



# Transhumance and the End of the World

Seminar Week Fall 2023

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# Rural Spain

Subject: Seminar Week to Rural Spain  
Date: 30 August 2023

Dear Reader,

Did you know that 90 Castilian yardsticks equal 72 meters? This is the width of traditional transhumance paths in Spain, as defined by the royal edict of King Alfonso X in 1273.

Transhumance, the seasonal movement of livestock to the highlands in the warmer and to the lowlands in the colder months, is a response to landscape and climate conditions and is one of the few remaining nomadic herding practices in Europe. Following the protest march of the shepherds with their livestock into Madrid in 1995, the 120.000 kilometers of historic livestock paths, the “vias pecuarias” were protected as a common good and due to their cultural and ecological relevance. Since then, every late October, some of the shepherds make their way through the capital with their flock. It is a fiesta, a protest, an outcry, an invitation.

With this, we will start our move from the center to the end of land, across the Castilian Meseta. South of the Camino Frances we will enter Galicia, ending at Finisterre. Moving through emptiness; through potent though exhausted territories, through grounds too scarce for souls to root; through the lands that sparked the Spanish colonization. While walking with the sheep and following the flight of the storks, we will revisit our relationship to non-humans and interrogate what it means to be human. Transhumance will be our entry point to think about land use and ownership, changing climates and the divide between urban and rural, nature and culture. We will visit abandoned churches and “casas rurales” while dealing with drought in Castilla, and becoming acquainted with eucalyptus laboratories, and emptying villages in Galicia. We will be accompanied by perspectives of various hosts and companions along the way.

It is on this transect from the metropolitan Madrid to the Atlantic coast, that we will encounter cycles of the rural: from old practices derived from landscape and climate, to ambitious models of revitalization through culture and art that see an opportunity in the countryside’s rampant depopulation, to the struggle of reclaiming territory in order to care for it communally.

Our interest lies here in the gap between the idea of rural life and its reality. In a world and discipline where attention is so easily directed to the spectacle of urbanization, our journey is an attempt to understand the relevance and demand of rural realities.

We are looking forward to travel together,  
Juan Barcia Mas, Sophia Garner, Freek Persyn

22-28 October 2023  
Cost: Frame C  
Participants: Max. 22