Balancing on the transhumant road
—an updated political ecology of livestock driveways

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outline: transhumance & political ecology now

1. a long, long history
2. two situations (case studies): Spain & western United States
3. power relations differ: Mesta (Spain, strong); sheep drovers (western US, weak)
4. owners and “associations” have authority, not the herders-drovers
5. long linear movements depend on crossing land not owned
6. common property resources are challenged by today’s neoliberalism
7. reality? vast ecosystem services are tied to access to trails and linear features — but are threatened.
Honrado
Consejo de
La Mesta
(1273–1836)
Vereda de Chirlata
Espacio Natural de Interés
Garganta de Gorafe
Vértice Geodésico “El Cocón”
stock driveways (drove roads) in Spain (vías pecuarias)

- cañada/cañada real (long distance) width 90 varas, < 72.22 m
- cordel (< 37.50 m)
- vereda (< 20 m)
- colada (case-by-case, but small)
- (pasos = sites with seasonal right of through-passage)
- other features: abrevaderos (troughs), descansaderos (rest huts), corrals, puertos (tally sites); majadas; chozos
- proposed for UNESCO cultural patrimony of humanity status, 2007 (pending)
Cañadas Reales de La Mesta

Principales cañadas:
1. De La Vizana o de La Plata
2. Leonesa occidental
3. Leonesa oriental
4. Segoviana
5. Soriana oriental
6. Soriana occidental
7. Riojana
8. Conquense
9. Del Reino de Valencia

Fuente: Pedro García Martín, "La ganadería Mesteña en la España Borbónica (1700-1836)"
CAÑADA REAL DE MADRID A PORTUGAL
As of the 2010 census, the United States consists of 11,078,300 Census Blocks. Of them, 4,871,270 blocks totaling 4.61 million square kilometers were reported to have no population living inside them. Despite having a population of more than 310 million people, 47 percent (from mapsbynik)
Portion of each state that is federal land

Source: U.S. General Services Administration
stock driveways (drove roads) in western United States

- used informally starting in 1850s
- widely traveled as of 1870, mostly “market drives”
- transhumance common as of 1890s
- not recognized by U.S. government until 1912
- permitted cattle, and mostly sheep, to cross land
- taken out of existence in 1976 (FLMPA)
Conclusions ... (in brief)
Conclusions (I)

- The worldwide history of transhumance is long with many benefits.
- Long-distance seasonal grazing benefits energy-use, ecosystem services, efficiency, and species.
- Advantages of trailing livestock include dispersal, better breeding, lower cost, reduced natural degradation, less fire risk.
- Preserved driveways (all species) offer transit corridors for humans, wildlife, and livestock.
- Benefits to cash income and autoconsumption economies are considerable.
- The lifeways and folk society of transhumance are culturally rich and worth preserving.
Conclusions (2)

• In neoliberal society, private and public entities seek to sue common property resources.

• Reluctant to allow local autonomy, nation-states seek full control.

• Aspects of a post-productivist “sharing” economy exist in transhumance.

• Complicated legal regimes must protect access and prevent abuse, which central governments do not always provide.
HUNDREDS OF SHEEP DRIVEN THROUGH DOWNTOWN MADRID IN ECOLOGICAL PROTEST

Sunday, November 12, 2006
Associated Press

Madrid, Spain — Farmers led a flock of sheep through Madrid Sunday in an annual protest urging the protection of ancient grazing routes threatened by urban sprawl.

Around 700 of the animals meandered along major thoroughfares in downtown Madrid, bleating and tinkling bells in a pungent-smelling parade that also featured donkeys, horses and humans in old-fashioned garb from rural areas of Spain.

The protest, now in its 14th year, calls on authorities to protect Spain’s 78,000 miles of paths used for seasonal movement of livestock —
THE END IS AT HAND