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EUROMONTANA

Suaci Montagn'Alpes

COMPETING FOR MOUNTAIN RESOURCES: SOCIAL CONFLICTS, BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND THE FUTURE OF PASTORALISM IN ALBANIA



Wolff Martine Albania

Eco-antropologue/ Université Paul Valery Montpellier

Interpretation center for pastoral cultures QIKB Balkans

Adad Malore NGO

contact mail: martine.wolff@yahoo.com

coautors : Abdulla Diku – Pr Lumturi Papa – Enea Mataj

The Value of Pastoralism and Rangeland Commons

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PASTURES ARE MANAGED DYNAMIC ECOSYSTEM SHAPED BY UNIQUE HERITAGE OF SHEPHERD PEOPLE

These lands not only supply food, fiber, and ecosystem services but are deeply embedded in local culture and livelihood strategies. Their traditional practices are tuned to local ecologies

Mobile pastoralists manage pastureland commons in ways that are very efficient in resource use, producing high-nutrient foods and other vital products with relatively little financial investment.



RECOGNITION OF PASTORALISTS' RIGHTS MEANS PROTECTING THESE BIOCULTURAL RESOURCES.

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Why pastoralism matters?



Albanian mountain pastures: more than grazing land

~449,000 ha of pastures and meadows

Support extensive livestock farming

Maintain High Nature Value landscapes

Biodiversity conservation

Ecocultural heritage and rural livelihoods

Shepherding is the ecocultural identity of Albanian Alps inhabitants

PASTORALISM IS A CORNERSTONE OF MOUNTAIN SUSTAINABILITY.

Pastoralism and the Conservation of Livestock Biodiversity

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Why pastoralism matters for livestock genetic resources

Pastoral systems maintain a large proportion of the world's livestock genetic diversity.

Extensive grazing systems allow local breeds to remain adapted to harsh environments, low-input management, and climate variability.

Traditional pastoral communities act as custodians of indigenous animal genetic resources through the continued use of locally adapted sheep and goat populations.

The conservation of local breeds contributes to food security, resilience to environmental change, and the preservation of unique genetic traits.

Declining pastoral activities may accelerate the loss of valuable livestock genetic resources and increase genetic erosion.



PROTECTING PASTORALISM MEANS PROTECTING LIVESTOCK BIODIVERSITY.

Mountain Pastures as Refuges for Local Sheep and Goat Populations

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Mountain pastures provide the ecological basis for the survival of many local sheep and goat breeds.

Seasonal grazing and transhumance practices support the sustainable use of natural resources while maintaining breed adaptation to local environments.

Local breeds often exhibit superior resilience to diseases, feed scarcity, rugged terrain, and climatic extremes.

In Albania, pastoral communities are among the main keepers of indigenous and locally adapted sheep and goat populations.

Maintaining access to grazing lands is therefore essential not only for pastoral livelihoods but also for the conservation of animal genetic resources.



THE FUTURE OF LOCAL BREEDS IS CLOSELY LINKED TO THE FUTURE OF MOUNTAIN PASTORALISM.

The lifestyles of pastoralists are central to maintaining the landscapes themselves.

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The shepherds are guardians of fragile ecosystems, contributors to food security, and keepers of cultural heritage stretching back centuries. Grazing is not degradation but the memory of ecological co-creation

They are facing many challenges : land loss, legal invisibility, economic marginalization, cultural erosion, and climate , interconnected problems rooted in systemic governance failures. These challenges also have direct consequences for Europe's commitments to climate resilience, rural development, and cultural diversity.



LIVESTOCK ACT AS "ECOLOGICAL MOVERS": GRAZING IS NOT DEGRADATION; IT IS CREATIVE DISTURBANCE, AN ECOLOGICAL POETRY

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The emerging conflict

More actors, same mountain

Pastoralism increasingly competes with:

- ⚡ Hydropower
- ☀️ Solar energy
- 🏨 Tourism development
- 🚙 Off-road recreation
- 🚜 Intensive agriculture

Result :

Growing pressure on common resources and increasing social conflicts.



Protests against HPPs in Zall-Gjocaj (Mat)





- Battle for water

BATTLE FOR LIFE







Hydropower and water access

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Water diverted, livelihoods affected

Expansion of hydropower schemes

Reduced access to springs and streams

Impacts on livestock and agriculture

Local conflicts over water use









KEY QUESTION:
CAN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES SURVIVE WITHOUT RELIABLE WATER ACCESS?

Deviation of water for hydropower in Kelmend

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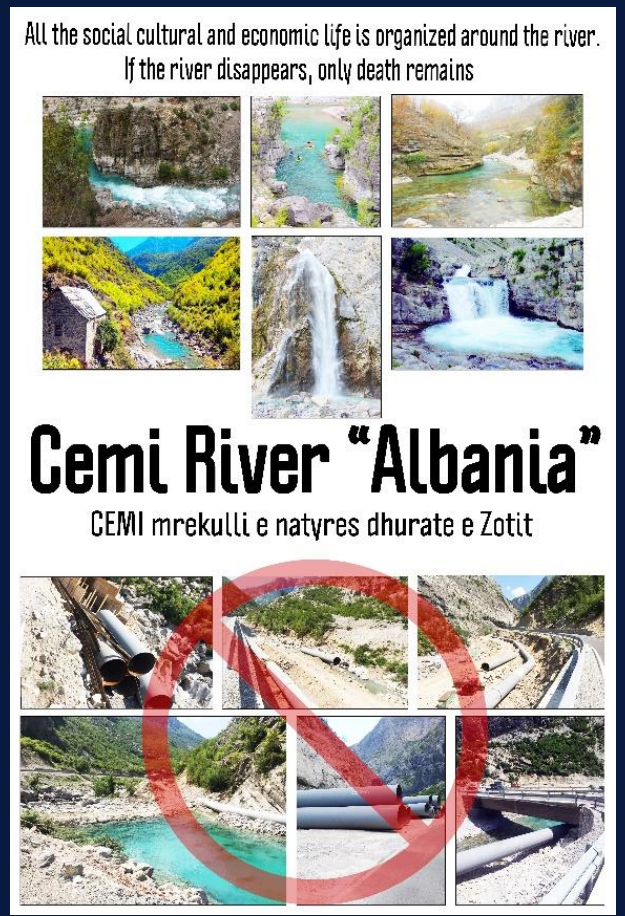
WHERE IS OUR NATIONAL PARK ?

The once exceptionally rich biosphere of our territory is now transformed into a vast apocalyptic garbage dump.





Solar energy vs pastures

Renewable energy, but at what cost?

Photovoltaic projects increasingly located on pasture land
Loss of grazing areas
Conflicts with local communities
Examples: Vlora - Pogradec



Fermerët protestojnë për kullotat në Pogradec, tokat do të jepen për panele fotovoltaike

24 Gusht 15:45





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Vlorë/ Qytetarë të shumtë protestojnë në Kakome, shembin rrethimin që kufizonte tokat prej 22 vitesh

13:13 | 21/06/2026

AA



Banorë të Nivicës, Shën Vasilit, pronarë të tokave në Kakome, të mbërritur nga qytete të ndryshme të vendit dhe emigrantë, kanë protestuar këtë të diel në Kakome. Ata kanë shembur rrethimin që prej 22 vitesh mbante të izoluar një prej pasurive më të mëdha me bukuri natyrore në zonë.

Dy ditë para protestës së paralajmëruar është hequr porta metalike që ndalonte hyrjen e qytetarëve në këtë zonë të lakmuar bregdetare.

Kompania "Riviera" zotëron pronën në Kakome prej rreth 18 vitesh, pasi e ka marrë me qira nga shteti shqiptar në kohën e qeverisë së Sali Berishës për 99-vite (në një proces shumë të diskutueshëm).

Gossip



Pas dasmës 2 milionë dollarëshe, Dua Lipa dhe partneri i saj tërheqin vëmendjen në Romë me makinën luksoze

15:30 | 24/06/2026

Pak javë pasi kurorëzuan dashurinë e tyre me martesë dhe organizuan festime luksoze në Itali, Dua Lipa dhe Callum Turner...

Opinione

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PAKETA E MALEVE

NJË KURTH I RREZIKSHËM PËR BJESHKËT, KULLOTAT DHE PAQEN SOCIALE NËVERIU E SHQIPËRISË



STOP KËSAJ PAKETE KRIMINALE

NË VERIUN E SHQIPËRISË

- PRIVATIZIM I KULLOTAVE
- SHKATËRRIM I NATYRËS
- KONFLIKTE SOCIALE

Bjeshkët, pyjet dhe kullotat nuk janë mall tregu – janë trashëgimi kombëtare!

Tourism: Opportunity and threat

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A paradox of mountain development

TOURISM BENEFITS FROM: Landscapes - Traditional products - Cultural heritage







YET TOURISM ALSO INCREASES: - Land demand
- Infrastructure development - Competition for resources

SHEPHERDS ARE CREATING THE ECOCULTURAL LANDSCAPES BUT RISK BEING DISPLACED FROM IT.



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A new land use
Until recently livestock
used to graze here

Off-road recreation

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HIDDEN DEGRADATION OF MOUNTAIN GRASSLANDS

Impacts of uncontrolled: - 4x4 vehicles
- Enduro motorcycles - ATV use





CONSEQUENCES: - Soil erosion
- Vegetation loss - Landscape degradation
- Conflicts with shepherds

A conflict between local villagers and rally competition team

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Guri i Bardhe (Klos)





Governance challenges

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PASTORALISTS FACE MULTIPLE BARRIERS

Loss of Grazing Access & Mobility

Environmental Degradation
Climate change Risks & Loss of ecosystem services

Inadequate Policies

Governance Gaps and Policy Disconnects

Insecure Land Tenure & Legal Invisibility

Economic Marginalization

Cultural Erosion & Social Exclusion & Knowledge loss

Difficult access to grants and subsidies

Complex administrative procedures

Difficulties to obtain a permit for mountain shelters

Unexisting institutional support

Shepherds communities, despite their crucial role, they remain largely invisible in law and policy, facing systemic violations of their fundamental rights. They have to become key partners in sustainable land-use, grazing resources management, ecosystem conservation, climate adaptation, and cultural heritage protection.



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Infrastructure gaps

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Life in remote grazing areas

COMMON CHALLENGES: - No electricity - Poor mobile coverage - Limited road access
Lack of water infrastructure – Lack of medical assistance – Lack of school for the children









PASTORALISM CANNOT ATTRACT YOUNG PEOPLE WITHOUT BASIC SERVICES.

Livelihood violations

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THE RIGHT TO LAND AND RESOURCES
THE RIGHT TO WORK AND LIVELIHOOD
THE RIGHT TO CULTURE AND HERITAGE
THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE
THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

OBJECTIVE PROPOSAL :

1. Recognition of pastoralists as rights-holders.
2. Documentation & Mapping of pastoral routes and territories to secure tenure.
3. Policy Integration across human rights, biodiversity, climate, and rural development.

GIVING SUPPORT FOR :

A. Capacity Building for pastoralist organizations to engage in governance.
B. Awareness & Advocacy to reshape narratives around shepherds as cultural and ecological stewards.





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Solar panel donated by a rural development NGO

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Social conflicts in mountain areas

A growing competition
for common resources

CONFLICT ACTORS:

- Shepherds
- Energy developers
- Tourism investors
- Recreational users
- Public authorities
- National parks
- Intensive crop farming



THE ISSUE IS NO LONGER ONLY ENVIRONMENTAL,
IT IS INCREASINGLY SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL.

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What needs to change?

Policy recommendations

1. Protect strategic grazing areas.
2. Secure access to water resources.
3. Improve pastoral infrastructure.
4. Simplify support schemes.
5. Regulate off-road recreation.
6. Integrate pastoralism into tourism and energy planning.
7. Pastoralist-inclusive rural and environmental governance policy recommendations.
8. Greater visibility, dignity, and institutional voice for shepherd communities.



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Let us support

HUMAN RIGHTS: Shepherds' rights to land, livelihood, participation, education, and culture.

ENVIRONMENTAL STABILITY: enhancing appropriate grazing, maintaining ecosystems, and sustaining biodiversity.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE: recognizing mobile pastoralism as an adaptive response to climate variability.

CULTURAL HERITAGE: supporting this traditional practice of transhumance as living heritage. Losing them erodes both identity and diversity.

POLICY INTEGRATION: Without coherent action, Europe cannot meet its commitments on climate, biodiversity, rural inclusion, or human rights.



Grazing is not degradation
it’s the memory of ecological co-creation

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The presence of shepherds in the mountain huts (stane / bane)
speaks more than anything else about the deep alliance
between the people and the mountains.

Mountains without shepherds’ huts turn
into giant lifeless bodies,
over which the cuckoos sing



Let us safeguard the dignity and rights of these communities, while strengthening Europe’s ecological resilience, cultural heritage, and rural democracy.

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KEYWORDS: Pastoralism; Mountain pastures ; Livestock biodiversity; Local sheep / goat breeds; Biocultural resources ; Ecological movers ; Ecological resilience; climatic resilience ; ecological cocreation; Rural resilience ;

Social conflicts; Land-use competition; Gouvernance gaps.



Final message

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Mountain pastures are not empty land waiting for development.

They are living landscapes that sustain biodiversity, food production, culture, and rural communities





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MERCI

DE VOTRE ATTENTION !

THANK YOU

FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



Martine Wolff tel 00355685443237
martine.wolff@yahoo.com



Pastoralism: A territorial activity
Pastoralisme: Une activité territoriale

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- What are the main interactions between livestock farming and tourism, nature and energy? Where do tensions and opportunities emerge?
  - ***Quelles sont les principales interactions entre l'élevage, le tourisme, la nature et l'énergie ? Où apparaissent les tensions et les opportunités ?***
- What solutions can help support coexistence in mountain areas?
  - ***Quelles solutions peuvent favoriser la cohabitation dans les zones de montagne?***
- What makes these solutions work in real-life scenarios?
  - ***Qu'est-ce qui fait que ces solutions fonctionnent dans la réalité?***

Coexistence
Cohabitation → Dialogue + Coordination + Territorial planning
Aménagement du territoire

And now... *Et maintenant...*

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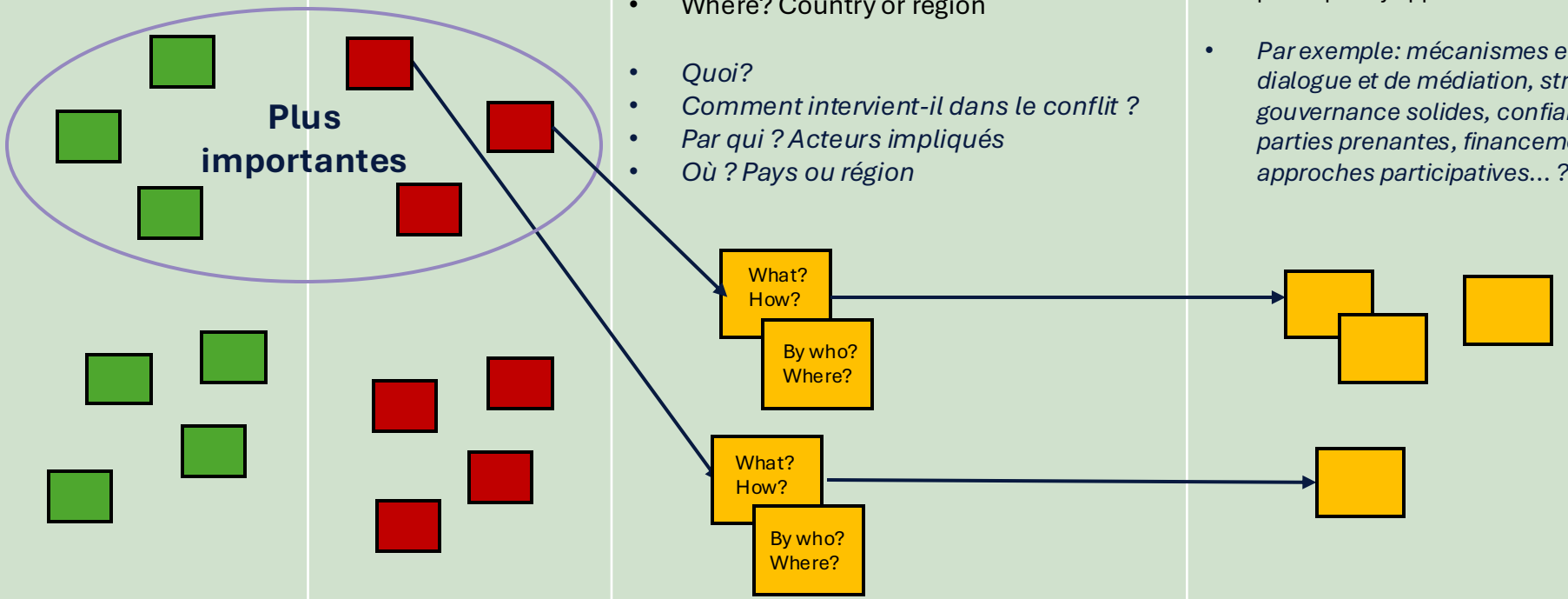
Interactions		Solutions	Why it works *Pourquoi cela fonctionne*
Opportunities *Opportunités*	Conflicts *Conflits*	• What? • How does it address the conflict? • By who? Actors involved • Where? Country or region • *Quoi?* • *Comment intervient-il dans le conflit ?* • *Par qui ? Acteurs impliqués* • *Où ? Pays ou région*	• E.g., Dialogue and mediation mechanism, strong governance structures, trust among stakeholders, adequate funding, participatory approaches...? • *Par exemple: mécanismes efficaces de dialogue et de médiation, structures de gouvernance solides, confiance entre les parties prenantes, financement adéquat, approches participatives... ?*





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FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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Our partners

haute-savoie le Département

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La Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes

DES SAVOIE

AGIR CHAQUE JOUR DANS VOTRE INTÉRÊT
ET CELUI DE LA SOCIÉTÉ

Groupama

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Égalité
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