who proudly referred to themselves as shepherds 2.0. Their cabin was comfortable and included technological conveniences. It even had a simple washing machine, providing a distinct holiday house ambiance.

Figure 6. *Inside two shepherds' cabins. The left picture shows a bucket with water presenting a fridge and a water pot presenting the shower. The right picture shows a cabin with better conditions*

However, it is important to note that for the shepherds, the cabin is not simply a holiday house. While it does provide a space for leisure activities such as dining, sleeping, and gathering around the fireplace, it is also a working space. Often, cheese is made in the cabin, and lunch breaks may be interrupted for various tasks related to the ewes or to attend to tourists interested in purchasing cheese. During the off-season, some cabins are open to hikers for overnight stays, further blurring the boundaries of the space. This can lead to tourists entering the cabin without the shepherd's permission, using the tap water, and treating it as a shared space. As the shepherd season comes to an end, the cabin is emptied and prepared for the winter, with shepherds sometimes using a helicopter to transport their personal belongings and making space for hikers.

Residing in the cabins is closely intertwined with the process of creating a sense of home. For example, shepherdess Josephine experienced a feeling of homecoming when she returned to her cabin after a year [12]:

"When I arrived here in June, when we did the helicopter stuff, I really felt like home, I was like, oh I am back! [...] when I was here on the terrace. I don't know [what it was exactly, but I think], the atmosphere. But it was without the sheep, just like the house".

Similarly, Charlotte shows this appreciation of her daily life residing in the mountain cabin:

"I enjoy being here, in my bed, in my little house, far from the world and the internet, the city, and the speed. I appreciate being in a new rhythm, aligned with the days, the sun, the animals, and the weather".

According to Duyvendak (2011), feelings of home are shaped by different elements, including familiarity, safe haven, and a sense of personal expression. Familiarity with the cabin, having comforts such as a fridge, shower, and oven, and the ability to express oneself as a shepherdess contributed to Josephine's and Charlotte's feeling of home.

In contrast, shepherdess Juliette was dissatisfied with her cabin, particularly due to the lack of comfort. For example, the absence of a fridge posed challenges as food easily spoils on hot days, and there are no nearby supermarkets in the mountains. The scarcity of resources in these remote areas forces shepherds to become more self-sufficient and autonomous. Shepherdess Elodie explained that she realised that in the cities humans rely too much on superficial things. In the mountains she learned how to become more autonomous, cooking with her reserves and making her own bread and making yoghurt without an electric yoghurt maker. This made her seem proud and satisfied.

It became apparent that even while shepherds are away from the mountains, they feel a certain longing to the mountain lifestyle. Several shepherds emphasised that they enjoyed their time in the mountains as a shepherd more than their lives down the mountains. In the case of Charlotte while living city life the other seasons of the year, every week she thinks about the pastures as the mountain lifestyle is such a powerful experience for her, being incredibly close to animals and nature. In the case of shepherdess Bernadette, next to the closeness to the wider natural world, she enjoys the fact that there is no advertisement and less human stimuli in the mountains. In a similar vein, Juliette states the following:

"You find yourself deep inside you, you learn to know yourself, within you. You are with you. No phone, girlfriends, parties, the stuff. It's connected to you, it's in the present moment, a lot in fact. This is what the population lacks, being in the present moment".

In conclusion, the shepherd's cabins in the Pyrenean mountain landscape serve as more than just physical shelters. They are integral to the shepherd's daily routines, a place of comfort and work, a source of longing and connection to the mountain lifestyle. The cabins not only anchor the shepherds but also provide a sense of home in a challenging profession intimately intertwined with the natural environment.

5.4 Conclusionary reflections

In this chapter, more-than-human relations within the shepherding world were central. Within the Ossau-Iraty region, shepherds develop intimate connections with not only the ewes but

also with the mountain landscape and their cabins. Shepherds have a tendency to approach the ewes as knowledgeable subjects or perhaps partners in the web of life. This perspective illustrates the interconnectedness of nature and culture. Shepherds live their days in the rhythm of the ewes, the weather and the mountain conditions. These are rhythms which are often ignored or undervalued in the Anthropocene, the current era wherein human rhythms and desires tend to be central. With their ability to form intimate relations with the more-than-human, shepherds are valuable actors with knowledge about the more-than-human.

By residing in a mountainous landscape, shepherds experience a way of life that differs from that of those residing in lower regions. The scarcity of resources in these remote areas forces shepherds to rely on themselves, fostering self-sufficiency and the recognition that effort is essential for accomplishing their goals. Even when they are away from the mountains, shepherds feel a deep longing for the pastures, the cabin and the flock, underscoring how the landscape influences their lifestyle and their connection to the broader natural world.

However, as Palladino (2018) argues, the more-than-human relations within shepherding should not be idealised or romanticised as shepherding is a form of livestock production. Therefore, the subsequent chapter will delve further into exploring how these intimate relationships between shepherds and their flock fit within the context of livestock production.

Chapter 6. Shepherding insights in terms of production

Figure 7. *A friend of shepherdess Juliette is visiting Juliette on the mountain pastures*

This image portrays shepherdess Juliette in Northern Basque Country as she tends to her flock in a meadow. A notable presence in the foreground is Juliette's friend, wearing dreadlocks, a custom colored t-shirt, an artistic vest and carrying a small bag. It is the button on this bag that captures attention, depicting an animal confined behind bars, accompanied by the words "égalité animale", meaning animal equality. This scene prompts contemplation on the relationship between shepherding and animal equality, delving into the ethical considerations underlying livestock production. Adopting a more-than-human perspective, shepherding as a livelihood strategy encompasses ethical dimensions and challenges that consider the welfare of the animals. This chapter aims to explore valuable lessons from shepherding practices in terms of production. The first paragraph presents the complexity between production on the one side and the respectful care for animals on the other side. The second paragraph presents the role of cheese in the relationship between shepherds, the flocks and the broader natural world.

6.1 Ethical dilemmas: balancing economics and animal welfare

In the Pyrenees Ossau-Iraty region, shepherding is a form of extensive livestock production focused on milk and cheese production. As discussed in Chapter 3, the relationship between shepherds and their ewes is characterised by interdependence, where shepherds regard their animals as knowledgeable subjects. However, it is essential to acknowledge that sheep farming is primarily driven by economic and consumption interests. When I asked student shepherd Théo why he wanted to become a shepherd, he emphasised the functional relationship, stating that working with sheep, raising them, and eventually having access to their meat and cheese made sense to him due to his enjoyment of consuming these products. The significance of economics becomes also clear, considering the loans shepherds often acquire from banks, which they must pay off.

Nevertheless, compared to industrial farming, shepherding demonstrates several ethical distinctions. Shepherd Markel clarifies that industrial farming subjects animals to a life confined within a building, devoid of natural light and grass. These animals are denied a natural environment and face high risks of diseases. He expresses frustration over the funding for industrial farming, highlighting the politicians' reluctance to acknowledge the reality of industrial farming. In contrast, his animals graze freely outdoors, and he refrains from using antibiotics. Moreover, he reflects on how he treats the animals and aims to give them a chance to live, even if their existence costs him money, stating:

"And there are many people who, if a ewe doesn't have a lamb for one year, she doesn't produce milk, wherefore they feed her for nothing. They don't accept that, they will remove her. There are many things like that they consider in terms of economics more than the bond they have with the ewes. Personally, I ***respect*** *the ewes, I can't do that".*

This illustrates how Markel does not prioritise maximising production but acknowledges the subjectivity of the animals. The ewes are more than just economic products to him. When asked about the origins of his values, Markel reveals that he unconsciously learned it from observing his father and grandfather's interactions with the animals. Moreover, his respect for the animals is further reinforced by the lineage of his flock to his grandparents' flock, connecting his farming practices to the past. Markel also recognizes the impact of his lifestyle on future generations, emphasising the importance of cherishing and caring for what we have. This perspective contributes to the debate on livestock farming, expanding the notion of care

beyond the self, other humans and animals, thus promoting a more inclusive approach to care (Nijland et al., 2021).

Similarly, salaried shepherdess Josephine sees value in extensive livestock farming. She emphasises the importance of supporting small farmers and expresses pride in contributing to their livelihoods. While she does not identify herself as an ecological militant, she believes that her work holds greater significance than merely abstaining from consuming meat during winter. To her, engaging in shepherding is an act of genuine support and contrasts with working for large corporations like Intermarché or Mc Donald's. She recognizes extensive livestock production as a viable alternative to industrial farming. However, she admits that she occasionally struggles with her desire to maximise milk production and cheese-making, which she reflects a poor mindset rooted in consumption and production maximisation. She argues that shepherds often discuss their size of flock and the volume of milk they produce, making it a collective challenge to resist the temptation of increasing production further. Josephine takes pride in the flock's owner for keeping his business small-scale.

During my observations, I noticed that within the production process, there is room for intimacy, attention, and appreciation for the animals. Milking by hand, a common practice in the Ossau-Iraty region, can be viewed as an intimate event, with the shepherd's hand touching the ewe's udder. The milk that flows into the bucket establishes a direct connection between the ewe and the product, fostering an individualised appreciation for each ewe [13]. An intimate moment arose when shepherdess Josephine and I turned our coffees into cappuccinos by directly pressing the milk into our glasses filled with coffee while milking. This practice creates a more localised and intimate experience, bringing us closer to the ewe. As this intimacy flows in both directions, during milking, shepherds are in close proximity to the ewes and can show affection, as depicted in the picture on the front page of this thesis.

This physical connection between the one who produces and the product, and the linked responsibility of the former over the latter, appears also in the expression "the killer needs to sit at the table" which a shepherdess shared with me. A friend of hers only eats meat when the one who slaughtered the animal is present. The product, in this case the meat, is not disconnected from the act of killing due to the presence of the killer. Although this does not benefit the non-human, the meat is at least approached as something which was a subject. Instead of seeing the ewes as meat or milk or totally disconnecting it, which is often the case in current society (Knight 2005; Holm & Møhl 2000), in the above mentioned examples the meat or the milk is directly referring to the ewes.

The sense of care, respect and intimacy within production processes, including the act of killing, that emerges in shepherding practices in the Ossau-Iraty region, exhibits similarities to the interactions between animals and certain indigenous or non-Western communities. Cunsolo et al. (2020) suggest that the Inuit's relationship with reindeer is one of interconnectedness with the animals, the land and the culture. Similarly, Govindrajan (2015) explores how the sacrifice of goats in India is central to establishing kinship between humans and goats, as the human awareness that the animals die for them fosters affective bonds. These examples demonstrate that intimacy within the production process is a phenomenon that extends across different cultures, highlighting the universality of the phenomenon of intimacy within production processes. This narrative of intimacy within production finds particular expression in the sale of the Ossau-Iraty cheese, which the subsequent paragraph will discuss.

6.2 Cheese narratives about human and more-than-human entanglements

The cheese produced in the Ossau-Iraty region goes beyond being a mere food product; it presents the shepherding lifestyle including its more-than-human entanglements. An Instagram (2023) post from Trevor Warmedahl, who visits and does research about shepherds and cheese all around the world, outlines this. He writes about one shepherd in Basque Country who says the following to his customers: "When you buy cheese, you aren't just buying food. You're buying a landscape, a culture, a tradition". According to Warmedahl, the cheese is "about hospitality, about how to treat people, livestock, the place where you live". This quote makes clear how the entanglement of livestock, humans and landscape is experienced and presented via the cheese selling. In essence, the cheese goes beyond being a simple dairy product. It becomes a conduit for connection- to the land, to the people, and to a way of life. It embodies values of sustainability, tradition, hospitality, inviting consumers to participate in a broader narrative. Also shepherd Markel actively shows the story behind his cheese by displaying a picture of his sheep grazing on mountain meadows while selling his cheese at a local market [14].

However, this narrative of the Ossau-Iraty cheese is not fixed as shows the example of Bernadette and Alexandre who imprint their cheese with a bear-paw to argue that the bear can co-exist with pastoralist practices. In an interview presented on the platform *Qui veut du fromage* (2017), Alexandre emphasises the importance of living in harmony with the environment, including the flora and fauna. He pleads the following:

"We live in a context where humans tend to degrade nature. Not supporting the presence of the bear means accepting the disappearance of one more species".

Thus, the cheese serves not only as a conduit for connection, presenting the shepherds' way of life, but also a platform for discussion on how to engage with the human and more-than-human world within the shepherding community. These shepherds show a more-than-human perspective that goes beyond the shepherds' connection with the flock and the mountain landscape.

6.3 Conclusionary reflections

This chapter started with an image portraying a scene which prompted contemplation on shepherding and animal equality. The intimate relations with the ewes make us reflect on the interactions with animals in terms of livestock production. This chapter emphasised complexity and ambivalence of production on the one side and respectful care for the animals on the other hand. Shepherding in the Ossau-Iraty region is highlighted by an intimate entangled relation between shepherds, the flock, the broader natural world and the final product. The cheese produced in this region goes beyond being a simple dairy product; it becomes a symbol of connection to the landscape, culture, and tradition, embodying values of sustainability and hospitality. Additionally, the cheese serves as a platform for discussions on coexistence with the more-than-human world, as exemplified by shepherds imprinting bear-paw symbols on their cheese to advocate for the preservation of species.

The shepherds actively participate in every stage of the supply chain, from milking and cheese production to its sale, serving as a vital link connecting the ewes, the landscape, and the consumers. This highlights the significance of local supply chains in provoking connectedness to the wider natural world.

Chapter 7. Conclusion: shepherding spaces of care

This thesis delved into the interconnections between humans and the broader natural world in the context of shepherding. The central research question: *"How do human and more-than-human relations produce lifeworlds of shepherds and shepherdesses in the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty cheese region?"*, guided the exploration of the essence of these interconnected relationships. The non-representational approach of this ethnography acknowledged the limitations in fully capturing the reality and experiences of shepherding. This chapter offers a conclusive response to the research question, along with a discussion of recommendations, limitations, and future prospects for further research.

In the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region, human and more-than-human relations play a crucial role in shaping the lifeworlds of shepherds and shepherdesses engaged in sheep farming and cheese production. Their lifeworlds are intimately connected with the natural environment, the flock, and traditional practices. (Salaried) shepherds and shepherdesses collaborate with neighbouring shepherds, forming supportive communities in which local cultural identities occupy an important position. By engaging in cooperation and interacting with sheep farmers, muleteer, and tourists, they establish a network of interdependencies that sustain their livelihoods. The increasing participation of women in shepherding represents a significant shift in the traditionally male-dominated profession. This shift has brought about both challenges and support for shepherdesses. While shepherding may not be perceived as a social endeavour, these insights have shed a different light on the perception of human solitude in the shepherding world.

At the heart of these lifeworlds lies the bond between shepherds and their flock. Shepherds holistically take care of the flock, viewing the ewes as subjects rather than objects, regularly even as kinship. This connection extends to the surrounding landscape, as shepherds harmonise with the rhythm of the mountain landscape and the weather. Living in the cabins evokes a sense of home, while the absence from the mountains during the other seasons creates a longing for the pastures. These interdependent and intimate relationships with the wider natural world provide valuable insight into our interactions with nature amidst an era of anthropocentrism, particularly when contrasted with industrial livestock farming and urban landscapes or rhythms.

When it comes to livestock production, shepherding emphasises a strong connection with the natural world through continuous presence and observation of the flock and the landscape. This close relationship allows shepherds to understand animal behaviour and

landscape conditions. Shepherding cultivates resilience and adaptability in the face of unpredictable weather, landscape challenges, and animal behaviour. While shepherding is primarily driven by economic interests, these close connections foster a deep respect for the flock and the landscape. Moreover, the significance of Ossau-Iraty cheese extends beyond being a mere dairy product, as it acknowledges the interdepencies involved in shepherding that go beyond human involvement. Shepherds take part in every step of the local supply chain and thereby connect the consumers to the wider natural world, including the ewes. In contrast, industrialist farming often prioritises large-scale operations and machinery, leading to a disconnection from the flock, the landscape and the consumer. It seeks to minimise uncertainty by imposing controlled environments and uniformity (Gunderson, 2019).

When comparing the lifestyle in mountain and urban landscapes, a stark contrast emerges. In mountain landscapes, there is a profound opportunity for reconnecting with nature. The simplicity and minimalist lifestyle in these remote areas are characterised by fewer possessions and limited resources. Self-sufficiency is a foundational aspect of shepherding in mountain landscapes. Shepherds rely on their skills and knowledge to navigate the challenges of living in such an environment, where resources are scarce and weather circumstances erratic. The sense of community and interdependence among shepherds is palpable, as neighbouring shepherds form a supportive network, fostering social connections. In contrast, urban landscapes often distance individuals from natural environments. Urban living tends to encourage consumerism and materialistic lifestyles. The pace of urban areas is often hectic and stressful, leaving little room for quiet reflection or meaningful connection with the natural world (Cronin, 2006).

However, by incorporating aspects such as reconnecting with nature, embracing simplicity and fostering community ties, we could strive to find a balance between urban living, industrial practices and our innate connection to the broader natural world. This is of importance because, coming back to the statement of Pyle (2003), feelings of connectedness to the wider natural world are linked to responsible behaviour. By recognizing not only the interdependencies among humans but also the interdependencies between humans and the wider natural world, this study has attempted to challenge the dichotomy between nature and culture, emphasizing that humans are an integral part of the natural system.

These research insights were obtained through an approach of methodological openness, also referred to as a “nomadic mind” by Wilsson Janssens (2019). The methodological chapter has already highlighted how this flexible approach enriched the insights but also that it has limitations, such as the limited focus of the research. Various

topics, including the feminization of shepherding, the existence of salaried shepherds, and power relations within animal care, were brought to attention but require further examination.

It would be valuable to further explore the existence of salaried shepherds. Salaried shepherds offer a unique perspective as they frequently experience distinct lifestyles throughout the year, transitioning between city living and mountain dwelling. Studying their experiences can provide insights into the diverse landscapes and rhythms they navigate, as well as how these distinct rhythms impact their lives. By examining the interplay between different landscapes and rhythms, we can gain a deeper understanding of how these factors influence us as individuals and communities.

Moreover, an in-depth examination of gender relations within the shepherding world, particularly to questions of power, would be valuable. Tracking the feminization of shepherding in this region could provide insights into how this dynamic influences norms and values within the traditionally masculine context of shepherding. Specifically, it would be valuable to explore the feminization of shepherding within the theoretical framework of ecofeminism (Plumwood, 2000) and assess whether this trend impacts the care for animals.

To delve deeper into the nuances of care and power within the shepherding context, it is important to examine the fundamental nature of the relationship, particularly how shepherds position themselves in relation to nature. Throughout this thesis, terms such as partnership, reciprocity and motherhood have been used to describe the connections between shepherds, the flocks and the landscape. However, these terms were employed without a precise definition or framework. To address this gap, Van den Born (2006) presents a comprehensive model for human-nature relations, distinguishing four types: mastery over nature, steward of nature, partner with nature and participant in nature. Further research can employ this framework to gain a deeper understanding of how shepherds perceive their power in relation to the wider natural world. Moreover, it can shed light on their perspectives regarding the appropriate ways of relating to their flocks and the landscape. This analysis would be particularly insightful when contrasting the perspectives of shepherds with those of sheep farmers who do not ascend the mountain pastures and those who engage in more industrialised farming practices.

In terms of academic disciplines, this research has prompted me to reflect on the distinction between social and natural sciences. Fostering collaboration between these two domains could be valuable to react against the nature-culture divide. By embracing a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates disciplines such as ethnography, ecology, and

other relevant fields, we could cultivate a holistic understanding of the interplay between humans, the natural world and shepherding practices.

This study about shepherdesses and shepherds in the Pyrenean Ossau-Iraty region has shown a lived experience of intimacy within livestock production, highlighting that humans are not separate from nature but deeply connected to it. May it be a reminder to cherish our bond with the wider natural world and embrace our place within it.

References

Adams, M., Ormrod, J., & Smith, S. (2023). Notes from a field: a qualitative exploration of human–animal relations in a volunteer shepherding project. *Qualitative Research*, *23*(1), 163-172.

Aldred, O. (2012). Mobile communities: The gathering and sorting of sheep in Skútustaðarhreppur, Northeast Iceland. I*nternational Journal of Historical Archaeology*, *16*, 488-508.

Anderson, B. & Harrison, P. (2010). *The promise of non-representational theories*. Ashgat.

Archer, A. P. (2018). The men on the mountainside: An ethnography of solitude, silence and sheep bells. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *64*, 103-111.

Bahlo, C., Dahlhaus, P., Thompson, H., & Trotter, M. (2019). The role of interoperable data standards in precision livestock farming in extensive livestock systems: A review. *Computers and electronics in agriculture*, *156*, 459-466.

Blot, J. (1990). L'Age du Fer en Pays Basque de France. *Munibe (Antropologia-Arkeologia)*, *42*, 181-187.

Boas, I., Schapendonk, J., Blondin, S. & Pas, A. (2020). Methods as moving ground: Reflections on the 'doings' of mobile methodologies. *Social Inclusion*, *8*(4), 163–146.

Breines, M.R., Menet, J. & Schapendonk, J. (2021). Disentangling Following: Implications and Practicalities of Mobile Methods. *Mobilities*, *16*(6), 921-934.

Buttimer, A. (1976). Grasping the dynamism of lifeworld. *Annals of the association of American geographers*, *66*(2), 277-292.

Cadman, L. (2009). Nonrepresentational theory/nonrepresentational geographies. In R. Kitchen and N. Thrift (Eds.), International encyclopedia of human geography (1st edition, pp. 456–463). Oxford: Elsevier.

Castelló, E., & Romano, M. J. (2021). Shepherdesses: new representations of rural women in Spain. *Feminist Media Studies*, 1-17.

Catton Jr, W. R., & Dunlap, R. E. (1978). Environmental sociology: A new paradigm. *The American sociologist*, 41-49.

Clifford, N., French, S., Gillespie, T. W., & Cope, M. (2010). *Key methods in geography*. Sage, London.

Coelho, P. (1995). *The alchemist*. Thorsons.

Colls, R. (2012). Feminism, bodily difference and non-representational geographies. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *37*(3), 430–445.

Cresswell, T. (2006). *On the move: Mobility in the modern western world.* Taylor & Francis.

Cresswell, T. (2013). *Geographic thought: a critical introduction* (Vol. 8). John Wiley & Sons.

Cronin, A. M. (2006). Advertising and the metabolism of the city: urban space, commodity rhythms. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, *24*(4)*,* 615-632.

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1988). A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Athlone Press, London.

Della Porta, D., & Keating, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Approaches and methodologies in the social sciences: A pluralist perspective*. Cambridge University Press.

Descola, P. (2013). *Beyond nature and culture*. University of Chicago Press.

Despret, V., & Meuret, M. (2016). Cosmoecological Sheep and the Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet. *Environmental Humanities, 8*, 24–36.

DeVerteuil, G., Power, A., & Trudeau, D. (2020). The relational geographies of the voluntary sector: Disentangling the ballast of strangers. *Progress in Human Geography*, *44*(4), 919-937.

Donovan, J. (2006). Feminism and the treatment of animals: From care to dialogue. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *31*(2), 305-329.

Duyvendak, J.W. (2011). *The Politics of Home: Belonging and Nostalgia in Western Europe and the United States.* Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Emel J., Johnston, C.L., & Stoddard, E.L. "Livelier Livelihoods: Animal and Human Collaboration on the Farm'" *Critical Animal Geographies: Politics, Intersections and Hierarchies in a Multispecies World*, edited by Gillespie K, and Collard R. C, 164–83. London: Routledge, 2015.

Era sauta de Banassa (English translation). (2017, 15 november). Accessed on the 4th of April 2023, https://lyricstranslate.com/en/era-sauta-de-banassa-falls-banassa.html.

Faist, T. (2013). The mobility turn: a new paradigm for the social sciences?. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *36*(11), 1637-1646.

Farinella, D., & Nori, M. (2020). Lessons from the mountains: mobility and migrations in Euro- Mediterranean agro-pastoralism. In *International Labour Migration to Europe's Rural Regions* (pp. 70-85). Routledge.

Fernández-Giménez, M. E. (2015). "A shepherd has to invent": poetic analysis of social-ecological change in the cultural landscape of the central Spanish Pyrenees. *Ecology and Society*, *20*(4).

Fernández-Giménez, M. E., Oteros-Rozas, E., & Ravera, F. (2021). Spanish Women Pastoralist' Pathways into Livestock Management: Motivations, Challenges and Learnings. *Journal of Rural Studies, 87*, 1–11.

Fernández-Giménez, M. E., & Le Febre, S. (2006). Mobility in pastoral systems: Dynamic flux or downward trend?. *The International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology*, *13*(5), 341-362.

Flaherty, M. G., Denzin, N. K., Manning, P. K., & Snow, D. A. (2002). Review symposium: Crisis in representation. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, *31*(4), 478-516.

Gilligan, Carol. 1982. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge*. MA: Harvard University Press.

Gorman-Murray, A., & Nash, C. J. (2014). Mobile places, relational spaces: conceptualizing change in Sydney's LGBTQ neighborhoods. *Environment And Planning D: Society And Space*, *32*(4), 622-641.

Gorman, R. (2019). What's in it for the animals? Symbiotically considering 'therapeutic' human-animal relations within spaces and practices of care farming. *Medical Humanities*, *45*(3), 313-325.

Govindrajan, R. (2015). 'The Goat That Died for Family': Animal Sacrifice and Interspecies Kinship in India's Central Himalayas. *American Ethnologist, 42*(3): 504–19.

Gray, J. (1999). Open spaces and dwelling places: Being at home on hill farms in the Scottish borders. *American Ethnologist, 26*, 440-460.

Gray, J. (2014). Hefting onto Place: intersecting Lives of Humans and Sheep on Scottish Hills Landscape. *Anthrozoös*, *27*(2), 219-234

Hall, S. M. (2019). Everyday austerity: Towards relational geographies of family, friendship and intimacy. *Progress in Human Geography*, *43*(5), 769-789.

Haraway, D. (2008). *When Species Meet.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Hastrup, K. (2013). Anthropological contributions to the study of climate: past, present, future. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, *4*(4), 269-281.

Herrero, J., García-Serrano, A., Reiné, R., Ferrer, V., Azón, R., López-Bao, J. V., & Palomero, G. (2021). Challenges for recovery of large carnivores in humanized countries: attitudes and knowledge of sheep farmers towards brown bear in Western Pyrenees, Spain. *European Journal of Wildlife Research*, *67*, 1-13.

Hodgetts, T., & Lorimer, J. (2020). Animals' mobilities. *Progress in Human Geography*, *44*(1), 4–26.

Ingold, T. (1993). The Temporality of the Landscape. *World Archaeology*, *25*(2), 152–174.

Ingold, T. (2007). Materials against materiality. *Archaeological dialogues*, *14*(1), 1-16.

Ingold, T. (2010). Footprints through the weather-world: walking, breathing, knowing. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *16*, 121-139.

Ingold, T. (2013). Anthropology beyond humanity. *Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*, *38*(3), 5–23.

Instagram (2023). Milk_trekker. Accessed on the 22th of June 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CluGyIvoSSS/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igshid=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D

Knight, J. (Ed.). (2020). *Animals in person: Cultural perspectives on human-animal intimacies*. Routledge.

Knight, T. (2016). Rewilding the French Pyrenean landscape: can cultural and biological diversity successfully coexist?. *Biocultural Diversity in Europe*, 193-209.

Krauss, W. (2018). Alpine landscapes in the Anthropocene: alternative common futures: Landscape Research, *43*(8), 1021-1031.

Kylli, R. (2021). An Historical Overview of Gender Equality and Sámi Women in Reindeer Herding Communities. *Indigenous Peoples and Gender Equality with Special Reference to Sámi Reindeer Herding*, 24-36.

Latham, A. (2003). Research, performance, and doing human geography: Some reflections on the diaryphotograph, diary-interview method. *Environment and Planning A, 35*(11): 1993–2017.

Lewis, S.L. & Maslin M. A. (2015). Defining the Anthropocene. *Nature, 519*(7542), 171–180.

López-i-Gelats, F., Rivera-Ferre, M. G., Madruga-Andreu, C., & Bartolomé Filella, J. (2015). Is multifunctionality the future of mountain pastoralism? Lessons from the management of semi-natural grasslands in the Pyrenees. *Spanish Journal of Agricultural Research*, *13*, e0307.

Lorimer, H. (2006). Herding memories of humans and animals. *Environment and Planning D: Society and space*, *24*(4), 497-518.

Macpherson, H. (2009). The intercorporeal emergence of landscape: Negotiating sight, blindness, and ideas of landscape in the British countryside. *Environment and planning A*, *41*(5), 1042-1054.

Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual review of anthropology*, *24*(1), 95-117.

Markeles, M. (2009). Phase space: geography, relational thinking, and beyond. *Progress in human geography, 33*(4), 487-506.

Markeles, S. (2005). Transhumance re-examined. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 11*(2), 357-359.

Maru, N. (2020). A relational view of pastoral (im) mobilities. *Nomadic Peoples*, *24*(2), 209-227.

Massey, D. (1994). *Space, Place and Gender.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

McCormack, D. P. (2008). Geographies for moving bodies: Thinking, dancing, spaces. *Geography Compass*, *2*(6), 1822-1836.

Meeus, B. (2016). Migration and postsocialism: A relational-geography approach. *An Anthology of Migration and Social Transformation: European Perspectives*, 87-100.

Mientjes, A. C. (2010). Pastoral communities in the Sardinian Highlands (Italy): A view on social mobility. *Ethnos*, *75*(2), 148-170.

Millet, M. (2019). From Ossau and Iraty to PDO Ossau-Iraty: The long-term construction of a product based on two distinct places. *British Food Journal, 121*(12), 3062-3075 .

Mintz, S. W. (1986). *Sweetness and power: The place of sugar in modern history*. Penguin.

Molle, A., & Gobo, G. (2016). Doing Ethnography. *Doing Ethnography*, 1-352.

Nayak, A., & Jeffrey, A. (2011). *Geographical thought. An introduction to ideas in Human Geography*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Niamir-Fuller, M., & Turner, M. D. (1999). A review of recent literature on pastoralism and transhumance in Africa. *Managing mobility in African rangelands: the legitimization of transhumance*, 18-46.

Nieuwenhuis, M. (2022). Geographies of Trust: Hitchhiking from Gateshead to Calais., *GeoHumanities*, *8*(1), 329-343.

Nori, M. (2019, 10th of May). What-can-our-increasingly-mobile-world-learn-from-pastoralists/.patres.org. Accessed on 3th of March 2023,

https://pastres.org/2019/05/10/what-can-our-increasingly-mobile-world-learn-from-pastoralists/

Nori, M., & Scoones, I. (2019). Pastoralism, uncertainty and resilience: Global lessons from the margins. *Pastoralism, 9*(1), 1-7.

O'Rourke, E., Charbonneau, M., & Poinsot, Y. (2016). High nature value mountain farming systems in Europe: Case studies from the Atlantic Pyrenees, France and the Kerry Uplands, Ireland. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *46*, 47-59.

Ossau-Iraty. (2017). *La Transhumance*. Accessed on the 5th of May 2023, from https://www.ossau-iraty.fr/decouvrir-l-ossau-iraty/fromage-au-lait-entier/transhumance-des-brebis

Ott, S. (1993). *The circle of mountains: a Basque shepherding community*. University of Nevada Press.

Palladino, P. (2018). Transhumance revisited: On mobility and process between ethnography and history. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, *31*(2), 119-133.

Pardoel, H.J. (2020). Cognitive Map-Making of Long-Distance Transhumance: The Royal Drove Road of Cuenca, Spain. In: Brunn, S., Kehrein, R. (eds) Handbook of the Changing World Language Map. Springer, Cham.

Plumwood, V. (2000). Integrating ethical frameworks for animals, humans, and nature: A critical feminist eco-socialist analysis. *Ethics & the Environment*, *5*(2), 285-322.

Pyle, R.M. (1993) *The Thunder Tree: Lessons from an Urban Wildland*. Houghton Miain, Boston, USA.

Qui veut du fromage. (2017). *Quand les ours et les bergers vivent en harmonie*. Accessed on the 10th of June 2023 https://www.quiveutdufromage.com/ac-quand-les-ours-et-les-bergers-vivent-en-harmonie

Reeves, M. (2011). Staying put? Towards a relational politics of mobility at a time of migration. *Central Asian Survey*, *30*(3-4), 555-576.

Rose, G. (1993). *Feminism & geography: The limits of geographical knowledge*. U of Minnesota Press.

Schapendonk, J. (2020). *Finding ways through Eurospace: West African movers re-viewing Europe from the inside* (Vol. 7). Berghahn Books.

Scoones, I. (2022). Livestock, methane and climate change: The politics of global assessments. *WIRES Climate Change*

Sellick, J., & Yarwood, R. (2013). Placing livestock in landscape studies: pastures new or out to graze?. *Landscape Research*, *38*(4), 404-420.

Sheller, M. and Urry, J. (2006). The new mobilities paradigm. *Environment and planning A*, *38*(2), 207-226.

Spradley, J.P. (1980). *Participant Observation.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston

Stolton, S., Dudley, N., & Zogib, L. (2019). Mobile Pastoralism and World Heritage. A DiversEarth publication (Switzerland).

Symanski, R., Manners, I. R., & Bromley, R. J. (1975). The mobile-sedentary continuum. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *65*(3), 461-471.

Thrift, N. (1996). Spatial formations (Vol. 42). Sage.

Thrift, N. (2004). Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, *86*(1), 57–78.

Thrift, N. (2008). *Non-representational theory: Space, politics, affect*. Routledge.

Tsing, A. (2013). More-than-human sociality: a call for critical description. In Anthropology and nature (pp. 27-42). Routledge.

Vannini, P. (2015). Non-representational ethnography: New ways of animating lifeworlds. *Cultural geographies*, *22*(2), 317-327.

Vidal-González, P. (2013). Sacred rituals and popular religiousness amongst transhumant shepherds of Teruel region, Spain. *Pastoralism, 3*(24), 1-10.

Vidal-González, P. & Fernández-Piqueras, R. (2021). Connected solitude: Mobile phone use by Spanish transhumant livestock farmers. *Mobile Media & Communication*, *9*(2), 377-396.

Vincent, K. (2022). Gender in agricultural and pastoral livelihoods in SPARC countries in Sub-saharan Africa and the Middle East: a review, 1-51.

Walby, S. (1989). Theorising patriarchy. *Sociology*, *23*(2), 213-234.

Waters-Bayer, A., & Bayer, W. (2016, July). Pastoralists in the 21st century:"lo-tech" meets "hi-tech". In *Saskatoon, SK: 10th International Rangeland Congress* (pp. 24-31).

Waterton, E. (2013). Landscape and non-representational theories. In The Routledge companion to landscape studies (pp. 84-93). Routledge.

Whatmore, S. (2002). *Hybrid geographies: Natures Cultures Spaces*. Londen: Sage Publication.

Whatmore, S. (2006). Materialist returns: practising cultural geography in and for a more-than-human world. *Cultural geographies*, *13*(4), 600-609.

Wilson, E. & Little, D. (2008). The solo female travel experience: exploring the 'geography of women's fear. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *11*(2), 167-186.

Wilson Janssens, C. (2019). *Conflict (im) mobiles: biographies of mobility along the Ubangi River in Central Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, Leiden University).

Wimmer, A., & Glick Schiller, N. (2002). Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation–state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global networks*, *2*(4), 301-334.

Wylie, J. (2002). An essay on ascending Glastonbury Tor. *Geoforum*, *33*(4), 441-454.

Appendix 1: Photo series

The pictures in this photo series are self-made during the fieldwork and correspond with the text of this thesis.

1. *Shepherdess Bernadette is making cheese by hand in the cabin*

2. *Mountain Banasse, view from the cabin*

3. *Day of the transhumance: the flock, along with the shepherds and a few of their friends, arrived by truck and will now proceed on foot as they ascend the mountain.*

4. *Day of the transhumance: ascending the mountain with the flock*

5. *Day of transhumance: the ewes are directly milked after arrival on mountain Banasse*

6. *Handcrafted cheese with bear-paw imprint on top and on the side the cloudy weather of the day is imprinted together with the sign that the cheese is produced in a mountain landscape*

7. *Making a soup with potatoes, mushrooms, carrots and meat of lamb for lunch during the shearing event*

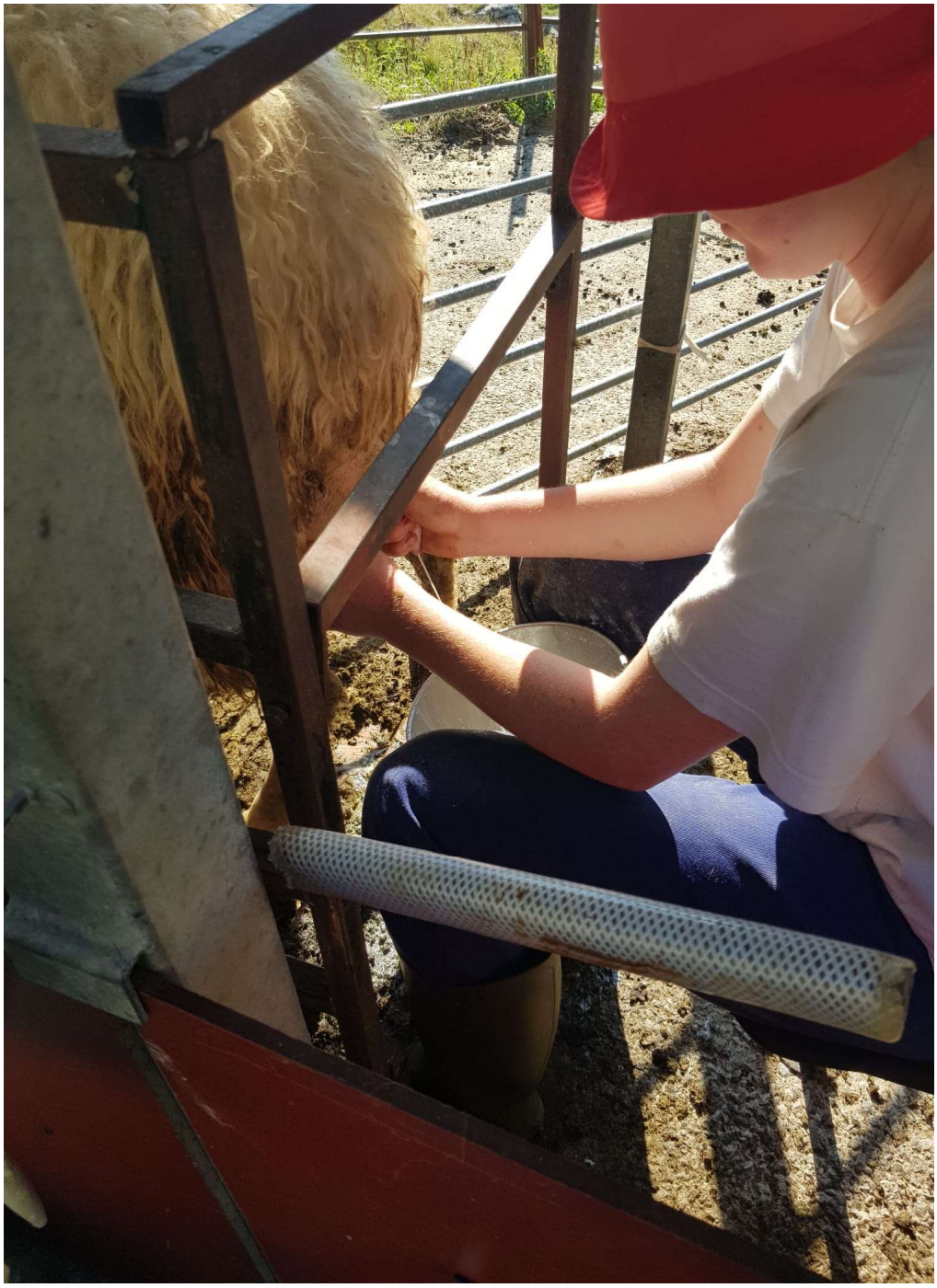
8. *The muleteers arrived with their donkeys at the cabin of shepherdess Josephine to transport the cheese*

9. *Feminization of shepherding: Josephine is eating her well-deserved breakfast after having milked by hand for four hours*

10. *Living in the rhythm of the days: shepherd Markel with his dog woke up early to search the flock and watches the sunset*

11. *Feelings of home: Shepherdess Josephine laying in front of her cabin having a siesta together with her dog Nola*

12. *Being part of the mountain: The mountain meadows on which the flock of shepherdess Josephine grazes, dog Nola keeps a close eye on everything*



13. *An intimate event: Shepherdess Josephine is milking an ewe by hand in the morning sun*

14. *Selling Ossau-Iraty cheese at a local market: the black picture frame shows an image of the ewes of shepherd Markel while grazing on the mountain meadows*

Appendix 2: Information respondents formal interviews

Date interview	**Region**	**Name**	**Gender**	**Age**	**Function during summer**	**Function during other seasons**
13-7-2022	Béarn	Josephine	V	24	Salaried shepherdess	Student art school
14-7-2022	Béarn	Xabier	M	40	Sheep farmer & shepherd	Sheep farmer
16-7-2022	Béarn	Charlotte	V	27	Salaried shepherdess	Student art school
20-7-2022	Béarn	Nathalie	V	46	Salaried shepherdess down the mountain, working in a cheese shop	Working at the farm
22-7-2022	Béarn	Théo	M	26	Student shepherd	Student at a shepherd school, living in a van
27-7-2022	Northern Basque Country	Juliette	V	31	Salaried shepherdess	Working in a restaurant
10-8-2022	Northern Basque Country	Markel	M	28	Sheep farmer & shepherd	Sheep farmer
12-8-2022	Northern Basque Country	Elodie	V	25	Salaried shepherdess	Veterinarian
28-10-2022	Via Zoom	Emma	V	?	Coordinator organisation *Bourse d'emploi des bergers*	Coordinator organisation *Bourse d'emploi des bergers*

Table 1. *Information about the respondents of the formal interviews*