

Pastoralist women in the Mediterranean: A pathway to the future



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Gender and pastoralism: some insights from Spain

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“Women play a crucial role within pastoralist societies not just as livestock producers, income generators, and caregivers but also as key organizers and keepers of local knowledge. They are integral to maintaining pastoralist community life and identity” (FAO 2017)



Gender and women in pastoralism studies

Gender dimensions of pastoralism and women's roles in pastoral systems in the developing world have received increasing attention

- women's ecological knowledge (Flintan, 2008; Kohler-Rollefson, 2012);
- gendered division of labor and gender relations (Anbacha, Kjosavik, 2019; Tangka et al., 2000);
- property rights and natural resource governance (Po and Hickey, 2018; Wangui, 2014);
- gender dimensions of information access including Extension services (Aderinoye-Abdulwahab et al., 2014)

Studies of women and gender in ranching and pastoralism in the Global North remain extremely scarce (mainly US and Australia):

- women ranchers' roles and needs (Sachs, 2016; Wilmer & Fernández-Giménez, 2016a)
- how women sustain rangeland systems, including reducing their standard of living, engaging with non-ranchers, and facilitating intergenerational transfer (Wilmer & Fernández-Giménez, 2016b)
- non-conventional affective approach to animal management, and how "alterity" enabled women to avoid sanctions from conventional farmers (Finan, 2011).
- newcomers to ranching (Munden-Dixon, 2019)
- Adoption of computer-based precision agriculture technology (Hay and Pearce, 2014)

Gender and women in pastoralism studies

Invisibility of women in pastoralism studies in Europe and Spain

- SPAIN:

- Women have long been part of extensive livestock management systems although their roles and visibility varied regionally (Garcia Ramon, 1989; Garcia Ramon et al., 1993)
- Nowadays the number of women working in the livestock sector is nearly equivalent to the number of men (FADEMUR, 2011)
- the proportion of women operators increased slightly from 28% to 32% by 2016 and over a third of operators in the youngest age group (< 25 years) are women (INE, 2016)
- statistics can be misleading, as men often remain primary decision-makers even if the farm is registered in a woman's name
- Spain approved the Law of Shared Ownership (Ley 35/2011) in 2011 but by 2017 only 339 women had obtained shared ownership under the new law (Senra Rodríguez, 2018): required approval by the husband, high cost and lack of administrative officers trained to assist women

Theoretical and analytical frameworks

- Feminist theories of women in agriculture - Feminist Agrifood Systems Theory (FAST) (Sachs et al. 2016)
 - 1) Women are creating gender equality on farms,
 - 2) asserting their identity as farmers,
 - 3) accessing the resources they need to farm (land, labor and capital),
 - 4) shaping new food and farming systems,
 - 5) navigating often discriminatory agricultural organizations and institutions,
 - 6) forming networks for women farmers
- Feminist analytical framework of O'Shaunnessy and Krogman (2011)
 - material and discursive contradictions in women's practices and discourses around natural resource use
- Feminist political ecology
 - structural sources of gender inequities in agriculture and natural resources, such as differential access to land, capital and technical resources
 - Intersectional/simultaneity approach (from Black feminist scholars)

Objectives

- To explore the experiences of women involved in extensive livestock farming, (motivations, identities, challenges, and sources of learning and support).
- To understand their roles in the conservation, transformation and abandonment of pastoral SESs
- To understand their experiences and responses to multiple barriers and challenges (at individual, sectorial, social level), including environmental challenges (climate change)
- To study governance of pastoral and silvopastoral systems

Methods

DATA COLLECTION

- Interviews – LIFE HISTORIES (N=29; age: 22-96)
 - Women directly and indirectly involved in extensive livestock management
 - Owners, co-owners and workers + family members
 - Participants in networks (N=19 from Ganaderas en Red and/or Ramaderes.cat)
 - Mostly sheep but also cattle, goats, pigs and horses (local or heritage breeds N=13)
 - Some transhumant (N=7)
 - Some with direct marketing/value-added processing (N=8)
 - Some combine with agri-tourism/rural tourism (N=5)



Methods

LIFE HISTORIES - A coherent and thoughtful interpretation of someone's own life

01

Make the role of women/indigenous/others subjects visible to a larger public through the written words

02

Rescue women experiences, knowledge and historical memory.

03

Give to women a central role in scientific/academic field.

04

Search for alternative versions of official history.

Methods

DATA COLLECTION

- Interviews → Field visits/participant observation
- Workshops with members of GeR in Andalucía (n=11 participants), Northwest Spain (n= 11), and in the Pyrenees (n=3):
 - As two-way learning spaces
 - To expand the group of participants
 - To collect additional data on women's experiences and perspectives
 - To discuss preliminary research findings
 - To engage participants in data interpretation



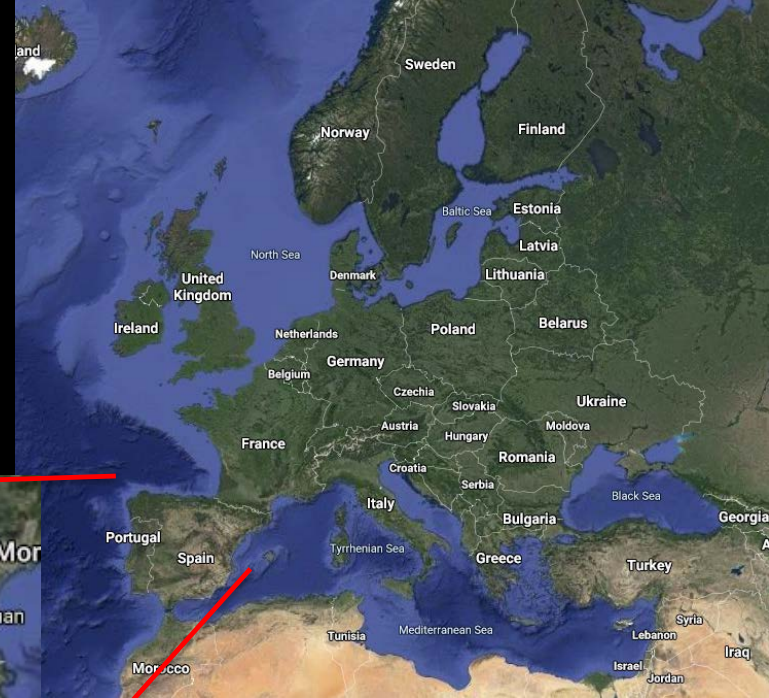
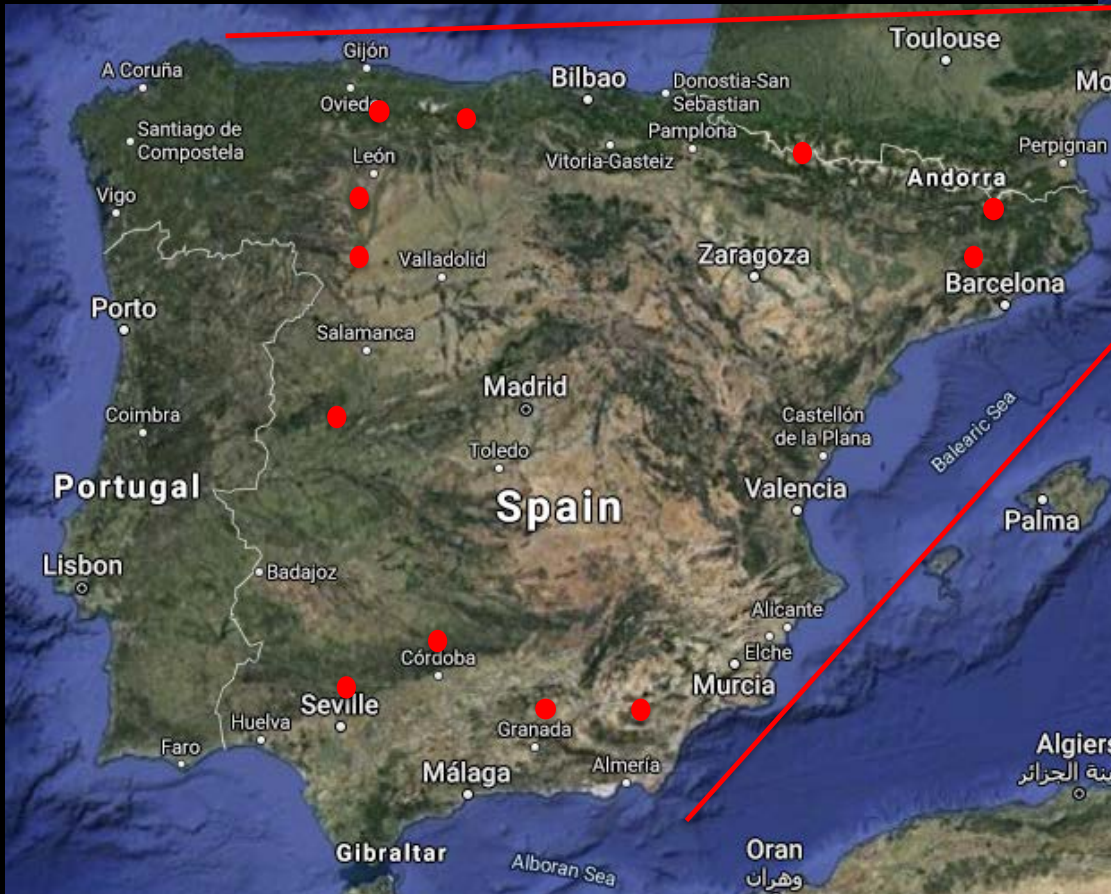
DATA ANALYSIS

- Transcriptions
- Qualitative content (QSR NVIVO)
- Coding (inductive + deductive)

Methods

Study areas:

- Andalucía (southern Spain),
- Northwest (Zamora, León, Asturias and Cantabria),
- Central Pyrenees and lowlands of Aragón, and Catalunya



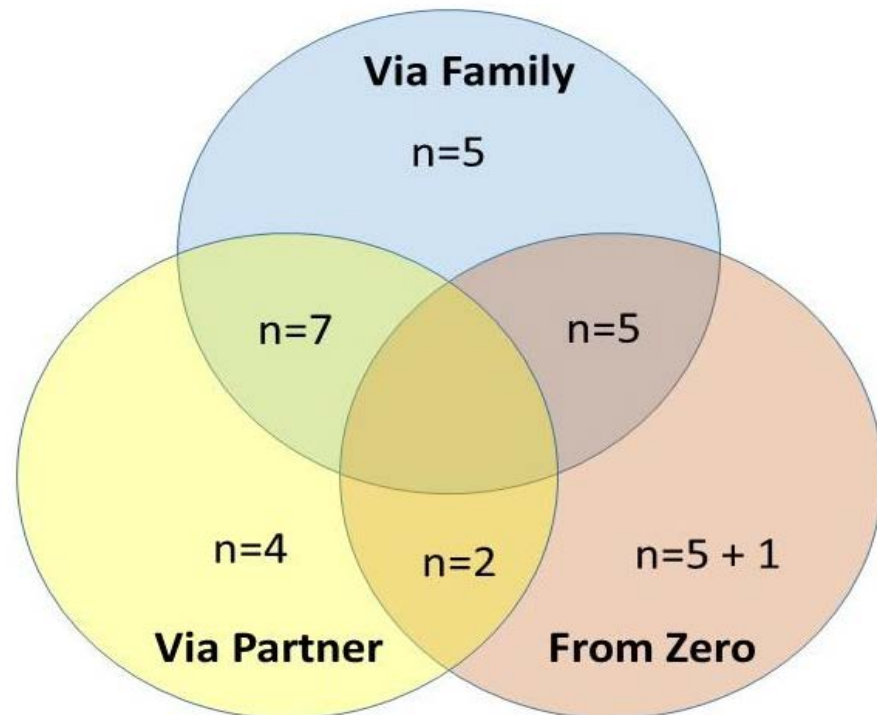
Some keys of our methodological approach

- ✓ **Reflexivity** refers to the examination of one's own beliefs, judgments and practices during the research process and how these may have influenced the research.
- ✓ **Embodiment** invitation to researchers to overcome the duality of mind and body challenging the positivist science-based knowledge production.
 - Examples drawing from activist research and decolonial anthropology: epistemic-corporeal workshops that consider body and emotions as spaces from which to explore collaboratively (researchers and non-) embodied and experiential knowledge
- ✓ **Reciprocity and ethic of care for transformation, that implies**
 - demonstrating long-term commitment to local research partners, pursuing questions and needs they identify, engaging with them as co-researchers and returning results for a better understanding, offering training and capacity building.
 - nurturing a new culture of collaborations, shared learning and relationships of trust, respect of time and conviviality, essential for understanding complex social and spatial processes (Caretta and Faria 2019).

Relations to livestock and pastoralism: Life pathways



Each woman's story of entry into the livestock sector is unique, but most participants fell into one or two of three main pathways into the sector



Relations to livestock and pastoralism: life pathways

Via Family

“The first year I went, really went on transhumance, the entire route, which for me was a bit harder because it was climbing to the (place name), I was 13 years old. I remember that everyone told me, ‘look at you go, good-for-nothing, you won’t make it, look at you, how will you make it?’ (laughter) And I arrived, perfectly.” (Juana, 27)

- Some did not foresee incorporating
- Most of them had a post-secondary education or significant off-farm professional experience and work opportunities before becoming farmers
- Some knew since the beginning they wanted to be farmers

Relations to livestock and pastoralism: life pathways

Via Partners

“At first it was a little hard, hard, but what happens when you are young and in love, and you have all these dreams. Now I am happy, but in the beginning it was a little hard, the adaptation. And then the livestock husbandry, it’s a profession for which I have always felt much respect and admiration. For me the women `ganaderas` have..., it’s a thing that..., I have always admired. [...]Here we have a word “recias”, recias means hard, strong, for birthing, for working.” (Lourdes, 49)



- Earlier or later formal incorporation
- Some had previous studies
- Mother in-law as important mentor or teacher

Relations to livestock and pastoralism: life pathways

From zero

“Let’s see, in reality, since I was 10 years old, when people asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I said I wanted to be a shepherd, but because everyone laughed at me and said, ‘Shepherd, no, come on, astronaut, because the stars also...’ Because in reality the rural world always interested me. Later what happened? At 14 I started to have more contact with nature and with shepherds through my brother and I fell in love with the Pyrenees. And I fell in love hard. ... And now the decision to leave all that I was doing was when I was 23. ... And since that year well we began to move towards this path and he went to the shepherd’s school in the Basque Country. I went to one in Andalucía, to have different visions of what shepherding was. And we learned a lot because each place has its idiosyncrasies and its way of looking at things. (Mariela, 30)



- Mostly “neorurales” – newcomers into farming from urban origin
- Some had been to shepherds schools
- Some had previous studies
- Many among the youngest participants

Relations to livestock and pastoralism: life pathways

MOTIVATIONS

- Lifelong passion to farm
- Family inheritance of land or animals created an opportunity and a sense of obligation to maintain or revive the farm
- Strong sense of identity with place, culture, family or occupation
- Love (part of their attraction to their partner) → moving to a remote rural location where opportunities for off-farm work are limited (practical choice)

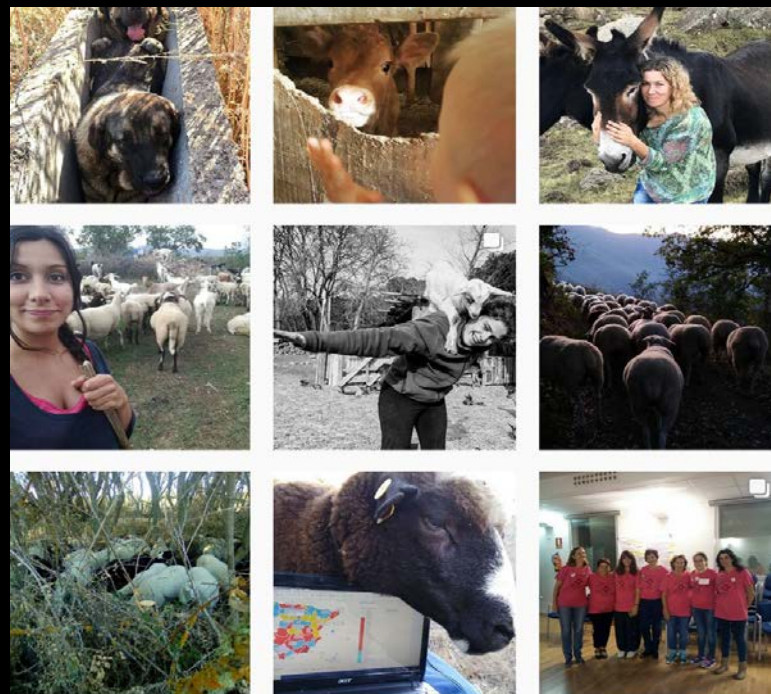
Barriers and strategies

BARRIERS

- multiple labor burdens women bear, including active roles in organisations, livestock management, family care-giving obligations, and frequently an extra job for family economic sustainability
- trade-off between being active in collective spaces, and having sufficient energy and time to organise, monitor and plan her own business
- perceived sexism is the moment of selling, of negotiating prices of their products
- Lack of economic independence

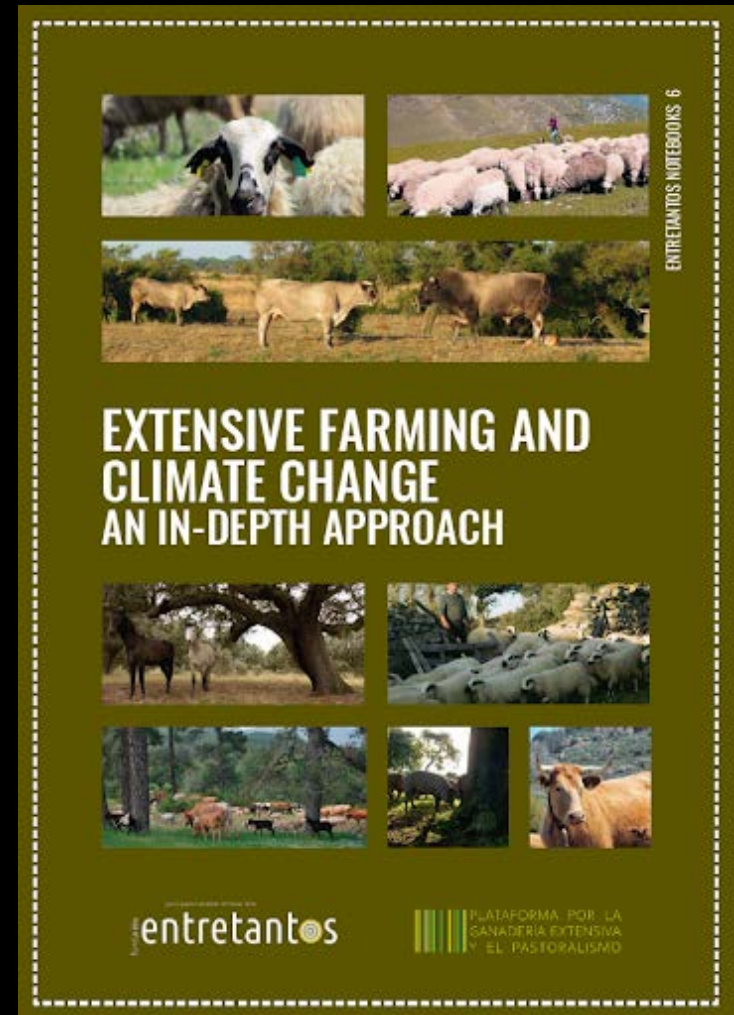
STRATEGIES

- Humor
- Collective spaces or networks of women → Ganaderas en Red, Ramaderes.cat
- Mutual support and alliances with other people in particular



Environmental challenges

- The relationship between climate change and livestock farming is twofold. The projections of climate change in Spain predict that Mediterranean ecosystems are close to a tipping point, requiring urgent responses
- According to the Spanish National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (Rubio and Roig 2017), *traditional extensive livestock management practices are powerful adaptive responses to a variable climate*



Women pastoralists and CC perceptions

Three concepts from feminist research applied to CC research:

- **Embodiment** of climate change or weathering, i.e. “a particular way of understanding how bodies, places and the weather are all inter-implicated in our climate changing world” (Neimanis and Hamilton, 2018: 80).
- “Everyday life and relations” (Smith 1987)
- **Intersectionality** or “simultaneity” or “interlocking” conjunctures of common histories and oppressions and disjunctures that refer to the production of differentiation between subjects, knowledges, experiences (Johnson 2017).

LIFE HISTORIES AND WORKSHOPS + SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS

Women pastoralists and climate change perceptions

Strong perception of vulnerability in the face of increasingly frequent and large wildfires

“There is the fire. Come quickly that your animals are burning.- If there is a taboo in the rural, it’s the fire. Nobody name it. Since we arrive with our project of the Las Cumbres five years ago, we have thought to establish somewhen a protocol, but we didn’t do, to not invoke the devil. In July the 31st of 2020 the devil appeared. (...) and the fear, lot of fear. (and then) The smell. The silence. To walk the land, your land, when it burned, it’s unforgettable. ¿Where have the birds gone? This year arrived to remember us we are so fragile”

(Laura, Huelva, Tweet, 20th August 2020 in @ganaderasenred twitter)



Women pastoralists and climate change perceptions

Impacts of floods, and landslides



“the first of May 2014, we had just finished building the warehouse and an “argayo”, a landslide took it and I had to build it again. That night we risked our lifes, we could have lost our lifes beacuse it was dark, 23 at night and we couldn’t see anything, tres started entering the warehouse, and a river of mud and water... (XXX, Cantabria)”

Women pastoralists and climate change perceptions

Impacts of long-lasting droughts

“The dehydration of soils is chronic. The springs, the mountain and the planet know, our skin and our heart of men and women farmers who live and work in the rural. Who produces food see and feel what means the lack of water. It’s impossible for shepherdesses to not see our mountains and pastures losing springs at an irrevocable speed”

(Tweet @ganaderasenred 13th October 2020)



“Here there is a strange equilibrium because the weather is changable, there are years of drought, in which you do not have grass, or very little grass, and years in which you have a lot of grass and you need sheep to eat it because otherwise you have a very high risk of wildfire... you need to have sheep.”

→ changes in the herd size and the movements (i.e. time and space when the animals are moved from summer to winter territory, and viceversa, or between pasture lands)

Women's roles in pastoral social-ecological systems

Abandonment



- **HOUSEHOLD LEVEL**

- They encourage their children to finish school in order to have more choices for their future
- Not encourage a young person to go into the business

- **SECTOR LEVEL**

- abandonment of traditional practices like transhumance, persuading husbands and parents

- **SOCIETY LEVEL**

- women's decisions to leave, often because of inadequate services
- reluctance of women from urban areas to marry rural men/herders and settle in small and often isolated communities

Women's roles in pastoral social-ecological systems

Conservation



• HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

- Recover and preserve recipes for product transformation
- Transmitting the culture and TEK/LEK to the next generation
- Instilling values and pride
- Transferring the operation/herd to the next generation
- Maintaining the Casa /house as productive/reproductive unit

• SECTOR LEVEL

- Maintaining transhumance
- Preserving autochthonous and endangered breeds

• SOCIETY LEVEL

- Sustaining rural life with care tasks



Women's roles in pastoral social-ecological systems

Adaptation and transformation

- **HOUSEHOLD LEVEL**

- Innovating in livestock management
- Innovating in grassland, forest and agricultural management (especially to respond to CC)
- Innovating in multifunctionality
- Innovating in administrative management
- Capturing added value of products

- **SECTOR LEVEL**

- Accessing positions of responsibility/leadership in organizations
- Participating in research on the topic
- Creating new networks

- **SOCIETY LEVEL**

- Getting involved in children's education
- Participating in events and social networks for awareness raising
- Incorporating to local politics/ political consciousness



Women and Governance of Iberian silvopastoral system



ADVANTAGES of participating in governance

- Participating in associations improves direct marketing of her products
- A way out family/men tight bonds
- Integration in the community
- Introducing changes in education and training
- Tourism and value-added food processing (e.g. cheese-making) as engines for rural women's empowerment and development. Entrepreneurship is perceived to be in the hands of women, who are more frequently owners of their own lives and freedom.
- Being part of collective organisations is critical to access relevant information about training opportunities → while men get their information in the bar, women accesses information through other spaces such as the local youth organisation, the farmers' association or GeR

Women and governance of Iberian silvopastoral system

Susana, remembers that when she stepped officially into the business, with goats for milk production, she also entered the board of the cooperative and was the first woman in its history:

“at first, my colleagues accepted and voted me “as a flower vase”, “what a nice girl, let’s have her here so that at least we enjoy the views”. Well, the girl struggled to do her homework [studying previously and arriving to meetings with proposals and ideas], we would gather at night, from 21 o 22 until we would finish all bullet points in the agenda, at 1, 2 or 3 at night. [...] For instance I introduced the percentage that each association had to dedicate to training, which is so essential and they had never done it, so I brought the idea of training [...]. With patience and “left hand”, and the ideas written, when they accepted me, after 9 years... I decided to leave voluntarily, and they begged not to leave.”



Women and governance of Iberian silvopastoral system

In relation to participation in cooperatives, Ana says:

“we, women, have to prove that we are not the same as men in this [being individualistic], united. We should show more empathy towards the group, forget individualism, look for what unites us and try to obviate what divides us, and I think a woman is more receptive than men, men are more complicated for that.”



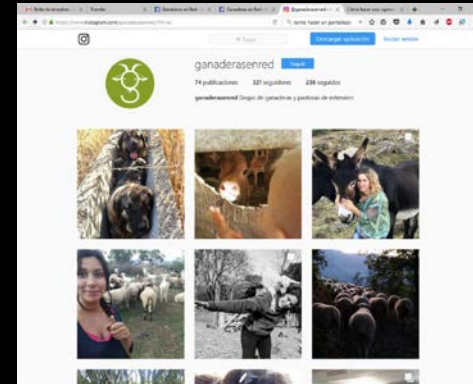
Ganaderas en Red and Ramaderes de Catalunya



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