

Mobile Pastoralism in World Heritage Sites



Sue Stolton
Equilibrium Research



Mobile Pastoralism and the World Heritage Convention

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RESEARCH**

roads
less travelled

We looked at the role of pastoralism in natural World Heritage sites, and particularly at the way in which UNESCO is working to accommodate nomadic pastoralists within protected areas

A quick overview, which included 9 case studies

https://www.diversearth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Mobile-Pastoralism-and-the-World-Heritage-Convention-_-For-Web.pdf

There are major differences within World Heritage sites in terms of how mobile pastoralists are perceived and dealt with.

In some sites, pastoralism of different types is cited as integral to the successful stewardship and conservation of the site.

In other cases, herders are blamed for land degradation, or deemed incompatible with areas of 'pristine wilderness', which leads to forced or coerced removal of these traditional users and managers of the landscape





UNESCO's response

Some World Heritage sites have explicitly or implicitly identified nomadic pastoralism and transhumance as important values to be addressed through management and designation, while identifying the site.

More often, issues relating to pastoralists are being considered retrospectively in sites that have been listed on World Heritage for other reasons such as biodiversity or landscape values.

UNESCO is working actively to integrate ecological and cultural considerations into management.



Some problems...

Fears that pastoralists will be pushed out of Qinghai Hoh Xil in China – the Chinese government has said this will not happen

Pastoralists increasing herd sizes leading to a decline in wildlife in Lake Turkana

Pastoralism becoming more of a tourist attraction than a genuine lifestyle in parts of the Pyrenees

Mobile pastoralism can and does exist successfully as a key management element in semi-natural ecosystems, and can actively support the survival of wild biodiversity. But this is not always the case.

Changes in land availability, management, herd numbers and type, markets and changing climate can all lead to degradation, particularly overgrazing, which also undermines long term pastoralist activities.

External pressures can force lifestyle changes on mobile pastoralists that lead to overgrazing and human-wildlife conflict. Pastoralist communities can often find themselves blamed for these problems without a full enquiry into their root causes.



Management is further complicated because mobile pastoralist communities do not always share a common vision.

Some may regard pastoralism as outdated, hard work and unnecessary while others may be passionate about its survival. This cuts across cultures, gender and age groups.

People have moved in and out of pastoralism for millennia, sometimes using mobile pastoralism as a safety net in difficult times and there is no reason to think that this will change.

There is therefore no “right” answer to managing pastoralism in World Heritage. UNESCO will need to remain flexible and open to change





Thank you