

NOMADIC FUTURES

—◆◆◆—
CULTURAL RIGHTS,
KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS,
CLIMATE RESILIENCE
International conference

19-21 August 2026
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia



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WELCOME NOTE

Dear colleagues, distinguished guests, and friends,

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to Nomadic Futures: Cultural Rights, Knowledge Systems and Climate Resilience!

Over the coming days, we are honored to bring together scholars, Indigenous knowledge holders, nomads, policymakers, artists, and community leaders from across the world to explore the diverse futures of nomadic peoples and cultures. Through keynote presentations, plenary discussions, thematic panels, an exhibition, and film screenings, we will examine how nomadic knowledge systems contribute to environmental stewardship, cultural resilience, social justice, and climate adaptation.

At a time of profound environmental and social change, this conference offers an opportunity to learn across disciplines, regions, and lived experiences. We hope these conversations will inspire new collaborations, deepen mutual understanding, and strengthen our collective commitment to protecting cultural rights and human-non-human environments.

Your participation is what makes this gathering possible. We are grateful for your expertise and willingness to engage in thoughtful discussion.

We also warmly welcome our international guests to Mongolia and hope you enjoy not only the academic program but also the country's rich nomadic heritage and hospitality.

We wish you an engaging, thought-provoking, and enjoyable conference.

Welcome, and thank you for being part of Nomadic Futures.

Yours faithfully,

The Organizing Committee



ORGANIZERS



unesco

International Institute
for the Study of
Nomadic Civilizations
under the auspices
of UNESCO



SoGE | School of Geography
and the Environment



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

IN CONNECTION WITH



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
**RANGELANDS AND
PASTORALISTS**
2026



UNCCD
COP17
ULAANBAATAR 2026

SUPPORTED BY



Ministry of Culture,
Sports, Tourism and
Youth of Mongolia



Culture and Arts
Authority

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF



CNP
COMMISSION ON
NOMADIC PEOPLES



**MONGOLIA
NOMADS**
WORLD CULTURAL FESTIVAL



INDIGENOUS ELDERS FOR FUTURE
WUISP



NOMADIC FUTURES: CULTURAL RIGHTS, KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS, CLIMATE RESILIENCE



AUGUST 19-20

**VENUE: LIBRARY BUILDING OF
THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
OF MONGOLIA**

Conference Rooms

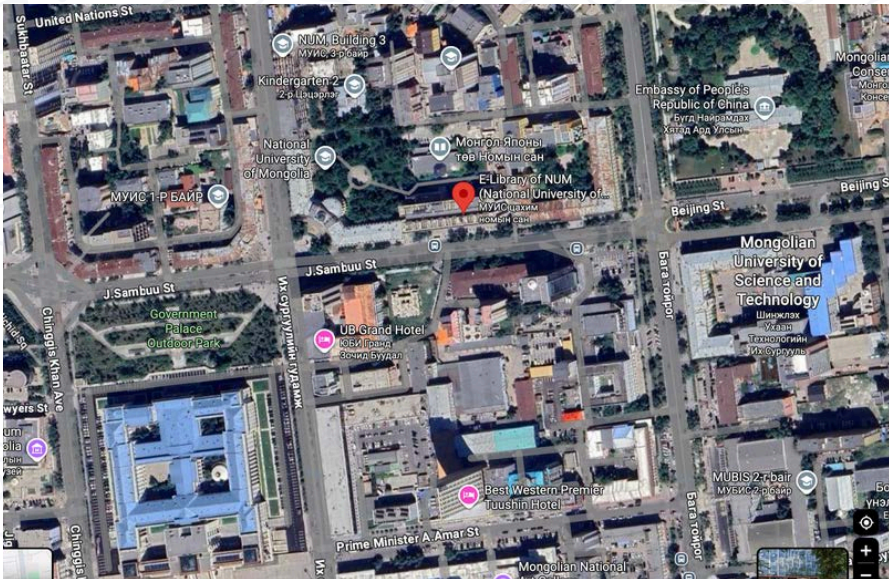
Day 1: 5th Floor, Room 502

Day 2: 2nd Floor, Rooms 202, 203 and 204

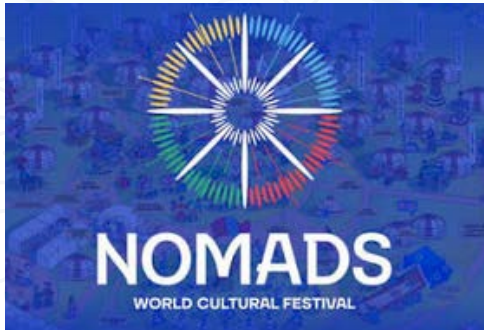
Conference Venue Address:

University Street 1,
Baga Toiruu, Sukhbaatar district,
Ulaanbaatar

Google Map Link: <https://goo.gl/maps/V7CvD8iUWKECjSd2A>



**NOMADIC FUTURES:
CULTURAL RIGHTS, KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS, CLIMATE RESILIENCE**



AUGUST 21-22

VENUE: NOMADS WORLD CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Festival Venue Address:

Taij Khaikhan, 3 khoroo, Nalaikh district,
Ulaanbaatar

Google Map Link:

<https://goo.gl/maps/V7CvD8iUWKECjSd2A>

Transportation to the Venue:

6:45 AM bus departs from NUM Library building and returns at
19:00 to UB

Fee for Transportation and Food:

\$30 / 120,000MNT preferred; includes lunch, dinner,
and two-way transportation.

NB there is no fee if you organise your own travel and meals at the
venue.



OFFICIAL PROGRAM

19 AUGUST

Simultaneous interpretation is available for Day 1 plenaries.

08:30-09:00

REGISTRATION *5th floor*

09:00-09:10

*NUM LIBRARY
Room 502*

OPENING & WELCOME

Aldarjavkhlan Jukov

Opening Words from the Minister of Culture, Sports, Tourism and Youth of Mongolia

Shahbaz Khan

Opening Words (Recorded) from Director and Representative UNESCO Regional Office for East Asia

09:10-09:30

*NUM LIBRARY
Room 502*

CONFERENCE INTRODUCTION

Ariell Ahearn & Eric Thrift

Nomadic Culture and COP17: Cultural Rights, Knowledge Systems, and Climate Resilience

09:30-11:15

*NUM LIBRARY
Room 502*

KEYNOTE PANEL

Chair and Discussants:

Daniel J. Murphy and Ariell Ahearn

Bumochir Dulam

Pastoralists and the Social Impacts of Development

Ilse Kohler-Rollefson

Pastoralists as role models for managing livestock within Planetary Boundaries

Abdul Wahid Khan

Pastoralist Worldviews and Commoning in an Age of Nationalism and Climate Change in Chitral, Pakistan

11:15 - 11:30

COFFEE BREAK

NUM LIBRARY, Terrace of Room 502



11:30-13:00

NUM LIBRARY
Room 502

Chair: Eric Thrift

**PLENARY SESSION 1. NOMADIC FUTURES:
STANDPOINTS AND PERSPECTIVES**

Tuvshintur Munkhtumen

Reflections on current situation of herder youth

Shinya Konaka

Recognizing Nomadic Culture as Relational for Nomadic Futures under Climate Change

Sarantuya Zandaryaa

Water in nomadic civilizations: Learning from ancient wisdom and traditional knowledge to enhance climate resilience

Daniel J. Murphy

Place, Hope, and the Future of Pastoralism: Rethinking Sustainability in Rural Mongolia

Fernando Garcia Dory

Global Pastoralist Movement: Reflections from WAMIP

Francesca Lugli

Winter Camps of Mongolian Nomads, Climate Resilience, and Contemporary Adaptations

13:00-14:00

LUNCH

NUM LIBRARY, Terrace of Room 503

14:00-16:00

NUM LIBRARY
Room 502

Chair:
Michael James
Warren

**PLENARY SESSION 2. LAND RIGHTS,
GOVERNANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

Tungalag Ulambayar

Energy Justice? Pastoralism, Political Ecology and Lower-Carbon Energy Transitions

Sumiya Bilegsaikhan Taij

Mapping Multispecies Change: Nutag, Ecology, and Renewable Energy Transition Frontiers in Mongolia

Tamir Erdenechuluun & Khatansaikhan Ravdandorj

Land Rights in the Context of Natural Resource Use, Environmental Protection, and the "Green Transition"

Baljinnyam Ishgen

Legally Invisible on Their Own Land: Nomadic Herders, Unrecognized Land Rights, and the Limits of Mongolia's Green Transition

Byambajargal Ayushjav, Xi LU, Tsenguun Ganbat, and Dolgorsuren Jamiyan

The Role of Mongolian Traditional Knowledge in Green Energy Transition in the Context of Climate Change

Bayarsaikhan Namsrai and Boldbaatar Nyamsuren

Herder Red Line Initiative for Sustainable Pasture Rights

16:00-16:15

COFFEE BREAK

NUM LIBRARY
Terrace of Room 503

16:15-17:45

NUM LIBRARY
Room 502

Chair:
Ariell Ahearn

**PLENARY SESSION 3. LIVING KNOWLEDGE:
NOMADIC WISDOM IN A TIME OF CHANGE.**

A special session of Nomadic Futures Conference, presented by The World Union of Indigenous Spiritual Practitioners and the Wayfinders Circle.

Molu Kulu (spiritual leader; member of WUISP and the Wayfinders Circle), Dr. Hussein Isack, and Ali Gufu Ibrae

“Worr Gaala: The Gabbra” Film screening and discussion.

This documentary, co-produced by the Gabbra – a nomadic pastoralist people living across northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia – follows a young Gabbra camel herder as he helps guide his community's migration across their vast rangelands. Drawing on Indigenous knowledge, cultural resilience, and a close relationship with the camel, he and his village navigate a changing climate in order to survive and thrive. (22 minutes)

Buyanbadrakh Erdenetsogt

The Worship of Ezen-Sabdag (Guardian Spirits): The Living Interdependence of "Human-Nature-Culture" Among Mongols

Mirrakhim Oposh

Carrying Traditional Knowledge Forward: Cultural Continuity through Contemporary Art Curatorship

Aibek Baiymbetov

In Search of Roots through Art: Indigenous Youth in the Origins Creative Program

Tunga Rai

Nature as Sacred Force: Ancestral Knowledge on Reading, Respecting, and Thriving with the Land

20 AUGUST

9:00 TO 10:30 AM | PARALLEL SESSION: PANELS 1, 2 & 3

09:00-10:30

NUM LIBRARY, 2ND FLOOR

Room 204

Chair: Allison Hahn

Oyundalai Odkhuu

Young Male Herders in the Face of Transformation: Embodied Knowledge, Landscape, and Lived Experience in the Mongolian Steppe

Gerelmaa Altangerel

Self-Regulated Learning of Mongolian Nomadic Herder Children: Bridging Home-Based Early Childhood Education and Mandatory Primary Education

Xiaojie Tian

Pastoralist Children's Land Rights on the Move: A Mixed-Method Ethnographic Inquiry into the Contemporary Ways of Living and the Everyday Learning of Children in a Maasai Community in Southern Kenya

Meerim Aytkeeva

From Sacred Landscapes to Digital Futures: Youth Co-Creation of Kyrgyz Nomadic Knowledge Systems

09:00-10:30

NUM LIBRARY, 2ND FLOOR

Room 202

Chair: Munkhtamir Damdinsuren

Natasha Fijn

Racing in the Naadam: The mobility and endurance of the Mongolian horse

Akira Kamimura

The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Mobile Pastoralism in Mongolia

Francisca Cortés Quezada

The human-animal relationship and its impact on the landscape: the case of transhumance in Monte Patria, Chile

Yufang Gao

Between Sentient and Material Worlds: Tibetan Pastoral Knowledge of Plants in a Changing Climate

Christopher Nelson Wizda

Düýe at Dusk: The Arvana, the Kejebe, and Multispecies Heritage in Turkmen Pastoral Life

09:00-10:30

PANEL 3. MEMORY AND INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS

NUM LIBRARY, 2ND FLOOR, Room 203

Chair: Munkh-Erdene Gantulga

Chieko Hirota

Rethinking the Conditions for the Movement and Regeneration of Skills: The Case of Kazakh Handicrafts in Western Mongolia

Zoljargal Enkhamgalan

Memory and Heirloom of a Herder Family: The Life of Tiny Silver Earrings (based on auto ethnography)

Anujin Erdenebayar

Rebuilding Memory: Intergenerational knowledge transmission, cultural continuity, and nomadic futures in contemporary Mongolia

Meriam Sehim

Memory and Resistance of Ancestral Spatial Literacies across the Sahara: Weaving Indigenous Nomadic Resilience and the (In)tangible Desert Archive

Radhika Gupta and Dawa Bhutia

Wind horse will you carry our prayers to the skies to protect our land and food?

10:30-10:45

COFFEE BREAK

NUM LIBRARY, 2ND FLOOR

10:45-12:15

PARALLEL SESSIONS: PANEL 4, 5 & 6

10:45-12:15

PANEL 4. INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE FOR HEALTH AND ECOLOGY

NUM LIBRARY, 2ND FLOOR, Room 203

Chair: Saverio Kratli

Ganbold Yandag

Traditional Knowledge of Mongolian Herders on Treatment and Protection of Animal Diseases

Peregrine Rothman-Ostrow

Indigenous Language Disease Ontologies: Towards Epistemic Equity in Disease Surveillance and Response in Pastoral Communities

Oyundelger Khurelpurev

Pasture condition in the Mongolian steppe: Relevance of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Ecological Surveys

Lkhagvadulam Tumur-Ochir

Mongolian Ecological Wisdom: Traditional Knowledge and Practices of Nature Conservation

Ganjargal Mijiddorj

The Expression of Natural Disasters and Phenomena in Mongolian Folklore

10:45-12:15

PANEL 5. RIGHTS AND RISING EXTRACTIVISM IN NOMADIC TERRITORIES

NUM LIBRARY, 2ND FLOOR, Room 202

Chair: Ariell Ahearn

Tamir Erdenetsogt & Nomyrbayasgalan Suld

Regulatory issues of the Law on Herders

Oyun-Erdene Chuluunbaatar

Exclusion in Agenda Setting: Stakeholder Dynamics and Nomadic Communities in Mongolia's Tourism Policy

Carmen Hamel and Altanzaya Yansanjav

"Nowhere Else to Go": Mining Expansion, Climate Uncertainty, and Herder Livelihoods in Mongolia

Sarah Lunacek

Mobile Pastoralists' Rights in Sustainable vs. Extractivist Land Management

Yuanhui Ding

Violent Mining and Violent Landscape: Scars of Excavation and Life World of Tibetan Herders

10:45-12:15

PANEL 6. KNOWLEDGE FUTURES AND INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

NUM LIBRARY, 2ND FLOOR, Room 204

Chair: Allison Hahn

Munkhtamir Damdinsuren, Byambabaatar Ichinkhorloo & Anujin Bat-Erdene

Nomadic futures: Young herders and generational continuity in Mongolia

Mijid Sainbuyan , Ondrej Srba

Who Will Inherit the Övöljöö? Intergenerational Pastoral Succession and the Future of Young Herders in Khyargas Soum, Uvs Province

Joana Roque de Pinho

Seeking Health and Finding Collective Joy under Lockdown: The COVID-19 Meat Camp among Maasai of Southern Kenya

Mari Kazato

Local Mobility and Information Media Use among Mongolian Herders

12:15-13:15

LUNCH

NUM LIBRARY, 2ND FLOOR

13:15-15:15

PANEL 7. NOMADIC PLACES AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

NUM LIBRARY, 2ND FLOOR

Room 202

Chair: Eric Thrift

Cecilia Dal Zovo

Landscapes of Memory and Knowledge: Long-term Pastoral Mobility in the Govi-Altai Mountains, Mongolia

Aiza Abdyrakhmanova

Stone Archives: Community-Based Safeguarding of Petroglyphs in Kyrgyzstan

Moe Terao

Rethinking Mongolian ger as a nomadic space

Sharaa Byamba

Hot Ail: A Way of Life of Mongolian Herders – A Social-Ecological Analysis

Jenny Tang

Art of the 'setgel': Crafting emplacement for a post-nomadic subjectivity

13:15-15:15

PANEL 8. NOMADIC KNOWLEDGE AND RESILIENCE

NUM LIBRARY, 2ND FLOOR

Room 204

Chair: Wahid Khan

Malahat Mazinani

Ethics of Nomadic Communities in Iran: Biocultural Governance, Mobility, and Cultural Resilience

Hande Sinem Ergun

From Yörük Heritage to Contemporary Cultural Rights: Nomadic Knowledge Systems and Pastoral Futures in Türkiye

Kh. Orkhonchimeg & Khalzan Odonchimeg

Some Challenges in Safeguarding Mongolia's National Security and Preserving Nomadic Civilization

Qurbonidin Alamshoev

Pamir Kyrgyz: Between Nomadic Heritage and Settled Life in the High Mountains of Central Asia



13:15-15:15

PANEL 9. CLIMATE CHANGE, VULNERABILITY AND ADAPTATION

NUM LIBRARY, 2ND FLOOR

Room 203

Chair: Joana Roque de Pinho

Caroline Upton and Batbuyan Batjav

Contesting 'Climate Resilience': Knowledges, Mobilities and Livelihoods in Kenya and Mongolia

Altansukh Bayarbileg, Dina Azhgaliyeva and James Correia

Climatic Extremes and Pastoral Vulnerability: The Impact of Dzud on Household Livestock in Mongolia

Qiruona (Tsarun)

Weathering Storms and Policies: the Vulnerable Voyage of Inner Mongolian Herders Amidst Climate and Policy Shifts

Annah Lake Zhu

Cultural Heritage in Motion: Adaptive Mobile Cultures of (Semi)nomadic Indigenous People in Changing Climates

Delgerzaya Delgerjargal

Climate-driven Species Substitution in Mongolian Cattle Herds: Adaptation Between Yaks and Mongolian Cows

15:15-15:30

COFFEE BREAK

NUM LIBRARY, 2nd Floor

15:30-17:00

PLENARY SESSION 4. FUTURE TRAJECTORIES AND NOMADIC RELATIONALITIES

NUM LIBRARY, 2ND FLOOR

Room 202

Chair: Wahid Khan

Bruce Forbes

Participatory Research from Alaska to Siberia and Back: Co-Development and Resilience in Linked Social-Ecological Systems

Saverio Kratli

Why Pastoralism is Already in the Future

Khand Byambaa

Camel Knowledge Systems in Dundgovi

Orhon Myadar

Beneath the Softness: Cashmere, Livelihood, and the Politics of Pasture Degradation in Post-Socialist Mongolia

Wassie Berhanu

The Challenges of Living in the Periphery: Pastoral Poverty, Vulnerability and Resilience

Dawn Chatty

Nomadic Futures and the Rights of Mobile Peoples

17:00- 18:00

NUM LIBRARY,
2ND FLOOR
Room 202

**CLOSING SESSION: OPEN DISCUSSION OF
DRAFT CONFERENCE DECLARATION**

Moderators:
Ariell Ahearn & Eric Thrift

All participants are invited to discuss the draft Conference Declaration.

The Conference Declaration will be submitted to the Minister of Culture of Mongolia and to the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

18:30-20:30

CONFERENCE DINNER (SIGN-UP REQUIRED)

Dinner tickets will be available for purchase at the registration desk at morning and afternoon conference venues.



“NOMADS” WORLD CULTURAL FESTIVAL

21 AUGUST

Programming at this venue is co-hosted by the Commission for Nomadic Peoples and the International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations. Public exhibition and film festival presentation continue 21-23 August. Transportation to the “Nomads” World Culture Festival venue will be provided on 21 August for all registered participants. “Nomads” World Cultural Festival is located in Nalaikh, Mongolia.

9:00 - 10:30

PRESENTATION OF CONFERENCE DECLARATION TO THE MINISTER OF CULTURE OF MONGOLIA

10:30 - 11:30

NOMADS WORLD
CULTURE FESTIVAL

EXHIBITION OPENING: MONGOLIAN-ITALIAN PASTORALISM

Francesca Lugli

Introduction to the Exhibition and Q & A

12:00 - 14:05

NOMADS WORLD
CULTURE FESTIVAL

WORLD NOMADS GER CINEMA: PASTORALISM IN FILM

The World Nomads Ger Cinema brings together filmmakers and researchers to explore the lives, knowledge systems, and contemporary experiences of nomadic and pastoral communities through documentary cinema.

Saverio Kratli

Pastoralism is the future; Climate change and pastoralism

Dawa Sangbo Bhutia & Radhika Gupta

Before more is lost

Joana Roque de Pinho & Maasai Youth Filmmakers

Maasai voices on climate change (and other changes, too)

14:15 - 15:15

NOMADS WORLD
CULTURE FESTIVAL

CNP ROUNDTABLE. THEMES FROM THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS

Joana Roque de Pinho

Allison Hahn

Tomas White

And more!

15:15-16:35

NOMADS WORLD
CULTURE FESTIVAL

WORLD NOMADS GER CINEMA: SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Delgerzaya Delgerjargal

Herders at the Edge

Bradley Rappa

Lost Ground

16:45-18:00

NOMADS WORLD
CULTURE FESTIVAL

WORLD NOMADS GER CINEMA: TRANSHUMANCE AND TRADE CARAVANS

Sarah Lunacek

Commitment (Zaveza)

Tarlamt: Salt caravan to Bilma

18:10 - 19:00

NOMADS WORLD
CULTURE FESTIVAL

WORLD NOMADS GER CINEMA: EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES AND HERDER COMMUNITIES

Steps Without Borders NGO

The largest cave in Mongolia and its only remaining family

22 AUGUST

Transportation to the World Nomads Festival on 22 August will be arranged on request.

10:00 - 19:00

WORLD NOMADS GER CINEMA: FILMS FROM THE TARTARY FILM WORKSHOP

The Tartaly film workshop investigates contemporary Kyrgyz life, culture, and traditions through the production of documentary and short feature films. The methodology involves collective immersion into the complex fabric of modern social interactions. Participants embark on expeditions to various regions of the country, collaborating with local communities to capture authentic narratives. Operating with an ethnographic sensitivity, the workshop meticulously studies and documents societal reality through the camera lens, tracing subtle transformations from social structures to spiritual foundations. The resulting output is a cinematic anthology that captures the multifaceted passage of time—archiving the past, interrogating the present, and contemplating the future.

Dastan Borkosh

Alihan's village

Tynystan Temirzhan

Ala kiyiz

Alina Baitokova

Umai

Aibek Baiymbetov

The Path



NOMADIC FUTURES:

CULTURAL RIGHTS, KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS, CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Public exhibition and film festival presentation continue 21-23 August.
Transportation to the “Nomads” World Culture Festival venue will be provided on 21 August for all registered participants.

EXHIBITION

THE WORLD OF MONGOLIAN AND ITALIAN PASTORALISM: SURVIVING CLIMATE CHANGE AND MODERNITY

Jointly organized by the Italian Association for Ethnoarchaeology (IAE) and IISNC under the auspices of UNESCO, this exhibition will introduce participants and visitors to the rich cultural, historical, and contemporary dimensions of Mongolian and Italian pastoralism.

Through a comparative and diachronic approach, the exhibition will explore the resilience of pastoral communities and the challenges they face today, including climate change, desertification, modernization, and socio-economic transformation. It will highlight the crucial role of pastoralists in safeguarding cultural heritage, biodiversity, and sustainable land management practices.

The main curatorial team will be led by Francesca Lugli and Graziano Capitini of the Italian Association for Ethnoarchaeology (IAE), together with Munkhtuul Chuluunbaatar of the International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations (IISNC), in collaboration with Otgonsuren Dugarsuren of the National Museum of Mongolia and Batkhuyag O. of the Department of Culture and Arts.



**NOMADIC FUTURES:
CULTURAL RIGHTS, KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS, CLIMATE RESILIENCE**

ABSTRACTS



KEYNOTE PANEL

ILSE KÖHLER-ROLLEFSON

LEAGUE FOR PASTORAL PEOPLES (LPP)

PASTORALISTS AS ROLE MODELS FOR MANAGING LIVESTOCK WITHIN PLANETARY BOUNDARIES

Pastoralist systems are oriented at optimizing the use of variable vegetation by means of mobile herds of animals who are treated as intelligent partners and household members. They represent an antithesis to 'modern', 'scientific' farming systems which aim to maximise output by feeding immobilized livestock with standardized, exactly calculated rations. In conventional animal science the dominant mantra is 'efficiency' in converting feed input into food output, as if animals were machines, and without consideration for biodiversity and other sustainability parameters.

Farm animals now compose more than 60% of mammalian body mass while wild animals contribute only 4%, and humans 34%. This exponential growth has been enabled by the destruction of tropical forests and natural grasslands that have been converted to the production of row crops (soy and maize) to feed livestock. It is majorly responsible for our transgression of several of the 'Planetary Boundaries', that should not be crossed if the climate on Earth is to remain stable. These include land use change/deforestation, biodiversity, climate change and nitrogen and phosphorous cycles.

By adapting livestock numbers to annually fluctuating resources, pastoralists raise livestock in tune with Planetary Boundaries. Yet, if looked at through the lens of animal science their production per animal is low. For obtaining political support for pastoralism, it is imperative to challenge the efficiency paradigm that undergirds conventional animal science and replace it with a new model that integrates the holistic knowledge of pastoralists and includes consideration of animal welfare and the environment. Rather than 'improving' pastoral systems along the lines of conventional animal science we need conventional systems to turn pastoralist.

KEYNOTE PANEL

WAHID KHAN

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

PASTORALIST WORLDVIEWS AND COMMONING IN AN AGE OF NATIONALISATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN CHITRAL, PAKISTAN

In the Hindu Kush region of Chitral, Pakistan, pastoralist communities have long organised access to high-altitude commons through relational and often spiritual understandings of land, water, and more-than-human beings. Pastoralist commons in Chitral, Pakistan's Hindu Kush Himalayan borderlands, are being reshaped simultaneously by state nationalisation of pastureland and by climate change, including the glacial lake outburst floods that have displaced pastoralist households in recent years. Drawing on fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Yarkhun Valley, this keynote introduces four concepts developed from that research: muzhayo, the more-than-human relations through which commons are constituted; culturalscape, the layered material and spiritual terrain pastoralists use to claim land; apoliticisation, the process by which state and conservation narratives strip commons of their political history; and boomki, seasonal settlements governed outside formal tenure categories. Rather than treating pastoral commons as remnants awaiting privatisation or blank land awaiting conservation, I argue they represent an active and contested politics that both nationalisation policy and climate adaptation frameworks consistently misread. This has direct consequences for how loss and damage gets recognised, and for whom, after climate disasters. The talk closes by placing Chitral within a wider conversation on pastoralist and nomadic commoning across nationalising and climate-stressed states, asking what forms of recognition, legal, epistemic, or political, could better hold what current frameworks flatten.

SHINYA KONAKA

UNIVERSITY OF SHIZUOKA

RECOGNIZING NOMADIC CULTURE AS RELATIONAL FOR NOMADIC FUTURES UNDER CLIMATE CHANGE: RESILIENCE AND DISPLACEMENT IN NORTH-CENTRAL KENYA

When discussing the sustainable development of rangelands and pastoralist societies, one fundamental challenge persists: the knowledge systems and living cultural practices through which pastoralists have sustained dryland environments for generations are frequently treated as though they did not exist. Sustainable development initiatives—whether addressing climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, or biodiversity conservation—are commonly based on the assumption that appropriate knowledge and practices must be introduced from outside pastoral communities. Consequently, nomadic culture is often portrayed either as an obstacle to sustainable development or as a historical remnant worthy only of preservation or tourism. Such representations are reinforced by globally circulating narratives that depict pastoralists as agents of environmental degradation. Protecting the cultural rights of pastoralists and other nomadic peoples is therefore essential (Fribourg Group, 2007; UN, 2024). Yet legal and institutional frameworks alone are insufficient if the living cultural practices through which nomadic societies sustain themselves remain unrecognized.

Drawing on long-term ethnographic research among Samburu pastoralists and Dorobo foragers in north-central Kenya (Konaka, 2006, 2021, 2025, 2026), this presentation demonstrates how living nomadic culture has contributed to the ecological sustainability of rangelands and to the resilience of local communities across generations. One reason these contributions have often remained unrecognized is that nomadic culture is continually constituted through changing relationships among people, livestock, landscapes, forests, neighbouring communities, and wider social and political processes (Konaka, 2023, 2024). Rather than existing as a bounded and static entity, nomadic culture emerges through these relationships and is continually renewed as they change. This presentation therefore argues that nomadic culture should be recognized as fundamentally relational (Gibson and Venkateswar, 2015; Goldman et al., 2015; Goldman et al., 2017; Krätli, 2017; de Wit, 2020; West et al., 2020; 2024; Konaka and Little, 2021; Shnegg, 2022; Konaka et al., 2023; Konaka, 2025, 2026). Such failure to recognize the relational nature of nomadic culture has contributed to externally driven climate change mitigation, conservation, and development initiatives that have accelerated ecological degradation, displacement, and impoverishment.

Recognizing nomadic culture as relational changes how sustainable development is understood. Rather than introducing solutions from outside, it calls for working collaboratively with pastoral communities to recognize and embrace the living cultural practices through which pastoral societies and rangeland ecosystems continue to be sustained. Recognizing nomadic culture as relational is therefore not merely a matter of preserving the past, but of opening up nomadic futures full of possibilities.

SARANTUYAA ZANDARYAA

UNESCO - DIVISION OF WATER SCIENCES

WATER IN NOMADIC CIVILIZATIONS: LEARNING FROM ANCIENT WISDOM AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE TO ENHANCE CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Water has been a vital aspect in nomadic settlements, as both ancient and modern nomadic communities move seasonally in search of water and better pasturelands for their livestock. The availability and accessibility of water resources—such as rivers, streams, groundwater wells, snow, and ice—are the key factors that determined where nomadic communities decide to settle. While nomadic communities in water-rich areas change their settlement locations primarily as part of their cultural practices, in arid regions or drylands, their movements were driven mainly by the need to access water resources essential for their survival and livelihoods. Transhumance—the seasonal migration of nomad people with their livestock—is, therefore, closely linked to water availability and significantly impacts water resources. On the other hand, water serves as the central element around which nomadic settlements organize and manage their activities.

This paper focuses on the central role of water management in nomadic settlements, emphasizing the traditional practices and indigenous knowledge systems that enabled these societies to not only survive in water-scarce environments and harsh climates but also to flourish economically and socially. In particular, UNESCO's role in promoting water sciences and education for people, peace, climate adaptation and resilience will be highlighted, with a focus on Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme's (IHP) activities on water in human settlements. It will also emphasize UNESCO's initiatives that emphasize the role of water in shaping different cultures, as well as the role of culture in the ways nomadic communities use and value water. Furthermore, examples of UNESCO's water-related natural World Heritage sites and intangible cultural heritage elements involving nomadic cultures will be featured.

Integrating the time-tested water management strategies developed by nomadic communities over centuries—especially their methods for finding, storing, and using water in arid regions or in the fight against water scarcity driven extreme climate events—into scientific and technological solutions of our times can significantly enhance climate-resilient water management. Applying lessons from water management in nomadic settlements also helps preserve traditional knowledge and cultural values that foster humanity's coexistence with nature amid changing environmental conditions and global climate change.

DANIEL J. MURPHY

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

PLACE, HOPE, AND THE FUTURE OF PASTORALISM: RETHINKING SUSTAINABILITY IN RURAL MONGOLIA

In a rural pastoral district of eastern Mongolia, many livestock owners have, until recently, avoided the disastrous trajectories experienced elsewhere in Mongolia and have paradoxically increased their herd sizes and wealth over the last few decades. This seems like it might be a developmental success story, but during the winter of 2023-24, this suddenly changed as a long, harsh dzud disaster unfolded, causing households to lose on average 80% of their livestock. Interestingly, in contrast to the despair portrayed in much of the popular press about dzud in Mongolia, qualitative and ethnographic data I collected in the summer of 2024 revealed that many herders, though not all, were undeterred by such loss and remained confidently hopeful that, in time, their herds would grow again. In this paper, I describe how a relational understanding of a 'more-than-human' world, including spirits, ghost, and 'others', and a 'more-than-now' temporality help explain this source of hopefulness and provide an important critique of current models of pastoral sustainability. Grounded in the concept of 'ontological security', I argue that rooting our analysis in understandings of place, through local inflections of the Mongolian concept of nutag, or homeland, provides a deeper sense of the material and non-material relational fabric of rural livelihoods than dominant sustainability frameworks permit. In doing so, I argue that a relational, place-based approach illustrates serious blind spots in largely 'western' models of pastoralism, and sustainable development more broadly.

TUNGALAG ULAMBAYAR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY LUUJIN

ENERGY JUSTICE? PASTORALISM, POLITICAL ECOLOGY AND LOWER-CARBON ENERGY TRANSITIONS

As global renewable energy (RE) capacity continues its unprecedented expansion, green extractivism and energy justice (EJ) have become increasingly pressing concerns, both in critical political ecology-inspired studies and where lower-carbon energy (LCE) infrastructures touch down in particular places and everyday lives. We focus on the justice implications of LCE transitions and the processes by which they are produced specifically in pastoralists' lands and communities. We argue that these remain relatively marginalised in current scholarship, despite pastoral drylands globally becoming targets for roll-out of large-scale LCE, facilitated by intersection of their environmental characteristics and the livelihood strategies, land rights and relations of their occupants, and underpinned by re-emergent discourses of empty, degraded wastelands.

We aim to enhance critical understanding of EJ in pastoralist communities and through this to advance current debates on EJ principles and meanings and the role of non-Western norms, place and land relations therein. Our two-stage study draws on systematic desk-based analysis of pastoralist case studies globally and on secondary and empirical material from Kenyan and Mongolian case studies. It utilises Sovacool's (2021) '4Es' framework to examine the subtleties of how enclosure, exclusion, encroachment and entrenchment operate in these contexts, and links these to the production of particular energy-related injustices. We highlight the importance of pastoralists', place-based meanings of EJ, grounded in local land rights and relations, and of contested concepts of consent, including Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) as critical in refining EJ principles and in shaping prospects for locally owned, just energy transitions.

SUMYA BILEGSAIKHAN TAU

INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER

MAPPING MULTISPECIES CHANGE: NUTAG, ECOLOGY, AND RENEWABLE ENERGY TRANSITION FRONTIERS IN MONGOLIA

Across Inner Asia, livelihoods are deeply entangled with animals, plants, as well as rangelands and water systems. Nomadic pastoralism, smallholder agriculture, fisheries, and foraging practices form multispecies relationships that sustain both cultural identity and nutritional wellbeing. Renewable energy projects, including roads, railways, special economic zones, hydropower, and critical miners mining reconfigure these relationships by altering local ecologies, human mobility patterns, and multispecies relations. Through participatory mapping exercises with local communities at the forefront of the renewable energy transition, this in-progress research aims to generate a more nuanced understanding of how transnational flows of ideas, investment, and expertise reshape everyday life across culturally and nutritionally significant water-landscapes, and exemplify how Nutag, as an ontology, system of knowledge, and place, can help understand and redress the multispecies change unfolding across renewable energy frontiers in Mongolia and perhaps beyond.

TAMIR ERDENECHULUUN & KHATANSAIKHAN RAVDANDORJ

THE NATIONAL LEGAL INSTITUTE OF MONGOLIA

LAND RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF NATURAL RESOURCE USE, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, AND THE "GREEN TRANSITION"

Although approximately 76.9 percent of Mongolia's territory is affected by desertification and land degradation, its economy remains profoundly dependent on the mining sector – a tension that gives rise to challenges meriting future attention in the legal regulation of land rights. Article 6 of the Constitution of Mongolia provides that, save for land transferred into the ownership of citizens of Mongolia, land – together with the subsoil and its resources, forests, water resources, and fauna – shall constitute the public property of the State. Business entities engaged in mining activities in Mongolia, however, carry out their operations through the legal forms of possession and use of land rather than ownership. Accordingly, this article examines the regulatory framework governing land rights in their possessory and usufructuary forms and analyses the land rights stipulated in the contracts of business entities operating in the mining sector pursuant to legislation and to investment agreements. It further investigates the interrelationship between land rights and the "green transition," and advances proposals and recommendations for newly incorporating into, and refining, the legal regulation that would bring the relations attendant upon the cessation of mining operations (mine closure) into conformity with the benchmark principles of the "green transition."

BALJINNYAM ISHGEN

BREATHE MONGOLIA NGO

LEGALLY INVISIBLE ON THEIR OWN LAND: NOMADIC HERDERS, UNRECOGNIZED LAND RIGHTS, AND THE LIMITS OF MONGOLIA'S GREEN TRANSITION

Mongolian nomadic herders govern their relationship to land through a coherent knowledge system like nutag, ideeshikh, khot-ail that has sustained mobile livelihoods across generations. In December 2024, UNESCO inscribed Mongol nomad migration as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Yet Mongolia's regulatory framework does not recognize these knowledge systems. This paper argues that this unrecognized and unresolved customary land rights question is not merely a historical injustice but a legal gap that systematically excludes nomadic herders from every model of economic development. Mining companies obtain land possession titles without adequate consultation and EIA processes including consultation are conducted after key licensing decisions are made. The green transition reproduces the same exclusion in new form. The Draft Law on Critical Minerals requires local authorities to support land allocation for extraction, while the Draft Law on Climate Change introduces carbon credits without resolving the foundational issues around herders' customary land. For instance, herders who have stewarded carbon-sequestering grasslands for generations cannot access green economy revenues because, in law, the question of how they hold land remains open. It argues that existing international frameworks, including FPIC standards, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, and business and human rights obligations, international human rights standards offer adaptable tools for recognizing in national laws how nomadic peoples know and govern land, and that this recognition must precede any transition aimed for economic benefits.

BYAMBAJARGAL AYUSHJAV, XI LU, TSENGUUN GANBAT, AND DOLGORSUREN JAMIYAN

TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY, CITI UNIVERSITY OF MONGOLIA

THE ROLE OF MONGOLIAN TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN GREEN ENERGY TRANSITION IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

In the current climate change environment, Mongolia faces the interrelated challenges of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, ensuring energy security, and maintaining the sustainability of nomadic pastoralism. Green energy transition policies and research focus on technology, economics, and carbon reduction, but the role of nomads' traditional knowledge has been understudied. There is a need to integrate green energy transition not only with technological innovation but also with traditional knowledge about nature. This study examines how Mongolian nomads' traditional knowledge can contribute to a climate-adapted and socially inclusive green energy transition. The knowledge of Mongolians' four-season migration, environmental and water-grazing management, risk-based decision-making, and adaptive management, which has been developed over centuries, is considered to be important for renewable energy planning, deployment, and implementation. In particular, herders' knowledge of weather changes, wind patterns, solar radiation, water resources, and terrain characteristics can increase the location selection, local participation, and social acceptance of wind and solar energy projects.

We will discuss how this can be incorporated into the Global Change Analysis Model (GCAM), a global energy-climate assessment model. GCAM estimates future scenarios for energy demand, supply, technology choices, and carbon emissions, but does not adequately reflect local cultural knowledge and behavioral factors. Therefore, we will explore the possibility of considering herders' folk knowledge of nature, traditional experience of resource use, and social factors that support renewable energy acceptance in conjunction with GCAM's technology choice (Logit) parameters and energy demand forecasts. This opens up the possibility of enriching green transition options with factors beyond economic efficiency, cultural compatibility, and local participation.

The study uses a qualitative research methodology that uses literature review, policy document analysis, and experiences of renewable energy development in Mongolia. The results of the study highlight the valuable resource of nomadic traditional knowledge for Mongolia's green energy transition and climate change adaptation policies, and propose a new approach to using local traditional knowledge in energy planning.

LIVING KNOWLEDGE: NOMADIC WISDOM IN A TIME OF CHANGE SESSION

This 90-minute session brings together Indigenous knowledge-holders and practitioners from Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Kenya to explore how living traditions of nomadic knowledge continue to guide communities through environmental and cultural change. Through a series of presentations and the screening of a short documentary co-produced by the Gabbra people of northern Kenya, participants consider knowledge shaped by long experience of demanding landscapes – from the worship of guardian spirits and the interdependence of human, nature, and culture, to the civilizational potential of nomadic life and the ways young people reconnect with their roots through art. Together, the contributions ask how such knowledge can inform shared futures: helping us read change, act amid uncertainty, and sustain reciprocal relations with the living world.

Presentations:

Mongolia

Buyanbadrakh Erdenetsogt

The Worship of Ezen-Sabdag (Guardian Spirits): The Living Interdependence of "Human–Nature–Culture" Among Mongols

Kyrgyzstan

Aibek Baiymbetov

In Search of Roots through Art: Indigenous Youth in the Origins Creative Program

Mirrakhim Oposh

Carrying Traditional Knowledge Forward: Cultural Continuity through Contemporary Art Curatorship

Nepal

Tunga Rai

Pastoralists of Mustang: Living Knowledge and Futures in the Himalayas

Kenya – Gabbra

Molu Kulu (spiritual leader; member of WUISP and the Wayfinders Circle), Dr. Hussein Isack, and Ali Gufu Ibrae

“Worr Gaala: The Gabbra” Film screening and discussion. This documentary, co-produced by the Gabbra – a nomadic pastoralist people living across northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia – follows a young Gabbra camel herder as he helps guide his community's migration across their vast rangelands. Drawing on Indigenous knowledge, cultural resilience, and a close relationship with the camel, he and his village navigate a changing climate in order to survive and thrive. (22 minutes)

OYUNDALAI ODKHUU

NATIONAL CHENGCHI UNIVERSITY, TAIWAN

YOUNG MALE HERDERS IN THE FACE OF TRANSFORMATION: EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE, LANDSCAPE, AND LIVED EXPERIENCE IN THE MONGOLIAN STEPPE

This research examines young male herders' situated knowledge, lived experiences, and herding livelihoods in contemporary Mongolia. Pastoral communities are increasingly facing gendered transformations in which young male herders tend to remain in their local areas and continue herding livestock, while young women increasingly migrate to urban settlements. This research investigates how young male herders navigate everyday herding life in the absence of women, how they perceive their livelihoods, and how they create meanings and values around herding amid these gendered transformations.

Grounded in ethnographic fieldwork as a qualitative research approach, this study employed semi-structured interviews with young male herders in two rural districts of central Mongolia. The findings show that herders actively produce relational, practical, and contextual knowledge through their interactions with both human and non-human actors while engaging with ongoing social, economic, and environmental changes. The study also elucidates that herders produce value in everyday life through interactions with horses, contests, jokes, and songs, which function as communal and performative practices of constructing masculinity.

The findings further suggest that herders occupy an epistemic vantage point and that their knowledge production is socially situated and cannot be fully accessed from dominant perspectives. This research therefore challenges static representations of herding as a timeless and male-dominated vocation by situating it within broader processes of post-socialist social and economic transformation. It contends that the emergent gendered configurations of mobility and stasis necessitate an epistemic redefinition of how rurality, gender, and tradition are conceptualized within dominant knowledge systems.

GERELMAA ALTANGEREL

UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

SELF-REGULATED LEARNING OF MONGOLIAN NOMADIC HERDER CHILDREN: BRIDGING HOME-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND MANDATORY PRIMARY EDUCATION

What I can bring to the conference is my findings on how young Mongolian nomadic herder children demonstrate strong self-regulated learning (SRL) skills within their home cultural contexts, and how Mongolian primary schooling can better support these learners. Drawing on two summers of ethnographic fieldwork with nomadic herder families in Alag-Erdene soum of Khuvsgul province, I examine children's SRL as it develops in home environments and during the transition to formal schooling.

SRL is an active and constructive learning process in which learners set learning goals and regulate their cognition, motivation, behaviour, and emotions to achieve those goals. Across international education systems, SRL is increasingly recognised as a foundational skill for lifelong learning; however, it remains under-researched in out-of-school contexts, particularly in relation to children's home-based cultural upbringing.

Mongolian nomadic children typically remain with their families until school age due to the isolated nature of the nomadic lifestyle and limited access to early childhood education services. However, this period also offers valuable opportunities for children to engage deeply with traditional nomadic culture and acquire culturally specific knowledge and skills. These prior knowledge and skills, however, are often overlooked in schools due to deficit discourses surrounding nomadic life and other contributing factors, such as the lack of formal early childhood services.

My initial findings demonstrate that these children can metacognitively and motivationally regulate their learning through participation in daily chores, guided by family members and more-than-human learning partners such as herd animals, Khangai Delkhii, nutag, and other cultural norms and beliefs.

PANEL 1. KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS: YOUTH, CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

XIAOJIE TIAN

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR UNIVERSITY OF TSUKUBA

PASTORALIST CHILDREN'S LAND RIGHTS ON THE MOVE: A MIXED-METHOD ETHNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY INTO THE CONTEMPORARY WAYS OF LIVING AND THE EVERYDAY LEARNING OF CHILDREN IN A MAASAI COMMUNITY IN SOUTHERN KENYA

Within pastoralist studies and land rights discourse alike, children appear in a doubly passive guise: as knowledge receivers rather than knowledge holders, and as recipients of land rights rather than claimants in their own right. Adults negotiate titles, treaties, and the political economies of dispossession, while children figure merely as those who will one day inherit. Taking pastoralist childhood as its broader concern, this paper reframes child rights on land through children's integrative developmental process – one in which physical activeness, social participation, and knowledge-making unfold together.

Drawing on a decade-long, mixed-methods ethnographic study in a Maasai community in Kenya, this paper explores three aspects for rethinking children's land rights in pastoralist contexts. The first is staged mobility: children's movement widens by degrees as they take on social participation. The second is autonomy within a play-work complex, expressed through self-guided play and chore-taking across the land with livestock and peers. The third is the parental and social norms that cultivate this autonomy on the move. Together, they place children's land rights at the core of intergenerational pastoral knowledge transmission – the means by which a self-initiated mobile way of everyday living renews itself.

As enclosure, subdivision, and climate variability fragment lands in pastoralist communities, these land-rooted pastoral pedagogies become both resilience and rupture. Foregrounding children as present-day knowers, carers of the lands, and rights-holders, the paper argues that "child rights on the move" demand serious consideration in future policy.

MEERIM AYTKEEVA

AIGINE CULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER IN KYRGYZSTAN

FROM SACRED LANDSCAPES TO DIGITAL FUTURES: YOUTH CO-CREATION OF KYRGYZ NOMADIC KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

This paper presents a youth hackathon organized by Aigine Cultural Research Center in Kyrgyzstan as a case study of how nomadic knowledge systems can be transmitted, reinterpreted, and adapted through contemporary digital technologies. The initiative brought together traditional knowledge holders, sacred site custodians, researchers, IT specialists, and students to collaboratively develop digital products based on three interconnected domains of Kyrgyz knowledge: sacred sites, petroglyphs, and traditional calendar systems.

Particular attention is given to the ways in which sacred sites, petroglyphs, and traditional calendars function as complementary knowledge systems. Sacred landscapes preserve relationships between communities, place, and spiritual practice. Petroglyphs embody cultural memory and reflect long-term understandings of animals, landscapes, and cosmological worldviews embedded within nomadic lifeways. Traditional calendars, grounded in observations of celestial bodies, seasonal cycles, animal behavior, and weather patterns, represent forms of ecological knowledge that historically informed pastoral activities and adaptation to environmental variability.

The paper argues that these knowledge systems should be understood not only as elements of intangible cultural heritage but also as living repositories of ecological memory and resilience. The hackathon demonstrates that youth engagement can support intergenerational knowledge transmission when young people and knowledge holders work as co-creators rather than as separate audiences. At the same time, the case highlights methodological challenges related to digitalization and used language. The study contributes to broader discussions on cultural rights, Indigenous and nomadic knowledge systems, and the role of community-led digital initiatives in shaping sustainable futures.

NATASHA FUN

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

RACING IN THE NAADAM: THE MOBILITY AND ENDURANCE OF THE MONGOLIAN HORSE

Unique cultural practices relating to the Mongolian horse have been retained through long-held intergenerational knowledge in the Mongolian countryside. Winning Naadam races is seen as indicative of a herder's knowledge in terms of the breeding, nurturing and training of horses with stamina and endurance seen as particularly admirable characteristics. A trainer's engagement with individual horses involves an embodied approach, employing all of the senses to assess their level of fitness and readiness to race. Such attention to a horse's condition is through a dedication and passion toward the Mongolian horse and as a form of pride in a nomadic way of life. Traditional approaches toward training and the selection of Mongolian racehorses, including the accompanying rituals, practises and ceremonies, are a form of intangible cultural heritage. Yet changes have been rapidly occurring with differing attitudes towards the selection, breeding and training of racehorses through the introduction of foreign breeds and new techniques that are part of a global horseracing complex. Will this result in fundamental changes to the engagement and cultural connection with the Mongolian horse? It is argued here that skills and practises that have been passed down over the generations are significant forms of traditional knowledge, as a unique nomadic form of "horse culture", which deserves wider recognition.

AKIRA KAMIMURA

TOKYO UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN STUDIES

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON MOBILE PASTORALISM IN MONGOLIA

This paper explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on mobile pastoralism in Mongolia. The author conducted field surveys with questionnaires and open-ended interviews in the summer of 2022, which involved around 80 herder households. The questionnaire included questions about how the governmental policies against the pandemic had affected the following three flows: (1) the flow of people, (2) the flow of animals (pastoral or livestock migration), and (3) the flow of goods (purchase of foods and daily commodities, and sale of livestock products). While they evaluated the impact of the pandemic on their livelihoods and lives as low in total, most respondents thought there would still be a significant negative impact on health and the economy on a global basis. The policies cutting the above flows generated detours and new connections on the other hand: domestic tourism boom, distrust and evasion of vaccines, and reconnect to TK as a return to traditional food and herbs enhancing immunity, which the government also encouraged. Moreover, the large gap between the outside-high and the inside-low risk evaluation probably reflects their self-perception that their homeland or pastoral area is healthy, less risky, and pure. The pandemic reinforced the stereotype.

FRANCISCA CORTÉS QUEZADA

UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE CHILE

THE HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LANDSCAPE: THE CASE OF TRANSHUMANCE IN MONTE PATRIA, CHILE

Transhumance is a practice of seasonal mobility that shapes the landscape through the joint movement of people and animals. In Chile, this form of pastoral nomadism constitutes a living cultural heritage, where the relationships between herders, herds and the environment create and sustain long-lasting cultural landscapes. This research analyses the case of the transhumant herders in the municipality of Monte Patria, Coquimbo Region, with the aim of understanding how their seasonal journeys generate material and immaterial transformations that shape the landscape and sustain specific ways of living.

From this perspective, transhumance is approached not only as a productive activity, but as a system of ecological and territorial knowledge based on mobility. Routes, memories, infrastructure and historical links between humans, animals and the environment form a dynamic network that enables the continuity of this ancestral practice. The study was conducted through fieldwork and semi-structured interviews with herders from Las Ramadas of Tulahuén and coastal areas associated with summer pastures, documenting everyday practices and local knowledge linked to seasonal migration.

The results show that pastoral mobility leaves lasting traces on the landscape, expressed in cattle tracks, stone walls, meadows and other physical features, as well as in knowledge of climatic cycles, pasture availability, animal behaviour and land management, passed down through generations. The aim is to understand transhumance as a practice of co-construction of the landscape between humans and non-human animals, capable of broadening conventional notions of heritage and architecture. This approach contributes to the recognition of pastoral nomadism as a contemporary way of inhabiting and preserving the biocultural diversity of territories.

YUFANG GAO

YALE UNIVERSITY INTER ASIA INITIATIVE

BETWEEN SENTIENT AND MATERIAL WORLDS: TIBETAN PASTORAL KNOWLEDGE OF PLANTS IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

Pastoral knowledge is commonly discussed through livestock, mobility, and rangeland management, yet plants remain largely absent from many accounts of nomadic knowledge systems and climate resilience. This paper examines how Tibetan pastoralists understand plants and how these understandings shape relationships among humans, wildlife, landscapes, and environmental change.

Drawing on long-term ethnographic research in pastoral communities on the Eastern Tibetan Plateau, I argue that plants occupy a distinctive position within Tibetan knowledge systems. While animals are generally understood as sentient beings, plants are associated with the material world that sustains life.

However, plants are not passive environmental objects: they provide food, medicine, habitats, and ritual materials, while linking pastoral livelihoods, sacred landscapes, and more-than-human relations. They thus occupy an intermediate position between sentient and material worlds, mediating ecological, social, and cosmological relationships.

This paper further explores seasonal plant knowledge. For Tibetan pastoralists, plants function not only as ecological components but also as indicators of ecological time. The flowering, growth, fruiting, and dormancy of plants provide temporal cues for livestock movements, wildlife activity, and ritual practices. Climate change is increasingly disrupting these ecological and temporal rhythms through shifts in temperature, precipitation, and seasonality that alter plant phenology and species distributions. These changes affect vegetation and pastoral livelihoods, but also the knowledge systems through which environmental change is perceived and acted upon.

This paper argues that climate resilience depends not only on ecological adaptation but also on sustaining the knowledge practices and relationships that connect people, plants, animals, and landscapes across generations.

CHRISTOPHER NELSON WIZDA

TURKMENISTAN RESEARCHER & REGIONAL ANALYST

DÜYE AT DUSK: THE ARVANA, THE KEJEBE, AND MULTISPECIES HERITAGE IN TURKMEN PASTORAL LIFE

The Arvana, the world's only Turkic-pastoralist single-humped camel breed, sits in a triple gap in the literature on Eurasian mobile pastoralism. Anglophone scholarship reads the dromedary through Arabian, Saharan, or East African frameworks, the Bactrian camel through Mongolian ones, and Turkic pastoralism through the horse and sheep complex of the steppe. The Arvana, central to Turkmen pastoral life for at least two millennia, is largely absent from all three. So is the düýeçi, the Turkmen camel keeper whose embodied knowledge of breeding, milking, fermentation, naming, and ornament has no monographic ethnography in any Western language.

This paper develops a multispecies reading of Turkmen camel pastoralism, anchored in an ethnographic encounter at a desert wedding in which the kejebe, the decorated palanquin carried on camelback, materialized the bride's passage between households. Drawing on Fijn, Ingold, Haraway, Despret, and Ahearn, alongside Turkmen and Russian language ethnography from Vasilyeva to Dubova, the paper treats the Arvana as a co-actor in a relational world spanning desert ecology, domestic ritual, çal fermented milk, camel down wool, the düýe yzy carpet motif, and the verse of Magtymguly Pyragy.

The paper argues that Turkmen camel pastoralism constitutes a coherent intangible heritage system, eligible under Article 2.2(d) of the 2003 Convention and resonant with paragraphs 81 and 93 of the 2024 UN Special Rapporteur report on mobile Indigenous peoples, whose survival depends on intergenerational transmission that current heritage instruments still struggle to recognize.

CHIEKO HIROTA

JSPS RESEARCH FELLOW/ AUSTRALIA NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
VISITING FELLOW

RETHINKING THE CONDITIONS FOR THE MOVEMENT AND REGENERATION OF SKILLS: THE CASE OF KAZAKH HANDICRAFTS IN WESTERN MONGOLIA

Over the past several decades, the number of practitioners of Kazakh handicrafts in western Mongolia has declined. Local people often interpret this situation as evidence that traditional craft skills are gradually disappearing. However, based on my fieldwork experience, these skills appear to remain reproducible under certain social and environmental conditions.

This paper examines the conditions that enable the regeneration of craft skills in a pastoral context. To do so, it draws on two ethnographic observations. The first concerns my experience of learning Kazakh embroidery in western Mongolia and subsequently teaching it to Japanese learners in Japan. This experience revealed how prior familiarity with materials, manual techniques, and practical forms of engagement shapes the acquisition of craft skills. The second observation concerns rugs produced by Tuvan and Uriankhai people in Bayan-Ulgii Province using techniques commonly associated with Kazakh craftsmanship. These examples suggest not only the diffusion of techniques across ethnic boundaries, but also the possibility that craft skills can be regenerated where people share similar materials, bodily practices, and ways of engaging with a pastoral environment.

Drawing on anthropological discussions of the ontology of skill, I argue that the persistence of handicraft traditions depends on understanding the conditions that make the movement and regeneration of skills possible. The paper concludes by emphasizing the importance of documenting these conditions ethnographically, rather than focusing solely on the techniques themselves.

BATTUSHIG TOGTOKH

OI HERITAGE

REBUILDING MEMORY: INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION, CULTURAL CONTINUITY, AND NOMADIC FUTURES IN CONTEMPORARY MONGOLIA

For thousands of years, Mongolia's nomadic civilization, like many pastoral societies, evolved in response to one of the world's most variable and demanding environments. Seasonal mobility, pastoral livelihoods, oral traditions, and cultural practices emerged as integrated responses to ecological uncertainty and climatic extremes. Due to the constraints of mobility, which limited the accumulation of extensive written archives, nomadic societies developed a strong dependence on memory as a central system of survival and knowledge transmission. Knowledge was primarily transmitted through observation, storytelling, apprenticeship, ritual, and lived experience.

The twentieth century brought profound social and economic transformations that disrupted many of these intergenerational transmission pathways. Rapid urbanization and a shift toward sedentary lifestyles widened the distance between younger generations and the nomadic knowledge systems that shaped Mongolian society for millennia. Today, approximately 70 percent of Mongolia's population is under the age of 35, representing a generation largely raised in urban environments with limited direct engagement with these inherited ways of knowing.

This paper examines OI (Memory), a community-based initiative that seeks to reconnect young people with Mongolia's cultural foundations through immersive and participatory learning experiences. Drawing on observations from more than forty workshops involving over 1,500 participants, it explores how memory can function as a living system for transmitting knowledge, identity, and collective responsibility.

The paper argues that cultural memory is not only about preserving heritage. Knowledge creates belonging; belonging creates responsibility; and responsibility inspires participation. In this sense, rebuilding cultural memory is not a mere act of remembrance, but an essential infrastructure for cultural continuity, civic engagement, and resilient nomadic futures.

MERIAM SEHIMI

BORDERS & TERRITORIES GROUP AT THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE & THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT, TU DELFT

MEMORY AND RESISTANCE OF ANCESTRAL SPATIAL LITERACIES ACROSS THE SAHARA: WEAVING INDIGENOUS NOMADIC RESILIENCE AND THE (IN)TANGIBLE DESERT ARCHIVE

Colonial and technocratic regimes have long depicted the Sahara as terra nullius, erasing Indigenous presence, cultural rights, and political recognition while marginalizing nomadic lifeways. My mother, from a Bedouin tribe in the Sahara, represents the last generation of a nomadic community that sustained life for generations in the desert, embodying matriarchal knowledge and revealing a history of both abundance and struggle.

This research examines how Indigenous desert dwellers and other human and more-than-human actors inhabit shifting Saharan ecologies shaped by uncertainty. Nomadic practices deploy interdependent modes of resilience that enable adaptive ways of sensing, orienting, and surviving. The study rethinks the desert through nomadism, framing it as an intangible archive where Indigenous cosmovisions and nomadic water literacies operate as embodied, relational, and (in)visible practices. Literacies are techniques for reading terrain, seasonal patterns, and hydrological flows. They guide mobility, sustain lifeways, and shape adaptive strategies under scarcity. Knowledge is enacted, transmitted, and shared through storytelling, weaving, ephemeral architectures, and iterative engagement, making knowledge tangible while operating beyond formal archives.

From an interdisciplinary perspective spanning architecture, anthropology, environmental science, and the arts, these practices are traced and interpreted using counter-cartography, field mapping, and archival research, assembling a relational archive that challenges dominant historiographies. The project enacts an epistemological and methodological shift, unlearning conventional frameworks, foregrounding Indigenous ways of knowing, and positioning Saharan nomadic worlds as living, storied landscapes dense with relational ecologies, governance, and climate resilience. Saharan nomadic worlds are recognized as authoritative sites of environmental intelligence, heritage, and climate resilience. This research contributes to debates on mobility, transboundary movement, customary territorial rights, and the integration of Indigenous cosmovisions and water literacies into culturally grounded approaches for sustaining pastoralist futures under ecological and social uncertainty.

Keywords: Nomadic lifeways, Indigenous cosmovisions, water literacies, matriarchal knowledge, storytelling, tacit knowledge, (in)visibility, mobility, pastoralist governance, climate resilience, counter-cartography, desert ecologies, intangible heritage

PANEL 3: MEMORY AND INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONS

RADHIKA GUPTA & DAWA BHUTIA

PROJECT LEAD FOR BEFORE MORE IS LOST

WIND HORSE WILL YOU CARRY OUR PRAYERS TO THE SKIES TO PROTECT OUR LAND AND FOOD?

A historic ban on livestock grazing in forests, distribution of rice, and push for commercial cash crop farming have threatened food security of agropastoral communities West Sikkim, a trend observed across the Hindu Kush. These interventions which have failed to include communities in decision making processes now erode agrobiodiversity and associated knowledge of sacred landscapes.

This film documents a community-led event held on 14 March, 2026, that emerged from discussions among village youth concerned about weakening community ties and the loss of knowledge held by a small number of Elders.

The wind horse or the lung-ta carries prayers to the skies that are written on Buddhist flags. Modern chemical inks instead mostly pollute rivers. We learned to forage and make ink from wild mushrooms with a village Elder. This knowledge transmission became part of the event, where residents from five villages gathered to discuss a scenario in which access to the outside world was lost: How would you survive and was this knowledge being passed to younger generations in case extreme scenarios were to become reality?

All five villages reflected on these questions and painted dream visions about their own villages on five cloths. The five colours when stitched together – using yak thread, also made by an elderly yak herder – became a lung-ta. The flag was raised as a promise to protect land and traditions for a resilient food future. Foods from the past were served and curated, along side the recreation of a 'goth' or yak herders' shed.

GANBOLD YANDAG

МАЛ ЭМНЭЛГИЙН ЭМ СУДЛАЛЫН ХҮРЭЭЛЭН" /НҮТББ/
МОНГОЛЫН МАЛ ЭМНЭЛГИЙН ДУНДЫН ХОРШОО

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF MONGOLIAN HERDERS ON TREATMENT AND PROTECTION OF ANIMAL DISEASES

ЗОРИЛГО: Монголын ардын уламжлалт мал эмчилгээний аргуудыг илрүүлж, үнэлэн, баримтжуулахад чиглэсэн болно.

АРГА ЗҮЙ: Судалгааны ажлыг 2026 оны 1-4 сард Говь-Алтай аймгийн Эрдэнэ сумын нийт 120 гаруй малчдыг хамруулан, “semi-structured questionnaire” аргаар, ардын уламжлалт аргыг мэддэг хүмүүсийг хайж олох судалгааг “Snowball sampling” аргаар малчид, мал бүхий иргэд, зарим албан хаагчдыг хамруулан явуулсан болно. Мөн бодит хэрэглээний түвшинг (FL) үнэлэн тогтоов. Цуглуулсан тоон мэдээллийг Microsoft Excel мэдээллийн санд оруулж, SPSS-27-г ашиглаж, дүгнэлт хийв.

ҮР ДҮН: Малын өвчнийг эмчлэх болон сэргийлэх эмийн (ургамлын, эрдсийн болон амьтны гаралтай) болон эмийн бус (хануур засал гэх мэт) аргуудыг уламжлан авч, эмчилгээ хийхдээ эмийг ихэвчлэн амаар олгох, гаднаас түрхэх зэрэг аргуудыг хэрэглэж байна.

Уламжлалт эмчилгээний мэдлэг нь амаар дамжиж байгаа тул мартагдах, хадгалагдахгүй байх, орхигдох зэрэг эрсдэл байна. Эдгээр түүхий эд болон эмүүдийг усанд уусгах, хандлах, дэвтээх арга давамгайлж байна.

Ахмад болон дунд насны малчид уламжлалт мал эмчлэх аргын талаар залуу үеэсээ илүү их мэдлэгийг хуримтлуулсан байна. Малын ходоод, гэдэсний замын, дэлэнгийн өвчний, хаг саатах, арьсны болон нүдний өвчинд илүү их хэрэглэж байна. Үүний үр дүнд мал эмчлэх ардын аргыг мэддэг, уламжлаж авсан, одоо хэрэглэж байгаа 30 орчим малчид, мал бүхий иргэд, бусад хүмүүсийг тодруулсан болно. Судалгаа явуулсан нутаг оронд малын өвчнийг эмчлэхдээ олон төрлийн ургамал ашиглаж байгааг ба ямар ч эмийн ургамлыг тариалаагүй бөгөөд ашиглаж байгаа түүхий эдийн ихэнхи хэсгийг навч, холтос, иш, үндэс эзэлж байна. Мал эмчлэх ардын аргад эмийн хэлбэр бэлтгэхдээ нунтаглах, хандлах, буцалгах, хатаах болон давирхай-зуурмаг бэлдэх зэрэг аргуудыг хэрэглэж байна. Элдэв төрлийн шарх /гэмтэл/, арьсны өвчнүүд, шимэгчийн эсрэг эмчилгээг илүү их хийж байна. Түүнчлэн, том мал болон төлийн амьсгалын замын өвчин, нүдний эмгэгүүд, ходоод, гэдэсний замын өвчнүүд, дэлэнгийн үрэвсэл зэрэг өвчин, эмгэгүүд байна. Цаашид нарийвчлан судлаж, Ethno veterinary medicine /EVM/ тогтолцоогор сэргээх, хөгжүүлэх шаардлагатай байна.

PEREGRINE ROTHMAN-OSTROW

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE DISEASE ONTOLOGIES: TOWARDS EPISTEMIC EQUITY IN DISEASE SURVEILLANCE AND RESPONSE IN PASTORAL COMMUNITIES

Across the Global South, a lack of accessible health infrastructure leaves pastoral communities and their livestock largely invisible in infectious disease surveillance, service delivery, and outbreak response. Community-based reporting has been increasingly recommended, framed within broader mandates for pandemic preparedness and community-led approaches to health. Yet, despite use of participatory language, objectives and frameworks are often pre-defined, and engagement approaches fail to redistribute power over problem framing or resolution. Critically, such top-down approaches also render locally situated disease knowledge, which may diverge from biomedical categories, invisible, undermining the gap that community-based reporting and engagement aims to address.

We present findings from a study conducted among Maasai transhumant pastoralists in Kenya, where cattle are central to lifeways, identities, and livelihoods. Through participatory approaches and ethnography, we explored how knowledge of cattle diseases is organised through Indigenous language ontologies, linking clinical, transmission, postmortem, and ecological observations. Ontologies are shaped by lived experience, intergenerational knowledge, histories, and conceptualisations of risk which govern ways of observing, distinguishing, labelling, and managing illness. Maa disease names foreground salient attributes, while the intrinsic value and individuality ascribed to cattle situate perceptions of risk.

Positioning this work within broader debates of epistemic justice and the rights of mobile Indigenous peoples, we suggest that Indigenous language disease ontologies constitute a form of intangible cultural heritage. Reflecting on the meaning of community-led approaches, we argue for a fundamental reorientation toward epistemic equity that recognises Indigenous disease ontologies as legitimate knowledge systems essential to equitable and effective health research and policy.

OYUNDELGER KHURELPUREV

SENCKENBERG SOCIETY FOR NATURE RESEARCH

PASTURE CONDITION IN THE MONGOLIAN STEPPE: RELEVANCE OF TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AND ECOLOGICAL SURVEYS

Mongolian steppes are still under traditional land use by mobile pastoralism and remain relatively intact. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) has always played an essential role in herders' assessments of pasture conditions, and decision-making regarding their movements. In the last two decades, Mongolia's rapid socio-economic development resulted in dramatically increasing livestock numbers and expanding settlements, raising concerns about rangeland degradation associated with potential declines in herders' TEK.

We compared quantitative and qualitative data from interviews on herders' TEK and standard ecological assessments, and estimated the level of congruence. In 2020, a total of 367 households across ten sampling sites were interviewed about pasture condition, TEK on forage and degradation indicator plants. For the same sites, we collected field-based data on plant species richness, composition and biomass, as well as remote sensing-derived biomass estimates.

Our results highlight variance in TEK: even within the same sites, there were widely diverging perspectives on pasture condition and its trends, forage palatability and degradation indicator plants, suggesting that there is limited exchange among herders. Multivariate analyses showed that herders' assessments had a moderate association with field-based vegetation data, reinforcing that comprehensive evaluations of pasture conditions still require field-based assessments. These findings underscore the need for stronger communication between scientists and herders, as well as enhanced transfer of TEK regarding current and changing pasture conditions. Since TEK and its transmission play a key role in herders' movement decisions and are vital for future rangeland monitoring, capacity building is recommended to support the development of sustainable land use policies that uphold ecological integrity.

LKHAGVADULAM TUMUR-OCHIR

MONGOLIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ARTS AND CULTURE

MONGOLIAN ECOLOGICAL WISDOM: TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES OF NATURE CONSERVATION

This study examines the traditional ecological knowledge and environmental conservation practices of the Mongols, focusing on their worldview, nomadic culture, and customary environmental ethics. In the Mongolian traditional understanding of nature, humans are viewed as coexisting with the natural world in a balanced system, where mountains, rivers, animals, and plants are regarded as living entities with spiritual significance. This worldview has historically supported sustainable human-environment relations.

The study explores key aspects of Mongolian ecological wisdom, including traditional perceptions of nature, nomadic pastoral practices that ensure sustainable use of grassland ecosystems through mobility and seasonal rotation, and customary water protection practices that safeguard springs and rivers from pollution. It also highlights the practice of worshipping sacred mountains and ovoos, which serves both spiritual and environmental conservation functions. In addition, traditional wildlife protection customs, including hunting taboos and ethical norms toward animals, are discussed.

Finally, the study emphasizes the contemporary relevance of Mongolian traditional ecological knowledge in addressing modern environmental challenges such as climate change, desertification, biodiversity loss, and water scarcity. It argues that these indigenous practices represent an important cultural and ecological heritage that can contribute meaningfully to sustainable development and environmental protection strategies today.

Keywords: Mongolian ecological knowledge, nomadic culture, environmental conservation, sacred nature, sustainability

GANJARGAL MUJDDORJ

MONGOLIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ARTS AND CULTURE

THE EXPRESSION OF NATURAL DISASTERS AND PHENOMENA IN MONGOLIAN FOLKLORE

Climate change has become one of the most pressing issues facing the world today. Although scientific knowledge, awareness of the extent of the negative impacts of climate change, and potential solutions are important in addressing climate change, every nation has, based on its own history and cultural traditions, portrayed in its oral literature— which preserves cultural archetypes— traditional wisdom and methods for overcoming natural phenomena and disasters. Mongolian oral folk literature is deeply imbued with the artistic culture, philosophy, worldview, and distinctive ways of life and traditional wisdom of the Mongolian people. For example, before reciting an epic, Mongolian epic storytellers traditionally begin with a praise song to the Altai Mountains as an introduction. It is said that when the Altai is praised, all living creatures of the Altai rejoice and thrive; there is neither bitter cold nor scorching heat, but rather gentle breezes and nourishing rains. Droughts and harsh winters do not occur, people's minds remain peaceful, livestock stay well-fed and healthy, and generations live in prosperity, free from illness and suffering. Ancient epic storytellers believed that if drought, severe winters, disease, suffering, or other disasters occurred, praising the Altai would bring about positive change and restore well-being. Therefore, an epic storyteller was expected to praise the Altai before reciting an epic.

According to a Mongolian folk legend, when seven suns appeared in the sky, causing severe drought, scorching the earth, drying up rivers and streams, withering plants and trees, and threatening all living beings with starvation and extinction, the hero Erkhii Mergen answered the people's plea for help. He shot at the suns lined up across the sky, starting from the east, bringing down six of them with his arrows and saving the people from the disaster of drought. The one remaining sun, frightened by the archer, hid behind the mountains on the western horizon. As a result, day and night began to alternate, and the natural order of the world was transformed. This narrative reflects the imaginative wisdom of nomadic herders, who were frequently affected by droughts and sought ways to overcome natural challenges. It symbolizes the belief that human beings have the ability to influence and even alter the natural order of the world through their own actions and ingenuity. In addition, Mongolian folk proverbs contain many expressions that metaphorically describe nature and climatic conditions, such as: "Times do not remain the same; the iris flower does not always stay blue; colors do not remain unchanged; grass does not stay green forever.", "Rain is water on a coat, but oil upon the earth.", "Before rain comes dust; before a wolf comes a crow.", "In times of drought, the value of a spring becomes known; in times of misfortune, the value of a friend is recognized.", "The land is filled grain by grain; the ocean is filled drop by drop.", "When the sea is calm, the fish are at peace; when the lake is calm, the ducks are at peace.", "A dzud (severe winter disaster) lasts for one year, but good customs endure for a thousand years." These and many other proverbs demonstrate how Mongolians have traditionally observed, interpreted, and conveyed knowledge about nature, weather, and environmental changes through figurative language and folk wisdom. Today, much of this traditional folk knowledge has, to some extent, been forgotten. Therefore, there is a growing need to study, preserve, and revive this valuable cultural wisdom.

In conclusion, the research findings show that in addressing the climate change and natural disaster risks currently facing humanity, it is important not only to rely on scientific knowledge and understanding, but also to carefully study the narratives and expressions of oral literature—an important part of intangible cultural heritage that serves as a rich source of traditional knowledge about the natural world. These cultural expressions hold significant value as knowledge that can contribute to coping with and adapting to climate change.

TAMIR ERDENETSOGT & NOMYNBAYASGALAN SULD

“WWW.URUG.MN” OF “WORD MEDIA” LLC
MONGOLIAN CRIMINOLOGICAL SOCIETY

REGULATORY ISSUES OF THE LAW ON HERDERS

In the current national legal system, there are many laws that are inconsistent with the traditional legal culture of herders and may be contrary to their rights and legitimate interests. For example, the Law on Mitigating the Negative Impacts of Climate Change on Traditional Livestock (hereinafter referred to as “the Law”) can be cited. Article 11 of the law states that “Any person or legal entity that violates this law ... shall be held liable as provided for in the Law on Violations,” but there is no regulation on liability other than Article 13.11 of the Law on Violations that “Any person or legal entity that violates the regulations established by the Law on Herders ... shall be fined ...”.

Accordingly, it is not possible to hold individuals and legal entities that violate the law liable under the Law on Violations. Because it is clear from the dates of approval of the laws (2024.04.19 and 2024.06.05) that the concept of “the law” does not apply to the currently valid Herder’s legislation. In other words, there are still unanswered questions such as how to understand “the regulations established by the law on Herder”, whether the regulations are formulated by law or established by an authorized entity.

On the one hand, this could create a legal uncertainty, with the relevant regulations of the law ineffective, implementation weak, and accountability mechanisms not working. On the other hand, it creates a need to consider whether the law has been able to strengthen and protect the values of herding, not only in its own country, but also in line with the unique characteristics, national style, and mentality and attitudes of Mongolians, and whether it has been able to be brought “to Mongolian soil”.

Finally, it is noted that, based on the uncertainty in the idea, main content, and basic principles of the law, it cannot be effectively implemented in reality and will only be a form of liability mechanism. Therefore, it is concluded that the concept of “legally established regulations on herders” in the Law on Violations should include, in addition to the Herder Law, the Law on Mitigating the Negative Impacts of Climate Change on Traditional Livestock.

Based on this, first, in Article 2, Section 2.1 of the Law on Herders, before the words “... this law ...”, add the words “... Law on Mitigating the Negative Impacts of Climate Change on Traditional Livestock, ...”; second, we propose to provide relevant information to the public in a balanced manner, not just “herders.”

OYUN-ERDENE CHULUUNBAATAR

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY, CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY

EXCLUSION IN AGENDA SETTING: STAKEHOLDER DYNAMICS AND NOMADIC COMMUNITIES IN MONGOLIA'S TOURISM POLICY

Tourism has emerged as a strategic sector for Mongolia's sustainable development, yet the nomadic communities central to the country's cultural identity remain marginalized in tourism policymaking. This study examines how stakeholder dynamics shape the exclusion of nomadic populations from Mongolia's tourism policy agenda-setting process. Using Birkland's Levels of the Agenda framework, the research analyzes how issues move from public recognition to formal decision-making and whose interests are represented or omitted.

The study employs qualitative methods, including policy document analysis (2015–2025), stakeholder mapping, and preliminary thematic analysis of governance structures. Findings indicate that despite policy narratives emphasizing cultural heritage, institutional mechanisms for nomadic participation are largely absent. Agenda-setting is dominated by state and private sector actors, while nomadic communities, which are the main actors of tourism development in Mongolia and civil society function primarily as advocacy groups with limited influence on decision agendas. Existing tourism frameworks often conflict with nomadic lifeways, reinforcing structural exclusion under development initiatives.

By extending agenda-setting theory to marginalized community contexts, this research highlights the need to institutionalize participatory mechanisms in tourism governance. Strengthening inclusive policymaking is essential for aligning Mongolia's tourism development with sustainability principles and the “Leave No One Behind” commitment.

CARMEN HAMEL & ALTANZAYA YANSANJAV

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

"NOWHERE ELSE TO GO": MINING EXPANSION, CLIMATE UNCERTAINTY, AND HERDER LIVELIHOODS IN MONGOLIA

As the global energy transition is driving rapid demand for critical minerals, it is also generating new burdens for some of the world's most climate-vulnerable communities. Likewise, pastoral communities are increasingly at the forefront of the intersecting challenges posed by climate change and resource extraction. In Mongolia, where pastoralism remains central to livelihoods, food systems, and cultural identity, climate variability and mining expansion are reshaping relationships between people, land, and mobility. This research examines how climate change and mining development intersect to affect Malchid (herding peoples) in Orkhon province, home to one of the world's largest copper mines. Using a qualitative, community-based approach, this study combines semi-structured interviews with participatory and sketch mapping to document local experiences of environmental change, land-use transformation, and livelihood adaptations. Findings reveal that climate change and mining function as converging pressures that simultaneously increase the need for pastoral mobility while restricting the ability to do so. Participants described how land-use changes have displaced livestock and malchid from migration routes and seasonal camps, while pasture degradation has reduced the grazing reserves that buffer herders against climate variability. Together, these pressures have weakened the adaptive capacity that pastoral systems have historically relied upon. By centering Malchid knowledge and lived experiences, this research demonstrates how resource extraction associated with the green energy transition can compound climate-related vulnerabilities for pastoral communities. The findings contribute to broader discussions on climate resilience, pastoral knowledge systems, and the future of nomadic livelihoods in landscapes increasingly shaped by environmental change and extractive development.

SARAH LUNACEK

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

MOBILE PASTORALISTS' RIGHTS IN SUSTAINABLE VS. EXTRACTIVIST LAND MANAGEMENT

States often sacrifice lands of mobile pastoralists for mining, perceiving them as 'empty'. With building alliances between pastoralists, civil society and academics, perspectives on pastoralism are finally changing, recognising mobile pastoralism as a sustainable food production system, adapted to variability and mobile pastoralists as guardians of productive landscapes providing ecological services.

We need practical tools and political will to implement pastoralists rights to pasture lands when facing extractivist and land grabbing projects. I will focus on legal tools in land management in contrasting development paradigms (sustainable and extractivist) in Niger. Pastoral code recognises mobility and communal land use rights to pastoralists but has issues recognising seasonal pasture lands. While mobile pastoralists need open principles of land management, the state uses territorial and extractivist approach to land management, represented in mining code. Land management plans could reserve more pastures to prevent mining on seasonal pastures. Environmental law provides Environmental and Social impact assessment, which can be useful instrument to limit environmental damage, include mobile pastoralists in decision making and should prevent mining if damage is unacceptable. Civil society proved to be essential in advocacy for mobile pastoralists in legal processes to make pressure on companies and achieve at least some improvements. It remains a challenge how to include direct voices of mobile pastoralists, based on traditional and new ways of organising, in decision making and access to their rights. Alternatives to development, such as good life (buen vivir) and desired changes could also be discussed for sustainable futures.

YUANHUI DING

INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

VIOLENT MINING AND VIOLENT LANDSCAPE: SCARS OF EXCAVATION AND LIFE WORLD OF TIBETAN HERDERS

This study investigates how intensive mining operations and related infrastructure development transform the lifeworld of pastoralists through landscape perception and historical memory. Based on longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork in a Tibetan herding community in Northwest China, this research examines the enduring socio-ecological impacts of a major 1960s state-led mining project. Operating under severe environmental constraints, this early industrial facility was critical to China's early steel production but exacted a heavy human and ecological toll. Crucially, contemporary herders conflate the collective memory of this arduous industrial excavation with broader mid-twentieth-century traumas, including military conflicts, famine, diaspora, and political campaigns against religious figures. Although pastoralists were rarely direct laborers in the enclaves, they actively witnessed these socio-technical disruptions. Consequently, their perception of the landscape shifted: the earth evolved from a pastoral resource into a repository of subaltern suffering and labor sacrifice; mountains became sites where state power was materialized through physical infrastructure; and water systems were re-inscribed with memories of violence. While active mining has significantly downscaled, the lingering material ruins remain constitutive of the contemporary landscape. These material traces function as a fragmented, everyday monument to historical violence, mediating the herders' ongoing relationship with their ancestral land. This paper contributes to political ecology and the anthropology of infrastructure by demonstrating how resource extraction permanently reconfigures indigenous spaces of memory.

MUNKHTAMIR DAMDINSUREN, BYAMBABAATAR ICHINKHORLOO & ANUJIN BAT-ERDENE

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF NOMADIC CIVILIZATION

FUTURE OF PASTORALISM: YOUNG MONGOLIAN HERDERS AND INTERGENERATIONAL CONTINUITY

Mongolian pastoralism depends not only on livestock ownership but also on the intergenerational transmission of *övöljöö* (winter camps), land-use rights, and herding knowledge. In recent decades, changing patterns of education, employment, and migration have posed new challenges to the continuity of pastoral livelihoods. This paper examines how the changing educational and occupational aspirations of herders' children are reshaping the intergenerational transfer of *övöljöö* and pastoral livelihoods in Khyargass soum, Uvs Province.

During the socialist period, winter camps were managed within collective farms. Following livestock privatization in the 1990s and the introduction of land-use certificates for winter and spring camps, *övöljöö* increasingly became inheritable household assets. Since the mid-1990s, Khyargass soum has experienced substantial out-migration, particularly to the provinces of Selenge, Darkhan-Uul, Bulgan, and Töv. By 2025, approximately 450 households, including around 250 herding households, had relocated from the soum.

Today, around 380 herding households continue pastoral production based on more than 300 winter camps. However, demographic trends and interviews suggest that 60–100 winter camps may lack successors within the next 10–20 years, as many herders' children pursue non-pastoral livelihoods. Drawing on interviews, surveys, and documentary analysis, and supported by comparative evidence from Bulgan soum in Bayan-Ölgii Province, the study explores the emerging risk of successorless winter camps.

Preliminary findings indicate that *övöljöö* function not only as material property but also as forms of social capital that sustain pastoral production and local belonging. The paper argues that the future of pastoralism depends on the relationship between inheritance practices, youth engagement in herding, and local development policies.

MUID SAINBUYAN

THE DEPARTMENT OF MONGOLIAN, KOREAN AND VIETNAMESE STUDIES AND
DEPARTMENT OF EUROPEAN ETHNOLOGY, MASARYK UNIVERSITY

WHO WILL INHERIT THE ÖVÖLJÖÖ? INTERGENERATIONAL PASTORAL SUCCESSION AND THE FUTURE OF YOUNG HERDERS IN KHYARGAS SOUM, UVS PROVINCE

Mongolian pastoralism depends not only on livestock ownership but also on the intergenerational transmission of övöljöö (winter camps), land-use rights, and herding knowledge. In recent decades, changing patterns of education, employment, and migration have posed new challenges to the continuity of pastoral livelihoods. This paper examines how the changing educational and occupational aspirations of herders' children are reshaping the intergenerational transfer of övöljöö and pastoral livelihoods in Khyargas soum, Uvs Province.

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JOANA ROQUE DE PINHO

IUAES COMMISSION ON NOMADIC PEOPLES;
CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, CEI, ISCTE-IUL

SEEKING HEALTH AND FINDING COLLECTIVE JOY UNDER LOCKDOWN: THE COVID-19 MEAT CAMP CAMP AMONG MAASAI OF SOUTHERN KENYA

The COVID-19 pandemic and its suite of governmental restrictions to mobility and sociality shone a light on the resilience of pastoral livelihoods and the role that pastoral practices and institutions played in this regard. Some pastoral institutions, which had been in decline prior to the pandemic, were revitalized. This process, in turn, encouraged the intergenerational transmission of pastoral knowledge, a reconnection with traditional mechanisms of collective solidarity, ultimately fostering community resilience. In this presentation, we examine one such institution: the olupul. The olupul (pl. ilpuli) is a gathering of Maasai men who spend several days or weeks in a secluded wooded area slaughtering livestock and consuming large quantities of meat and medicinal plants to strengthen themselves. During the lockdown, the number of olupuli and associated celebrations increased and were enthusiastically adhered to by Maasai (agro)pastoralists of southern Kenya, even though social interactions were criminalised. Based on a study co-produced with Maasai pastoralists as researchers during the pandemic, here we explore the olupuli le corona – the meat camps that emerged during the lockdown. We demonstrate that Maasai sought immunity and nutrition in olupuli and found *communitas* – the sense of intense social bonding and collective joy that can emerge during disasters. Participation in olupuli le corona and their wider social dynamics dispelled apocalyptic anxieties, promoted immunity and food security, and reconnected people with Maasai norms, pastoral knowledge, and values. In the process, it healed ongoing societal rifts and built resilience to future calamities.

Authors: Joana Roque de Pinho, Angela Kronenburg García, Stanley ole Neboo, Lenaai ole Mowuo and Matinkoi ole Mowuo

MARI KAZATO

FACULTY OF GLOBAL STUDIES, HOKUSEI GAKUEN UNIVERSITY,

LOCAL MOBILITY AND INFORMATION MEDIA USE AMONG MONGOLIAN HERDERS

This research examines young male herders' situated knowledge, lived experiences, and herding livelihoods in contemporary Mongolia. Pastoral communities are increasingly facing gendered transformations in which young male herders tend to remain in their local areas and continue herding livestock, while young women increasingly migrate to urban settlements. This research investigates how young male herders navigate everyday herding life in the absence of women, how they perceive their livelihoods, and how they create meanings and values around herding amid these gendered transformations.

Grounded in ethnographic fieldwork as a qualitative research approach, this study employed semi-structured interviews with young male herders in two rural districts of central Mongolia. The findings show that herders actively produce relational, practical, and contextual knowledge through their interactions with both human and non-human actors while engaging with ongoing social, economic, and environmental changes. The study also elucidates that herders produce value in everyday life through interactions with horses, contests, jokes, and songs, which function as communal and performative practices of constructing masculinity.

The findings further suggest that herders occupy an epistemic vantage point and that their knowledge production is socially situated and cannot be fully accessed from dominant perspectives. This research therefore challenges static representations of herding as a timeless and male-dominated vocation by situating it within broader processes of post-socialist social and economic transformation. It contends that the emergent gendered configurations of mobility and stasis necessitate an epistemic redefinition of how rurality, gender, and tradition are conceptualized within dominant knowledge systems.

CECILIA DAL ZOVO

THE SCHOOL OF ARCHAEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY AND KNOWLEDGE: LONG-TERM PASTORAL MOBILITY IN THE GOVI-ALTAI MOUNTAINS, MONGOLIA

In Mongolia, pastoral practices, narratives, and cosmologies are embedded in a local landscape that has been growing into a monumental living archive. This, I propose, can be approached through an archaeological lens that may actively contribute to ongoing conversations not only about the past, but also about the present and future of nomadism, particularly regarding the subtle materiality of local seasonal mobility, in the context of a changing world.

In the Govi-Altai Mountains research area, for instance, we identified a statistically significant correlation between modern pastoral paths and Late Prehistoric funerary mounds. This suggests that modern pastoral networks may be rooted in ancient mobility routes established more than 4,000 years ago. Likewise, we documented Bronze and Iron Age petroglyphs at pastoral campsites that often display traces of ancient origin and periodic returns, mirroring the accumulation of engraved motifs on rock surfaces over time.

However, this materiality and associated knowledge are in danger, as social and climate disruptions threaten the local pastoral communities and their relationship with a complex, interconnected, and often sacralised landscape. Indeed, through seasonal shifts and settlements, herders could reproduce and enact the local material and spatial memory, movement being a practice of knowledge and memory in itself. In time, not only are routes retraced and remade, but so are campsites and the spatial knowledge and significance of rock art sites. In this sense, landscape and heritage here represent not just external categories but something alive and challenged, yet continuously generated, maintained, and transmitted through pastoral practices over time.

AIZA ABDYRAKHMANOVA

THE AIGINE CULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER

STONE ARCHIVES: COMMUNITY-BASED SAFEGUARDING OF PETROGLYPHS IN KYRGYZSTAN

This paper presents Aigine Cultural Research Center's community-based work on documenting, interpreting, and safeguarding petroglyph sites in Kyrgyzstan. Over several years, Aigine CRC has combined archaeological documentation with oral histories, local interpretations, digital technologies, and public awareness activities at rock art landscapes.

The organization works with archaeologists, ethnographers, local residents, pastoralists, traditional practitioners, teachers, students, and workers living near petroglyph sites. Field teams document carvings through photography, mapping, and digital recording, while local knowledge holders explain animal figures, ritual scenes, hunting images, celestial symbols, and motifs connected to pastoral life. These interpretations allow petroglyphs to be understood not only as archaeological objects, but also as living records of relationships between people, animals, mountains, seasonal movement, and sacred landscapes.

This work is now being expanded through regional cooperation and the development of a Central Asian digital platform that brings together petroglyph materials from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Aigine CRC is also creating an immersive exhibition that introduces younger audiences to rock art through storytelling and digital media.

The paper argues that safeguarding petroglyphs requires protecting both carved stones and the community knowledge, memories, and ethical relationships that keep these landscapes meaningful.

MOETERAO

KANTO GAKUIN UNIVERSITY

RETHINKING MONGOLIAN GER AS A NOMADIC SPACE

This presentation examines the Mongolian ger as a dynamically generated nomadic space, focusing on how domestic order emerges through ritual, mobility, and relational practices rather than fixed spatial structures. The ger is “continuously connected to the external environment, like a ‘permeable membrane’,” and its openness is enacted through culturally embedded forms of hospitality that emphasize role-based interaction.

After examining the overlap between critiques from pastoralism studies directed at classical nomadology and feminist critiques of Levinas’s account of hospitality, the presentation asks how the hospitality of the ger can be understood not through patriarchal domestic structures, but through a language of mutual permeability and ongoing relational adjustment. Approaching habitation as a process of habitation highlights the micropolitics through which spatial order is generated, reframing the ger as a fluid, emergent milieu shaped through everyday negotiations among humans, animals, materials, and spirits.

SHARAA BYAMBA

INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER

HOT AIL: A WAY OF LIFE OF MONGOLIAN HERDERS – A SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Hot ail occupies an important place in the lives of Mongolian pastoralists, yet its nature and raison d'être remain subjects of scholarly debate. Earlier studies have interpreted hot ail primarily as a kinship-based group, a form of mutual assistance, or a labor-sharing arrangement.

This study re-examines hot ail through herders' knowledge and experience and interprets it from a social-ecological perspective. The research employs a qualitative approach based on in-depth interviews with nine herders from Övörkhangaï, Sүkhbaatar, Төв, and Увс provinces, complemented by document analysis and long-term field observations. Data were analyzed using a Grounded Theory approach.

The findings suggest that hot ail is more than a group of co-residing households. Herders continuously observe and interpret environmental signs, including weather conditions, pasture quality, water availability, vegetation, and livestock behaviour, when selecting grazing areas and making mobility decisions. This knowledge is not confined to individuals; rather, it is shared, discussed, and collectively interpreted within the hot ail, forming an important basis for decision-making. This study conceptualizes this process as collective environmental sensing.

The raison d'être of hot ail lies not only in cooperation, but also in its capacity to support the collective observation, interpretation, and adaptation required for pastoral mobility. Hot ail can therefore be understood as a way of life through which Mongolian herders organize movement and maintain dynamic relationships among people, livestock, and pasture.

JENNY TANG

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

ART OF THE ‘SETGEL’: CRAFTING EMPLACEMENT FOR A POST-NOMADIC SUBJECTIVITY

Setgel can be approximately translated as ‘heart-mind’ to the extent that ‘heart’ is understood as both corporeal and sentimental, and ‘mind’ is understood in an expanded, ecological sense. Setgekh as a verb encompasses the epistemic modalities of ‘thinking’ (bodokh), ‘feeling’ (medrekh), and ‘intuition’ (zön sovin); it is polysemous, and its precise meaning depends on discursive context. While the setgel can be influenced by more-than-human forces, it seems to rest primarily within the realm of human being(-in-the-world) in Mongolian cosmo-epistemologies, which not so much juxtapose the ‘mind’ against the ‘body’ as triangulate it with the physical-corporeal and the spiritual.

Based on fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork, during which I travelled and made various works with professional contemporary artists in urban and rural Mongolia, I argue that Mongolian contemporary art is best intelligible from an emplaced epistemological context in which any notion of ‘thinking’ (setgekh) is situated. Conversely, artists’ pursuit of emplacement—through the work of crafting materialities in situated timespaces—as nomadic and the nomadic as emplaced accepts the mutual constitution of the human, nature, and other beings, and it reconfigures what freedom and autonomy could mean for citizens normally residing in urban settlements where mobile pastoral lives increasingly become distant imaginations.

MALAHAT MAZINANI

NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATERSHEDS MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION OF IRAN

ETHICS OF NOMADIC COMMUNITIES IN IRAN: BIOCULTURAL GOVERNANCE, MOBILITY, AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE

This paper examines the ethical foundations, cultural values, and biocultural governance systems of Iran's nomadic communities, highlighting their significance within broader debates on cultural rights, indigenous knowledge, and climate resilience. Iran hosts one of the world's largest nomadic populations, whose seasonal mobility systems have evolved over nearly twelve millennia. These communities—comprising Turkmen, Turk, Persian, Kurdish, Lur, Arab, and Baluch groups—maintain diverse yet interconnected traditions shaped by ecological variability, pastoral livelihoods, and long-standing social institutions. Drawing on historical sources, ethnographic literature, and qualitative field observations, the paper explores how nomadic ethics emerge from dynamic relationships between people, animals, landscapes, and mobility. Nomadic ethics, as conceptualized by scholars such as St. Pierre and Braidotti, reject individualistic moral frameworks and instead emphasize relational responsibility, interdependence, and collective stewardship of shared territories. These ethical systems are embedded in customary governance structures that regulate pasture use, migration routes, social cohesion, and conflict resolution.

The paper further analyzes how ecological factors—such as rangeland conditions, climate variability, and resource availability—shape cultural landscapes, settlement patterns, and architectural forms, including the spatial logic of tents, communal gathering spaces, and gendered domains. It also highlights contemporary cultural initiatives in Iran, such as national nomadic festivals, community cooperatives, and educational programs, which aim to strengthen intercultural dialogue and support the transmission of indigenous knowledge. By situating nomadic ethics within the broader context of Iran's socio-ecological history, the paper argues that these ethical systems constitute a form of biocultural governance that enhances community resilience, sustains mobility rights, and contributes to the protection of vast rangeland territories. The study underscores the relevance of nomadic ethical frameworks for current discussions on cultural rights, climate adaptation, and the future of mobile pastoralism.

Keywords: Nomadic ethics; biocultural governance; indigenous knowledge; pastoral mobility; cultural rights; Iran; climate resilience.

HANDE SINEM ERGUN

MARMARA UNIVERSITY, TÜRKİYE
VISITING RESEARCHER AT NUM, MONGOLIA

FROM YÖRÜK HERITAGE TO CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL RIGHTS: NOMADIC KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND PASTORAL FUTURES IN TÜRKİYE

This paper examines nomadic pastoralism in Türkiye through the historical and contemporary experiences of Yörük and Türkmen communities, which have long sustained Anatolia's nomadic and pastoral traditions. It explores how a once-recognized way of life has become a site of cultural rights claims, and how mobility continues to shape social memory, ecological knowledge, and collective identity (Bazin, 1990; Sakin, 2010). (The paper focuses on three interconnected dimensions.

First, it examines the historical foundations of nomadic (konargöçer) life in Anatolia. The discussion centers on the nomadic (yaylak-kışlak) seasonal cycle, oral transmission, and the sacred meanings attached to landscapes and rituals (Bazin, 1990; Tuztaş Horzumlu, 2014). Second, it examines the effects of Republican-era settlement policies on customary mobility patterns and on the institutions that sustained pastoral life. It also explores how nomadic identity adapted to changing conditions and persisted in different forms within settled communities (Tuztaş Horzumlu, 2014). Third, the contemporary role of Yörük associations, heritage initiatives, and civil society organizations is also discussed. These actors increasingly present nomadic traditions as cultural rights rather than as elements of folklore (Tuztaş Horzumlu, 2017). Drawing on ethnographic and historical scholarship, the paper adopts an institutional-logics perspective to analyze the interaction between state, heritage, and pastoral community logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999; Thornton et al., 2012).

It further examines contemporary challenges associated with climate change, pressures on rangelands, and changing forms of cultural representation (Scoones, 2025). The paper argues that the future of nomadic life in Türkiye depends not only on heritage recognition but also on the protection of mobility as a cultural right and an adaptive ecological practice.

KH. ORKHONCHIMEG & KHALZAN ODONCHIMEG

MONGOLIAN NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

GENERAL MANAGER OF THE "PRIME BRIDGE" MONGOLIAN LANGUAGE TRAINING
CENTER

SOME CHALLENGES IN SAFEGUARDING MONGOLIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY AND PRESERVING NOMADIC CIVILIZATION

Throughout human history, the rise and decline of civilizations have been closely associated with the ability of states to maintain stability and mitigate threats to their cultural and civilizational foundations. In the contemporary era, one of the key factors in ensuring national security is the protection and preservation of nomadic civilization.

This issue is inseparable from the development of effective state policies and institutional mechanisms for safeguarding nomadic civilization. The purpose of this article is to identify several pressing challenges related to civilizational security within Mongolia's national security framework, with particular emphasis on the preservation of nomadic civilization, and to propose possible approaches for addressing these challenges. It is essential to examine the factors that adversely affect nomadic civilization and to explore practical measures for its protection based on the realities of the present day.

Mongolia's long-term development policy explicitly recognizes the preservation of its nomadic civilization as one of the country's distinctive characteristics that sets it apart from other nations. In particular, the policy envisions the establishment of specialized institutions dedicated to the protection of nomadic civilization and the phased implementation of initiatives aimed at preserving, transmitting, and promoting the nation's cultural heritage for future generations. However, the practical pathways and implementation mechanisms for achieving these objectives remain insufficiently defined.

Therefore, this article seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse by proposing feasible approaches for translating the objectives outlined in state policy into effective implementation strategies at every stage of policymaking and governance. By identifying practical means through which Mongolia can preserve and safeguard its nomadic civilization, this study aims to provide meaningful recommendations that will enhance the protection of this unique cultural heritage as an integral component of the country's national security.

QURBONIDIN ALAMSHOEV

INSTITUTE OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION, REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

PAMIR KYRGYZ: BETWEEN NOMADIC HERITAGE AND SETTLED LIFE IN THE HIGH MOUNTAINS OF CENTRAL ASIA

The Kyrgyz of the Pamir region, living predominantly in Murgab District of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) of the Republic of Tajikistan, represent one of the last high-mountain communities in Central Asia that has preserved elements of nomadic pastoralism, traditional ecological knowledge, and a distinct cultural identity. For centuries, their way of life, social organization, and worldview were closely connected to seasonal migrations, the use of high-altitude pastures, and livestock husbandry in the harsh environmental conditions of the Eastern Pamirs.

A major turning point occurred during the Soviet period, when state policies of sedentarization encouraged and, in many cases, imposed a transition from nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralism to a settled life way. These measures fundamentally transformed traditional systems of pasture management, seasonal migration routes, social relations, and cultural practices, leading to the gradual weakening of nomadic institutions and mechanisms for transmitting traditional knowledge.

Today, climate change is creating both challenges and opportunities for the Kyrgyz of the Eastern Pamirs. Rising temperatures and longer growing seasons are expanding cultivation while reshaping traditional relationships between people, livestock, and mountain ecosystems. Drawing on field observations and ethnographic research conducted in Murgab District of the Eastern Pamirs, this paper examines how the Pamir Kyrgyz navigate legacy of sedentarization and adapt to contemporary environmental and socio-economic changes. It argues that traditional ecological knowledge remains an important source of resilience for local communities, while climate change is opening a new chapter in the history of this high-mountain people, whose way of life was once predominantly nomadic.

CAROLINE UPTON & BATBUYAN BATJAV

ENVIRONMENTAL HUMAN GEOGRAPHY AT UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

CONTESTING ‘CLIMATE RESILIENCE’: KNOWLEDGES, MOBILITIES AND LIVELIHOODS IN KENYA AND MONGOLIA

‘Climate resilience’ remains a normative goal of many donor-driven interventions in pastoralist landscapes and cultures globally. Growing recognition of pastoral mobility and cultural norms of reciprocity as integral to development of such resilience suggests some welcome decentring of non-pastoralist, sedentary perspectives and frameworks. Nonetheless, critics argue that resilience continues to be ‘defined by expert knowledge’ (Weichselgartner and Kelman, 2015:257-258), underscoring concerns with power, participation and the co-production of knowledges and meanings. We argue that normative understandings of ‘resilience’ continue to merit critical examination, where these may mask local knowledges and priorities. Through two major interdisciplinary projects, co-developed and conducted with pastoralist communities in Kenya and Mongolia between 2016 and 2024, we explore locally meaningful dimensions, translations of and aspirations for ‘resilience’, with due cognisance of socio-economic, environmental and historical contexts. We furthermore examine how these aspirations and pastoral knowledges may become entangled with other knowledge forms and products and their longer-term effects, with particular attention to the remote sensing (RS) products now widely deployed in rangeland governance. In our projects, pastoralists’ involvement in critiques and co-design of sample RS mapping products and in setting out requirements for optimum products in the future provided a vital route for co-production of knowledge and outputs, and important steps towards supporting locally meaningful resilience. Innovative methods such as Resilience Stories and PhotoVoice also revealed a range of ‘everyday’ resilience strategies and their limitations in the face of wider structural and institutional, as well as environmental constraints.

ALTANSUKH BAYARBILEG, DINA AZHGALYEVA AND JAMES CORREIA

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK & THE NATURE CONSERVANCY IN
MONGOLIA

CLIMATIC EXTREMES AND PASTORAL VULNERABILITY: THE IMPACT OF DZUD ON HOUSEHOLD LIVESTOCK IN MONGOLIA

Dzud— recurring severe winter disasters causing the heavy loss of livestock—remain one of the most severe threats to nomadic and pastoral livelihoods and rural welfare that is unique to the Eurasian steppes of Mongolia and Central Asia. Almost 60% of the total territory and about 70% of all herder families in Mongolia – representing some one-quarter of total households - have been severely affected by dzud. We examine how different types of dzud affect household livestock ownership and herd size. Combining high-resolution climate reanalysis and administrative geodata with the National Statistics Office of Mongolia's Household Socioeconomic Survey (HSES) for rural households from 2010 to 2022, we algorithmically construct monthly indicators for white, black, and ice (iron) dzud using government thresholds and Earth Engine–derived ERA5 Land variables. Using a Cragg (double-hurdle) specification with extensive controls and fixed effects, we find: (i) dzud reduces the probability of owning livestock and lowers small-stock holdings; (ii) the differentiated impacts of dzud types (white, black and ice). Female-headed households hold smaller herds, highlighting their heightened vulnerability to dzud.

QIRUONA (TSARUUN)

DUKE UNIVERSITY

WEATHERING STORMS AND POLICIES: THE VULNERABLE VOYAGE OF INNER MONGOLIAN HERDERS AMIDST CLIMATE AND POLICY SHIFTS

Facing climate change, herders in Inner Mongolia are increasingly vulnerable due to their reliance on natural resources. Government policies limiting herders' movement further compound this vulnerability. Sedentarization has exposed herders to severer climate risks, pushing them to acquire costly external resources in the face of extreme weather events. Furthermore, being excluded from environmental governance discourse and being portrayed in official narrative as culprits of ecological degradation, herders found their hands tied when they attempt to utilize traditional adaptive strategies.

This paper examines the relationship between climate change, policy decisions, and hierarchical institutional structures in the context of Inner Mongolia, China, focusing on Mongolian herders' vulnerabilities and adaptation. By drawing on multi-year ethnographic fieldwork and policy document analysis, this paper analyzes how power dynamics within the state's discourse contribute to the formulation of policies that, while strong governmental interventions have benefitted Inner Mongolian herders in terms of financial and technological capacities. The paper also highlights that such power dynamics have simultaneously weakened social structures and traditional grazing practices, reinforcing existing vulnerabilities and compromising the long-standing resilience of herding communities.

The paper advocates for more inclusive and flexible pastureland policies that recognize and integrate herders' indigenous knowledge and adaptive strategies. Recent grassroots initiatives, like small-scale mobile pastoralism and mutual aid organizations, reflect the resilience and adaptive capacities of herder communities. The study emphasizes the need for a cooperative approach, where both state-driven and community-based solutions can coexist, to address the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change in Inner Mongolia.

ANNAH LAKE ZHU

WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY

CULTURAL HERITAGE IN MOTION: ADAPTIVE MOBILE CULTURES OF (SEMI)NOMADIC INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN CHANGING CLIMATES

Studies that explore the interconnection of cultural heritage, climate (im)mobilities and Indigenous ways of knowing in changing climates are rare. This paper calls for reimagining and reframing this intersection in global climate governance. What existing studies have shown, and what we advocate exploring further, is that the mobile livelihoods or mobility practices of Indigenous mobile groups are more than an adaptation strategy or a fix for climate change. They embody meaning, rituals, ancestral guidance and ways of knowing nature, land, seas and the universe, connecting intangible and tangible dimensions of culture in relational ways. This paper conceptualises mobility not merely as a response to environmental changes and climatic stress but as a living heritage of Indigenous ways of knowing. To elaborate on the dynamics of the adaptive and mobile-oriented cultural expressions of Indigenous mobile groups in changing climates, we draw on four case studies of (semi)nomadic communities in Ethiopia, Senegal and Thailand to illustrate how the mobility practices of many Indigenous groups constitute mobile systems of observation, forecasting and ecological adaptation that embody centuries of empirical climate knowledge. Our case studies also illustrate how sedentary-focused sustainability projects that overlook adaptive mobile cultures can impinge on not only the mobility rights of historically mobile groups but also on their adaptive cultural practices. Hence, we demonstrate the need for integrating the peculiarities of mobile-oriented cultures in climate mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage policies to avoid maladaptive outcomes that threaten both livelihoods and cultural identity.

DELGERZAYA DELGERJARGAL

CLIMATE AND DATA REPORTER, REUTERS

CLIMATE-DRIVEN SPECIES SUBSTITUTION IN MONGOLIAN CATTLE HERDS: ADAPTATION BETWEEN YAKS AND MONGOLIAN COWS

Climate has shaped pastoral production systems worldwide, influencing which livestock animals herders choose to raise. While most research has focused on genus choice – such as from cattle to goats to chickens – less attention has been paid to species choice within a single genus. This study uses a representative panel from Mongolia to examine climate-sensitive substitution between two closely related cattle species: cold-adapted yaks (*Bos grunniens*) and more heat-tolerant Mongolian cattle (*Bos taurus*). Both OLS and fractional logit models confirm that the yak share of all cattle is sensitive to seasonal temperature and precipitation. Fixed-effects panel regressions of yak and Mongolian cow populations reveal that warmer winter and spring temperatures reduce yak populations, but warmer winters increase Mongolian cattle populations. Summer warming is detrimental to Mongolian cattle but not yaks. Overall warming leads to losses for yaks (-439 head/ $^{\circ}\text{C}$) and Mongolian cattle (-256 head/ $^{\circ}\text{C}$), signaling that substitution may buffer but not fully offset warming. Increased precipitation decreases yak populations -1450 head/cm/mo, but increases Mongolian cattle 5364 head/cm/mo, largely because of the harmful winter effects of snow on yaks. These results highlight how subtle species changes within a genus can act as a climate adaptation even though they may not always prevent the harmful long-term impacts of warming.

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FRANCESCA LUGLI

ITALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR ETHNOARCHAEOLOGY (AIE)/MEMBER OF ISMEO;
PRESIDENT OF THE AIE

WINTER CAMPS OF MONGOLIAN NOMADS, CLIMATE RESILIENCE, AND CONTEMPORARY ADAPTATIONS

Winter camps of Mongolian nomads represent one of the fundamental aspects of nomadic life in Mongolia, constituting a crucial node of cultural continuity and ecological adaptation. Currently, these camps are undergoing profound modifications, driven partly by the pressures of modernity and partly by the effects of climate change, which manifests through erratic weather patterns and severe events. This paper examines the evolving dynamics of Mongolian winter camps, focusing on their structural changes, socio-ecological importance, and shifting geographical locations. Historically selected for localized microclimates and natural shelter, contemporary winter camps are frequently relocated or structurally modified as herders deploy traditional ecological knowledge alongside modern strategies to mitigate climate risks. By analyzing these transformations, which are both spatial and structural, this study aims to directly address the core themes of the conference. It explores how the relocation of winter camps represents a vital, culturally embedded knowledge system that directly fosters climate resilience. Furthermore, the paper addresses the critical issue that securing the spatial rights and associated land use of winter sites—as well as those of all seasons—is indispensable. Indeed, this is fundamental to safeguarding the cultural rights and mobile lifeways of Mongolian pastoralists.

Our observations regarding the use of winter camps, initiated in 2007 within the framework of the mission “The Camps of Mongolian Nomads – an Ethnoarchaeological Perspective” promoted by the AIE, with the sponsorship of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and subsequently taken over a few years ago by ISMEO—of which the mission is now fully a part—provide empirical insights into how Mongolian nomads actively renegotiate their relationship with a changing landscape. Moreover, it emphasizes that their intangible heritage remains a living, dynamic tool for environmental survival.

SAVERIO KRATLI

COMMISSION ON NOMADIC PEOPLES

WHY PASTORALISM IS ALREADY IN THE FUTURE

The abstract could read something like this: “Climate change is commonly understood as an environmental crisis requiring new technologies, markets and forms of governance. But climate change also reveals the limits of a broader production model and cognitive framework organised around stability, prediction and control. Industrial modernity has reached a historical point where the assumptions that once appeared self-evident—stability, optimisation, control, insulation from variability—have become part of the problem. Climate change makes pastoralism interesting because it developed outside those assumptions. Drawing on recent work on pastoral mobility, climate adaptation and carbon markets, I suggest that pastoralism offers a fundamentally different point of departure. Rather than insulating production from ecological variability, pastoral systems generate relatively stable livelihoods by working with variability through mobility, flexible institutions and adaptive governance. This perspective challenges dominant approaches to climate adaptation and raises questions about securing pastoralist’s access to land and the expansion of rangeland-based carbon schemes. Rather than presenting pastoralism as a vulnerable livelihood requiring climate solutions, the paper argues that pastoralism offers important conceptual and practical lessons for rethinking climate policy and climate finance in an increasingly variable world.”

CONFERENCE DECLARATION DRAFT - OPEN FOR COMMENTS

THE NOMADIC FUTURES DECLARATION

(PREPARED DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION DURING CONFERENCE)

We, the participants of the “Nomadic Futures: Cultural Rights, Knowledge Systems, Climate Resilience” conference, scholars, herders, and practitioners gathered in dialogue on the future of pastoral and nomadic civilizations, address this declaration to the Parties assembled at COP17.

Introduction

This declaration builds on an existing body of international recognition. Marking the United Nations' designation of 2026 as the *International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists* and endorsing and guided by the UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, the *Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation* (2002), and the *Dana Manifesto* (2020), we situate this statement within a lineage of instruments that have already established what this declaration now asks Parties to act on.

The 2024 report of the *United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* on the situation of mobile indigenous peoples documented the specific vulnerabilities pastoralist and nomadic communities face, and affirmed mobility as a right, not a deficiency to be corrected. The *2007 Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights* established that cultural life, including ways of life bound to land and movement, is a matter of rights rather than heritage alone, a principle the *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* extends by affirming that cultural diversity, including the diversity of pastoral and nomadic ways of life, is as necessary for humanity as biodiversity is for nature. The *Dana Declaration* and the *Dana Manifesto* set out the complementary principle that mobile peoples are partners in, not obstacles to, the stewardship of the landscapes they inhabit, while the *2023 Statement on Nomadic Ethics and Intercultural Dialogue* affirmed the ethical standing of nomadic ways of life within a wider dialogue among cultures and knowledge systems.

This recognition sits alongside UNESCO's own safeguarding of nomadic heritage, including the inscription of Mongol nomadic migration and its associated practices on the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*, as evidence that mobility is already understood as heritage worth protecting, not merely a livelihood to be managed. We build this declaration on that foundation and extend it into the specific arena of desertification finance.

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THE NOMADIC FUTURES DECLARATION

(PREPARED DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION DURING CONFERENCE)

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Our Message

Desertification is not only a crisis of soil. It is a crisis of the relationship between people and land. Where that relationship has been sustained for generations through mobility, flexibility, and the accumulated knowledge of pastoralist communities, grasslands have remained healthy. Where mobility has been restricted, fragmented, or made illegal, degradation has followed.

The evidence is clear and the mandate already exists: as UN Special Rapporteur reporting confirms, mobile resource use, including transhumance, herding, rotational fallows, and land-sharing, more often enhances biodiversity and ecosystem resilience than diminishes it. As climate change intensifies seasonal variability and unpredictability, the capacity to move flexibly across landscapes is not a cultural relic to be accommodated. It is a climate adaptation strategy already proven at scale.

We therefore call on the Parties to shift the terms of the conversation: from funding new adaptation projects imposed on pastoralists, to financing pastoralism as adaptation, on its own terms.

Mobility Practices to Be Recognized and Financed

The mobility this declaration calls on Parties to finance is not a single act but a repertoire of practices, refined over generations to match the rhythm of variable landscapes:

- Seasonal mobility and migrations
- *Otor* / emergency, short-term grazing
- Transhumance (mountain systems)
- Hunting
- Flexible grazing
- Access to water points and sources
- Sacred sites and culturally significant sites
- Flexible production to cull
- Digital infrastructures supporting mobile livelihoods

Each of these is a working part of how grassland-pastoralist systems stay healthy. Financing mobility means financing the whole repertoire, not a single idealized form of it.

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THE NOMADIC FUTURES DECLARATION

(PREPARED DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION DURING CONFERENCE)

Continued from previous page..

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We Call on Parties To:

1. **Redirect climate finance toward enabling mobility itself**, not as a side effect of other interventions, but as the direct object of investment. Support access across seasonal grazing lands, water points, and administrative boundaries, including the flexible and informal mechanisms through which herders already manage variability.
2. **Recognize and give legal rights for customary mobile land tenure systems and mobility rights** as a precondition for grassland health, recognizing that the resilience of rangeland systems depends on the relationship between herd, herder, and landscape being kept intact, not divided by competing land uses.
3. **Require free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)** and social and cultural impact assessment wherever mining, crop agriculture, or other competing land uses threaten herders' capacity to sustain existing grazing resources.
4. **Recognize and finance the intangible cultural heritage of mobility**. The traditional knowledge, ritual, and spiritual practice bound to seasonal movement, including through dedicated climate-resilience funding channelled via UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage mechanisms, and support to state parties in developing nominations and management plans for such inscriptions.
5. **Measure what mobile systems actually deliver**: invest in environmental accounting that captures the ecological, biodiversity, and carbon outcomes of pastoral production, and correct the economic imbalance that currently privileges intensive, fossil-fuel-dependent systems through subsidy. A level playing field means pastoralist systems are measured, credited, and rewarded for the resilience they provide.
6. **Invest in diversified, decentralized pastoral economies**, supporting market integration and food safety for pastoral products, labelling that recognizes their living cultural heritage, and trade mechanisms that return value equitably to rural producers.
7. **Give pastoralists the authority to conduct climate monitoring**, treating herders not as subjects of adaptation policy but as its co-authors.

Our Position

Rangeland-pastoralist systems are not separate entities to be managed independently, they are a single, co-evolving system whose health depends on the interaction of mobility and variability. To fund land restoration while restricting the mobility that sustains it is to work against the very outcome the Convention seeks.

We ask the Parties to trust what pastoralist communities and the evidence base already show: supporting pastoralism to persist on its own terms is not a departure from combating desertification. It is one of the most direct paths to achieving it.

Presented on behalf of the participants of the Nomadic Futures conference.