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# 1. Introduction

**Abstract**
A plethora of herding communities – the Bedouin of the Middle East and North Africa, the Maasai of East Africa, the Mongolians of Central Asia, and the Sámi of Northern Europe – are using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to form new methods of communicating, utilizing public services, and engaging in protest. This chapter discusses the field and archival research conducted for this text, introduces each of the chapters, and provides a detailed analysis of the terms (such as "herder" and "pastoral nomad") used in the text.

**Keywords:** communicative network, herder, pastoral nomad, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

A cell phone buzzes in Mongolia. The national government is asking each herder to weigh in on mineral policy. In East Africa, a Maasai herder texts relatives in the city to determine the going price for cattle, then later uses the same phone to record his interactions with local police. In China, a young man articulates his love for both the city and pasturelands, distributing music and protest about land policy over his smartphone. From Kenya to China, Egypt to the United States, rural and nomadic communities are utilizing cellular phones to connect with local, national, and international debates, activists, movements, and policy makers. This book examines the ways that mobile communities from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America are recording their experiences, presenting arguments from multiple cultural standpoints, preserving traditional lifestyles, and sometimes reclaiming elements of mobile lifestyles even though their communities are now settled. From the collected case studies, I ask how new technologies and information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructures have changed the communicative norms and patterns that regulate these communities' engagement in local and international deliberative decision-making.

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When I described this book project to my International Communication class at the City University of New York, I was met with surprised stares and questions about whether rural community members really have access to cell phones. As I answered these questions, I noticed one student smiling in the back of the classroom. "Omar," I called, "can you explain to your classmates why you are smiling?" Omar's smiled widened as he told the class that many herders in his native Pakistan have cell phones, and how his father frequently calls rural relatives to find the best deals on meat, fresh foods, and to recruit day laborers. Completing his story, he told his classmates, "We are not poor, just different from you."

This difference – the ways that rural, mobile, and nomadic communities have integrated cellular technologies into their traditional lifestyles – is commonly accepted by the communities themselves, and by their neighbors, such as Omar's father, with whom they are in frequent contact. But for the rest of the world, in this case for students from New York City, rural, mobile, and nomadic communities are far away. Often these distant communities are imagined through images found in *National Geographic*, seen on television specials such as BBC's *Tribe*, or imagined in feature films such as *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. These media productions tend to portray nomadic and indigenous peoples as isolated, pure, and out of time.[1] Simultaneously, the lands on which they live are described as the most pristine yet endangered spaces in the world. Environmental communication scholar Phaedra Pezzullo notes that through these images, distant environmental spaces have "already come to signify significant spaces in [our] personal and national imaginaries."[2] These depictions often obscure the more complex and challenging reality facing rural, mobile, and nomadic communities in today's world, where state-sponsored development projects, corporate mining projects, and pressures to settle all come into conflict with nomadic and semi-nomadic ways of life. Like many topics of contemporary interest, rural, mobile, and nomadic communities' conflicts are frequently reported, debated, protested, and adjudicated through social media platforms. These deliberations have forged new communicative networks between settled and mobile communities. Some of these networks are between groups that have one touch point – such as tourists and their guides. Others are between protesters brought together by a similar topic. Some networks are forged between communities that have much in common, such as indigenous communities that live in separate regions but are connected

1 Caplan, 2005; Lee, 1986; McShane and Danielson, 2010; and Neumann, 1997; Todd, 2010

2 Pezzullo, 2009, p. 171

across platforms and through those platforms have also organized real-world meeting spaces.

## Working with and among Rural Mobile Communities

I began working in Mongolia in 2004 as part of an archaeology project on the origins of pastoralism. While digging 900 test pits in the blazing sun, I spoke with my Mongolian counterpart, who grew up as a herder and had only recently moved to the national capital, Ulaanbaatar, to study archaeology. Though he was working toward a professorship in archaeology, he was also determined to later retire and return to living in the countryside as a herder. His life plan was radically different from what I had previously learned about rural development. Before coming to Mongolia, I had been told that when given access to education and employment opportunity, herders would choose to settle and enjoy the comforts of modernity. No one, according to my textbooks and professors, would plan for retirement as a pastoral nomadic herder. And yet, my Mongolian classmate was doing just that.

Later, I continued to learn about pastoralism by conducting research and working on education projects through Central Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa. I met academics, politicians, and activists from Berber, Bedouin, Fulani, Maasai, Mongolian, Sámi, and Tibetan communities who all planned to return to life as herders, or who were oscillating between sometimes living in settled communities and sometimes in herding communities. Traveling in the countryside with these scholars, I met even more pastoralists who were determined to protect and maintain their herding lifestyles. I also met former herders who had no intention of returning to a herding lifestyle, but even those individuals were connected to and supportive of their relatives who were living and working in the countryside. Many of these community members were aware that governments, conservationists, and development workers wanted or expected their communities to give up their herding lifestyles. Some herders expected that this was just a ploy to attract more tourists to see the "last" of a disappearing tribe. Others framed their herding lifestyles as continued acts of resistance against governments, capitalism, and/or development projects.

What struck me as I spoke with herders was that their knowledge of the plans being made for them was detailed, accurate, and up to date. How, I wondered, could these communities, which were so far from city centers, be so well informed? When I first worked in Mongolia, I would travel with university professors who were conducting ethnographic interviews. We

would often bring along books, newspapers and other reading materials which family members frequently asked for to help keep up to date with local and national news. However, the media landscape soon changed, and many Mongolian herders are now receiving their news through text messages, phone discussions with family members, and other uses of new media. Later, when I traveled in Kenya, I met with Maasai pastoralist who coordinated their herding schedule, payments, and other business matters via cell phone.

This book is an attempt to better understand these herders' communicative networks. I investigate both how these networks are changing the communicative norms within herding communities and what those changes mean to national and international stakeholders. Drawing from archival research, oral history interviews, and argumentative analysis, I explore a diversity of communicative events and ask how pastoral nomadic communities are working to participate in these discussions.

One of the hardest tasks in producing this text is that I want to highlight the parallels between these shared pastoral nomadic experiences with modernity while not glossing over, or homogenizing, critical parts of these individual community identities. Many of the communicative events studied in this book address development and conservation. In this analysis, it is not my goal to vilify settled communities or development programs. Many international programs do excellent work and share conservation goals, if not methods, with pastoral nomads. Strong and persuasive arguments have been made in full support of pastoralist and indigenous communities, such as Mark Dowie's *Conservation Refugees*, and Dawn Chatty and Marcus Colchester's *Conservation and Mobile Indigenous Peoples*, which argue that herders must not be framed as opposed to conservation as their lifestyles are frequently in line with the same goals. There are also excellent, specific studies of the modern position of pastoralist communities, such as Dorothy L. Hodgson's *Being Maasai, Becoming Indigenous*, and Rebecca Empson's *Harnessing Fortune*, which study resilience within herding communities. And Israeli scholar Oren Yiftachel gives us the concept of a "trapped minority" to describe the Bedouin who fall outside of the nation-state, despite being trapped within its borders. This concept of trapped positionality applies not only to the physical borders of the state, but also to the cultural representation and participation of the mobile and nomadic communities examined in this book. However, there are few texts that examine the comparative experiences, arguments, and positions of mobile and settled communities. Many of the books that do exist, such as Jimmy Nelson and Mark Blaisse's *Before They Pass Away*, focus on the disappearance of pastoralists. In this

book I questions the presumption that pastoralists are disappearing while working to more fully understand the modern position of pastoralists, conservationists, and development workers, but also to understand the milieu in which they live and work.

I have chosen to focus on a diversity of herding communities: Bedouin of the Middle East and North Africa, Maasai of East Africa, Mongolians of Central Asia, and Sámi of Northern Europe. These communities herd cattle, sheep, goats, camels, horses, reindeer, or yaks, and have adapted their herding to arid steppe landscapes. At times these communities have herded alongside agriculturalists, sometimes they practice a mix of herding and farming, and at other times they have conquered settled lands and raided other communities' herds. They are drawn together by these complex histories, as well as their long-term engagements with socialist and capitalist governments, colonialism, and, more recently, conservation and mining pressures. While all of these communities have lost large swaths of land to state-sanctioned conservation and mining projects, they have also worked to maintain their traditions through herding, migration, and cultural preservation. It would be tempting to use these struggles to make sweeping generalizations about how these communities have much in common. However, it is important to keep in mind the many ways that these communities, and their experiences are unique. This book is not an attempt to make comparisons between groups. Instead, I am working to find what Jacques Lacan and later Slavoj Žižek call a *point de capiton* or "quilting point."[3] Their metaphor draws from the process of making furniture, referencing when two pieces of fabric are drawn together and secured by a button. Those two fabric pieces are separate entities, but they come together across the couch or chair, and they give strength to the furniture because they are joined together at specific points. For Lacan and Žižek, this metaphor is useful because they are talking about ideological fields where signifiers are slippery – their meanings are frequently changing. Quilting points are useful for them because they tie down ideology at a specific moment and claim "this means that at a specific time." For this book, the slipperiness is in herder identities, livelihoods, and lived realities. Herders may experience extreme changes throughout their lives – from living in pastures to living in large cities, from moments of wealth to poverty, from changes in education access, political power, and freedom of movement. To produce a static book that firmly defined that a "herder is always this" would miss the richness of herder identity, movements, and communication.

3 Žižek, 1991

Instead, in this book I have been inspired to draw from Lacan and Žižek's idea of quilting points to look for moments when the social fabric of a herding community has been drawn together – has been anchored into place. In the case study chapters, these quilting points are found at the moment of a protest, a vote, or a poem. Then, in the concluding chapters, these quilting points are found when herding communities from around the world have come together – both in person and online – to exchange ideas, tactics, and develop new networks of communication. These quilting points happen, and then herding communities again disperse. One such quilting point, examined in Chapter 8, is the joining of mobile and nomadic communities from around the world at the Standing Rock River Sioux Tribe's opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). The resulting transnational and transcontinental deliberations is one way in which this book finds parallels in the communicative strategies of mobile and nomadic communities.

New media and social media platforms have radically changed how communities define themselves, share information, and find new supporters. Herders have actively adapted these tools, especially cellular phones, which are sometimes charged by solar panels and generators. Telecommunications infrastructure, which rapidly expanded in rural areas, has encouraged herders to participate in online petitions and protest, circulate market prices, and receive weather reports. Photographers recording this delight in producing images of Maasai warriors holding cell phones, or Mongolian herders texting while on horseback. Beyond the voyeurism that such images encourage, Chapter 2 examines the establishment of ICT infrastructure and the ways that cellular phones have become available to and used by rural and mobile communities around the world. This chapter examines the impact of these new networks and the ways that they have opened up new information pathways between herding communities, government officials, and development programs.

## Methods and Materials

In a YouTube video, Maasai women in the Serengeti gather around a microphone to make a plea for audience attention. One begins, "Many have spoken for us, now we speak for ourselves." This speech is a radical change from Western discourse, fiction, and art, which is filled with images and imaginaries of distant and unknowable herders. Historic encounters with these communities were almost always mediated through the writing of a few scholars and adventurers who dared to travel through distant lands.

From Marco Polo to Dr. Livingston, the spaces in which herders live have been framed as distant and, in the case of the Central Asian steppe, the ends of the earth. This expectation of distance, coupled with low levels of literacy, has often resulted in the expectation that herding communities could not speak for themselves or could not be directly encountered by travelers.

I argue that rural, mobile, and nomadic communities are recording their own experiences, presenting arguments from multiple cultural standpoints, preserving traditional lifestyles, and sometimes reclaiming elements of mobile lifestyles even though their communities are now settled. From the case studies presented in this book, I ask how new technologies and ICT infrastructures changed the communicative norms and patterns that regulate these communities' engagement in local and international deliberative decision-making. Chapters 3 to 7 each examine a herding community that is working to overcome this expectation of silence, and has built a communicative network that utilizes new and social media to ensure that the community's perspective is heard. These chapters are built on a complex body of research that I have collected over the last decade. For contextual background, each chapter utilizes oral history interviews juxtaposed with archival documents, including government reports, ethnographic studies, photographs, newsreels, educational materials, and propaganda productions, to understand the multiple, historical interpretations and representations of herder identity.

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Additionally, in this book I ask what information has been collected by local government agents and then changed or omitted before submission to higher levels of government. These questions are guided by historian Robert Tignor's comparative study of Kenyan and British archives. He reports that

materials recording colonial government failures are often held in Kenyan archives, but missing from those in England. Meanwhile, documents still labeled as "state secrets" in Kenya have been readily accessible in England for decades.[4] By consulting multiple archives I have tried to access the widest diversity of archival material possible in order to understand as many standpoints as possible. I am grateful for the many librarians and professors who have helped me to access these document collections at national, local, and university archives in England, the Netherlands, Tanzania, Kenya, Mongolia, and China as well as those at the United States Library of Congress, the National Geographic Foundation Archives, the Smithsonian Institute, Harvard University's Tozzer Library, Indiana University's African Studies Collection, and the Dutch International Institute of Social History. This international diversity of archival access is particularly helpful for my study of nations which have recently undergone political transition, allowing me to access historic documents purged or lost from Tanzanian, Kenyan, Mongolian, and Chinese libraries during periods of political transition.

One space of disagreement found throughout archives and contemporary posts on social media is how to refer to communities such as those discussed in this book. Before delving into each community's experience, this introductory chapter will examine the multiple terms used to describe these communities, and the entailments of the decision to use one term as opposed to another.

## Nomads and Herders

Communities such as the Bedouin, Maasai, Mongolian, and Sámi are labeled in many different ways. Sometimes labels such as nomads, pastoral nomads, and herders are used positively. Other times, these communities are pejoratively characterized as being primitive, barbarian, savage, underdeveloped, uneducated, or impoverished.[5] I often use the term "herder" to describe these communities. I have chosen this term based on the literal and figurative translation of the traditional phrases used by these communities to describe themselves. For example, Maasai herders use *kínèjì*, and the Mongolians use *malchid*, which both loosely translate to the English term "herder." Additionally, referring to these communities as herders highlights the centrality of herds to community identity and survival.

4 Tignor, 1976
5 Hall, 1991

Western literature typically refers to these communities as nomads, pastoral nomads, or pastoralists. Historically, labeling a community as "nomads" has produced an expectation of wandering at random, eluding the state, social hierarchies, and complex economies.[6] This misunderstanding of herders fails to acknowledge the complex, often hierarchical structures of their communities and networks of exchange.[7] What it does, however, is establish a rhetoric of dualism between nomadic and settled communities, between the civilized and the barbarian, between the knowable and unknown, and between right and wrong. As such, while I do at times use the term "nomad" in this book, I've tried to be critical in the term's application and avoid these negative connotations.

Beyond separating mobile and settled communities, colonial encounters with rural and mobile communities created a preference for the specific, ethnographic term of "pastoral nomads" to separate herding communities from other types of nomads such as migrants, wanderers, and hunter-gatherers. This definition of pastoral nomadism is based on two factors: the keeping of domesticated herds and seasonal migrations between pasturelands. As such, referring to herders as pastoralists or pastoral nomads can be helpful as it underscores the necessity of access to pasturelands. However, the term "pastoral nomads" was also used by invaders, colonizing governments, and development organizations as an ethnographic terminology to justify boundaries, education, and specific versions of history. When using the term "pastoral nomad," these colonizers constructed real, lasting implications for land use, conservation, development, and tourism with little regard to the multiple, geographically diverse communities collected by the term "pastoral nomad."[8] This collective term has been legitimated through essentializing misrepresentations of herder communities that foreground the "pure" or "essential" elements of pastoral nomadism while omitting anomalies or changes in tradition.[9] For example, in Mongolia, the label of "pure pastoralists" has been used to characterize those who identify as herders and do not engage in any other economic or employment activities. At the same time, development organizations use the term "absentee herders" in similar contexts because the subjects in question own but do not move with herds. Herders often move to urban areas seeking employment, leaving their animals with younger family members. Many herders plan to return to the countryside and a

6 Lafitte, 2011

7 Ahearn, 2018; Sneath, 2007

8 Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson, 1980; Palmer, 1998; Waller, 1984

9 Miller, 1998

herder lifestyle upon retirement or after they have earned money in the city.[10] This means that a part-time teacher might identify equally as both a herder and teacher, but to a development organization she is identified by her mode of employment – as a teacher. The concept of "pure pastoralism" creates absences in development policies targeted only at visible herders. These policies may help "pure pastoralists" through programs such as credit to buy fodder during environmental catastrophes. However, "absentee herders," such as the teacher that also keeps herds, would not be classified as a herder and therefore cannot access those same lines of credit to protect her herds.

Similarly, suggesting and, at times, romanticizing pastoral nomads' underdeveloped livelihoods can prevent audiences from learning about the many ways that herding communities have appropriated technology and adapted to modern conditions.[11] My students have frequently fallen into this trap when we begin to talk about my research and herding communities. They expect me to tell them about a distant, nearly alien people who are fully self-sufficient, have never seen an electric light, car, or other trapping of late modern capitalism. This perspective makes sense as it is informed by movies such as *The Gods Must Be Crazy* or *Mongolian Ping Pong*. They are then amazed – and a bit confused – when I tell them about my research and show them pictures of the families with whom I visit. These images often include a mixture of traditional herding tools and electronic devices. This expectation of primitivism can result in a misalignment of development projects or overbearing projects that presume herders do not have the education or experience to determine which technologies can or should be used by their communities. This presumption of primitivism can also be used as a tool to oppress herding communities. For example, they might assert that herders who participate in online deliberations cannot possibly be "authentic." We'll see this desire for authenticity, and claims that herders online cannot be anything but photoshopped, in Chapter 8 where I examine the ways that Samburu herders from Kenya voiced their support for the Standing Rock River Sioux's protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline.

## Organization of the Book

Communicative networks alter the ways that herders move through new social spaces, and call into question historical networks of power,

10 Fernandez-Gimenez, 1999

11 Grzimek, 1959; Grzimek and Grzimek, 1960; Evans and Humphrey, 2002

communication, and technology.[12] This book contains six case studies, drawn from across the world to investigate the ways that pastoral nomadic communities are using ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) to form new methods of communicating, utilizing public services, and engaging in protest. Each of these examples could stand alone as a case study of how a rural community is working to engage in international development while maintaining their traditional lifestyle. Yet, when read together, this text argues that while not all communities have the ability to skillfully utilize new and social media, many do. And by studying what has worked well for herding and nomadic communities, it may be possible to expand upon these successful projects.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed look into the ways that ICTs have been used and developed by mobile communities. Many rural communities around the world were latecomers to ICT development. However, when they were able to access new and emerging technologies, they often leaped over older technological tools and systems. Rather than have to lay telegraph lines, telephone lines, and then fiber optic cables, many communities went straight to satellite connection. They did so by using solar panels, portable batteries, and generators, allowing devices to be charged while on the move, and reducing the need for mobile communities to return to a stable location to connect with an electricity grid. Chapter 2 introduces these technologies, their emergence, and the international development programs that funded their expansion into the most rural locations. While many readers from settled and Western communities use the same technologies, this chapter introduces some of the novel adaptations that herding communities have made to utilize ICTs while on the move. In this chapter, I explore the development and instillation of these emergent technologies and resulting communicative networks that have the potential to change herding communities' relations with the state, access to banking, and use of image testimony.

Chapter 3 focuses on how the Maasai have used ICTs to build networks of international supporters and then use those new networks to put pressure on their national government to change land policy. This chapter examines the ways that the Maasai joined with Avaaz, an online activist network that provides organizing tools (such as online petitions or letter-writing platforms), to raise awareness of the Maasai's problems and gather 2.25 million signatures opposing the eviction of Maasai herders from their traditional lands. Through examination of the Avaaz petition, this chapter

12 Baasanjav, 2003; Chachage, 2010; Dyson and Underwood, 2006; Musiitwa, 2012

finds that Maasai communities have formed an international network that successfully pressured the Tanzanian government to revise its policy of evictions in the name of tourism and conservation.

Chapter 4 moves to the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (IMAR) of China, where herders and settled youth from herding communities are utilizing online message boards to build new communities, network across international borders, and negotiate what it means to be from a herding community in modern-day China. This chapter examines the ways that local and international supporters recorded and debated about a 2012 road protest during which a herder was run over and dragged to his death by a mining truck. Focusing on the use of ICTs by rural citizens, this chapter finds that herders were able to publish their own narratives in real time, often challenging narratives presented by the state. Additionally, through these narratives, youth in IMAR identified with and expressed a herding tradition and identity, even while living largely settled lives.

Chapter 5 examines the use of ICTs by Bedouin herders in the Middle East and North Africa. This chapter examines the ways that the traditional form of Nabati poetry is produced and shared across social media platforms. I then examine the ways that one Nabati poet, Hissa Hilal, performed her work on the *Million's Poet* reality TV competition show. Her work sparked new debates about the work of women Nabati poets as well as Bedouin women's rights throughout the region.

Chapter 6 examines the Mongolian government's use of ICT infrastructures to encourage democratic deliberation and decision-making, even among the most rural herders. This chapter focuses on the 2015 cell phone referendum, in which each SIM card owner was given one vote in a national referendum on mining policy. While the referendum was widely regarded as a flop due to low voter turnout, this chapter argues that the referendum established the expectation among Mongolian herders that their government can and should reach out to even the most remote herders for feedback on national policy.

Chapter 7 examines the Sámi of Finland, Norway, and Sweden and asks how these communities have turned to online petitions, protests, and campaigns as a way to fight against deep-sea drilling, oil extraction, and railway development. The Sámi's protests are made difficult because on paper these seem like ecologically sound developments. But in person they damage the pastures and herds. Through Twitter and YouTube the Sámi have launched a diversity of campaigns to maintain and reclaim their rights. This chapter also examines the role of international agreements for a transnational herding community.

Chapter 8 examines the youth members of the Lakota Sioux's organization and promotion of the Standing Rock protest of 2017 through new and social media. This protest against the expansion of the Dakota Access Pipeline brought together many Native American communities as well as their supporters from within the United States and around the world. This chapter focuses on the ways that international herding communities, including representatives of Sámi and Bedouin communities, joined and supported the Standing Rock protests. It also examines activities prompted by herding activists who took part in the DAPL protests.

Chapter 9 examines the presented cases in tandem, and explores the multiple meanings that they hold for development politics, programs, and research. The case studies presented in this book do not point to a winner or a conclusion. But what they do indicate is that many herding communities are active users of ICTs and are presenting data, narratives, images, and films that enrich and advance academic and international understanding of moments of crisis. These many uses and affordances of new and social media are examined for their application to academia and development politics. This chapter examines how herding communities are deliberated about through frames of "nomadology," proleptic elegies, and settlement, as well as the role of academics in ensuring that nomadic and mobile communities are accurately represented, discussed, consulted, and collaborated with in future research projects. The chapter begins by examining the ways that these communities have been studied in academia. Then, it discusses the ways that new and social media enable direct consultation. The chapter ends with a discussion of research methods and collaborations.

Throughout these chapters, I have looked for quilting points that help the reader to see connections between each community's protests, day-to-day activities, and engagement in online deliberation. I have also included moments of my own engagement with herding communities and reflections on the ways that I and my students based in New York City are able to encounter herders. In doing so, I hope that this book will help readers to imagine future collaborations between themselves, herding communities, conservation projects, and development programming. I have been fortunate that my educational experiences and now employment as a professor have allowed me to return to these herding communities and I look forward to the day when I can present copies of this text – both bound and digital – to the many herders who have helped me to better understand the world in which we all live.

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# 2. ICT Development for Mobile Communities

**Abstract**
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been used and developed by mobile communities. Many rural communities around the world were latecomers to ICT development. However, when they were able to access new and emerging technologies, they often leaped over older technological tools and systems. This chapter introduces these technologies, their emergence, and the international development programs that funded their expansion into the most rural locations. While many readers from settled and Western communities use the same technologies, this chapter introduces some of the novel adaptations that herding communities have made to utilize ICTs while on the move. In this chapter, I explore the development and instillation of these emergent technologies and resulting communicative networks, which have the potential to change herding communities' relations with the state, access to banking, and use of image testimony.

**Keywords:** Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), technological leapfrogging, international development, solar power, cell phone

In the summer of 2016, I sat at a train station in the Mongolian Gobi. My research partner and I were preparing for a few days of interviews and surveys among herders along the border of Mongolia and China. As we waited for our jeep, he took a moment to sign into a dating app and see who else was signed on in the region. He told me about the app, and how he used it to find potential dates – some living in settled homes near the train station, and others living farther into the countryside with their herds. Our discussion, weighing the likelihood that one or another contact would accept his request for a date, was similar to a thousand other conversations that I'd had with friends in large cities. Yet, it highlighted to me how quickly cellular access and mobile phones had been introduced to the region. I had

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been to this town many times before. Once, only a few years prior, I had been stranded there when a snowstorm took out all of the telephone lines. Yet, on that summer day in 2016 I used a smartphone to email my parents in the US, took a few selfies, and considered my research partner's dating life, all before getting into a jeep and driving out to interview herders about their use of mobile phones.

By 2014 more than 96% of the world's population had access to a cellular phone, including 90% of citizens in developing countries. This did not mean that 96% of all humans owned a phone, but that they could reliably access one when necessary. Access to Information and Communication Technologies, commonly abbreviated as ICTs, continued to increase, and by 2018, more than one-half of the world's population was online. And "almost the whole world population" lived within range of a 3G mobile signal.[1] Worldwide, mobile phone users most commonly use SMS (short messaging service) across a diversity of platforms to communicate. In some nations, SMS messages are sent directly across a mobile provider's service. In other nations it is more common to use a free mobile texting application such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Skype, or Renren.[2] Across the world, rapid increase in access to cell phones, smartphones, satellite coverage, and social media platforms is reshaping communicative networks for all communities.

The use of mobile phones has increased dramatically around the world, including among herding communities in developing nations. Some of these communities are made up of individuals with their own phones, while others are borrowing phones for frequent use. And communication scholars caution that as you read the following numbers, keep in mind that many individuals are sharing phones or pooling their resources to ensure that they have access to cellular coverage.[3] Yet, even considering the caveat, the growth in coverage is staggering. Some reports indicate that by 2018 there were 774 million SIM connections in Sub-Saharan Africa, reaching a penetration rate of 74% of the total population, and that 39% of these SIM cards were used in smartphones. It is expected that by 2025, 66% of phones in use will be smartphones.[4] Numbers are similarly large in the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. As this expansion occurred small markets cropped up around all of the services that cellular phone users would need. Suddenly, market stalls emerged offering cell phone charging services for

1 ITU, 2018
2 ITU, 2014
3 Butt, 2015
4 GSMA, 2019

owners who did not have electricity at home. Communities began mapping out their lands, determining where the best cell phone signals could be found. New networks also emerged based on the borrowing of cell phones where neighbors and relatives could pass out the number for one phone, often asking children and teenagers to serve as runners if the phone rang and someone in the network needed to be found.

The rapid increase of technological use and ownership has been attributed to market saturation of affordable phones, the liberalization of telecommunication laws, and the ways that cellular phone credits can be used for both telecommunication and for purchase of tangible goods and services. Scholars studying ICTs have determined that mobile phone use is not restricted by age or wealth.[5] For example, in 2015 Bilal Butt, a geographer who studies pastoralists in East Africa, found that 97% of herders had access to a mobile phone. Of those herders, 80% owned their own phone, and 16.7% relied on borrowed phones.[6] Some herders were only using phones for quick calls, while others were making "flash calls." This happens when a phone user does not have enough credits to make a long call, or does not want to use their credits for a long call. Instead, they call a known contact, let the phone ring, and then hang up before the call is answered. This is understood to be a request from the caller for the contact to quickly return their call. Flash calls work best for known acquaintances, and when a phone is shared can serve as a messaging system that asks one member of the shared phone network to call back as soon as possible. In the case of flash calls, users are able to put the cost of the call on the (sometimes only perceived to be) richer member participant in the call. Building on the popularity of flash calls, some Tanzanian political groups have begun using a combination of text and speech tools to reach their constituents. Participants first agree to participate in a group. Then, when a speaker has a message to deliver, they record a voice message, which is saved and accessible by dialing a call-in number. Participants are then "flashed" by either text or a quick call from the call-in number, letting them know that a new message is available. In this way, the end receiver of the message is responsible for the cost of the call. And the speaker of the message is able to invite listeners, many of whom will share the message with others, thus producing an expansive communications network. Researchers from Kenya and MIT have designed a system called Tangaza which would help NGOs to implement this type of text-and-voice message system for rural and poorer

5 Wesolowski et al., 2012
6 Butt, 2015

community members. In their early tests, these researchers were told that participants like using the Tangaza system for political messages because, as one participant explained, "Text does not work. [...] [With] voice, you get to capture people's emotions in their voices."[7] This study, which involved 100 people, has formed the foundation for understanding how cell phone users in Kenya use their phones. The research methodology and findings are unique in that the study specifically focused on Kenyans from low-income families.

Despite the spread of mobile access, there are still significant gaps in our understanding of the ways that mobile technologies, such as mobile phones in rural spaces, influence patterns of resource use and control.[8] Much of the existing literature focuses on the digital divide, or on the concern that poor and rural communities are being left behind by technological developments. This concern is addressed in Chapter 9. At the moment, we are concerned with the usage of those technologies that can be accessed by mobile and rural communities. These activities often come as a surprise to those who expect that rural and mobile populations are not yet technologically inclined or capable.

Expectations of minimal technological access are also seen in the ways that advertisements for new media play off the expectation that distant nomadic communities are unaware and unskilled in the use of new and social media. For example, in 2016 Samsung began an advertising campaign for virtual reality (VR) technology with depictions of two communities, Maasai in East Africa and herders in Mongolia.[9] In a lighthearted video clip, these distant communities are introduced to new technologies. The captioning, as Maasai women tend their goats and cattle, tend to their homes, and a Mongolian woman milks cows, reads, "The way of life of the Maasai people of East Africa and the nomadic herders of Mongolia remained unchanged for thousands of years." Then, an excited Mongolian man, a Maasai man, and an elder Mongolian woman each put on VR headsets. The captioning says, "Through the power of Gear VR we gave them a series of incredible experiences, the likes of which they had never seen before." The Samsung video shows Maasai and Mongolian community members' first experiences with VR, from skiing to mountain biking to riding a roller coaster. In many ways, the experience is like when my students in New York don a VR headset for the first time. Users move about, seek to find their footing, and amuse their peers as they dance while wearing the headset. What sets this advertisement apart

7 Odero et al., 2010, p. 9
8 Castells, 2011
9 Samsung, 2016

is the way that it positions Maasai and Mongolian herders as being so distant that they have not experienced anything close to this type of technology. Instead, the viewer is presented with a background full of manual tools, herds of animals, and the family's rural home. The herders are engaged in the technology, which is indeed phenomenal, but does that phenomenality need to be emphasized by juxtaposing the technology alongside herding communities? Speaking of the way that the commercial was scripted and produced, Conor Pierce, vice president of IT and mobile for Samsung UK and Ireland, said, "We wanted to bring that transformative experience to two of the most remote communities in the world. The reactions from the nomadic herders of Mongolia and the Maasai people of East Africa have been amazing to watch and it is incredible to hear their feedback."[10] Samsung is not unique in their use of herding communities to demonstrate VR technologies. A year before, the "Nomads 360" VR documentary series launched at the Sundance Festival, providing a VR immersive experience with "nomads," including two films titled *Nomads: Herders* [*Mongolian*] and *Nomads: Maasai*.[11] These videos do not fall into the pitfalls of earlier films that exploited the images of herding communities without their knowledge or consent. However, it is no longer true that these communities are "the most remote" in the world.

Before examining individual case studies of the ways that herding communities are using ICT infrastructure, this chapter examines the ways these information and communication technologies have reached and become accessible for rural communities. The resulting background is designed to help the reader better appreciate the milieu in which herders encounter ICTs and the new economic networks which have emerged around ICTs. This chapter begins by thinking about the status quo and the reasons why a study of herders' technology is important. I then ask how ICT technologies are used and how Wi-Fi and cellular service are accessed. Next, I trace the ways that this access became available to these communities in the first place, the ways that herders are able to afford this technology, and the ways that herders have adapted ICT technology to better fit their communities.

## How Important Are ICTs to Herders?

In 2001, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations argued that for pastoralists to survive they must adapt new technologies and

10 NetImperative, 2017

11 PRWeb, 2016

defense mechanisms. One suggestion was the use of mobile phones, which at that time were well established in urban centers and quickly moving into rural areas.[12] This proposed support for mobile technologies encouraged much debate over technological and social determinism, and the effect that modern technologies would have on herding communities.[13] These debates hinged on the "purity" of herding and nomadic communities. Some scholars expected that these communities were so traditional that they would not want to use cellular phones. Others argued that these tools would break down the social fabric of herding communities, gradually leading to a loss of values, ethics, traditions, or other critical elements of their cultures.

These warnings of technological determinism were countered by scholars and herders who supported technological expansion. For herding communities, access to cellular phones quickly resulted in access to markets, politicians, and social services. These new points of contact did not necessarily transform herding communities, but they might lead to other, later developments that would alter the community. In all human communities there are disadvantages to mobile phone use, ranging from the inability to turn oneself away from a phone to risks of putting one's own information online for view by surveillance states and identity thieves. The effect of these changes on communicative networks and power dynamics are vast and often global. For example, just as parents in New York City grapple with determining how much time and access a teenager should have online, parents of young herders worry that their teenagers are spending too much time texting and not enough with their families. In all cases, networks of communication are emerging and changing the lives of ICT users and their families. What is important to note, however, is that scholars have not found any disadvantages arising from ICT use that are unique to mobile communities such as the herders discussed in this book. Instead, many development organizations and practitioners have written that access to and use of mobile technologies has enabled herders to quickly resolve problems, ask for social services, and establish stronger networks both within and beyond their communities.[14] The World Bank notes that this ability to reach herding communities via mobile technologies is especially significant given that they are often in regions which do not have access to established social services, such as hospitals, schools, and government offices. This access is made possible, even beyond electric grids, through the use of portable power sources.

12 FAO, 2001
13 Butt, 2015
14 World Bank, 2012

## Powering Connectivity

Nomadic and pastoralist communities use a plethora of ICT platforms and media technologies. These tools include smartphones, laptops, and other devices powered through solar energy, which are used to access information from Wi-Fi, cellular, and satellite providers. This means that a herding community might be hundreds of kilometers away from an electrical grid, yet they are still able to power cell phones, lights within their house, televisions, and radios through the use of solar power. For example, using portable solar panels, Mongolian herders are able to continue using cell phones from their pastures, and are guaranteed enough power to support their devices regardless of where they might move. This access to portable, renewable technology is so important to communities such as Mongolian herders that, in 2013, the World Bank funded the 100,000 Solar Ger Electrification Program, which added to the 30,000 solar panels that the Mongolian government had provided to households in 2005. Combined, it is estimated that by 2013 between 60 and 70% of Mongolian herders had access to solar powered energy. And the Mongolian government plans to bring solar panels to the remaining 30 to 40% of herders by the end of 2020. Baatar Khandaa, a herder interviewed by the World Bank, discussed the importance of the project when he said: "We used to manage life with candles and oil lanterns. The change in herders' life between then and now is like night and day."[15]

Similarly, solar panels have become popular among herders across the border in China, where the Chinese Renewable Energy Development Project joined with the World Bank to provide 40,000 rural families, mostly herders and farmers, in western Chinese providences and autonomous regions.[16] *China Dialogue* reports that these panels are sufficient to power two lights and charge one mobile phone. In a follow-up analysis, the World Bank found that these panels were used for charging lights and phones, as well as radios and, at times, cassette and DVD players.[17]

Across the world, other herding communities are seizing on the potential of solar power to support their lifestyles and help to cope with an arid environment. For example, Tanzanian projects such as the Maasai Stoves and Solar Project[18] have been developed to provide portable power for Maasai communities. These solar panels are supported by the USAID as

15 World Bank, 2013
16 World Bank, 2011b
17 Bird, 2008
18 Maasai Stoves and Solar Project, n.d.

part of the Power Africa Project. USAID reports that these solar microgrids have are used to run refrigerators, water purification systems, and laptops. They also allow herders to charge their cellular phones at home, saving them from a three-mile walk to a bus stop, followed by a ride to the city to find a vendor whom they would pay to charge their phones.[19] The expansion of these electric networks is fascinating both for the ability to leapfrog over the need to lay power and cable lines, and for the independent ownership of power sources which allows herders to operate beyond national electricity grids. Many of the nations discussed in this book are susceptible to power outages causes by unstable grids, overwhelmed networks, poor maintenance and dependence on international sources of coal, oil, and machinery. Yet, herders using social power are removed from these constraints. This is seen in the case of Nenets reindeer herders who live in northern Russia, who have been able to power their phones using mobile generators which were originally distributed to run community radios. Even though the community does not have reliable power grid, they have enough power to charge their phones.[20] Yet, there are still networks of power to attend to when analyzing these systems. The funding of these new grids, reliance on materials and repairs, and access to replacement pieces all affect a user's ICT access. Many of these cell phone projects have been built on the trial-and-error process of radio distribution projects that came before them.

## Radios: The Herder's Precursor to Contemporary ICT

The case studies presented in this book examine the ways that herders have used new mobile communicative technologies to engage in deliberations, change power hierarchies, launch protests, and build international networks. While examining these actions, it is also important to keep in mind that mobile technologies have also changed the ways that communities are taking photographs, thinking among each other, listening to music, and producing videos from around the world. In these many ways, herders are sharing their own culture and imagination with citizens that live far away from them. Many of these uses are built on earlier networks, which were established through the use and proliferation of two-way radios among herding communities.

In this way, these new media technologies are a means for communication, information access, and education. They build on previous technological

19 USAID, n.d.
20 Stammler, 2009

advances, which encouraged herders to be drawn closer into the deliberative space and public spheres of their nations. In Mongolia, far before cell phones allowed for herders to participate in these deliberations, two-way broadband radios were used so that the most rural children could still attend classes at school, listening to lectures over the radio, and using the CB radio to call in their answers. This type of two-way, radio-based communication was a successful way for both children and adults to gain access to continuing education.[21] Similarly, in the 1990s, Nigeria encouraged "literacy by radio" through programs such as the Nomadic Fulani Educational Radio Programme (as well as the radio series *Don makiyaya a ruga* [For nomadic pastoralists in the homestead]). The program was designed for the 9.3 million pastoral nomads and migrant fishing families who were facing extremely low literacy rates. The program was named for the Fulani participants, who are cattle herders and among the largest nomadic groups in Nigeria. While this program has faced funding and pedagogical problems, it is an example of utilizing mobile technology which herders already have access to, and bringing new educational opportunities to herders rather than requiring that they settle or send children to boarding schools to receive an education.[22] Reports regarding this program estimate that with targeted awareness strategies and training, this kind of distance education could work well in Nigeria. In Uganda, the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja was successful in providing basic education, farming skills, and a weapon disbarment program for herders. This program is named after the northeastern region of Uganda near Kenya and South Sudan. It is home to many cattle-herding communities, including the Karimojong, who lost much of their land during British colonization and later lost more land to the creation of conservation lands. This loss of land has resulted in many clashes between herders, conservationists, and ranchers.[23] In addition to providing the academic and critical-thinking skills needed for citizens to participate in modern societies, this program has been successful in encouraging "peace education" and programming that is designed to allow all members of Karimojong communities, including youth and women, to participate in community decision-making.[24]

For Russian reindeer herders such as the Nenets, radio programming was established in the late 1960s not for education but to support the Soviet

21 Krätli and Dryer, 2009

22 Aderinoye, Ojokheta, and Olojede, 2007

23 Emmanuel, 1998

24 Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Program, 2007

meat market. Because this was a market-driven innovation, the connection was only available for short periods of time during the day, and was only meant for discussion of meat production. Anyone could listen into the meat price discussions, meaning that there were not any private conversations, organization, or education occurring via this radio connection.[25] While during the Soviet period the use of these radios was restricted, researchers have shown that after the fall of the USSR, the Nenets continued to use these radio sources, allowing them to hold real-time interactive conversations in semi-private settings as they used their own languages that were difficult for Russian listeners to understand.[26] Similarly, in Oman, in the late 1970s the sultan worked to ensure that even the most distant herders felt like they were part of the nation and provided technology such as radios to herding communities. These radios encouraged herders to access health and educational information. They also helped government officials to coordinate with herders to find mutually convenient spaces to meet for mobile clinics. This radio-based public service program provided the foundation for future programming that would use mobile phones.

## Herder Use of Smartphones and Cell Phones

Contemporary herders continue to use radios, as well as cell phones. Because cell phones are charged by solar grids and can facilitate private conversations, they enable a broader array of communicative activities than radio. The phones that herders use are not always the latest or most advanced models. Instead, in my experience they tend to prefer phones that can handle a rugged environment and are easy to repair. Many of these phones have been cast off in other parts of the world, and have arrived in Mongolia in what Lisa Parks, Professor of Comparative Media Studies at MIT, calls a "dynamic and coordinated arrangement and use of dispersed hardware, physical instillations, spectrum, footprints and interfaces that enable mobile telephone services as well a human labor and activity."[27] The expansiveness of this infrastructure is readily apparent to consumers of cellular phones. For many years in Mongolia I used an original Nokia 3310, a "brick phone," which I bought for about US$9. When I was running study abroad programs in Central Asia, my students would use these phones, often causing me

25 Stammler, 2009
26 Stammler, 2009
27 Parks, 2014

to purchase them in bulk from a Mongolian vendor who operated a cell phone repair and sales desk. His kiosk was one of many on the second floor of the MobiCom cellular provider's main office. Oftentimes my vendor would joke that there were much better, trendier phones available, and only herders still bought the Nokia 3310s. But using these phones makes sense to herders as well as to my students. They were traveling around the countryside, often exposing their phones to dust that can be easily removed from the Nokias (which allow users to remove and clean every piece of the phone). The phones also allow for easy removal of subscriber identification modules (SIM cards). This allowed students to buy a new SIM card if they traveled to a region covered by a different cellular provider, or if they had to travel into Russia or China, both of which required different SIM cards for access. Herders who are traveling between different coverage areas buy phones frequently, allowing them to use multiple SIM cards in one phone. In Nigeria, it is estimated that 66% of mobile users are using multi-SIM phones. This number is not unique; in Tanzania multi-SIM phones are also frequently used.[28]

Purchasing a phone and providing SIM card access is indeed expensive for some herding communities. In Mongolia, the least expensive plans provided by MobiCom includes a new cell phone number and SIM card for 9,900 tugriks (US$3.79). The MobiCom plan includes sending text messages on the network for 19 tugriks (US$0.01), free endless calling on network, and purchase of cellular data at a rate of 1 KB to 1 tugrik (US$.0004). In Tanzania, TiGO offers one-day plans which start at 500 Tanzanian shillings (US$0.22) and allow for 16 minutes of call time, 100 texts, and 3 MB of data.[29]

For many herders, this is an affordable service and, as previously discussed, it is often a tool which allows for greater financial stability among herders who can guarantee better rates when they sell animals at market, access to health care, and education information. Some herding communities have one cell phone per person, while others share one phone among a family or small group of herders. The ways that this ownership shapes and informs communication networks is addressed throughout this book. For example, in Chapter 6 we examine the ways Mongolia has experimented with using SMS to encourage rural participation in political decision-making. Cellular phones are a great way to reach distant citizens, inform them of new policies, and garner feedback. Yet, as Chapter 6 demonstrates, using cellular phones for voting and polling is also made difficult when several

28 Mirani, 2015

29 Calculations correct as of January 2019.

citizens are sharing one phone, or when connections are unstable. These constraints should not discourage future experimentation, but they do point to spaces where more researchers and practitioners would do well to continue developing their methods.

Despite their limitations, even the oldest of phones are put to quick use and can radically improve the livelihood of herders. For example, herders are able to receive storm reports, letting them know if their region is about to experience a drought, a flash flood, or an oncoming blizzard. Many of these climatic events are predictable by signs in the weather, and herding communities continue to use these signs from the sky today. However, herders are able to receive an even further advanced warning coming from national and international weather services because of the early alert system, particularly through SMS text messages that they receive on their cell phones. This is especially important for herders living in changing climates, where the weather is becoming less predictable and storms are becoming fiercer.

Herding communities are also able to receive welfare information, including messages focusing on the needs of children. Schools often send alerts regarding opening and closing events. Save the Children found in 2016 that many children from herding families attended boarding school and brought a phone along with them. This allowed children to call or text home every day, lessening the stress that many children feel while attending boarding school. While the poorest families were not able to send a phone with their child to school, children from those families were still able to borrow phones from their classmates to call home.[30] This is a large change for herding families around the world who send their children to boarding schools. For herders, enrollment in boarding school is sometimes coerced, forced, or otherwise not wanted by the child and parents. In Mongolia, between 1921 and 1990, boarding schools were modeled after Soviet education models. During that period, in part because of boarding schools, literacy rates reached 97%. These schools were designed to help children from nomadic families adapt to both settled and nomadic lifestyles. They did not require enrollment until children are eight years old, ensuring that children felt comfortable in a nomadic herding household, and they were closed for the summers so that children could herd with their families.[31] Similarly, in East Africa, Maasai herders who have been sent to boarding school reflect on their experience, and the social distancing that resulted from their attendance. Reflecting on why he, among his 37 brothers and

30 Save the Children, 2016

31 Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe, 2005

sisters was selected to be sent to school, Saitoti indicated that his father knew "if he sent someone who was not close to the family, they might not return. But I was close to the family, and he knew that I would return."[32]

Changes in government structures, development schemes, and educational programming have resulted in even more children leaving herding communities to attend school. Yet, despite increases in attendance, the physical and psychological separation required to gain a certificate-bearing education is difficult for many children and their parents, especially when they cannot quickly access information about their children, or be contacted in case of an emergency. ICTs have played a critical role in improving this situation by enabling new communication patterns. This new technological affordance, that of a child bringing a phone to school and the parents having one in the countryside, allows for better family communication and peace of mind. Additionally, by decreasing feelings of loneliness and separation it may increase the amount of time that children are willing to stay in school.[33]

Families also benefit from the ability to access medical information via SMS. This is important in two ways. First, it radically decreases childhood mortality because even the most rural families are able to access information about maternity and the care of their children. For example, the Tanzanian Healthy Pregnancy, Healthy Baby Text Messaging Service has been established to coordinate prenatal care for women in even the most rural communities. The plan is free for cellular subscribers of many cellular networks. In its first three years, it was estimated to reach 500,000 Tanzanians.[34] After a child is born, access to immediate health information, often referred to as a "text message intervention" can provide critical information for small health problems that can have life-threatening implications if left unchecked.[35] For illnesses such as vomiting or diarrhea, these interventions can have dramatic implications because family members are quickly able to receive advice and, if necessary, medicines to save their children. Additionally, cell phones have provided lifelines for victims of abuse who are able to call or text their requests for help. In one study of rural mobile Guatemalan communities, researchers found that SMS text messages were a less intimidating way for victims of violence to reach out for help from social service providers and nongovernmental organizations.[36]

32 Domowitz, 1980
33 Ahearn and Bumochir, 2016
34 US Embassy in Tanzania, 2014
35 Fjeldsoe, Marshall, and Miller, 2009
36 Bautista, 2012

Beyond instances of abuse, the ability to individually reach health care and social service providers is new for many herders and their families. Recall that previously many communities were utilizing shared radio frequencies, or visited clinics in a group when transportation was available. Individual access to care providers allows individuals to ask sensitive questions, to admit that they are illiterate and have directions read out loud to them, request medical procedures that might be negatively or poorly understood in the community, and, in many other ways, control the ways that their own health care is managed. This access has the potential to radically improve both physical and mental health in all human communities, but it is especially true for herders and other mobile groups who are now able to reach a health care provider from even the most rural and distant pasture.

SMS text messages are also helpful for herding practices and the care of animals, which are central to herder identity and livelihood. For example, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Belgium (a veterinarian service modeled after Doctors without Borders) operates services in Niger and Burkina Faso that allow pastoralists to text in for information about their herds and local environment. This information helps herders to identify where they are most likely to find food and water, and it allows Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Belgium to understand where the need for food and water is the greatest. To better meet these needs, development organizations are able to set up food banks in the locations that herders have identified as lacking in grass or water.[37] Similarly, Oxfam has a program in Kenya that allows herders to text in and request humanitarian services after experiencing a drought or other climatic problem.[38] This ability to request aid for an entire community is critically important because it frees up herders to act as first responders, rather than organizing travel to find assistance. Additionally, it allows herders to become part of a communicative early warning system, which can alert other herders and their neighbors to the outbreak of animal-borne disease, flash flood, blizzard, or other large events. Using SMS text messages, families are able to receive veterinarian information and are able to prevent their herds from becoming sick or, if already exposed, heal their herds quickly. This ability is particularly important in regions such as East Africa, which has previously been affected by rinderpest, a viral disease that can quickly infect and kill a herd of cattle. In 2011 the United Nations declared that rinderpest had been eradicated, but herders still need to diligently watch for a reoccurrence of the disease. They suggested that

37 Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Belgium, 2016

38 Spence, 2013

health officials could be alerted to the return of rinderpest through SMS text messages sent by herders.

Herders also frequently use their cell phones to access information about, and sources of, clean water. Not only do herders need to know where the water is located, but they also need to be aware if there are pollutants in that water which might affect them or their herds. Some communities, such as Maasai herders, use both SMS texts and flash calls to receive information regarding water sources as well as information about fodder and predator locations.[39] While conducting interviews with Maasai herders in southern Kenya I was frequently interrupted by herders calling one another to ask about rainfall, to determine how much water was in a catchment, and to ask about water-related pests such as mosquitoes, which affect animals and spread malaria. These networks were strong, building upon preexisting networks to form new spaces of exchange and deliberation.

While herders use cellular phones to find life-sustaining information, some also use their new and emergent networks for political engagement and at times subversion of state officials, government regulations, and conservation organizations. For example, in many places, herders have been forced to stop using traditional grazing lands in an attempt to build national parks. These parks are built under the theory of "fortress conservation," which presumes that the best way to preserve land and wildlife is to ensure that human communities do not come into contact with wild spaces. Problematically, these now "wild spaces" were once herding community grazing lands, and herders often need to access those once grazing lands to ensure the health and livelihood of their herds. Rather than give up on their herding spaces, herders and their animals often enter these areas when they expect the land to be empty. When I studied in East Africa I spoke to several Maasai herdsmen who acknowledged that they engaged in this night herding practice. They claimed that it was necessary to access the best grasses, but also dangerous as both the herders and herd animals were at risk of attack by wildlife which hunt at night and are harder for the herders to see from a distance. With the assistance of cell phones, herders have also taken to grazing in these wild spaces during the daytime, using their phones to track the movement of rangeland officers, and moving their herds any time that an officer comes close to the grazing land. As Butt reports, "herders and rangers actively engage in a cat-and-mouse game" which is enabled by cell phones.[40] While phones are used in this case to subvert the police, other

39 Butt, 2015
40 Butt, 2015

scholars have shown that the same phones are used to maintain a herd, and at times to find out who has raided a herd, illegally stolen cattle, or taken an animal to market without a herder's consent.[41]

## Cellular Public Sphere

Beyond communicating with their families and managing their herds, herders are also able to use cell phones to access political information, maps, and other public services. In this way, many herders are entering and embracing new pubic spheres. Before the emergence of new and social media, scholars were deliberating on the role of the public sphere as a physical space in which citizens are free to gather, express their opinions, and participate in meaningful debate. Yet, the foundational text for academic deliberation about the public sphere is Jürgen Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Habermas's text is well grounded in examples from the bourgeoisie past and laments the decline of these public spheres in contemporary nations. The work is widely read in international academic settings (and was even assigned to me as a foundational text by an advisor from the Anthropology Department at the National University of Mongolia). However, there are questions regarding its application to herding communities. These community members would likely never have been invited to the salons that Habermas celebrates. Yet, each community has its own tradition of public deliberation, argumentation, and decision-making and Habermas's model of an ideal public sphere maybe taken as an example to better understand the types of public deliberation in which herders engage.

Communication scholar Thomas Goodnight expanded upon Habermas's theory and focused on the division between the public, private, and technical sphere. These spheres are the space in which arguments and deliberations are able to make appeals. In the private sphere, herders might deliberate within their family or friend group, but in the public sphere, they are engaging with a much larger audience which is open to experts, public officials, other herders, and also their own community and family. Goodnight urged that these kinds of public sphere deliberations are necessary for all communities. And he, like Habermas, was concerned that deliberation in the private and technical spheres had begun to act as a substitute for public deliberation. The effect of this substitution is seen in the focus on private deliberation,

41 De Jode, 2010

which celebrates individualism, but does not work to establish the collective agreement, deliberation, and traditions of disagreement that form the foundation of an active civic culture.[42]

The concern for Goodnight, and for our study of herders' use of new media, is that the increasingly technical forms of communication could led to a culture of expertise in which only the best-informed, technologically inclined are able to participate in deliberations. Yet, that speed of communication also opens up new places for deliberation and participation. As Kevin DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples indicate in their study of public screens, "the speed of communication has obliterated space as a barrier to communication."[43] This obliteration of spaces is particularly important for herders, for whom immediate access to public sphere deliberations can radically change both the ways that the members of a community can demand changes for themselves, and the way they can become visible within their larger national and international deliberations. For some communities this information includes reminders to vote and direct access to local government officials through the use of call-in or text-in services. The ability of herders to speak directly with their politicians has had radical implications on herder participation in civic deliberations as well as policy makers' appreciation for the herding lifestyle. For example, in Ethiopia, herders are able to use cell phones to call local officials and sway the opinions of policy makers.[44] This ability to call officials is so impactful that when researchers asked Ethiopian women herders who did not have their own phone what they would do if they were given a phone, they listed three activities. They would contact relatives, keep in contact with herders in the pastures, and request government services.[45]

Herders have used their cellular access in similar ways around the world. In northern Russia, Nenets herders also experienced quicker growth in their access to mobile communication and the Internet than Russians living in more settled parts of Russia. By 2001 the Nenets forest activist Yuri Vella had established mobile access deep within the Varegan taiga of northern Russia. This access was made available due to the establishment of oil operations at the Povkh oil field. This connection supported Vella's work protesting in support of environmental issues and connection with international NGOs. As Stammler writes, "in early 2001 the court case of the oil company against

42 Goodnight, 1982, p. 215
43 Deluca and Peeples, 2002, p. 131
44 IRIN, 2010
45 Hurst et al., 2012

Vella was still ongoing, and it felt almost like from another world to sit in a Moscow apartment and talk to a reindeer herding activist in the taiga."[46]

Additionally, systems have been created to help rural communities, including herders, to report election-based violence. For example, in Kenya, violence spread throughout the country in 2007-2008, some of which was propagated through the quick spread of political rumor via SMS. After the elections were complete, conflicts continued, and in the Rift Valley more than 200 people were injured and 100,000 displaced.[47] However, in following elections politicians and NGOs worked to use SMS as a way to prevent additional violence. Programs such as Sisi Ni Amani (We Are Peace) were established in cooperation with East African cellular providers, allowing organizers to send 50 million free SMS text messages to promote peaceful elections in 2011. Sisi Ni Amani responded to many attempts to incite violence. For instance, a violent text circulated, such as "Fellow Kenyans, the Kikuyu's have stolen our children's future. [...] [W]e must deal with them in a way they understand – violence." Sisi Ni Amani quickly responded to this text and sent back "Let us maintain and promote peace during this nomination. Tudumishe amani Koch!"[48] It was reported that these messages had a calming effect for Kenyans both during the election and later in response to other violent moments. Following a politically charged murder, a resident of Dandora (a neighborhood outside of Nairobi) responded to Sisi Ni Amani's text, "We were planning to avenge the death of our friends who were killed by the gangs. But after we received the message, we changed our approach and thought that revenge would not bring our friends back."[49] An additional program, Uchaguzi, was developed in 2010 and has continued to provide crowd-sourced information regarding election processes and election-based violence. It allowed politicians, police, NGOs and voters to track SMS messages, tweets, phone calls, and emails during the elections to determine where violence was occurring and hopefully prevent additional violence. A total of 4,964 reports of violence were filed during the 2013 election, of which 2,699 were verified.[50] These mixed methods of utilizing ICTs to encourage voting, form new political networks, and ensure political equity demonstrate the ways that ICTs can encourage participation in politics. Israeli scholar Oren Yiftachel has described the position of the Bedouin as a "trapped minority"

46 Stammler, 2009, p. 61

47 Cho et al., 2015

48 Tudumishe amani Koch translates to "Maintain Peace Koch!" "Koch" is the slang term for the Korogocho district (Verjee, 2013; Quist-Arcton, 2008).

49 Verjee, 2013

50 Ushahidi, 2013

who fall outside of the nation-state, despite being trapped within it.[51] This trapped positionality applies to the physical borders of the state, but also to the cultural representation and participation of the minority community. In Chapter 5 we explore the ways that Bedouin poets are speaking out from these borders. Similarly, in their attempt to control depictions of their communities and culture, while also providing their vision for the future, herding communities from around the world are working to escape the confines of images and representations made about them, but not by them. ICT access brings together participants who live far apart, in different social and political contexts, but are connected by common struggles and political goals. For example, American Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez told reporters in 2018 that her determination to run for political office was fueled in part by her visit at the Standing Rock protests.[52]

All of these interactions indicate the new ways that herding communities are engaging in political deliberation. For some communities, voting is not a new activity, but the access to multiple sources of information that can be reviewed before voting has improved voter education and participation. For other communities, access to polling information and providing security at polling places has radically improved voting turnout. Even in communities where voting is not permitted or not common, there are still outlets for herder citizens to express their needs and desires to public offices and authorities. When those outlets fail, herders are able to use their communicative networks and new technologies to garner national and international attention.

Posting images, songs, and videos of herding life and the struggles faced by their communities has become a common tool of protest and advocacy by herders. When working to gain international support, these media artifacts frequently form a bridge between herders and their supporters. For example, many people who go on safari in East Africa interact with or at least see Maasai herders during their trip. Maasai herders can then build upon their relationships with tourists to form new networks which continue even after the tourists have gone home. Other communities are seldom visited by tourists, but are still able to provide the necessary background information, through images and storytelling, to form a bond between the viewer and the herding community.

When working to press for legal intervention and development assistance, these images can also form the foundation of a legal case. For example, when Maasai communities faced forced eviction and the burning of their homes,

51 Yiftache, 2008
52 Murphy, 2018

they were able to produce images, videos, and testimony of these crimes. The evidence was posted to local media, and eventually linked to articles hosted by papers such as *The Guardian*. This combined body of reporting lead to the European Union's 2015 Resolution on Land Grabbing, which condemned Tanzania's permissiveness in the loss of Maasai herding lands. Similarly, in Chapter 4, this text examines how Inner Mongolian herders used cell phone videos as evidence when claiming that they were abused by police forces and mining companies.

Some government officials have rejected these images as fake, doctored, or taken out of context. This rejection of photographic evidence of police brutality has much in common with the struggles of marginalized people across the world. The Maasai and Mongolian attempts to substantiate the realness of their images is discussed in Chapters 3 (Maasai) and 4 (Inner Mongolia). In discussing these difficult images, it is to examine both our own position as witnesses to a phenomenon, and also analysts of a social conflict. In *Image Testimonies: Witnessing in Times of Social Media*, Schankweiler, Straub and Wendl remind us that the emergence of technologies that allow many individuals to record, upload, share, and report about current events in real time has dramatically affected the ways we witness events, and are able to participate in events unfolding half a world away. They draw from their term "image testimony" to organize how scholars might understand these changes. For them, an image testimony consists of four parts: (1) the subject or testifier, (2) the event requiring testimony, (3) the audience to whom the testimony is addressed, and (4) the media which is used to disseminate the testimony. In each case study of this book I attempt to understand the role of image testimony by herders. In doing so, I seek to remind readers that the media discussed here is not randomly created or unintentionally produced. Each item has been designed with an event, audience, and media in mind. By examining all three elements we can better understand the ways that mobile and nomadic communities are utilizing ICTs.

The concept of image testimony may call to mind instances of violence – and indeed this book does discuss violence. However, it is important to recognize that image testimony can also be utilized to share happier, kinder moments between family and friends. Many herders are using their cell phones and the cameras that come along with them to take pictures of their families, local livestock, and wildlife. Many times in Mongolia, I have had dinner with a rural family or have consulted with a herder for directions. After exchanging greetings, they've pulled out their cell phones to show me something new and exciting. By and large, the new and exciting thing that they've seen is a spotting of a rare sheep or a mountain lion or other various

types of Mongolian wildlife. Many herders have spent their lives in remote pasturelands and care deeply for the animals that are there. Spotting these rare animals is a joy for many herders, and it's one of the joys that they're able to capture with a cell phone, to share and exchange with their friends and with the people that they meet.

Similarly, the multimedia capacity of cell phones also provides a way for herders to stay in touch with their communities, especially when they are traveling or working beyond their herds. In 2014 I lived in a student hostel in southern Kenya. My room had a view of Mount Kenya and was adjacent to a dormitory filled with rowdy European college students on summer holiday. The night guard at the hostel was a Maasai man around the same age of the tourists, but was consistently distant from them. He told me that he'd taken the job because it seemed like a good way to spend time with people his own age while making money to support his future family and herds. He did meet tourists, but was frustrated that he was always stuck at the hostel while they were able to travel in the countryside. He seemed depressed for several days, and each time we spoke he expressed his loneliness and worry that his family was so far away. And then, one day he was in a far better mood. When I asked him what had made him so happy he pulled out his cell phone and showed me a series of short videos that had just been sent to him by his brother who was in the pastures, but had briefly found a cellular phone connection strong enough to send media files. In the videos his friends told him about his cattle, took him on a visual tour of the pastures, and sent a short clip of a song. The videos were short, a personal form of image testimony, which provided a much-needed window and connection with his community. This kind of connection made his employment as a night guard easier – putting his mind at ease that his family was okay while he earned and saved money in the city. Once he earned enough, he would be able to return to his family, herds, and marry with a well-established financial future.

## Cellular Access Means Market Access

Even without working as a night guard, my Maasai friend would probably still have been able to afford cellular service. This ability frequently comes as a surprise. After all, even though this technology is inexpensive, it still comes at a cost. How do these communities, who at times teeter on the edge of poverty and debt, afford this technology? Herders have access to money in several different ways. I recently met with the son of a Fulani herder who is studying for his master's degree in England. He told me about

his father who had four wives and many children. After hearing about his many relatives, I responded, "Wow. It must be really expensive to maintain such a large family." He looked at me, puzzled. "You know herders are not poor. We don't have money, but we have so many cattle." The many cattle are supporting vast, huge families and can be sold to pay for things such as school fees, medicines, equipment, and also cell phones. Herders want to ensure that they get the best possible price for the animals and, by using cellular phones, they are able to sell animals at a fair price.

The implications of this access to market prices is seen in West Africa where small-scale herders in Senegal and Mali use cell phones to determine the price that they should charge for their products. As one farmer indicated in 2007, "Sometimes we feel our village is isolated. […] We have problems selling our products. Speculation forces us to sell at very low prices."[53] Cell phones enable members of rural communities to text into the market to determine market-rate prices. By texting a friend or representative who is already at the market, herders are able to determine how quickly animals are selling on that particular day, ask what prices that are being paid for different types of meat, and estimate the price that they should charge for their own animals. This ability to access market prices means that if you plan to buy a sheep, even in the most rural communities, you can expect that herders will check to find out the going price at markets and will negotiate their prices accordingly.

The ability to access fair prices has radically changed the ways in which herders are able to demand a fair price for their animals and are able to make sure that they are not being taken advantage of by markets closer to the city. In this way, herders can equalize their deliberations and negotiations with middlemen. This is a change in the traditional power structure in which traveling middlemen held a significant and powerful role in the local economy. They set prices, negotiated pay, and often also brought along news via word of mouth or newspapers. These travelers are still necessary agents who buy animals and take them to markets. However, they can expect that herders have additional information sources. At a minimum, this forces middlemen to be honest. At an extreme, it could lead herders to find new middlemen, or cut middlemen out completely. In some nations, this information is accessed through an ad hoc network of community members. In other communities, the desire to find local prices has drawn herders into a larger network in which they contact distant acquaintances for information. This access at times crosses ethnic and religious lines, providing a reason for communication that did not previously exist. The advantage

53 WSIS, 2011

here is that, if herders are frequently texting into a market to receive prices, they are building a network of trust that may have not previously existed.

There is also an environmental advantage to herder knowledge of market prices. Herders seeking the best prices for their animals often want to take the animals to market themselves, thereby cutting out middlemen. This is especially common in locations where meat prices fluctuate or where it has previously been difficult to transfer money from the market back to the herder. While some families bring their herds to market only a few times a year, others have decided that it is more worthwhile to live near the market, thus cutting down on the time and effort to bring animals in when it's time for a sale. This movement toward markets often results in overgrazing in the market regions. As one Inner Mongolian herder told *China Daily* reporters, "In the past, I had to contact retailers to sell cows, but now business comes to me."[54] By being able to gain a fair price in the countryside, there is less of an incentive for herders to move animals closer to the market to ensure that they get a fair price. Instead, herders can keep animals in a pasture farther away where the grasses are better, the animals are able to roam freer, and therefore grow up healthier, and still ensure that they receive the best price for those animals.

These networks of communication are so well established and helpful that some nations have formalized their use. For example, the mKisan program in India provides a variety of services for herders and farmers, including crop management, weather information, and market prices.[55] The program also provides instructional videos for herders and farmers as a way to expand their knowledge of rural issues. These video lectures overcome the difficulty of providing technical information for herders who may not have the literacy skills to read a long report, but who are engaged in the topic and will benefit from a detailed video. One mKisan user reported, "I can check the rates and show the same to the merchants/middlemen also. So, they are not able to deceive us anymore."[56] Examining the use of mKisan, analysts suggested moving beyond a fee-based system to provide information for free to rural communities. They also suggested combining SMS-based information with in-person meetings that would encourage community members to meet with experts. This education model mimics the radio-school model of educating herders discussed earlier in this chapter, and may serve as a method of empowering herders. This resolves a large environmental fear as for years herders were leaving distant pasture lands

54 China Daily, 2014
55 GSMA, 2015
56 GSMA, 2015, p. 10

to move closer to roads and market. The result was a semi-rural space in which the land was destroyed, herder profits fell, and more distant lands were underpopulated. By providing access to market information, ICTs have produced an affordance in which some herders are able to say in the countryside while still getting fair prices for their animals.

Once an animal has sold, herders have a number of different ways to receive payment quickly – many of them based, again, on their cell phone. For example, in East Africa one of the largest and most common ways for herders to receive money is called M-Pesa (M for mobile, *pesa* is Swahili for money). This is a mobile phone-based money transfer system which enables subscribers to transfer credits electronically using a cell phone number. Users of M-Pesa have bank accounts which are linked to their cell phone numbers. When making payments, they send a text message indicating how much money they would like to be sent and to what number it will be sent. M-Pesa can be used fully through a phone, meaning that a customer never has to visit a bank. Instead all of their payments, transactions, and withdrawals can be done through on a cell phone. A similar mobile money service has been established in Somaliland – ZAAD – by the mobile operator Telesom. ZAAD is modeled after M-Pesa, but is specially designed for Somalia where approximately 55% of all citizens are herders. Since its establishment, ZAAD has become the most common – and at times the only – way to pay electric bills, school fees, and make other large purchases in Somalia.[57]

Frequently when working in Kenya I would take my cell phone to the local market. There, miles away from a bank, ATM or other way to access hard currency, I was able to buy an assortment of snacks, cell phone parts, or safari equipment using M-Pesa. Using cash was still possible in this market, but no longer nearly as necessary and increasingly rare. The M-Pesa system is seen as safer than cash at a rural market. This safety is perceived not only because money is stored electronically, but also because it is password protected. This means that even if the cell phone is lost or stolen, the money is safe since it can be accessed only by its owner. In short, services such as M-Pesa have radically reduced the likelihood of rural consumers being robbed. Speaking of a similar service used in Myanmar, Wave Money, herders expressed the monetary security that it has brought them. As Keow, a trishaw driver in Myanmar, told Case for Change,

> I give half my wages to my mother, who hides it in her house. This makes me worry greatly as she is old and lives alone in an isolated place. [...] With

57 Pénicaud and McGrath, 2013

> Wave Money my mother no longer has to keep cash under her mattress and now I can manage my savings much better. Soon I will be able to afford for her to live somewhere safer.[58]

This monetary security radically changes the livelihoods of herders. The desire for this banking access and security is apparent in the increase used of banking systems by herding communities.

Around the world, more herding communities are turning to programs such as M-Pesa or online banking. The 2009 Digital Oman Strategy that has been used to establish a national e-payment gateway as well as various forms of e-governance and e-commerce. These services allow rural community members to engage in social services, banking, and governmental programs from distant locations. Similarly, in Finland and Norway, many Sámi herders have access to online banking. And in Mongolia, herders are able to buy cell phone credits to lend those credits and sometimes have monetized them even though that is not a formalized system that is being provided by the cell phone companies. All of these examples demonstrate how cell phones are providing a secure, consistent way for herders to receive payments, spend money, and protect their accounts. This brings herders into the market, while also allowing them to continue living their traditional lifestyles and travel shorter distances to sell their herds.

Individual herding communities are using cellular phones to sustain their livelihoods, access educational and medical services, and participate in economic systems. By obtaining market access, alongside establishing new communicative networks, herders and demanding that they be listened to, respected, and consulted. Through the production of image testimonies, they are informing local politics, bolstering local markets, and demonstrating the ways that we might engage in a more deliberate and ethical study of rural and mobile communities.

## Speaking for Others and Speaking for Ourselves

As Edward Said writes, the West views the Orient to be patriarchal, static, and in need of development assistance.[59] The expectation of patriarchy has been used to overlook the role of women in herding communities, and in the case of the Maasai to develop a system of patriarchy in a region that previously

58 Case for Change, n.d.

59 Said, 2004

had equilateral relations between men and women. Dorothy L. Hodgson, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and Professor of Anthropology at Brandeis University, depicts the ways that British colonial tax administrators presumed that it was Maasai men who controlled and owned livestock, and eventually produced legislation in which only the ownership of livestock by men was recognized. She argues that as a result of these policies, Maasai women suffered material disenfranchisement as well as a devaluation of their work, their role in society, and their future ability to participate in both public and technical sphere.[60] Today's development policies attempt to bring Maasai women to market places and increase their participation in economic decision-making. Yet, we can understand Maasai skepticism of those projects by remembering that today's development projects are designed and informed by the descendants of colonists who a century earlier destroyed traditional and at times equitable ownership patterns.

These gendered divisions are not as apparent in Mongolia, where citizens encounter a reverse gender gap. This means that more women enter higher education than men. While this diversity is not reflected in Mongolia's government structure (where there are far more men than women), this gap does not mean that women are uninterested in politics. Instead, it is more likely that well-educated women have turned to jobs in the private and development sectors where they earn higher wages and may have a deeper and more significant impact on society than if they ran for elected office.

The expectation that herders cannot speak for themselves persists, both among international organizations and local community members. When traveling with undergraduates through China, I was consistently frustrated in my attempts to have them speak with Mongolian herders. "Why do you need to do this?" our tour guides would often ask, implying and at times directly stating, that "herders don't know anything." Similarly, as I've met with frustrated development practitioners working in Africa and Central Asia complained of the difficulties that they faced, and the ways that communities rejected projects that were "good for them." There are a number of difficult equations that have led to these disagreements, ranging from perceptions of poverty, language differences, gendered norms, and historic mistrust. Anderson and Broche-Due's 1999 edited collection *The Poor Are Not Us* illustrates the many ways that Western metrics of poverty do not apply to pastoral communities. Similarly, when working in Mongolia I have been continually reminded that "the herders have all the wealth." One of my professors who was born and raised in Ulaanbaatar told me

60 Hodgson, 1999

many times that herders had little to complain about – they had animals after all, and the ability to move around the pastures, so their families were not at risk of starving. Her family, on the other hand, was separated from the countryside, and she was frequently concerned that they might not be able to purchase vegetables and grains that are brought in from international markets. In 2010 Monique Borgerhoff Mulder and her team studied this stability and intergenerational wealth and found that there was a high correlation between wealthy herder parents and wealthy herder offspring – meaning that material assets and training in animal husbandry are transferred between parents and children.[61] Although this team found that many herding communities experience wealth inequalities, each is supported by an ideal egalitarianism, which both regulates social networks and contributes to the ways that the community represents itself to the rest of the world. They found that intergenerational transmission of goods and training occurred across several herding communities in East Africa, West Africa, and Southwest Asia. Relatives who have settled in cities often benefit from this wealth as they rely on herder relations to provide access to meat. Such access to pastoral nomadic goods is a necessary provision in regions faced with harsh climatic conditions and subject to severe market fluctuations.

Yet, market-driven policy making, ranging from microloans to privatization of pastureland ownership, has been premised on the presumption of poverty within herding communities. This presumption at times resulted in misguided policies, and at other times insults those who would otherwise happily participate in a development scheme. In the next chapter we will explore the multiple ways development planners and conservationists have reimagined land use and tenure, and the ways that herding communities have participated in and rejected these projects.

All of the communities examined in this text have strong, proud histories. These histories are a source of community connectivity, but also at times complicate their attempts to establish networks with surrounding community members. For example, Maasai community members have worked to establish the Pastoralist Indigenous NGO Network, which aims to bring the many different pastoral, nomadic, and hunter-gatherer communities in Tanzania together. This seems like an excellent support network – and yet, they have had difficulty forming and maintaining stakeholder meetings due to their historical interactions with neighboring communities. Stakeholder meetings have at times fallen apart as different communities

61 Mulder et al., 2010

work to overcome histories of distrust based on cattle raids and local warfare. There is much to overcome in these conflicts – and yet the potential to do so is evident in the recent successes of herding and indigenous people's movements. In *Radical Hope*, Lear explores this dilemma between Crow and Sioux communities – which were historically opposed, and yet, have at times become united through attention to a new common enemy as well as commonalities in oppressions and stresses faced by their communities.[62] Similarly, Mongolians have worked to find ways to regain the history of Chinghis (Genghis) Khan, who raided the steppe generations ago but still is very present in histories of oppression throughout Central Asia. The resulting telling and retelling of these histories focuses on the ways that pastoral nomadic communities have been dehumanized, but also the ways that they have dehumanized their neighbors. In the contemporary retelling of these histories, what elements are maintained, and how are the resulting frames presented and acted upon? By emphasizing the complexity of herding communities, this book asks readers, academics, and policy makers to engage with pastoral nomadic communities as active speakers and citizens who are always, already, working to enter deliberations while also practicing pastoral nomadism.

Production of their own image testimony, and control of how information about them is disseminated online, is one way that herders are able to break out of their position as a trapped minority. In this chapter we have seen the many ways that herders are using ICTs to improve their livelihoods. Many of these technological adaptations are similar to those used by settled communities. Just like many herders, I do my banking online, I send pictures to my friends, and I check up on my mother. Yet, for herders, ICTs offer additional advantages. They encourage even the most distant communities to access national and international deliberations.

In the next chapters we will examine case studies of several herding communities and their use of ICTs. While these case studies focus on one specific use – be it to send poetry or to participate in a referendum – it is important to remember that these are indeed small cases. Members of herding communities are engaged in a broad range of online activities. These engagements are changing just as fast for herding communities as they are anywhere else. While it might be enticing to pull from these many different experiences to produce a new metaphor or way of understanding modernity, I urge the reader to just sit for a while with these case studies and appreciate these individual experiences for what they are. Then they should turn to the

62 Lear, 2006

concluding chapters, in which I think through the ways in which a cross-cutting comparison and analysis of herding communities can better inform the lives of herders and help international scholars to better understand the plethora of uses, experiments, and, at times, rejections of technologies herders engage with in the global development and spread of ICTs.

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# 3. Maasai Online Petitions

**Abstract**
In the East African nations of Kenya and Tanzania, the Maasai have used Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to build networks of international supporters and then use those new networks to put pressure on their national governments to change land policy. This chapter examines the ways that the Maasai joined with Avaaz, an online activist network that provides organizing tools, to raise awareness of the Maasai's problems and gather 2.25 million signatures opposing the eviction of Maasai herders from their traditional lands. Through examination of the Avaaz petition, this chapter finds that Maasai communities have formed an international network that successfully pressured the Tanzanian government to revise its policy of evictions in the name of tourism and conservation.

**Keywords:** Maasai, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), pastoralism, Avaaz, petition, slacktivism, land rights

Since 2012, the Avaaz online petition to "Stand with the Maasai" has collected 2.3 million unique signatures. This petition, addressed to Tanzanian president Jakaya Kikwete, opposes "any attempt to evict the Maasai from their traditional land or require them to relocate to make way for foreign hunters."[1] While the petition focuses on a specific attempt in 2012 to lease traditional grazing lands to an international tour company, it was prompted by a long history of evicting Maasai herders from their traditional pastures. Avaaz, an online an online activist network that provides organizing tools, drew from both social media platforms and mainstream reporting to garner international attention and obtain signatories which put pressure on the Tanzanian president and parliament.

The Tanzanian government's reaction to this petition provides a rich body of literature for this chapter's analysis. Among the types of speech

1 Avaaz, 2012

Hahn, A.H., *Media Culture in Nomadic Communities*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021. DOI 10.5117/9789463723022_CH03

that are studied in this chapter are the tweets sent by Tanzanian MP January Makamba, who first denied that evictions were occurring and then denied that any future evictions were planned. While Avaaz provided textual evidence of evictions, the Tanzanian government countered with short arguments through Twitter. The resulting argument highlights the ability of the Avaaz petition to generate a governmental reaction, but also the difficulties one faces when attempting to authenticate claims or hold extended deliberation through online petition platforms and Twitter.

In this chapter I investigate the use of online petitions by local and international communities as tools of social and policy change. I am particularly interested in the ways that image testimony is used to characterize arguments and evidence presented in this exchange by the multiple stakeholders of this conflict, including Maasai communities, the Tanzanian government, two international tour companies (Thomson Safaris, and OBC [Ortello Business Corporation]), Avaaz, and international signatories of the petition resources. Data for this analysis has been collected from texts archived by Avaaz, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media platforms aiming at a better understanding of how outside observers and potential supporters evaluate and authenticate the competing claims between Maasai communities and the Tanzanian government. Focusing on the Maasai's experience with Avaaz opens a window to understanding how academics utilize new and social media to understand the changing relationships between indigenous communities, national governments, and international organizations.

## Protesting as, with, or on Behalf of Herders

A rich body of academic literature investigates the ways that activist and advocacy groups influence and affect public policy. With the emergence of new media technologies, scholars have turned their attention to the ways that protest events such as the Tunisian Revolution and the Arab Spring have garnered international attention via new media. Much of this work has assessed the participation of "digital elites," such as Tunisians who circumvented national media blackouts to produce a cycle of protest that pressed for both political changes and emotional mobilization among viewers and participants.[2] However, when considering less developed, elite, or privileged communities, academics have frequently turned to study

2 Breuer, Landman, and Farquhar, 2014

compassion fatigue as addressed by international organizations such as Amnesty International[3] and UNICEF.[4] While these studies are instrumental in our understanding of calling attention to emergent crises, they do not offer a framework to assess what happens after attention has been gained and stakeholders began to participate in deliberation. Additionally, scholars question the real-world effects of pressing "send" on an online petition. For example, Stephen Hapgood's analysis suggests that rather than activism, online petitioners are participating in a low-cost alternative, "slacktivisim."[5] Slacktivism is often used in a pejorative way, referencing the ways that social media posters use hashtags or cross-postings about social events to feel better about themselves, but not necessarily help others. Critics of this kind of engagement stress that slacktivisim posts don't really help anyone, and are often so self-referential that they do not have the ability to engage a broader public. However, this concept has been challenged by scholars such as Henrick Christensen, who asked if the posts by slacktivists also influenced their real-life political decisions, and if Internet activism is a substitute for, or addition to, in-person activism. Christensen argues that more time is needed to determine if this is a true trade-off, but cautions that online and in-person activism are not mutually exclusive; it is possible that the one individual could participate in both online and offline petitioning or other forms of activism. He also concludes that, at a minimum, slacktivists are making members of their communicative networks aware of conflicts and struggles. That awareness is a small, but very necessary, step toward resolving struggles.[6]

The evidence presented in this chapter is in line with this criticism of the term "slacktivism." In the example of an Avaaz petition presented below, we find that some online petitions do prompt immediate and direct responses. The potential of these petitions, both as attention-getting mechanisms and as tools to garner responses, are particularly pungent among oppositional or subaltern communities that can utilize Internet tools to bypass mass media and gatekeeping functions which previously prevented protests.[7] A wide range of organizations use these online platforms and tools to gather support and influence. This chapter focuses only on Tanzania, in the Greater Horn of Africa, investigating the 2012 Avaaz petition that attempted to

3 Vestergaard, 2008
4 Hatfield, Hinck, and Birkholt, 2007
5 Hopgood, 2013, p. 106
6 Christensen, 2011
7 Earl and Kimport, 2009, p. 226

engage Maasai communities, the Tanzanian government, and international corporations concerning land policy in northern Tanzania.

## Technology in Northern Tanzania

In northern Tanzania, Maasai community members have an increasing level of access to Internet, social media, and digital tools provided through improved cellular networks, secondhand technologies, and digital infrastructures designed to support the region's tourism sector. In addition to, or perhaps beyond joining with Avaaz to create international petitions, Maasai communities are holding their own protests that have been recorded and distributed through YouTube videos.[8] Additionally, Maasai-run and -controlled NGOs, such as the Maasai Women Development Organization (MWEDO) and the PINGOs (Pastoralist Indigenous NGOs) Forum, are utilizing weblogs to facilitate international research and support. In each of these examples, Maasai communities are capitalizing on new technologies while maintaining traditional pastoral nomadic lifestyles. This increase in technological access has drawn communities such as the Maasai into new online communicative networks, calling into question the relationship between community settlement and technological access which was addressed in Chapter 2.

Yet, the interpretation of the availability and use of these tools has a storied past. In 1970 the USAID Maasai Livestock Development and Range Management Project encouraged the use of new technologies and machineries to improve the herding conditions of Tanzanian Maasai. While the program heavily encouraged the use of new technologies, it also suggested that the Maasai would be slow to use or possibly understand these tools. Gardner, who references Parkipuny's analysis of the program, argues that any failings of the program were framed as a failure of the Maasai to properly understand technology when, really, the technologies which the USAID was pushing were ill adapted to the Maasai's needs. This historic example runs alongside a more contemporary example of communication scholars who have attempted to better Maasai herders while not fully understand their evolving relationship to ICTs.

Digital tools, according to authors such as Fraser et al., will assist a community which they claim is "transitioning from a nomadic patriarchal polygamous society to one that is more democratic, non-nomadic, and

8 Hahn, 2016; Insightshare, 2015; NCA Residents, 2012

formally educated."[9] The problem with this statement is that it unnecessarily links techological use and settlement. While a technological transition is indeed occurring among pastoral nomadic communities, I contend that the government's expectation of settlement, referenced by Fraser et al., is not a necessary precondition of technological use. It is possible, and indeed evident in this book, that pastoral nomadic communities such as the Maasai can utilize mobile sources of energy to power mobile technologies. In this way, they are combining technological advances with traditional pastoral nomadic patterns and livelihoods.

Tanzania's ICT infrastructure expanded quickly in the early 2000s. By 2005 more than 97% of Tanzanians had access to a cellular phone, radically changing networks of communication and power throughout the country and the East African region.[10] These transnational cellular networks, coupled with access to electric generators or solar technology, allow Maasai community members to call, text, and email from their pastures. When conducting interviews in Narok, Kenya, and Arusha, Tanzania, I was told that these technological developments have allowed more Maasai voices, often unauthorized by either the state or community elders, to emerge in public spheres. The resulting new communicative networks represent radical changes in information distribution and political participation.

The Avaaz petition that I examine in this chapter is one such example of how Maasai men and women are using social media to directly speak and deliberate about development in their community. While Fraser et al. are correct that democracy, settlement, and education are among the topics of Maasai deliberation, the evidence analyzed in this chapter indicates that Maasai community members have not adopted a singular policy directive. Instead, multiple opinions, statements, and arguments are at play among a community led by committees of elders rather than elected officials. Examination of these protests and communication networks reveal the ways that pastoral nomadic communities are negotiating the space between tradition and modernity. In this negotiation, they are producing a complex body of texts and productions that are influencing local, national, and international deliberations.

These networks have radically altered the ways Maasai issues are addressed and require new deliberations regarding communality authenticity, experience, and leadership. The new deliberative spaces are informative for the community as well as academics analyzing emergent discourse

9 Fraser et al., 2012, p. 20

10 Owiny, Mehta, and Maretzki, 2014

and protests among rural and pastoral nomadic communities. In what follows, I explore the ways that stakeholders, ranging from the Maasai to the national government to tour companies, are framing land conflicts in northern Tanzania. Then, I analyze the 2012 conflict surrounding the sale or lease of Maasai herding lands to an international corporation, OBC. The resulting analysis indicates that the Maasai's participation in national and international deliberations sheds new light on the development and change of networks of communication and power, affording new potentials for both communicative study and movement success.

## Maasai Land and Conflict

The government of Tanzania, like historic East African colonial governments before it, expects that pastoral nomadic communities such as the Maasai want, and soon will, give up their traditional lifestyles and move into settled dwellings. Historic attempts at this settlement and abandonment of herders is found in documents from the colony of Tanganyika, controlled by German East Africa (1885-1919) and then the United Kingdom (1920-1960).[11] The land sale/lease would ban Maasai communities from herding on these traditionally held lands. This loss of land is important for any community, but especially for the Maasai, who are already herding on small spaces, having lost land during both the colonial and independent periods of Tanzania's history. During the 26 years between 1890 and 1916, the Maasai were evicted from 60% of their land to make way for European ranches.[12] Then, the establishment of the Serengeti in 1951 created the next wave of eviction when almost 10,000 Maasai were removed from their ancestral lands. One common method to remove additional lands from the Maasai was through allegations of trespassing as the Maasai had to cross private lands (which had once belonged to the Maasai) to access their own lands. These trespass allegations point to the problems caused as the Maasai were forced into smaller spaces. "Maasailand" was once a continuous space which was used in common with other hunter-gatherer and pastoral nomadic communities. During the colonial period this continuous space was fragmented many times. These divisions disrupted Maasai networks of trade, travel, herding, and communication. Many herders were forced to stay within specific areas,

11 Hughes, 2006

12 Brantlinger, 2003; Hodgson, 2011; Hughes, 2006

which functioned similar to the reserves onto which Native Americans were forced. At this time, herders could continue their traditional lifestyles, including keeping of herds, so long as they stayed within reservation lands. Then, in the 1960s many of these reserve lands became conservation reserves, which forbade herder activity. One of the largest divisions of land occurred when the Serengeti National Park opened in 1960, on land that was previously inhabited by the Maasai. At that time, the Maasai were moved to the neighboring Ngorongoro Conservation Area, which is one of the sites of conflict addressed in this chapter.

By the time that Tanzania became an independent nation, the Maasai were living on small parcels of land, often alongside of the now-national parklands that they previously called home. As a socialist nation in which all land is owned by the government, Tanzania's top-down land policies are not unique. However, the attention to, and treatment of, pastoral nomadic communities is strikingly dissimilar to the treatment of settled communities. For example, during the British colonial period, some Maasai land claims were omitted from maps by government officials who did not think that the Maasai needed so much land, or who believed that the Maasai did not own the lands which they were claiming. These omissions have resulted in on going debates about land and resource access. Errant maps have also caused significant harms to the Maasai and other mobile groups because they frequently need to prove that they have lost lands to access public offices and social services.[13] Some politicians and activists also argue that omitting Maasai land claims from archives has resulted in silences and gaps in the literature where the absence of Maasai perspectives makes it easier for the government to erase the community from national policy, planning, and memory.[14]

The expectation of disappearance is also expressed through settlement policies, frequently encouraged and organized by Tanzanian government officials. For example, President Jakaya Kikwete stated in his 2005 inaugural address: "Mr. Speaker, we must abandon altogether nomadic pastoralism which makes the whole country pastureland. […] The cattle are bony and the pastoralists are sacks of skeletons. We cannot move forward with this type of pastoralism in the twenty-first century."[15] Later in the same speech, Kikwete stated, "national unity is the unity among citizens, who like to consider themselves Tanzanians first, before identifying themselves by tribe, race,

13 Amin, Eames, and Willetts, 1987; Hodgson, 2011; Hughes, 2006
14 Brantlinger, 2003
15 Quoted in Bellini, 2008

religion, gender or region of origin."[16] Maasai activists have pointed to these two statements, that pastoralism will end and that all Tanzanians should consider Tanzanian nationalism before their group identity, as evidence of the pressures faced by the Maasai. Navaya ole Ndaskoi, a member of the PINGOs (Pastoralists Indigenous NGOs) Forum, has collected this and other similar statements by Kikwete's government to demonstrate an intentional governmental plan to develop the expectation of eviction, settlement, and modernization of pastoralists in Tanzania.[17]

The modernization of the Maasai is often presented through a criticism of the Maasai "traditional way of life" which, it is argued, places barriers on the political and cultural participation of community members. Since the late 1970s, community elders, such as M.L. ole Parkipuny, have argued that the Tanzanian government and parks administration is attempting to force the Maasai to choose between modernization and community traditions.[18] While Parkipuny's 1979 argument discusses schools and farming, his argument is extendable to contemporary clashes where the Maasai are framed as either traditional and therefore not participating in online deliberations, or as developed, and therefore lacking the ethos to speak about pastoral issues. The binary between tradition and technology is disrupted by examples such as the Avaaz petition that demonstrate the dual desire of Maasai communities to continue traditional herding practices while participating in online political and protest activities.

## Online Maasai Protests

The 2012 Avaaz petition opposed the long-term lease of land around the Ngorongoro and Serengeti Conservation areas in the Loliondo region. This was not the only online petition regarding Maasai land rights which was circulating the Internet at that time. Another petition, distributed through Weebly and Facebook, also called for rejection of land grabbing by tour companies.[19] The land leases requested by the Emirati hunting company Ortello Business Corporation (OBC) and the American tour company Thomson Safaris. prompted these protests. Once leased, the land would be developed to include hunting lodges, tourists' complexes, and hunting grounds. Maasai

16 Kikwete, 2005
17 Ndaskoi, 2006
18 Parkipuny, 1979
19 Gardner, 2016

communities opposed these leases since they would encroach on their traditional herding and agricultural practices in the region. This opposition occurred in person, on land, and online. Many of these protests had historic links, drawn together by the work of scholars such as Lottee Hughes who has chronicled the ways that herders have struggled to maintain access to this region in the face of colonial policy makers and the contemporary tourism industry. The Avaaz protest letter contextualized these historic losses, and then asked President Jakaya Kikwete to protect the Maasai's remaining lands. The letter concluded:

> As citizens from around the world, we call on you to oppose any attempt to evict Maasai from their traditional land or require them to relocate to make way for foreign hunters. We are counting on you to be a champion for your people and stop any attempt to change their land rights against their will.[20]

Reporters and bloggers gave support sharing the link to Avaaz's petition, often with an expanded explanation of the risk posed to Maasai communities. These explanations, usually citing email exchanges with Avaaz, highlighted both the experience of past evictions and the efficacy of international protest. For example, Arwa Aburawa, a journalist working for *Al Jazeera*, reviewed the injustices that the Maasai had recently faced, including beating from the police, burning of their homes, the loss of lands for the creation of tourist projects, and the starvation of their herds. However, Aburawa was confident that based on past experience, social media activism could prevent the Maasai from experiencing future suffering. He reported his conversations with Avaaz, which told him: "We can change that and force Kikwete to stop the deal if we join our voices now."[21]

In this statement, Avaaz outlines its plan to create a press controversy that will force the Tanzanian government to change its domestic policies. Tanzanian officials have worried about this type of international activism since independence in 1961 when Tanzania crafted policies that would differentiate their government from British colonial models. The fear of protest and separatism, expressed soon after Tanzania's independence, was that by focusing Tanzania's economy on tourism, Tanzanian policy makers would become beholden to international pressures.[22] For example, they

20 Avaaz, 2012
21 Aburawa, 2012
22 Mahiga, 1973

might alter domestic policy to ensure more money is coming from tourism. This risk can be explained as a boomerang effect, where underrepresented or abused Tanzanians, such as the Maasai, might utilize old colonial networks to form new methods of protesting. Indeed, Avaaz produced this type of pressure by facilitating Maasai community outreach to old colonial and new tourism networks – in this case using online English-language networks to reach supporters, collect signatures, send tweets, and generate direct letters. Each method and network tactic was designed to put more pressure on the Tanzanian government. In many ways, the work of Avaaz is similar to other petitioning organizations, such as Amnesty International. That organization was formed in 1961 by Peter Benenson and quickly expanded across the world. By 1977 there were 1974 groups in 33 countries all working on campaigns to have amnesty granted to prisoners of conscious, as well as working against torture and human rights violations. The organization won a Nobel Prize for its work in 1977.[23] Amnesty International meetings are still held, and many students encounter them through either a march or a letter-writing campaign. In many ways, the letter-writing campaigns of Avaaz are similar to those of Amnesty – they just occur through an online platform. Scholars do debate if the engagement of signatories in both Amnesty and Avaaz protests is sufficient to result in meaningful change. These debates are answered in part by the ways that the Avaaz petition letter was responded to in 2012.

The speed of these online petitions created a remarkable threat to the Tanzanian government that required a quick response. Tanzania's tourism-based economy, centered on the Serengeti nature reserves, is always already in competition with Kenya's Maasai Mara, which features a similar landscape and animal population. There is always a risk that tourists will choose to visit Kenya rather than Tanzania, a decision that could be influenced by new and social media activities such as the Avaaz petition. The speed and effectiveness of the online petition is demonstrated in Avaaz's 2012 narration of the campaign, which included the posting:

> Wow! More than 400,000 of us have signed in 24 hours! And President Kikwete's inner circle is starting to react – a few hours ago, the President's close confidante, Mr. January Makamba MP, tweeted saying he would send our voices to the President himself. Keep up the pressure by signing now and forwarding to others.[24]

23 Abrams, 1997
24 Avaaz, 2012

Makamba first responded to petitioners via Twitter stating, "To all who've sent me tweets on #Maasai issue in #Loliondo: I've heard you. I'll look at the facts & take up the matter with the President."[25] Three days later, Makamba tweeted again, this time indicating that there was no conflict in Loliondo: "Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism refutes claims of eviction of 48,000 Maasai from the Serengeti."[26] At this time, one of the companies accused by Avaaz of purchasing the land, OBC, responded and entered the debate. OBC claimed that it had no intention to purchase land in northern Tanzania, because foreigners are not allowed to purchase land in Tanzania. This is technically true; foreigners cannot purchase Tanzanian land. However, foreigners can lease land for 99 years, which is what OBC was attempting to do. In his response to Avaaz, OBC's country director, Isaac Mollel, indicated that its lease was legal. He then addressed the "realness" of the protests by arguing:

> Honestly, there's no conflict whatsoever at Loliondo area, save for the social media. [...] We have been the development partner with the Loliondo villagers since our inception. Apart from these baseless campaigns, we haven't encountered any problem with the real people in our area of operations.[27]

In this statement, OBC claims that there is no conflict, locals are not upset, and the only problems are caused by nonlocals and social media. These statements directly contradict those collected by David Smith, a reporter for *The Guardian*, who spoke with Maasai community members about the land leases in Loliondo. In one interview, Samwel Nangiria stated, "[The] government is telling us to compromise but people say they have given up enough. Giving up the Serengeti national park was a lifelong compromise to them. They will not be pushed again."[28] Other interviews in the same report emphasized the importance of land to the Maasai. They also made comparisons between the Maasai communities and the hunters who were arriving as tourists. According to the Maasai herders who were interviewed by *The Guardian*, the tourist-hunters did not have positive morals or ethics and would not guarantee the same level of ecological protection as the Maasai.[29]

25 Makamba, 2012b
26 Makamba, 2012a
27 IPP Media, 2012
28 Smith, 2012
29 Smith, 2012

These quotes indicate the emergent, fierce clash between herders and the Tanzanian government. This online deliberation also demonstrates the many ways that herders have to communicate grievances beyond government channels. While international media is reporting on the perspectives of herders, national Tanzanian reports, such as that written by Sef Slootweg in the National Land Use Commission indicate that in the near future a "policy that would protect the pastoralist lifestyle for the whole district is impossible."[30] While the report encourages more money from tourism to stay in the district, it also requires that many Maasai give up both their herding practices and stop encouraging the use of new technologies in the Ngorongoro district. These policy proposals, predictions, and ongoing conflicts between herders, tour operators, and government officials have been recorded by international commissions such as the EU and UN as well as USAID.[31]

This clash between government, tourism, industry, and Maasai speakers is a fascinating location to study the potentials and limitations of international activism through organizations such as Avaaz. In this case study, each stakeholder is attempting to authenticate its claims to an international audience that for the most part is reliant on image testimony consisting of textual, verbal, and visual evidence made available via the Internet. While international participants may have visited the region in the past, most audience members are not able to revisit Loliondo to authenticate the claims made in a petition. Therefore, each petition must make clear what problems are occurring, as well as find a way to verify the validity of each stakeholder's claims. These Maasai protests provide a way to study how online tools are used to construct visual testimony that proves the "realness" of the situation in northern Tanzania.

## Authenticating Social Media Claims

The clash of "realness" is evident when OBC claims that there is no conflict, only fabricated statements on social media. While OBC was posting that the conflict was not real, the Tanzanian government was using the same social media platforms to respond to the conflict. Rereading these posts years after they were written provides a critical window to see how stakeholders scrambled to respond quickly in this debate. Contradictions, such as the claim by

30 Slootweg, 2016, p. 10

31 Action Aid, 2015; Boudreaux, 2012

OBC that conflict only occurred on social media, were in part refuted by the Tanzanian government's tweets that appear to be responding to real conflicts. It is, therefore, interesting that many of the responses from the Tanzanian government were made via the same social media platforms. For example, Avaaz celebrated Makamba's August 2012 tweets which indicated that he would take up the matter with the president. However, by April 8, 2013, Makamba was advancing the government's line of argument by tweeting, "The people who are advocating for Maasai land are not doing justice to this good cause with hyperboles like 'the end of Maasai.'"[32] This response is interesting because it points to the "good cause" and criticizes protester's use of hyperbole. Yet, recall that earlier in this chapter a similar argument was made (and that time not labeled as hyperbole) by the prime minister when he said, "We cannot move forward with this type of pastoralism in the twenty-first century." In Makamba's statement we see that he does not directly attack the Maasai or Avaaz, but he does refute the protest attempts of "people advocating for the Maasai" and does not clarify how what he calls hyperbole differs from the PM's policy.

Given the long time frame in which this conflict has occurred, there are many pieces of competing evidence, as well as multiple social media platforms, at play in these exchanges. How can any of the many stakeholders evaluate the competing claims between OBC, the Tanzanian government, and the Maasai? The Tanzanian government and OBC assert that social media has been used to overstate or fabricate social unrest. Yet, Maasai communities and supporting NGOs are utilizing the same social media platforms to distribute image testimony aiming to gain international attention and support.

The realness of eviction has centered on visual and verbal proof, such as images of burning Maasai homes and verbal claims authenticating Maasai protesters as legal residents of particular districts. OBC, via Mollel's statements, attempts to make a differentiation between real and social media conflict. He does not contest that somewhere the Maasai are being evicted. Rather, he claims that there is no evidence of conflict or evictions of "real people in our area." It is unclear how Mollel has made this differentiation between real and social media conflict. His determination of realness is made even more difficult as during this conflict the Maasai seldom framed their arguments as legitimate because they are indigenous to the land. Instead, as Gardner argues, "they expressed their claims as rights-bearing villages and villagers, as state-sanctioned local authorities within a specific

32 Makamba, 2013

jurisdiction."[33] In this exchange, Mollel acts as if the Maasai are shifting between different identity constructions, or using unstable markers of authenticity. However, as Gardner illustrates, the Maasai worked to provide arguments from a standpoint – that of rights-bearing villagers. This standpoint was carefully selected and promoted as it fit into the international understanding of who could make land claims and participate in local land policy.

Avaaz does not engage in this discussion of authenticity. Rather, the organization supports its position with images of Maasai community members in traditional clothing walking through a field or standing with cattle. In these images, the "realness" of the Maasai protests is presented through visual texts accompanied by short quotations. These images evoke pathos and perhaps a connection between the petition signatories and the Maasai community. However, they do not address this question of "realness" or proximity between Maasai communities and OBC lands. Avaaz proclaims that the 2012-2013 petition was a "Maasai victory,"[34] but this proclamation tells us little about the actual argumentative exchange or even how victory was declared.

The Avaaz petition succeeds not through direct argumentative exchange regarding the "realness" of protesters, but through collecting millions of signatures and gaining attention from international media such as *CNN* and *Al Jazeera*.[35] Put another way, the Avaaz petition contributed to a body of arguments which overwhelmed and forced responses from members of the Tanzanian government as well as OBC. This strategy was effective in preventing evictions in 2012, but land conflicts have continued in the region. In the last section of this chapter I will examine the ways that the 2012 Avaaz petition, which the organization labels as a "success story," points to future complications and successes of online petitions and social media protests.

## Continuing Protests

Despite the apparent success of Avaaz's 2012 petition, by 2014 there were again reports that the Maasai in northern Tanzania were being evicted. Avaaz launched a new petition about these continuing struggles, garnering 2.3 million signatures and prompting a response from President Jakaya Kikwete who announced, via Twitter, "There has never been, nor will there

33 Gardner, 2016, p. 15
34 Avaaz, 2014
35 Kanduli, 2013

ever be any plan by the Government of #Tanzania to evict the #Maasai people from their ancestral land."[36] Avaaz campaign director Sam Barratt responded to Kikwete's tweet, writing that "[t]his is a massive breakthrough. […] [F]or the first time in 20 years, a Tanzanian president has definitively said the Maasai are safe on their land. Over two million people around the world have stood arm in arm with the Maasai to keep foreign hunters at bay."[37]

Yet, Barratt's statement may have been overly enthusiastic. Gaining this promise is a significant step toward Maasai rights. However, the first part of Kikwete's text ("there has never been […] a plan to evict the Maasai"[38]) is negated by contemporary reports of Maasai community evictions. Skepticism regarding Kikwete's denial of any past attempts at eviction is so strong that in 2015 the European Parliament passed the Resolution on Tanzania, Notably the Issue of Land Grabbing. This resolution includes the text:

> [P]astoralists, including the Maasai people, continue to face a massive loss of their land due to the selling out of land without adequate knowledge about the legal and practical consequences, corrupt and illegal allocation of land to foreigners, and the classification of land as trust land, reserve and national park by the authorities.[39]

The resolution continues by outlining the ways that herding communities such as the Maasai have been abused and encountered violence, including "killing, displacement, detention, the destruction of their villages, and the confiscation of livestock related to land grabbing operations."[40] The documentation of Maasai hardships by the European Union is a significant success for the Maasai. Activists have frequently been unable to get local government officials to admit to or address these hardships. Yet, by gaining international attention, the Maasai are able to document their hardships, and work with the European Union to put pressure on local government officials to address these problems.

Later, in 2018, the East African Court of Justice sided with the Maasai, finding that evictions which occurred in 2017 were violent, government-led, and were part of an ongoing practice of harassment and arrest.[41] As a result

36 Kikwete, 2014

37 AFP, 2014

38 Brockington and Igoe, 2006; Hicks, 2012; Mittal and Fraser, 2018; Shivij, 1994; Steyn, 2012

39 European Parliament, 2015

40 European Parliament, 2015

41 Ololosokwan Village Council, Oloirien Village Council, Kirtalo Village Council, and Arash Village Council vs. The Attorney General of the United Republic of Tanzania, 2017

of the court ruling, the Tanzanian government was prohibited from making future evictions of the Maasai. Similarly, a 2018 report from the Oakland Institute found that the Tanzanian government along with Thomson Safaris and OBC had made it impossible for herds to access water or land.[42] Additionally, international organizations have continued to pass resolutions cautioning the government of Tanzania that sanctions will be applied if evictions do not end. Maasai communities are increasingly turning to social and new media tools to distribute image testimony designed for audience members in both the Tanzanian government and supporters living abroad. In one such response, a YouTube video tiled *Olosho* created in early 2015, Maasai protesters respond to Kikwete's tweet, "writing on machines is not enough, it must be a visible, binding document. That is a legacy you will be remembered for, you will receive our blessings instead of leaving the Maasai children crying. Our fingers helped put you in power, don't use that power to oppress us."[43]

New and social media responses by Maasai communities are under constant revision, responding to both contemporary struggles and the (at times flawed) expectations of international supporters. Videos distributed via YouTube, such as *Olosho*, are strategically constructed to overcome international expectations about the Maasai. For example, *Olosho* features both male and female speakers. It includes statements that overcome expectations of patriarchy, and utilizes images to transcend education and linguistic barriers, and spell out the cultural differences and collective identity of Maasai groups. In this way, Maasai communities are responding to the multiple expectations that women are disempowered as expressed in Fraser et al., or that protesters are not speaking for the "real" community as alleged by Mollel. This expectation of realness is frustrating as it is frequently adjudicated by outside individuals, who do not have much basis for determining who is "real" and who is imposing themselves onto a mobile or herding community. It is still true that some Maasai women are disempowered, and it is not impossible that people from beyond Loliondo are participating in these protests. However, petitions and videos are enriching and expanding the communicative networks and evidence presented to support the standpoints of communities such as the Maasai in East Africa. Even if it is true that not all Maasai are able to participate in these deliberations, that is not a reason to ignore the participation which is evident through the image testimonies addressed here.

42 Mittal and Fraser, 2018

43 Insightshare, 2015, min: 12:30-12:59

The methods used by the Maasai continue to evolve, as does each person and the community's use of social media. Yet, the connection with Avaaz is a special one, which has persisted through many different moments of crisis. As I write this chapter, the COVID-19 virus is spreading through East Africa. A new Maasai-focused petition has been launched on Avaaz. Now, the Maasai in Nashulai are asking for assistance in maintaining their community-run conservation projects during this time of global economic slowdown. They are concerned that the lack of travel and tourism will radically affect their community's income, employment, and access to food. Avaaz and other platforms like it have already helped the Maasai to reach international audiences. This newest plea, for donations and funding, is perhaps proof of success in a new way. While prior international participation might have been categorized as "slacktivism" by the most cynical of analysts, participation in this new campaign, which asks for funding, is not. Within two weeks of being open (from March 31, 2020, to April 14, 2020) 120,000 people had made a donation using the Avaaz platform. It is not clear if these individuals were also participants in Avaaz's earlier calls to action in support of the Maasai. However, it is clear that campaigns such as those supported by Avaaz can generate awareness as well as result in tangible donations.

I began this chapter by asking how the Maasai have used new and social media to advocate for their community. Examination of their protest tactics, successes, setbacks, and experiments illuminates the many difficulties that the community faces. Often, they must contend with a double-bind of both proving that they are "Maasai enough" to make authentic arguments while also proving that they are technologically savvy enough to be making those arguments using new technologies. The expectation of poverty, poor education, and lack of access to new technologies runs deep in academic texts and government documents. As this chapter has shown, it is at times difficult for international researchers to know how real a threat or production is. It is also difficult for members of communities such as the Maasai to know which organizations they can or should partner with. Yet, in examining these historic and current protests, we find the ways that Maasai community members create image testimony to promote and authenticate their claims for domestic and international audiences. They are using digital tools to produce a complex body of arguments and protest methodologies, each aiming to authenticate the claim that evictions are or are not occurring. These documents continue to advance debates, provide evidence for court cases, and allow international and local audiences to better understand the Maasai community's perspective on the future.

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# 4. Inner Mongolian Online Identity

**Abstract**
In the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (IMAR) of China, herders and settled youth from herding communities are utilizing online message boards to build new communities, network across international borders, and negotiate what it means to be from a herding community in modern-day China. This chapter examines the ways that local and international supporters recorded and debated about a 2012 road protest during which a herder was run over and dragged to his death by a mining truck. Focusing on the use of ICTs by rural citizens, this chapter finds that herders were able to publish their own narratives in real time, often challenging narratives presented by the state. Additionally, through these narratives, youth in IMAR identified with and expressed a herding tradition and identity, even while living largely settled lives.

**Keywords:** Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (IMAR), China, road block, Renren, settlement

In the summer of 2009 I was guiding a group of undergraduate researchers on their way to Mongolia via Beijing. We had a week scheduled to tour Inner Mongolia, and the students were growing restless. They wanted to see camels and yet, due to a drought, there were no animals in sight. We were traveling with two academic liaisons – one from the Inner Mongolian University (Hohhot, China) and one from the National University of Mongolia (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia). They called everyone in the valley that they knew, and those contacts called other contacts. Within a few moments we had located herders who had camels and were willing to welcome a group of international students. My immediate reaction was relief – the students at long last stopped fretting. But as I reflected on the event later, I was impressed by the operation's success. We had contacted an assortment of herders, some more than 100 km away, quickly inquired about their herd size, health, location and negotiated a visit, including a cash payment for the hosts.

Hahn, A.H., *Media Culture in Nomadic Communities*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021. DOI 10.5117/9789463723022_CH04

We were able to find camels so quickly because of the Chinese ICT development, which took off in the 1990s and quickly grew into an expansive system. The country is heavily invested in expanding its broadcasting and telecommunication infrastructure, which includes providing access in even the most rural communities. Visitors to Shanghai or Beijing are quickly inundated with many screens – providing access to a plethora of international social media platforms as well as China-specific platforms, such as Renren, QQ, Tencent Webo, Webchat, and Sina Weibo. In the countryside, such as Inner Mongolia, herders are using their increased access to Wi-Fi and satellite signals for a plethora of activities. For example, Ganzhaorog, a herder of sheep, cattle, horses and camels, has installed surveillance cameras to keep track of his herds as they move across the steppe. With help from a government subsidy program, he is able to monitor their movements using an app from his home.[1] This surveillance system shows the ways that herders and government officials might utilize ICT networks harmoniously. Herders are also using social media tools such as WeChat to sell animals, find the most current market prices, and organize transportation.[2] However, these technologies have also been used to record and publicize conflicts over land access, cultural change, and mineral extraction across the region.

China is quickly developing its transportation and mining infrastructure in rural regions, such as the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (IMAR). Tensions surrounding IMAR roads came to a head in the spring of 2011 when the death of an ethnically Mongolian herder was captured and shared through social media, calling forth deliberation concerning the definition, regulation, and protest of roads in Inner Mongolia. These conflicts were not new – but they do point to an increase in tensions in the region, and the way in which protests quickly spread across ICT networks between urban and rural communities. These tensions also point to the ways in which once rural, hard-to-reach communities are utilizing new media to record, proliferate, and legitimize their protests.

The social media platforms that were used in 2011, and continue to be used today, demonstrate one way in which the Inner Mongolian steppe has become connected to larger communication networks with or without roads. Due to infrastructure investments, close proximity to neighboring (independent) Mongolia, and a proclivity for renewable energy sources, cellular phone use has expanded throughout IMAR.

1 Xinhua, 2017

2 BBC, 2014

When Inner Mongolians use their cellular phones, they have a number of different languages and linguistic input systems to choose from. They might text using simplified Chinese characters, Mongolian traditional script, Mongolian Cyrillic, Pinyin, or a Romanized version of Mongolian. They might also turn to using emojis, stickers, or the voice-to-text option available on many texting platforms. This diversity of linguistic tools is important to our study of technological use as it provides multiple modes of access for some IMAR residents. For example, those who have learned the traditional Mongolian script have access to a different set of tools than those who are primarily fluent in Mandarin characters. While China does sponsor Mongolian language schools, and local signs are provided in the Mongolian script, some families prefer to send their students to Chinese-language schools so as to give them a better academic and economic future in a nation that predominantly uses Mandarin. As such, this input method is a unique affordance, which encourages users who are not proficient in Chinese characters to effectively participate in online deliberations. The New York City-based Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC) argues that this ability to read traditional Mongolian is critical because it allows Boljoo, a chat platform that uses the traditional Mongolian script, to transcend China's boarders, reaching Mongols in Mongolia, Russia, and the Mongolian diaspora.[3]

Some of these devices are used to access social media platforms that support industry and trade. For example, the *China Daily* reports that herders are able to use WeChat to send and receive prices for cattle.[4] However, the government also actively uses social media platforms as a form of surveillance, recording interactions by potential protesters and gathering evidence against dissidents. For example, the WeChat accounts of activists have been discontinued in what *Radio Free Asia* reports was an attempt to stop them from "spreading evil rumors."[5] While it is clear to industry professionals and visitors that the ICT infrastructure is quickly expanding in China, data is at times hard to come by. As Katsuno notes, Chinese laws prohibit the collection of ICT data by international organizations or government. The statistics that are made publicly available do not include complete sets of information from which international researchers could confidently make definitive statements about ICT access, use, or demographic use factors.[6]

3 SMHRIC, 2011d
4 China Daily, 2014
5 Radio Free Asia, 2017
6 Katsuno, 2005

Additionally, many of these studies focus on urban access, largely ignoring rural areas such as the pasturelands in IMAR.[7] Many of the stories and sources discussed in the chapter have also been blocked on Chinese social media platforms, but remain accessible via international organizations that catalog and archive IMAR activities. It is these internationally accessible reports that I have used for the bulk of this chapter. Many of these reports come from SMHRIC. When conducting the research for this chapter I frequently attempted to find publications in which SMHRIC was not cited or discussed. This proved exceptionally difficult as reports from major English-language news sources, such as *Radio Free Asia*, *Reuters*, and *The Guardian*, all traced back to information provided or distributed through SMHRIC. I've noted SMHRIC's involvement throughout this chapter, and while I would have liked to provide a wider range of sources, this limited collection points to one of the larges problems that has been created by the simultaneous crackdown on the Chinese side and access problems on the international side. There is a rich, detailed set of events contained in this chapter, but only a few access points.

In this chapter, I turn my attention to the ways that social media has been used by Mongolian herders in IMAR to produce image testimony that protests against mining projects. This chapter focuses on the combination of a very old protest method – blocking a road – and new methods of organizing online through message boards and meet ups. This focus on roadblocks is especially important as nomadic communities do not always require the use of roads. When traveling with a large herd of animals, herders quickly transverse a large swath of land, without worrying about where a road has been created or paved. Yet, these movements are often upset by gridded spaces and pathways that are produced by new construction and mining projects. When protesting, as demonstrated in IMAR, herding communities are at times keen to meet their opponents where they are – in this case, on the road between the mine and the freeway. By examining the use of roadblocks by herding communities in IMAR, this chapter looks at the ways that ICTs have enabled Mongolian herders to use image testimony to broadcast their grievances internationally and form new networks with settled communities. Additionally, this chapter examines the ways which governments and international media have interpreted Inner Mongolian protests, leveraging frames of primitivism and separatism to co-opt or reinterpret protests. This chapter points to the many ways that herders are working to overcome the limitations of their position as a trapped

7 Wang and Lin, 2008

minority. While they are not physically able to leave China, through their image testimony they are able to improve their communities and preserve their herding traditions.

## Struggle on the Steppe

Conflicts have been increasing among and between Mongolian and Han Chinese residents in IMAR over land, the environment, and local governance. Much of the information received about these protests is regulated by the Chinese government which controls the movement of foreigners, the operation of international NGOs, and reporting via social media. These attempts to stop the distribution of protest materials have been criticized by international human rights organizations. For example, Minority Rights Group International reports that in China minorities enjoy the right to assembly, as stipulated in both the constitution and the 1984 Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy (LREA). Yet, the realization of this right is virtually nonexistent due to the lack of respect for individuals' civil and political rights.[8]

China celebrates the ways that Inner Mongolian herders have been brought into the civic and social fabric of the larger nation through education and social services. However, international watch groups, such as the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Watch and Minority Rights Group International, indicate that when problems arise, the efforts of citizens of IMAR to engage in constitutional deliberation and the processing of complaints have failed. Because of these failures, citizens of IAMR have revised their tactics. They still use petitions when opposing a political problem or activity but are increasingly relying on protests to present their arguments and complaints.[9] This transition from petition to protest matches University of Hong Kong Science and Technology scholar David Zewig's research regarding rural protests in China. In his interviews, protesters indicated that they knew petitioning would not result in real change. However, they still engaged in the process of petitioning as a way to justify their other tactics. These protesters needed to prove that they had attempted to follow the government's prescribed methods to voice a complaint, and that those actions failed. Then, because the petition failed, they felt that protest and other

8 Human Rights in China, 2007

9 SMHRIC, 2013a; SMHRIC 2013, b

methods of resistance were justified.[10] Many IMAR protesters have engaged in a series of protest methods, some legal and others illegal. While these protests may seem small or unsuccessful when viewed independently, Zewig reminds us that when viewed as a corpus of protest, these actions point to a conscious desire to work both within and beyond the system.

According to SMHRIC, protests in IMAR can be sorted into three subject areas: (1) illegal land expropriation and land sale by local government officials to Han Chinese, (2) destruction of grazing land by Han Chinese miners, and (3) failure to provide adequate redress and compensation to affected herders.[11] When organizing and participating in protests, citizens of IMAR often preface their arguments with the historic roots of Mongolian migrations across the Central Asian steppe. A focus on the movement and the fluidity of Mongolian culture is used by herders to claim heritage across a wide space, including, but not limited to, IMAR. This historic linage is juxtaposed to contemporary policy that has encouraged the rapid settlement of Mongolian herders and the migration of Han Chinese laborers into IMAR. According to Mongolian herders, ethnically Han Chinese residents in IMAR are both "other" and outsiders within an Inner Mongolian milieu. Yet, in modern Chinese government documents, it is Mongolians who are now in the minority and are literally classified as "other." This other classification is applied to both their ethnicity and because they cannot be classified as urban or rural. A herder, Gansukh, explains to SMHRIC in 2013:

> This is our land. We have lived here for generations and generations as herders. Now all of sudden, our ancestral lands are taken away by outsiders. [...] What is most outrageous is that many of our herders have been changed to "others" on their household registration cards, becoming neither urban nor rural population, but outsiders on our own lands.[12]

In this interview, Gansukh indicates his outrage regarding the change in classification of his occupation, the transference of ancestral lands, and the production of "outsider-ness" in his homeland. Similar arguments have proliferated across Inner Mongolian social media and are reflected in protest speech and tactics. For example, in May 2011, a herder named Mergen set up a roadblock protest to prohibit the transportation of coal across his

10 Zweig, 2010, p. 138
11 SMHRIC, 2013c
12 SMHRIC, 2013c

grazing lands. A Han Chinese truck driver drove through the roadblock, crushing Mergen's skull beneath the truck's tires. Later, in October 2011 a herder named Zorigt constructed a roadblock and was run over by an oil transport truck. Two years later, in July 2013, a herder committed suicide after stabbing and killing the head of the Livestock Grazing Prohibition Team. The same herder seriously injured another official while defending his right to graze his livestock on his grazing land.[13] By 2013, the US Congressional Report on China indicated that "[a]uthorities continued to detain, harass, and imprison ethnic minority rights advocates who engaged in peaceful protest and sought to assert their unique cultural identity."[14]

Reports of these deaths, and images of the resulting protests, were distributed through multiple social networking sites and across chat platforms. One of the most popular platforms was Boljoo, which used the traditional Mongolian script and allowed input directly in Mongolian or Roman letters. Perhaps due to this popularity, on October 27, 2011, the site was closed. While the platform originally indicated that it would return to use on November 15, 2011, it never regained its 2011 prominence and the platform was later forced to close. Both SMHRC and *Radio Free Asia* attribute Boljoo's closure to its popularity among protesters and its utility as a community-organizing tool.

Protesters also used Chinese bulletin board systems such as QQ and Renren to reach those Mongolians and Mongolian supporters who communicate more easily through Chinese characters. The inclusion of these protesters and supporters is important as it indicates that protests spread beyond the most nationalistic or ethnocentric Mongolians to include those who have been educated in Chinese-language schools, work for the government, and/or have acclimated to a settled lifestyle. Despite these citizen's efforts to assimilate into mainstream Chinese culture, they still chose to align themselves with the herders who were protesting about the loss of their pastures. Through these mediums, protesters have been able to organize simultaneous events in IMAR as well as in Europe, North America, and Australia.[15] During these protests, a variety of social media cites and platforms have been used to record and distribute image testimony of police carriers, riot police, and confrontations between herders and Chinese officials.[16] One of the most frequently discussed image testimonies is Mergen's death in 2011.

13 SMHRIC, 2013b
14 SMHRIC, 2013b
15 Coordinating Committee for May 29/30 Protest, 2011
16 SMHRIC, 2011e

## Road Blocks and Social Media

In this chapter I am particularly interested in the way new and social media were used to organize roadblocks and street protests. I focus on Mergen's protest, death, and the resulting protests spurred from his death because this was a critical movement in which both protesters and government officials negotiated the changed deliberative landscape in both online and face-to-face locations. These protests ranged from public outcry to online postings to the largest street protests seen in IMAR since the 1980s.[17]

Mergen's death under the tires of a coal truck was immediately recorded and reported through both local and global social media. While images of his death were quickly censored in IMAR, uncensored copies of the documentation were rapidly distributed to the Mongolian diaspora communities and their advocates. A week after the events, a reporter from *The Guardian* attempted to find Chinese-language sources regarding the events and wrote:

> [S]tudents' online bulletin board and chatroom – known as Qizhi – had been shut down for "maintenance" until 10 June. [...] [P]opular social networking sites such as QQ, Weibo and Tencent have been either blocked or censored. A Chinese-language Internet search for "Inner Mongolia" and "protest" yielded no mention of the events of the past week.[18]

The images have been archived by SMHRIC and are exceptionally graphic, showing the crushed and bloodied corpse of Mergen laying in the grassland. Today, Mergen's crushed skull is pixilated in the archival photographs, but the originally circulated images were uncensored.[19] In addition to Mergen's death, they show the path that Mergen was blocking. The road on which he stood is difficult to see because the surrounding steppe is just as smooth. To the outside viewer it may be difficult to tell if Mergen was blocking a road or occupying an empty field. What is clear from these images is that the coal truck driver intentionally hit Mergen. There was ample space to swerve around the protesters. Or the trucks could have taken their assigned road rather than taking a shortcut across the pastures. The *China Daily*, China's English-language newspaper, reported on the event, indicating that "Mergen and 20 others attempted to block the path of a coal truck and argued with the drivers on May 10. According to police, the truck dragged

17 NTDTV, 2011
18 Watts, 2011b
19 SMHRIC, 2011c

Mergen for 145 meters and subsequently killed him."[20] Also reporting on Mergen's death, Zorigt, an Inner Mongolian blogger, gives more context to the events, connecting the use of herders' lands and coal transport roads with these protests.

> In order to take a shortcut, these coal hauling trucks have randomly run over local herders' grazing lands, not only killing numerous heads of livestock but also further damaging the already-weakened fragile grassland. [...] [A]fter exhaustively petitioning various levels of local governments, helpless Mongolian herders of Bayanbulag, Saruul, Davshilt and Hongor Gachaa organized themselves since April 26, 2011, to block the coal haulers from trespassing on their grazing lands.[21]

The conflict was recorded by Mergen's fellow protesters. Due to increases in social media access, including digital recording devices, Mergen's death was immediately photographed and other protesters interviewed the driver. The created image testimonies that reflected on Mergen's death. These protesters were quick to quote the truck driver, who stated "my truck is fully insured, and the life of a smelly Mongolian herder costs me no more than 40,000 Yuan (approx. 8000 USD)."[22] The driver was eventually tried and executed for his part in Mergen's death, and another employee who was in the truck was sentenced to life in prison.[23] Yet, their arrests and trials only occurred after weeks of protest throughout the Inner Mongolian countryside and cities. NTDTV (New Tang Dynasty TV, based in New York) reported that these were the largest protests seen in IMAR in 20 years. In press statements prior to his execution, the driver continually emphasized that his victim was both a Mongolian and a herder, asserting that the herder's life was unimportant. And in the years since Mergen's death, his protest has often been summarized as a noise and pollution protest rather than a conflict over land, mining, and herding. The reframing of the protest may be an attempt to quell the ethnic divisions that appear so strongly in the organizing of protests and international support following Mergen's death. Additional reframing is seen as the government classified Mergen's death as a traffic accident, making no mention of the protest which proceeded his death. All of this reframing occurred after the first wave of protests. At

20 China Daily, 2011
21 Watts, 2011a
22 SMHRIC, 2011c
23 NTDTV, 2011

first Chinese officials wanted to keep the event quiet and offered money Mergen's family with the implicit request to remain silent. Early on, the government made no effort to arrest the driver. However, as images of Mergen's death, the driver's interview, and protests spread, the government was required to act. The driver's anti-Mongolian statements quickly spread through local and international social media. As SMHRIC reports, this combination of hate speech and government buy-out backfired for the government. SMHRIC reporters write: "[T]he Chinese authorities' bribery-like handling of the case not only failed to calm the Mongolian herders but also further angered them, inciting them to take to the streets to demand their rights and dignity be respected."[24] Payments to the family failed to stop the protests, and online attention to Mergen's death increased quickly. As a result, Mongolian students were confined to university campuses, herders were prohibited from traveling to urban areas, and Internet surveillance was increased. However, despite these efforts, protests continued in Hohhot, the capital of IMAR. Photos digitally sent by protesters to SMHRIC indicate that armed vehicles and riot police were brought into Hohhot to control crowds and police were assigned to follow known activists.[25] The images from these events are striking in their magnitude, juxtaposing rural and urban lifestyles and values. Perhaps for this reason, these images spread internationally throughout social and print media.

The Coordinating Committee for the May 29/30 Protest indicates many roots of these protests. According to the protest organizers, Mongolians have faced environmental destruction, cultural change, political oppression, and economic problems. They focus specifically on the ways that environmental protection has been used as a way to force Mongolian herders off of their traditional land. By arguing that herders have too many animals or are overgrazing on their lands, government officials have tried to limit the numbers of animals that a herder can keep, or regulate the spaces in which a herder can migrate. In some extreme cases, herds have been seized and herders have been forced to live in apartment buildings. Those herders that have chosen to continue to herd despite these pressures have to contend with a changed landscape in which open-pit mines pockmark the landscape and trucks cut across the pasturelands.[26]

As tensions continued to boil, protesters and supporters expressed their sentiment in short microblog posts and composed protest songs. Professors

24 SMHRIC, 2011a
25 SMHRIC, 2011b
26 Coordinating Committee for May 29/30 Protest, 2011

Haomin Gong (Case Western Reserve University) and Xin Yang (Macalester College) have argued that microblogs are particularly salient in China, where the state narrative has become grandiose and citizens are looking for a specific, smaller view which invokes localism and is generally accessible to the public.[27] In regards to the Inner Mongolian protests, one of the most local views was the "Song Dedicated to Mergen, Hero of the Grasslands," which was both published and banned on May 29, 2011. This song called forth a broad audience of Mongolians, even those who had settled and primarily communicate in Mandarin. The lyrics were written and performed in Mandarin, which is not unusual for this type of protest among minority communities in China. Other examples of protest songs, such as those emerging from Tibet, have appeared in linguistic mixtures of Mandarin, Tibetan, and English.[28] The anonymous author of "Song Dedicated to Mergen, Hero of the Grasslands" has had their words translated from Mandarin to English. The English translation can be found quoted in a diversity of reports and books, but all of those reports cite back to the translation produced by the SMHRC.[29] The full text of the song can be found in Mandarin in the information section of a reposting of the song on YouTube.[30]

In this song, the author self-identifies as Mongolian, as proven by his bloodline rather than spaces demarcated by state roads and boarders. This belonging is emphasized by images of herders, mining, and protests in Inner Mongolia. One implication of this identification is that it expands the definition of what it means to be "Mongolian" and links with communities living as, and identifying as, herders.

> I am a Mongol even if I sing my rap in Chinese
> No matter what you say I am a Mongol
> Mongol blood flows in my veins
> The vast Mongolian steppe is my homeland.[31]

Across the Mongolian steppe, herders and settled Mongolians rallied together in rural villages, in Internet forums, and in street protests. SMHRIC reported that at least a hundred protesters were arrested, detained, and beaten. These

27 Gong and Yang, 2017
28 Gong and Yang, 2017
29 For an example, see Sanchez, 2015
30 Wu, 2014
31 SMHRIC, 2011f

protests continued to expand, even after Boljoo was closed and other social media sites were censored. Freedom House International reported that later Boljoo appeared to be functioning, but users would receive a warning that the program was "temporally unavailable" when they tried to move beyond the homepage.[32] Students were also put on extended lockdown in their universities, mobile telephone service was blocked, and cybercafés closed, all in an attempt to end any public deliberation about Mergen's death and the surrounding protests.[33] Yet, government controls were not fast enough to prevent the circulation of all media, so the "Song Dedicated to Mergen, Hero of the Grasslands," was picked up and spread internationally through the message boards and Internet archives that the PRC cannot censor. At the time of writing this song still appears internationally on YouTube. This process of publication and censorship was predicted in the song's text:

> No single word is mentioned in CCAV
> "Social harmony" flooded the Internet, but no one knows what the exact situation is
> Internet sites in China are damn shit
> Mother fucking Ren Ren Site deletes all Mongolians posts
> Mother fucking microblog removes my blog.[34]

These lyrics anticipate censorship from Chinese censors. Deletion of the blog posts, microblogs and visits by state security were all actions which government officials took in order to block the song's distribution and other similar sources of information.[35] Many of these actions seem to have been taken as the Chinese government worked to censor the "Song Dedicated to Mergen, Hero of the Grasslands." Beyond blocking the song, Internet police and progovernment bloggers also posted support for government activities. SMHRIC responded to these government-sponsored posts, alleging that they had been made by what academics call the "50 Cent Party." This is a collective name applied to Chinese bloggers who are assumed to be employed by the government to make government –supporting posts. They are assumed to be paid 50 cents per post, resulting in their name. This name appears across the literature about Chinese media and censorship. For example,

32 China Media Bulletin, 2011a

33 China Media Bulletin, 2011b

34 Spelling and emphasis added by SMHRIC, which translated the "Song Dedicated to Mergen, Hero of the Grasslands" (SMHRIC, 2011f).

35 Reporters without Borders, 2011

Freedom House International archived a video in 2011 that is reportedly taken from a training video produced by the Propaganda Department in Hubei Providence. In the video, participants are directed in ways to use the Internet to guide public opinion in ways that the government felt was constructive to public ideology while facing "an important battlefield of ideology" online.[36] By 2017, a team of scholars from Stanford, Harvard and USC-San Diego estimated that 2 million Chinese citizens were employed as part of the 50 Cent Party, resulting in 448 million posts per year which are designed to distract the public away from topics of political debate or controversy.[37]

According to SMHRIC, members of the 50 Cent Party posted to Mongolian QQ instant messenger groups. They accessed the site using fake accounts and providing false narratives of the protests. One quoted example was made by a "a Mongolian brother who worked in Uushin Banner [a district of IMAR] and is familiar with the situation."[38]Among the comments posted by 50 Cent Party members were those that attempted to frame the accidental nature of this event. They told readers that this was "just a traffic accident. Some people who have hidden intentions are interpreting it as an ethnic problem or a conflict with the oil and natural gas development."[39] In this statement, we see the attempt by the PRC and its supporters to control the narrative of events unfolding in IMAR. This is similar to the ways that narratives are produced and controlled by all governments. What was different in this situation was that herders were quickly able to respond to this conflict, developing tactics that would be used in future protests. This attempt to deflect and distract public attention was at play during the 2011 protests in Inner Mongolia

## Aftereffects of Mergen's Death

Following the 2011 protests, in a possible attempt to better control the IMAR region and prevent future conflicts, the Chinese government has confiscated many herders' new media equipment, and tightened government control of microblogs. The Public Security Bureau has also voiced strong support for using officially sanctioned petitions as opposed to protests. Regarding

36 Cook, 2011
37 King, Pan, and Roberts, 2017
38 SMHRIC, 2013a
39 SMHRIC, 2013a

Mergen's death, the Ongniud Banner Public Security Bureau stated on its Tengxun Weibo official microblog that "the case is under review in accordance with the law." The facts are clear and the evidence is ample. Whoever has a disagreement can express his or her opinion through acceptable means. Whoever spread information inconsistent with the facts must be held accountable for the consequences."[40] In this statement from the Public Security Bureau, it is critical to note that the government is not making it clear that Mongolians should use petitions rather than protests, the government is also threatening legal action against anyone spreading false information regarding the situation in Inner Mongolia.

Yet, Inner Mongolian activists have identified the use of social media and microblogging as a critical feature in gaining international attention. For example, in 2013 when an IMAR protester named Bayanbaatar was beaten to death by a Chinese Railway worker, images of his death and his murderer spread quickly across a plethora of Chinese social media platforms before they were censored and deleted by the government.[41] Writing in 2008, Zukosky predicted this type of censorship would be part of the Chinese government's "Strike Hard" campaign which aimed at suppressing Internet rumors and conducting surveillance of Inner Mongolians through the auspices of conservation.[42] In a region known for its open spaces and unique ecosystem, the overarching theme of conservation is at times easy to apply to a diversity of topics. Yet, Mongolians have not given up their attempts to defend their herder identity. As one herder told SMHRIC, "[T]he herders are not afraid of the police, and ready to continue the protest anytime. […] [T]hey will see if the Ongniud Banner Public Security Detention Center is large enough to detain all of the hundreds of herders."[43]

## Continuing Protests

Inner Mongolian herders and their supporters have continued to protest in IMAR and use a diversity of technologies to produce image testimony. Oftentimes, in the organization of these protests or the international reporting following a protest, the events of 2011 are directly referenced. For example, in April 2013 new clashes erupted in the Shuang He Forest when

40 SMHRIC, 2013d
41 SMHRIC, 2013b
42 Zukosky, 2008
43 SMHRIC, 2013d

herders attempted to dismantle forestry company tents. Three hundred herders began the protest, aiming to petition the local government. The PRC government responded by arresting the protest leaders and their lawyer. This protest reemerged a month later, this time resulting in the police confiscation of protesters' cars, motorcycles, and cell phones. While their equipment was confiscated, the herders were not arrested and continued their protest by walking the last fifteen miles to the government offices. Upon arrival, they were rounded up and transported by the police back to their homes.[44] Later in the same year, 52 ethnic Mongolians were detained by the police for "creating and spreading rumors" online regarding ethnic relations, protests, and forced settlement of ethnic Mongolians.[45] Such events are rarely reported in international mass media, and in local media they are either contextualized for a settled, media consuming public, or reported using frames of primitivism that downplay the activist roles of protesting herders. The question therefore emerges, how can Inner Mongolian herders use image testimony to protest against the Chinese government and maintain herding identities? Or, put another way, what does it mean to be a protesting Inner Mongolian herder?

## Protesting Herders

Mongolians in Inner Mongolia are engaged in a complex set of violent and nonviolent arguments aiming to maintain Mongolian herder identity. Their protests, which include roadblocks, street protest, and social media organizing, are designed to both confront the Chinese government's attempts to define herder identity and gain international attention and collaboration. These protests have left a lingering impression which is frequently referenced by international journalists. For example, in a 2017 story generally supporting China's development of IMAR, an *Economist* reporter indicated that "new mines were curtailed in 2011, when a Han driver deliberately ran over and killed a Mongolian herder, sparking protests. The provincial government also soothed pastoralists with subsidies."[46] In this report, written six years after Mergen's death, we see the effects of Chinese censors to reframe both Mergen's death and the protests that followed. The deliberate nature of Mergen's death is mentioned in the article. It is not, as the PRC has wished, framed as

44 SMHRIC, 2013d
45 Radio Free Asia, 2013b
46 Economist, 2017

a traffic accident. Yet, from the article, it is not clear how the proliferation of protest will affect future political decision-making or cohesion in the region.

There have not been any large protests in IMAR since Mergen's death, and in many ways the region seems calmer. However, more information is emerging from the region via social media and networking sites and there are hints at the further development of both online and face-to-face communicative networks.

This chapter has demonstrated one way in which herders are utilizing songs, image testimony, and international networks to draw attention to their struggles. Inner Mongolians face the difficult political position of being a trapped minority within China. Frequently they are regarded as being "other" in their own traditional pastures and they face extensive pressure to settle and adopt to mainstream Chinese culture. Yet, as this chapter has demonstrated, access to social media platforms in a diversity of languages and the ability to produce image testimony has bolsterer Inner Mongolians' connections to networks beyond China. It is possible to find small successes, such as the *Economist* article that repeats the herders rather than government censor's version of Mergan's death. Using archives, such as that created by SMHRIC, can be difficult when there are not many materials available for comparison. However, this also highlights the need to pay attention to the work, however small it might seem, of herders to create image testimony, to distribute their work across international networks, and to press for change in the lives of their community members.

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# 5. Bedouin Poetry in Personal and Public Spheres

**Abstract**
Throughout the Middle East and North Africa, Bedouin herders continue to practice their oral tradition of Nabati poetry. This chapter examines the ways that Nabati poetry is produced and shared across social media platforms. The chapter focuses on a Nabati poet, Hissa Hilal, who performed her work on the *Million's Poet* reality TV competition show. Her work sparked new debates about the work of women Nabati poets as well as Bedouin women's rights throughout the region.

**Keywords:** Bedouin, Middle East, North Africa, Nabati poetry, *Million's Poet*

In 2010 Hissa Hilal, a 43-year-old Bedouin woman, placed third in the international *Million's Poet* competition, a televised series mimicking the structure of *American Idol* with contestants reciting their poems rather than performing music. Hilal's participation was unique in many ways – she was the only female participant. She was one of a few Bedouin participants. And her poems directly critiqued societal ills while other poets spoke about soccer games and more mundane topics. Her participation was watched internationally as some cultural critics mislabeled this established poet as "a Saudi housewife" and others were incensed that she dared to sign up for the competition. Hilal might have won the competition – she received more points from the judges than any other participant. But the show also invited the television audience to text in their votes – and she fell short in those points.

Beyond speculation about whether Hilal should have won the competition, the personal impact of her participation was long-lasting. Following the show's conclusion Hilal received several death threats from people angry at her participation and the messages carried in her poems, ultimately forcing her family to move. While debates about the ways that Bedouin youth are using Nabati poetry to express their cultural identities, negotiate a balance

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between tradition and modernity, and forge new networks across vast desert plains might have existed prior to Hilal's performance, there is little question that they were elevated following her appearance on international television.

This chapter examines the ways that Bedouin women are using new and social media to establish communicative networks while continuing to write and perform traditional poetry. The chapter begins by examining how Bedouin communities have sometimes been acknowledged by governments and colonizers and other times ignored by policy makers and planners in the nations in which they live. The implications of this sporadic acknowledgement, resulting in statehood and land rights, are investigated through several different national examples. Then, from this background in the pressures the Bedouin face, this chapter examines how the recording and posting of Bedouin women's poetry has enabled new communicative networks and debates. These online productions and publications are particularly important as they provide an avenue for Bedouin women to write and publish their own narratives. These texts are very different from the way that the history of the Bedouin has been historically written, from the perspective of settled communities, armies and governments which view their community as savage, barbarian, or otherwise opposed to settled culture.[1]

## Bedouin in the Middle East and North Africa

The Bedouin live across the Middle East and North Africa. For centuries these herders have been defined by their tribal affiliation and they do not often affiliate as a unified group. However, Bedouin youth posting on Facebook and other social media platforms have begun to use new and social media to articulate their "Bedouin-ness" as an ethnic identity that is unified beyond national or tribal boundaries. It is for this reason that this chapter considers Bedouin users of new and social media from throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Although youth may be forging new definitions of community, their efforts are not the first attempt at establishing a cohesive sense of Bedouin identity. Instead, there are many historic deliberations about where the Bedouin (should) live and in which state they have citizenship. Before examining the work of Hissa Hilal, let's focus on the ways that Bedouin citizenship has been negotiated and contested.

At the heart of these debates are questions of whether the Bedouin are supportive enough of their national government to deserve citizenship.

1 Amara, 2016

Critics also ask if they are willing or able to fulfill the responsibilities of citizens and how they might change the state if granted citizenship. There are many different interpretations at play regarding contemporary citizenship for Bedouin herders. Citizenship is also critical to the Bedouin ability to gain equal and equitable access to public services such as health care. The Bedouin experience of pursuing citizenship has been different in Egypt, Lebanon, and Oman. From these three examples, it is possible to understand the many different ways that Bedouin interact with national governments

## Egypt

In Egypt, citizenship laws passed in 1905 and 1908 were partly designed to keep aristocratic Egyptians from claiming to be Bedouin, and thus escaping military service. These laws were also written as an attempt to settle the Bedouin into towns and villages. These efforts were not fully successful, and the Bedouin continued to press for citizenship through World War II and after as Egypt attempted to encourage herders to accept settlement. As part of these efforts a collection of Bedouin women sent a petition to the Egyptian government asking for citizenship papers. They wrote, "We are your subjects […] and if the government does not want us to be its subjects, we implore you to let us know the name of a state we can join in order to request compensation for our families."[2] They concluded the petition on a note of sarcasm: "We truly believe that we do not belong to the Egyptian government, for, if we did belong to it, adhering to its laws [as we do], it would not subject us to [such] treatment as foreigners."[3]

Today, many Egyptian Bedouin have citizenship, but, as *The Guardian* reported in 2011, they are often treated as second-class citizens. They face a unique set of regulations in Egypt, including being banned from the military, forming political parties, or taking government office.[4] They also encounter different demands and policies than other Egyptians. An example is the law requiring that all Bedouin homes be moved out of the Massura area, between Rafah and Al-Arish. In 2007 there were reports that local officials were surveying land and houses, in preparation for a forced eviction of Bedouin families living in the area. The fear was based on the decree that all buildings must be more than 150 meters away from the Israel/Egypt border. This law is not new, but it has not been enforced and due to

2 Ellis, 2018
3 Ellis, 2018
4 Guardian, 2011

lack of enforcement, may homes were too close to the border.[5] There is a risk that enforcement may one day occur, and if it does, the Bedouin could their possessions, lands, herds, and stability in the region.

**Lebanon**

In Lebanon, many Bedouin are "stateless" persons, meaning that they are not granted Lebanese citizenship at birth and are also not given citizenship in other countries. Part of this lack of citizenship has been traced back to a 1932 census that overlooked or did not record some members of Bedouin communities who could not prove that they "regularly" lived in Lebanon.[6] This omission has had lasting implications for Lebanese Bedouins' ability to move across the country and internationally. One example of these implications is Dawn Chatty's study of Bedouin access to health care in Lebanon, which found that stateless Bedouin had limited access to primary health care and were often prohibited from receiving hospitalization.[7] Another example is ongoing each time that Bedouin citizens have sought refugee status and resettlement. Many countries have asked if these Bedouin, who are not recorded as Lebanese citizens, can apply as refugees wishing to enter a new country. And if these individuals can apply, how should they travel if they don't have a passport? The Refugee Board of Canada is one of many institutions that has debated this question. It was told that stateless Bedouin who entered or exited Lebanon illegally risked arrest and deportation.[8] This means that a child born in Lebanon who has never left Lebanon could be framed as having "illegally" entered the country. And if she were to be deported, there is no clear destination country to which she should be sent. As stateless people, they are not confined by the boundaries of the state, are often not considered to be covered by government services, and often cannot apply for passports, which are necessary to leave the country.[9]

In Oman the Bedouin do have citizenship. However, members of the community have still been forced to move and resettle to make way for development projects. For example, in 2017, Bedouin communities were told that they had to move to make way for a new highway, and others were moved to build apartment buildings.[10] Such forced movements show the

5 Daily News Egypt, 2007
6 Van Waas, 2010, p. 6
7 Chatty, Mansour, and Yassin, 2013
8 Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2007
9 Chatty, 2011
10 O'Toole, 2017

ways that herding and mobile communities are working with, and sometimes against, national governments. While the Bedouin are often encouraged by national governments to settle and stay in a single location, they can encounter difficulties if they choose to stay in the "wrong" location, or a location that was once approved for Bedouin residence, but is now needed for another development project.

The ability to claim citizenship is an essential part of the struggles that have led to this chapter's focus on new and social media among Bedouin communities. Many scholars have studied the ways that being unable to prove their citizenship prevents Bedouin community members from getting passports, enrolling in schools, and accessing medical facilities. This chapter is interested in a new reason that Bedouin community members need these documents. In many countries, it is also required that a national ID card or number is used to register a new SIM card or use an Internet access point. Without this information, Bedouin and other stateless people are severely limited in their ability to engage in contemporary deliberation and communicative networks. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that more than 10 million people around the world are stateless. Some of these people are refugees, but as in the case of many Bedouin, some stateless people have never left the country in which they were born. They are stateless because they are not given citizenship in the country of their birth or any other country.[11] While some Bedouin are stateless because they do not have the right to citizenship in the country in which they live, others are stateless because they were born at home, far from a hospital or state official who could certify that their birth occurred in a specific country. The UNHCR therefore indicates that birth registration is a critical pathway to citizenship.[12] This chapter will continue by examining how the Bedouin get around this regulation to access online platforms, news, and communicative networks.

## ICTs in the Middle East and North Africa

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), scholars have studied and celebrated the emergence of cell phones among young citizens.[13] Information and communication technologies (ICTs) quickly spread across the

11 UNHCR, 2018
12 Van Waas, 2010
13 Odine, 2015

Middle East and North Africa regions, and became increasingly popular after social media platforms adapted to provide Arabic-language interfaces. For example, Facebook launched its Arabic platform in 2009. Use of this platform resulted in many studies celebrating the ways that Middle Eastern and North African "youth and their phones have 'forever changed society.'"[14] Yet, little attention is paid to the Bedouin youth who are living in the same countries, also using new and social media to participate in protests, cultural events, and political deliberations. Researchers have recorded the access of these communities to cellular phones and social media. In 2004 Peterson declared, "social change is also being accelerated by newly introduced forms and patterns of communication. Mobile telephones are ubiquitous. Oman television broadcasts now reach even remote areas of Dhufar and satellite television is growing in popularity."[15] One reason that mobile media became so popular in the Middle East and North Africa was that they did not require the establishment of laid telephone lines. Like many rural regions around the world, rural and mobile communities in MENA did not have access to connected telephones but they were able to access cellular service. Beginning in 2005, cellular providers were ensuring connection even in the most rural regions. Yet, although ICT infrastructure grew quickly, community use of that infrastructure was often thwarted by national and local laws which restricted information access, censored posts, and/or surveilled social media users. Demands to end this online censorship grew alongside access to social media platforms and the conflict between social media and the state fueled many conflicts. For example, conflicts over censorship of YouTube are sometimes referenced as setting the stage for the Arab Spring.[16] When YouTube became unavailable, Egyptian and Tunisian organizers quickly utilized other platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WeChat. In reflecting on the power of the resulting visual testimony, Williams and Corey argue, "The power of uploaded images is not so much the internal audience, but the international audience that reacts to the images."[17] For example, even when YouTube was blocked internally during the Arab Spring, videos posted there were still viewable by outside supporters. These videos gained even more credibility for the international viewer because they were blocked. In the years after the Arab Spring, use and study of protest videos and activism in MENA has continued. Beyond immediate demands for change

14 Odine, 2015
15 Peterson, 2004, p. 269
16 Wilson and Corey, 2012
17 Wilson and Corey, 2012, para. 27

in government and censorship, these videos are also full of deliberation about the changing culture of MENA and its communities. At the center of many of these debates is the cultural legacy and continued livelihoods of Bedouin herders. Bedouin women's use of these networks is particularly interesting as even when their face-to-face opportunities for public life are strictly regulated, new and social media has supported strong and dynamic communicative networks.

## Social Media Use among Bedouin Women

In 2013 I attended the Thinking and Speaking a Better World conference held in Doha, Qatar. The event brought together scholars from the West as well as the Middle East and North Africa. I was at the conference to speak about Tanzanian Maasai's use of social media to what I expected to be an audience of academics who had lived their entire lives in settled communities. After presenting my paper I was approached by a member of the conference staff, who was from a Jordanian Bedouin family. He was working at the conference while attending college in Qatar. "You know," he told me, "we are doing the same thing. Do you want to call and speak to my relatives in Jordan to find out?" I was initially surprised by his reaction to my paper – while many of the presenters were asking questions about how Tanzanian herders had access to cell phones, this man was immediately drawing connections between the ways that Tanzanian herders and Bedouin herders are using new and social media to establish new communicative networks. While our correspondence dwindled after the conference, I remained intrigued by his claim. Researchers working in MENA were publishing similar statements about the use of social media. Writing of the ways that new and social media was gaining a foothold in the region, Prager reported that "Bedouins themselves have started to take the initiative to articulate their own identities, by utilizing various media – for example, tribal history books, Nabati poetry compilations and slams, Internet blogs and television series."[18] Using these media platforms, new identities are discussed, imagined, and negotiated. Some of these deliberations occur in public and center on the ways that Bedouin can and should participate in local or national governments. Other, more personal sphere deliberations about Bedouin identity are also occurring, though frequently in closed, gender-segregated networks.

18 Prager, 2014, p. 11

For example, in the South Sinai of Egypt, ICTs have brought many changes to Bedouin communities. One of the most marked differences is caused by an affordance that cellular phones provide for youth to participate in local and national deliberations. In her interviews with Bedouin women, Kiiskinen was told that this access has affected young women's behavior. One informant said, "[A]ll they think about is phone and laptop and social media."[19] A second interviewee told her that "today, any woman can hold a phone, it's normal."[20] In this interview, the historic disapproval of women having their own phones is evident because the speaker feels the need to comment on the change. The contemporary ability of women to own and use phones is new among Bedouin communities and marks a change in their freedom to access communicative interlocutors, even when they are far apart.

Many of these young women are using smartphones to access platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. MENA has one of the lowest rates of female education in the world, yet by using WhatsApp users are able to overcome their lack of education by recording short "voice notes" which can be sent via SMS. These voice notes are often sent in quick succession, allowing for a long, detailed communication across vast distances. For many rural users, voice notes are preferable to a phone call because they can wait until the receiver is ready to participate in a conversion – rather than interrupting the day as a phone call might do. Additionally, sending the SMS text message is usually less expensive than a call, and the message can be delivered once the recipient is within range of cellular service. Researchers have documented the ways that this type of voice communication enabled by social media platforms has enabled new communities to establish communicative networks, develop businesses, and access educational materials.

Many Bedouin women who use these apps live in settled or semi-settled households. This means that they do not move as frequently as their ancestors, but they may still engage in semi-frequent migrations. Or, they live in permanent households or apartments, but maintain strong ties to their relatives who practice traditional migrations. This movement between settled homes and tents is not new. Writing about Bedouin in the South Sinai in 1984, Lila Abu-Lughod, an anthropologist from Columbia University, noted that many Bedouin in this region were living in houses, and were using trucks rather than camels for transportation. Like their settled countrymen, Bedouin in the 1980s wore "wristwatches and plastic shoes, listened to

19 Kiiskinen, 2018, p. 44
20 Kiiskinen, 2018, p. 44

radios and cassette players, and traveled in Toyota pickup trucks."[21] This, and many other examples, are proof that years before these Bedouin communities would have a cellular phone, they were beginning to settle, use new technologies and integrate themselves into a national and international economies. Abu-Lughod also noted that these communities were already in contact with indigenous groups in the region and internationally. Similarly, in 2016 Amit Schejter of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Noam Tirosh from Northwestern University interviewed Bedouin about their use of new and social media. They were told about the prevalent use of SMS and WhatsApp to create new groups, both within their community and to work with refugee and migrant communities. SMS had become such a frequent communication tactic for some of these Bedouin communities that they felt harassed by mass messaging and some had stopped using the service.[22] Yet, despite the integration of new and social media into their communities, the Bedouin have stayed connected to their traditional organizational structures, which often overshadowed the attempts by the state to encourage herders to identify as citizens first and herders or Bedouin second.

For example, researchers working with Bedouin communities in Israel have emphasized the ways that new and social media are enabling Bedouin youth to form new communication networks. Utilizing information flows and historic connections with distant communities, Bedouin youth might be identifying as Bedouin as an ethnicity, rather than as members of a specific tribe or Bedouin group.[23] In 2016, Bedouin activists in Israel were using Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to organize supporters to protest against evictions. Their production of visual testimony is designed for an external audience and expresses the difficulties that their communities face. When discussing this tactic, one Bedouin interviewee said, "If the Facebook kids of Tunis were able to overthrow their dictator [...] and then in Egypt, then we can with Facebook wake up our youth and wake up the country."[24] Protesters have livestreamed community evictions, resulting in new debates about housing. In these productions we see the effectiveness of image testimony. This media is often produced in real time, by youth, and is perhaps more meaningful because it is so raw and to the external viewer feel so authentic.

Schejter and Tirosh's examination of protests and new media in Israel demonstrates ways that Bedouin communities are negotiating their use

21 Abu-Lughod, 1984
22 Schejter and Tirosh, 2016, p. 94
23 Prager, 2014;
24 Schejter and Tirosh, 2016, p. 95

of new and social media. Community members are at times conflicted by these new communicative networks. On the one hand, they are happy to have community needs and rights discussed, but, on the other hand, they oppose speaking through SMS because it subverts traditional channels of communication. SMS stands in contrast to traditional communicative forms, including the use of poetry to narrate life, record history, and make complaints within and beyond the family unit. Yet, at least when considering poetry, the art form and communicative practice has not disappeared in the age of social media.

## Social Media within and beyond the Home

Many studies have focused on the ways that the Bedouin have transition from rural to urban settings. These studies highlight the different ways that these transitions have occurred for men and women. For example, regarding men's labor, Hilary Gilbert has studied the ways that men have transitioned from agro-pastoralists (those who practice some farming alongside herding) to working as day laborers who are dependent on insecure wages.[25] Women in settled Bedouin communities sometimes have difficulty adapting to the ways that settlement has changed the labor that they perform for their household, and through that the place that they hold in household hierarchies. For example, Allassad writes that a Bedouin women's home is used for many purposes, but in general indicates that the home is used to highlight woman's creativity, as well as her ability to control and influence specific spaces and family members. When the home is a tent in the desert, it serves as an anchor for the family and women, but women move freely between the tent's walls and open doors. They are tasked with many chores that take them away from the tent, such as harvesting, collecting water, and tending to herds. When the home is that of a settled Bedouin family, such as those that Allassad has studied in Israel, the woman's freedom of movement and ability to control her environment are very different.[26] These families have settled, meaning that they often have running water, food bought from a store, and no longer tend herds. Therefore, much of the women's work which was previously done outside of the home is no longer necessary. However, they and their families are hesitant to have women move feely outside of the urban household, creating a situation which one

25 Gilbert, 2011
26 Allassad Alhuzail, 2018

interviewee referred to as "my private jail."[27] One way that women contend with this feeling of isolation is through the writing and expression of poetry.

Bedouin women's poetry has been the subject of much study and debate. Lila Abu-Lughod's seminal work *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories* examines the ways that women "write against culture," meaning that they are able to produce stories and texts which reject, question, and examine their culture and social hierarchies. Abu-Lughod argues that these texts challenge the expectation, particularly from the West, that Bedouin women are silent or completely repressed. First written in 1993, the text was too early to consider the use of new and social media. But it was, and remains, a foundational text in anthropology, communication, and women's studies courses. I remember first being assigned the text in Introduction to Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh where it was used as an example of how anthropologists are able to provide a unique lens into communities that would otherwise be unknown or misunderstood. The text continues to stay at the center of these courses, but it is no longer the only way that scholars are able to encounter Bedouin women, or Bedouin communities in general. Other, new forms of engagement, such as the poetry discussed in the next section, have opened room for engagement between Bedouin poets and their many audiences.

## Nabati Poetry

Bedouin poetry, also called "Nabati Poetry," has been identified as an intangible cultural heritage by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This tradition is recognized throughout the Middle East and North Africa and is the topic of both local debate and academic study. These poems address a wide range of topics, from herding animals to weather patterns, family dynamics and divorce. "Boasting" poems were historically made in support of the poet's family or tribe, but now extend to national and regional pride. Beyond only listing the strengths of their community, some of these boasts come with a rallying cry or motivating message. For example, Sayf bin Hārib al-Saʿdī edits poetry for the *al-Bayān* newspaper, *Emirati Pearls* magazine and serves as deputy chairman of the Dubai Council of Poets. His boasting poem titled "The Emirates" ends:

If you don't invite us in when life is a breeze,
We'll come uninvited when life is a squeeze.

27 Allassad Alhuzail, 2018, p. 711

The times that you live through can change, as can you,
But I know you know to ourselves we'll stay true.[28]

Other poems in one collection of Nabati poetry are more directly political, reflecting on changing government systems, clashes over land in the Gaza Strip, building the Suez Canal, and the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. While some poems are written from a first-person perspective, others are designed as a dialogue or debate and express the ways in which communities are negotiating modernity and its many challenges. They are also an artful, culturally acceptable way to deliver criticism. Moza, demonstrates how a poem is used to reject her family's suggestion that she use a wheelchair. Her poem begins,

Your suggestion, dearest grandson, seems unkind, more like a slur;
I don't want it, I reject it, and it cuts me to the quick.[29]

While Moza's poem is lighthearted in its criticism, not all critical poems are taken in jest. Clinton Bailey's *Bedouin Law from Sinai and the Negev: Justice without Government* recalls an example in which an old man, Shaykh Tōg, prepared a meal for his tribesmen, who were returning from a raid. While Tōg had originally planned to slaughter goats for the men to eat, they requested that he prepare a vegetarian meal instead. As the tribesmen were leaving, Tōg asked the oldest member of the party for "protection from any poets in your party who may satirize me for not having slaughtered animals for you to eat."[30] Despite the guarantee of the tribesmen that they would not criticize him, one poet in the group wrote a poem ridiculing his dinner host: "Tōg is an old fart, who has not oiled the beards of his guests" (meaning that he had not provided any fat from meat).[31] The ridiculing poet lost his hand over this poem, which was judged to be slander against Tōg and deserving of such punishment.

The vast centuries of Nabati poetry, archives of their many projects and study of what makes an excellent poet, are well beyond the space available in this book. However, more and more texts are becoming available in English, encouraging international readers to delve into these poems and their rich history.

28 Holes and Athera, 2011, p. 43
29 Holes and Athera, 2011, p. 113
30 Bailey, 2009, p. 218
31 Bailey, 2009, p. 218

Historically, and sometimes still today, many poets are illiterate. Their poems are shared through recitation and memorization, and today through audio and video recordings. Even illiterate authors are well informed in the history of poetry. Many young poets are trained by memorizing the works of poets before them while also learning to craft their own poems. In this way, a poet is a walking archive, both of their own work and the work of their community. UNESCO reports that for poets and members of the community "the most important aspect is the social bonding during the oral exchange of verses."[32] These bonds are now strengthened through online platforms, and supported by other types of media, such as radio and television programs devoted to poetry. Clive Holes from Oxford University writes that in 2005 he was having dinner with a Bedouin poet. The dinner was

> interrupted by a call to him on his mobile phone, out of the blue from a Saudi radio station. The call was from the host of a phone-in program devoted to Bedouin poetry and our host's name had cropped up. [...] The phone-call was live on air, and our poet was asked to recite a certain poem of his there and then, which he unhesitatingly did.[33]

This speedy recitation was facilitated by a number of networks – a radio program based on poetry, access to the poet's contact information, the poet having a cellular phone, and the poet being able to recite his work on demand. The speed and ease of this recitation indicate the smooth immersion of Nabati poetry and new media.

Nabati poetry is written and performed by both men and women, but is often performed in gender-segregated groups. It is not the only form of poetry used by the Bedouin. They also practice other forms, such as *al-taghrooda*, a short form of chanting that is used by Bedouin men traveling and used to entertain travelers. Nassar Ali Al Humaira indicated that social media, such a YouTube, have been critical for the spread of awareness and participation in these forms of Bedouin intangible cultural heritage.[34] The recording of poetry for display and publication via YouTube and similar platforms is one way in which Bedouin poets are able to preserve the orality of this poetry form while reaching a wider audience of both Bedouin and non-Bedouin listeners.

The ability to access new and social media has been used by Bedouin women to continue and expand this tradition. Seeley has examined the

32 Balakrishnan, 2011
33 Holes and Athera, 2011, p. 2
34 Farah, 2011

ways that new media encourages the writing of poetry among Bedouin women in Jordan who frequently upload their writing to websites such bdoaljnob.com and Sha3erJordan.net and are supported by organizations such as the Arār Foundation for Arabic Poetry, Literature and Culture.[35] These web pages encourage oral performance and the uploading of oral presentations of a poet's work. In this way, the web page combines together the affordances of new media in order to encourage communities to continue an oral tradition in a new, online space. At the time of writing, Sha3erJordan.net continues to be an active platform for the distribution of poetry, including Bedouin women's poetry. Bedouin authors and their work is celebrated on the homepage and linked to throughout the site. Visitors are able to access audio files of poetry performances, read biographies of the more famous poets, and access academic literature, such as Seeley's 2015 article regarding the study of Nabati poetry.

Users are able to upload videos and audio files of themselves performing their own poetry pieces. Many poets also send short poems through text message either individually to their known contacts or to large contact lists of followers who can receive a poem in a serialized – line-by-line – format. These contemporary Nabati poems are an extension of this cultural tradition, where both the writing and recitation of the poem are important to audience members. Marcel Kupershoek, a Humanities Research Fellow at NYU-Abu Dhabi and a Dutch diplomat, indicates that while contemporary Nabati poems maintain their traditional structures and themes, they also include new concepts and locations, such as shoping malls.[36] For example, Ghānim bin Rāshid al-Qusaylī is a poet from Abu Dhabi who grew up in the Empty Quarter with his bedouin family before finding a career as a car mechanic. He his now a member of the Joint Council of Poets in Abu Dhabi and provided the poem "O Mall!" for Holes and Athera's collection of Nabati poetry. The poem begins:

> O mall, your smart and modern frame
> Attracts the girls in numbers vast,
> Pale or dark, of unknown name;
> Alas my youth, lived in the past![37]

By blending traditional and contemporary themes, these poems serve as a vehicle for Bedouin poets to reflect on and respond to the pressures of

35 Seeley, 2015, p. 77
36 Kupershoek, 2017
37 Holes and Athera, 2011, p. 130

modernity. Some poems are light and jovial, while others contain lessons for future generations who may want to understand this moment in Bedouin history. For example, some poets are using poetry to teach youth about their community's past and the rights which they once had.

One of the most important rights which is addressed in these women's poems is the ability for women to move freely, beyond the home and sometimes beyond the community. There is a rich history of Nabati women's poetry – from poems that declare a divorce, record a family's history, or give instruction to future generations. However, these poems are at times ignored by studies of Nabati poetry which indicate, sometimes implicitly and soemtimes explicitly, that only men can be poets. Today, contempoary Bedouin women poets are working to continue this tradition. Their work serves two purposes. First, it documents historic poems to prove that Beouidn women have always been poets. The second is to create new poems that reflect on the Bedouin's encounters with modernity. This juxtaposition of modern and historic poems highlights the ways that women are now restricted and are able to indicate the ways that women were once, traditionally, permitted freedom of movement. Many women have participated in this process of writing, recording, and sharing poetry. Perhaps the most famous is Hissa Hilal, a Nabati poet who appeared on international television, has become the subject of an award-winning documentary, and has released several books of traditional Nabati poets.

## Hissa Hilal and *Million's Poet*

The ways Bedouin women's poetry is changing came to the forefront in the 2010s when Hissa Hilal al-Malihan al-'Unzi, aka Hissa Hilal, participated in *Million's Poet*, a reality TV context show on the United Arab Emirates' Abu Dhabi TV network. The show features contestants who present their own poetry, aiming to win prizes between 1 and 5 million United Arab Emirates dirham (approximately 240,000 to 1.2 million euros). Viewers vote on their favorite poets, sending text messages to an assigned number. Decisions are made based on the contestant's quality of writing as well as their presentation of the poem.

Hissa Hilal was the first female finalist to appear on *Million's Poet*. After a few initial rounds, she surprised the viewing audience when she recited her fifteen-verse poem titled "The Chaos of Fatwas." Wearing a full niqab, seated on a red and gold chair in front of microphones and a podium, she presented her work. In this poem she criticized many things, including the

violence that she found resulting from the ways that extremist clerics issue fatwas. She reflected on the ways that clerics have made announcements on Internet forums and have attempted to regulate women's lives. In the poem she spoke indirectly about Sheikh Abdul Rahman al Barrak, a Saudi cleric who had called for the execution of anyone who said that the mixing of sexes is permitted in Islam.[38] Her poem began, "I have seen evil in the eyes of the fatwas at a time when the lawful is condemned as unlawful; when I unveil the truth a savage monster comes out of its hiding place; barbaric in thought and action, angry and blind; wearing death as a robe with a belt over it."[39] The presentation of the poem was punctuated with the applause from the audience between verses, a reaction that seemed to urge Hilal into a more energetic recitation.[40] Women in the audience, who were interviewed by the American broadcaster ABC explained why her participation was so unique. One woman said, "What I'm seeing is lots of courage out there. A lady, she is speaking out, and she is in niqab. That's something amazing for me."[41] While Hissa Hilal's niqab was the subject of much debate, she only wore it in the last rounds of the competition. During the tryouts she wore a full face veil, covering all of her facial features. Her husband, a journalist, had hoped that the full veil would help to protect Hilal from public criticism which they both knew was likely after her participation. Indeed, as soon as the poem was completed there was fierce online debate regarding its merit as a poem and its meaning for Saudi Arabian women. This debate was coupled with opinions about whether a Saudi Arabian woman should even be allowed to participate in this competition.

Hilal had an established career and reputation as a poet before she appeared in *Million's Poet*. She was born near the border of Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and had attended high school in Bahrain. Some of her poems had been published in Saudi newspapers under the pen name "Rema," and she had worked as both a writer and editor for Saudi Arabian newspapers and poetry presses. Speaking of her own work, Hilal indicates "my poetry has always been provocative. [...] It's a way to express myself and give voice to Arab women, silenced by those who have hijacked our culture and our religion."[42] In interviews and in her documentary, she has told of how members of her family attempted to suppress her writing and orations.

38 Dajani, 2010
39 BBC, 2010
40 Wright, 2012
41 ABC News, 2010
42 Mail Foreign Service, 2010

However, she was able to continue to write and perform, eventually reaching the final round of *Million's Poet* where she placed third. As a prize, she won enough money for her family to buy a new apartment. Yet, her success was not without a cost. After appearing on *Million's Poet*, Hilal received death threats from viewers who thought women should not appear on the show. She faced additional criticism for performing poetry in front of a gender-mixed audience and for being a woman who was speaking publicly for the purpose of entertainment.[43]

Speaking of the effectiveness of poetry, Hilal reflected that, traditionally, poets celebrate their history, famous people in their tribe, or tell of their own exciting adventures. However, she indicated that there were many more things which poets could discuss. "This is a platform that can help you to reach the world," she said. "The ball is in your court. There are a wide range of issues to tackle. It is a platform with a wider horizon and higher ceiling."[44] While Hilal may have become the most famous woman writer and performer of Nabati poetry, much of her work has been to educate other women about historic poetry and women's rights, and to inspire new poets.

After her appearance on *Million's Poet*, Hilal published two books of poetry, focusing on the ways that Nabati poetry has been used by Bedouin women. She has collected poems written by Bedouin women who were speaking out against local government, demanding divorce and ensuring the enforcement of their human rights. Examples that she has collected include the story of Mudi from the nineteenth century. Mudi was from a settled family, though she married a Bedouin chieftain. He divorced her when her poems became so popular that they were recited by many herders, including his subjects. He eventually was persuaded, by her poems, that she had done nothing wrong. While he asked her to return home, she refused, writing poems rejecting his advances.

> Now that you have laid me low I will throw you flat, as the antelope is brought down by the hunter's shot. I will not enter my husband's home again, unless the sun will set where it rises. Or when the dead are heard to call out to the living, or snake poison is swallowed as spittle.[45]

Mudi's story plays multiple roles in understanding the history of Nabati poetry and Bedouin women's rights. Here, a woman continues to work as a

43 Wright, 2012, p. 94
44 Dajani, 2010
45 Kupershoek, 2012

poet against her husband's wishes, refuses to remarry him after he as shamed her, and asserted her independence from both her parental family and the family which she married into. Hilal indicates that Bedouin women need to hear this type of history because they frequently encounter attempts by community leaders, government officials, and religious leaders to limit women's freedom. Oftentimes these limitations are justified by "tradition." Yet, Hilal's work demonstrates that the Bedouin tradition is one of much more freedom for women.

Hilal was also the focus of the award-winning documentary *The Poetess* (2017), directed by the German team of Stefanie Brockhaus and Andreas Wolff. In that film we see Hilal's participation in the competition as well as get a glimpse of the changing world of Bedouin herders. Hilal is the perfect narrator for this kind of film – growing up in a desert community, and now living in an apartment in Saudi Arabia, she demonstrates the many changes and modernizations experienced by the Bedouin.

Through these many publication venues, Hilal and many other Bedouin women are continuing to write new poems. These are posted daily to websites such as Sha3erJordan.net, they are debated in chartrooms and blogs, and they are translated for international audiences. Contextualizing this new way to spread the thoughts of poets, Hilal told *The National*:

> Before, you only read poetry in the paper, and if you couldn't get on there then it was impossible for people to know you. Now we can use the Internet and satellites to show our work everywhere. [...] This is the first time in our history that Arabs are starting to understand that we are a small society in a big world and there are other people in the planet with a different experience.[46]

The poems posted by Bedouin men and women reflect on their experiences with modernity. Many of these poems are part of larger deliberations and encourage readers to seek out more and more poems and potentially write their own. I have been impressed as I worked on this chapter that the poetry postings update so quickly. Many times, I would check for new poems in the morning, and when I returned in the afternoon a whole new crop had appeared. While these poems are not accompanied by the visual evidence discussed in many other chapters in this book, they are still a form of testimony in which Bedouin are adapting a traditional rhetorical form to contemporary topics and deliberations. As the boasting poems collected by

46 Saeed, 2011

Holes and Athera demonstrate, the borders of Nabati poetry have expanded. While once boasts were made about a family or tribe, they are now inclusive of a nation or the entire MENA region. In this way, new and social media is connecting distant Bedouin communities. It is linking those with Bedouin heritage to herders still living in rural areas. And it is providing a way for Bedouin women to reclaim their history and press for their human rights.

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# 6. Mongolia's Cell Phone Referendum

**Abstract**
The Mongolian government has used ICT infrastructures to encourage democratic deliberation and decision-making, even among the most rural herders. This chapter focuses on the 2015 cell phone referendum in which each SIM card owner was given one vote in a national referendum on mining policy. While the referendum was widely regarded as a flop due to low voter turnout, this chapter argues that the referendum established the expectation among Mongolian herders that their government can and should reach out to even the most remote herders for feedback on national policy.

**Keywords:** Mongolia, cell phone referendum, mining policy, deliberation

In 2015 Mongolia held its first referendum by text message to determine the future of Mongolian mining policy. The vote, sent to every registered Mongolian cell phone number, was one of the first times that Mongolian citizens were asked to vote on a specific policy action. This request for voter participation was unique in many ways, including that it occurred in Mongolia, an emerging democracy where between one-half and one-third of all citizens are pastoral nomadic herders. Supporters of this vote were excited that the message was sent to herders, and that cell phones could be used to encourage participatory democracy for all citizens, regardless of their location or mobility. This was the first time that a mobile community was brought into public deliberation in such a direct way. In the days before and after the vote international attention varied, with some watching to see if the vote could occur fairly and others asking if this might be a model for other rural and developing democracies.[1]

This chapter focuses on the 2015 cell phone referendum, in which each established SIM card owner was given one vote in a national referendum on mining policy. SIM cards purchased in the last month were not eligible for

1 Bijker, 2006; Dalaibuyan, 2013

Hahn, A.H., *Media Culture in Nomadic Communities*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021. DOI 10.5117/9789463723022_CH06

the referendum vote in an attempt to prevent fraud. While the referendum was widely regarded as a flop due to low voter turnout, this chapter argues that the referendum established the expectation among Mongolian herders that their government can and should reach out to even the most remote herders for feedback on national policy.

In the following analysis, I focus on the use of a false dilemma fallacy in the construction of the referendum ballot, public response to the referendum among commenters on Twitter, and the government's strategic maneuver of reframing the referendum and vote tabulation. How, I ask, did the production and framing of this vote encourage or discourage herder participation? And how might the 2015 Mongolian vote set an example for future political participation among pastoral nomadic herders? To understand this use of SMS in Mongolia, I have relied on local and international media reports, Mongolian tweets, and Mongolian political speeches.

## Mongolian Mining

The 2015 referendum was called in response to national conflicts concerning mining rights, herding spaces, and landownership – specifically the Oyu Tolgoi mine, located in the south Gobi. Minister of Foreign Affairs Luvsanvandan Bold has described this issue as "so hotly debated because it was our very first strategic business agreement with a multinational corporation. Based on our past experiences and mistakes we are ready to cooperate with other investors on future projects."[2]

Yet, other Mongolians have argued that the country must stop mining and deliberate on mining policy before committing to future contracts. These critics point to the fact that mining companies often prefer to create open-pit mines that limit or prohibit herding. These open pits are preferable to underground mining for both economic and worker safety reasons, but are also far more detrimental to the surrounding environment.[3] While mining corporations are required to complete and file an environmental impact assessment before mining begins, the standards guiding the creation of those assessments are not always in alignment with the needs and practices of herding communities.[4] One instance of such conflict is the October 2012 complaint filed by OT Watch and Gobi Soil NGO on behalf

2 Bold, 2014
3 Jackson, 2014
4 Suzuki, 2013

of local herders. This complaint was sent to the compliance officer of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) regarding the use of water and land at the Oyu Tolgoi mining project.[5] The complaint alleges that the Oyu Tolgoi mine has resulted in four negative outcomes: loss of livelihood from herding, diminished living standards, negative health impacts, and the disappearance of the traditional lifestyle of Mongolian nomads. These herders and their supporting NGOs demanded that mining decisions be made based on the participation and consultation of herders. Additionally, they demanded compensation for the harms caused by current mineral extraction at Oyu Tolgoi. Since 2014, a council of herders, local government officials, and Oyu Tolgoi representatives have worked to determine solutions to the IFC complaint. Communities that were excluded from consultation because they were deemed too far away from Oyu Tolgoi have not been able to participate in these deliberations, and instead have turned to protests and debates demanding increased citizen participation in mining policy.

One method of incorporating these multiple perspectives was the 2015 referendum, called in response to this demand for increased participation in mining policy. On national television, Prime Minister Chimed Saikhanbileg announced a four-day-long referendum-by-text message poll which would ask Mongolians if they preferred foreign direct investment at Oyun Tolgoi, or a period of austerity. Government officials stood to gain significant political capital by both proving that citizens support mining and indicating a willingness to listen to their constituents. The 2015 referendum attempted to produce these numbers and was one of the first times that modern Mongolian citizens have been asked to vote on a specific policy action. It was also possibly the first time that a national referendum poll has been held via text message.

Yet, the idea of holding a national referendum was not new to Mongolians. On October 20, 1945, Mongolia held its first referendum in which Mongolia declared independence from China. This referendum indicates that even the most rural herders were able to participate in an in-person vote.[6] During the 1945 referendum, it was reported that 487,285 people, or 98.6% of eligible voters, took part in the 1945 referendum, and 100% of voters supported independence from China. The Republic of China then formally recognized Mongolia's independence in 1946. Since 1949, when the People's Republic of China came to power, there have been several unsuccessful attempts by the Chinese

5 Compliance Officer Ombudsman, 2012

6 Hahn, 2018

government to "reclaim" Mongolia. In some of these attempts, the Chinese government has claimed that the referendum was a sham. To do so, they point to voting irregularities, heavy Soviet influence on plebiscites, and accusations that Stalin meddled in Chinese politics.[7] International recognition, treaties and other documents indicate that there is little risk of Mongolia rejoining China at a political level. However, some Mongolians do fear that the growing economic ties with China could impede Mongolia's economic independence.

At least two factors of the 1945 referendum are important to the analysis of the 2015 referendum. First, despite having a poor infrastructure, Mongolia successfully carried out a massive information, education, and voting campaign before the 1945 vote. While there is much debate about the legitimacy of each vote, there is a strong historic record to indicate many herders did indeed cast ballots, proving the ability to participate in a national referendum.

Mongolia did not hold another national referendum until 2015. This may be due to a combination of socialist policy-making and a reliance on centralized government systems which typified Mongolia's socialist period (1924-1992). There were, however, occasional calls for referendums during this socialist period. For example, O. Dashbalbar (2008) called for a referendum in his 1990s speech, "A Referendum," which calls for a vote on foreign ownership of Mongolian lands.[8] This vote never occurred, perhaps because Dashbalbar died in 1999 of a suspected (but not proven) assassination by poisoning.

The 2015 referendum was held in a much different communicative milieu than the 1945 referendum, when many citizens were illiterate, unaccustomed to voting, and facing numerous political upheavals. All of these conditions had improved during Mongolia's peaceful transition to democracy in 1992, accompanied with an improving economy and expansive digital communicative network that made it possible for even the most rural citizens to participate in national decision-making. As such, some observers framed the 2015 referendum as a test case for understanding how mobile technologies might encourage more comprehensive political participation among both pastoral nomadic and settled Mongolian citizens.[9] In essence, the vote forced the question, Can cell phones enable a new way of understanding rural participatory democracy? And further, Can cell phones and social media enlarge the Mongolian public spheres? In the next section, I will begin to answer these questions by examining the Mongolian communicative network and how it enabled the 2015 referendum.

7 Radchenko, 2015
8 Dashbalbar, 2008
9 Tencic, 2015

## Mongolian Communicative Technologies

As a former Socialist nation, Mongolia offers a rich perspective into the ways Soviet ideology and Marxism was adapted to fit Central Asia. These ideologies had significant impacts on the ways that technology was developed and implemented in Mongolia. In this chapter we are interested in the ways that communication and transportation infrastructure developed, especially the use of electronic media.[10] With the support of the USSR, Mongolia invested in national radio (1934) and television services (1967). The use of technologies was guided by Soviet media theory, premised on public ownership of media designed to serve the interests of the working class. This ideology argues that communicative technologies are designed to disperse information to the public.[11] In this unidirectional flow of information, little attention is paid to how the public might send information back to government authorities.

This did not mean, however, that local communities lacked deliberative opportunities. Mongolians developed an expansive network of informal communication pathways that were controlled by their group classification: familial, classmates or alumni, coworkers and *neg nutgiinhan* (people from the same homeland). These networks functioned similar to the Russian *blat*, enforcing personal obligations and the norms of informal networks in formal contexts.[12] *Neg nutgiinhan* supported communicative exchanges among community members who were herding away from their traditional lands, or community members who moved to a city. As such, the *neg nutgiinhan* allowed information to travel across long spaces. However, they were formed based on historic connections and could not inspire the type of public, interenclave deliberation necessary for a new democracy.

During Mongolia's democratic transition (1991-1992), the government structure quickly changed, however, changes to media control and press freedoms moved at a slow pace. For example, although the 1998 Law on Media Freedom banned censorship of all types, censorship continues.[13] Online censorship occurs in at least two ways: by blocking websites using the excuse that a copyright violation has occurred (even though none of the material on the website was copyrighted) and by suppressing journalistic reports. Reports maybe suppressed before publication as it is not uncommon

10 Myagmar, 2001
11 Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, 1963
12 Mendee, 2012; Ledeneva, 2008
13 Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, 2012; Globe International Center, 2015

for journalists to be charged with defamation.[14] Additionally, Mongolian citizens have been labeled as "journalists" and then taken to court over their tweets, even for reports which turned out to be factual. Two Mongolian tweeters – who never worked as journalists – have been convicted of this type of defamation. These charges were filed by the (now former) Minister of Roads and Transportation A. Gansukh against Ts. Bat and L. Davaapil for their allegations of corruption. Ts. Bat was initially sentenced to three months in prison for his tweets. He was later released on appeal when the court decided to further investigate the case.[15] The second tweeter, L. Davaapil, was fined 9.7 million Mongolian tugriks (approximately US$5,200) for his tweet that asked, "[F]or how much money did you make an agreement with Samsung for the construction of a 1 km railroad[?] That money you swindled in the result of the agreement is much more than the saved money you mentioned."[16] Allegations of corruption in Mongolia may be common, but this was one of the largest to be seen and debated online.

While these cases were attributed to a power play by Minister A. Gansukh, they also sent a warning to future tweeters regarding state regulation of online deliberation. Minister of Culture Ts. Oyungerel stated that this case

> gives a very bad message about Mongolia. […] We have democracy, we have human rights, that all countries are struggling for. But if we lose it from within, what will we turn into? It is very bad news for Mongolian citizens, for Mongolia's future, for Mongolian democracy.[17]

While Oyungerel's statement is reassuring, it is similar to the statements regarding media freedom that Sabloff collected in 2013 which indicated many Mongolians expressed democratic ideals but did not anticipate democratic policies.[18] This lack of anticipated democracy, or perhaps democratic pessimism, might be traced to the large and growing economic divide in Mongolia. When the country transitioned to a capitalist democracy there were many training programs for citizens who had high literacy levels but had not been encouraged to engage in critical thinking or critical analysis of the press.

Mongolians followed and responded to these defamation cases via Twitter. For example, one tweeter asked, "Since when is social network deemed

14 Sabloff, 2013
15 News.mn, 2012; OSCE, 2014
16 Globe International Center, 2015
17 Khash-Erdene and Gardner, 2014
18 Sabloff, 2013

as press media. Which law mentions this? #FreeBat."[19] It is apparent that Mongolian tweeters were well aware of these two cases, and that twitter censorship and liability were active concerns among online deliberators. While the outside observer might expect that only a few, elite Mongolians have access to these deliberations, a review of network availability and the use of new media platforms indicates expansive access and use throughout Mongolia.

## New Media in Mongolia

The expansion of cellular and Internet access throughout Mongolia has been quick and expansive. Cellular service was first made available in Mongolia in 1996. Access grew quickly in the cities; by 2005, 30% of Mongolian districts had reliable access, though only 1% of Mongolia's rural residents had cellular connections.[20] I first worked in Mongolia in 2004, and at that time we took satellite phones into the field. These phones connected for a few hours each day utilizing an archaic system of bouncing cellular signals off of those transmitted by cruise ships. As a result, international calls could cost hundreds of dollars, a price out of reach for almost all of Mongolia's population. It was common, instead, to travel to the local post office to use a landline. This required both extensive travel and time as upon arriving at the post office you had to wait for a free line and for the operator to connect your call.

Today, rural residents are no longer reliant on post office phone lines. Due to the successful implementation of the "E-Mongolia" program and funding from the World Bank, all districts have mobile phone service, rural herders have satellite-based public phone service, and 34 of the largest districts have broadband Internet access.[21] The rate of cell phone ownership in Mongolia has been consistently higher than in many parts of the world. The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Asian Media Barometer (2012) reports that while ownership of cell phones worldwide has stayed at a constant 80% of the population, in Mongolia, 120% of the population owns a cellular phone.[22] This number is possible because the Communications Regulatory Commission of Mongolia counts SIM cards rather than cellular phones. Their report indicates that

19 Globe International Center, 2015
20 World Bank, 2011b
21 World Bank, 2011a
22 Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, 2012, p. 31.

in 2015 Mongolia had 3,068,200 active mobile subscribers, 2.2 million of which have 3G access and 1.9 million with smartphones.[23] It is possible for there to be more SIM card accounts than phones because many Mongolian phones can accommodate multiple SIM cards. When asked why and how they use cellular phones, herders frequently discuss access, commodity price information, and weather forecasts.[24] Using cellular networks, herders are able to price their products (meat, wool, milk, and live animals) at competitive rates, rather than relying on the prices that are offered by traders.[25] Herders also rely on their cellular access in the case of medical emergencies, such as to call for ambulances.[26] Development organizations also use these networks to contact rural communities. For example, Mercy Corps sends SMS messages to herders to alert them to poor weather.[27] And UNICEF sends information regarding child rights.[28] The integration of these technologies into the lives of pastoral nomadic herders is one way that herders are able to maintain their traditional ways of life while staying connected to the rest of the nation.[29]

Herders are able to utilize their cellular phones in the most remote parts of Mongolia by taking advantage of expansive solar power projects. In 2005, projects funded by the World Bank, the Dutch Government, and Xac Bank (Mongolia) offered microloans for training and installation of solar panels throughout Mongolia. By 2014, more than 100,146 solar panels had been installed throughout Mongolia.[30] The availability of solar energy, coupled with the extremely low price of text messages, has resulted in one of the most technologically connected nations.

Government officials have gestured toward utilizing this communicative network to facilitate public political argument. For example, in 2012, Prime Minister N. Altankhuyag created the "11-11" program, a phone line for citizens to call and express their opinions.[31] Within Ulaanbaatar, the city municipality's transparency project has resulted in the uploading of government documents and court cases to a publicly available, online server. Uploaded documents, such as digitized land-demarcation maps

23 Communications Regulatory Commission of Mongolia, 2016a
24 Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, 2012
25 Hay, 2014
26 World Bank, 2014
27 Mercy Corps, 2016
28 UNICEF, 2013
29 Diener, 2011
30 Hay, 2014
31 Geismar, 2015

could enable more citizens to settle land disputes, or prevent disputes from occurring.[32] These projects aim to overcome intuitional exclusion, which has been linked to the violence that erupted after the 2008 elections, as well as to provide a more stable and deliberative democracy.[33]

## Digital Diplomacy

The availability of solar panels and cellular phones explains the capability of the state to call for a deliberative poll or a referendum via text message. Yet, even full cellular coverage cannot guarantee that all citizens will participate in a referendum.[34] Before enacting the 2015 national referendum, Mongolia tested out the use of referendum via text message in a local context. Between 2013 and 2014 the mayor of Ulaanbaatar called for three referendums via text message on the issues of car regulation and recycling.[35] The October 27, 2013, referendum asked about traffic restrictions. In that poll, 23% of potential voters participated, and the majority supported continuing the status quo regulations.[36] This type of pretest of legislation, in which legislators are able to reach out to constituents to ask if they perceive the same dangers and flaws in society as their law makers, is a novel way to bring in the perspective and ideas of all citizens, not just those that attend town halls or call their representatives.

When the 2015 referendum via text message was announced, Mongolian government officials and media spokespeople were careful to indicate that the referendum was not politically or legally binding and was intended only as a way for the public to indicate their opinion. Yet, if as Dierkes argues, the referendum was meant to legitimate Mongolia's democracy, it would need to be influential and demonstrate more than a false gesture from the national government.[37] In the following analysis, I ask how the referendum was phrased, debated, and reported. In doing so, I pay attention to the production of a false dilemma between the referendum options, as identified by online deliberators. Then I examine Saikhanbileg's strategic maneuver of reframing the argument and mandate to indicate national support for an Oyu Tolgoi contract.

32 Theunissen, 2015
33 Oleinik, 2012
34 Gastil, 2008; McBride, 2005
35 Dierkes, 2015
36 Zoljargal, 2013
37 Dierkes, 2015

## Phrasing the 2015 Referendum

The 2015 vote was announced by Prime Minister Saikhanbileg on national television, indicating that an SMS vote would be taken over a four-day period between January 31 and February 3, 2015. Every cell phone number, except for very recently acquired numbers, would receive one vote. The referendum question, as translated by the University College London stated:

> Together let's choose our pathway of development for Mongolia 2015-2016:
>
> 1. Set the price [meaning to reverse the depreciation of the Mongolian currency and rising inflation] by deciding on Oyu Tolgoi [a copper and gold mine] and other big construction projects.
> 2. Set the price by reducing our spending and consumption, and discipline the economy.
>
> Please send the number in front of your response to 15151111.[38]

The referendum question was sent to all Mongolian SIM cards via text message. It was also supported by posters, postings on social media, and a televised announcement by Saikhanbileg. In the interview which accompanied the referendum's announcement, Saikhanbileg indicated:

> I think it is not [a] bad thing to ask the public about solving problems. The people are actually the decision-makers. They vote and choose the members of government and parliament. There is no wrong thing to ask the public once. I want the public to be very active on this poll and the economists must hear their views. If this measure really works successfully, I am ready to give a plan of works that shows a list of measures to be taken through the first or second options. I hope it will help to solve the problem, and will ease the issues for MPs to make their decisions.[39]

Saikhanbileg's statement indicates an openness to debate about mining policy. Yet, analysts identified Saikhanbileg's collectivist goals as invigorating public debate, and showing that a politician can directly reach out to Mongolian citizens.[40] Other commenters noted that there were a number

38 Geismar, 2015
39 Saikhanbileg, 2015
40 Barradas, 2015; Dierkes, 2015

of individual goals at play. Saikhanbileg may have been trying to produce the appearance of political capital. Or he might have tried to decentralize responsibility if his mining policy failed while increasing governmental legitimacy. Or, it has been alleged that he might have tried to prove to international investors that the public supports mining.[41]

Early analysts, both international and Mongolian, predicted that voters would support option number one, which was in line with the government's policy. The government's preference for option number one was made clear through its positive phrasing, which implied future prosperity through the signing of mining contracts. The second option was negatively phrased, calling for economic discipline that extended well beyond the mining contract to include household budgets and personal finances. Some commentators indicated that the second option actually constituted a threat of national and financial ruin.[42] Analysts also deplored the lack of mutual exclusivity between the voting options.[43] Immediately after announcing the vote, online forums began to appear to deliberate on this phrasing and the implications of the 2015 referendum via text message.

## Twitter and the False Dilemma

Mongolians quickly commented on the referendum via text message by tweeting with the hashtag #15151111. These tweets included arguments such as there was not enough time to vote, mining is a risky path for the national economy, and that the referendum was illegal (both because of its distribution and because of the false perception that it was legislatively binding).

A subset of these tweets took to parodying the referendum's phrasing and options. These tweeters argued that despite this positive and negative framing, the options were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Voters who agreed with both options were not given a third voting option and it is not clear how they chose or if they chose to participate in the vote. Some tweeters made comparisons between the referendum and *Mongolian Idol* – the allegation being that the vote was a mere popularity contest. Others mocked the lack of choice. For example, Marzan tweeted: "Solution to government polls: 1. Pushing? 2. Towing?"[44] This tweet was accompanied by a picture

41 Wilson and Hornby, 2015; Geismar, 2015; Edwards, 2015a
42 Geismar, 2015
43 Dierkes, 2015; Geismar, 2015
44 Marzan, 2015

of one of Mongolia's notoriously stalled trolleys which citizens were either pushing or towing through the capital's main street. Marzan not only points to the limited linguistic division between options one and two, he also recalls pressing social issues which the government has failed to address.

This parody, and the much larger pool of tweets that it represents, demonstrates the ways that Mongolians identified a false dilemma fallacy in the wording of the 2015 referendum. A false dilemma fallacy is usually based on a deductively valid argument. Yet, they utilize incorrect reasoning, which is based on deductive invalidity. As such they may misleadingly appear to only offer logically correct reasoning.[45] In doing so, these fallacies overemphasize the negative consequences of an action.[46] The second option in the Mongolian referendum demonstrates this overemphasis when it implies that not only will a single mining contract be rejected, but also the entire country will fall into financial ruin. The parody tweet can therefore be seen as a corrective to the false dilemma fallacy. It produces active criticism which highlights the lack of mutual exclusivity and indicates that both options one and two have a complex set of consequences. Using parody, Mongolian commentators encouraged voters to think beyond the government's framing of the vote.

Some tweeters called for a rejection of the entire referendum via text message, refusing to vote as an indication of a lack of faith in the system, or lack of clarity in provided options. It may have been arguments such as this that resulted in such a low voter turnout. For example, consider ErikF's tweet, posted on February 2, 2015, two days into the voting period: "Saikhanbileg surveys 3 million people, 160,000 answered, 90% of citizens resisted. This was a stupid question."[47] Similarly, a commenter for Gesmar's online report indicated "majority of public did not respond because the poll itself was followed with scare tactic, not choose no. 1 possibility the public will more suffer."[48] Some commenters also alleged that foreigners and teenagers were casting votes.[49]

This commentary alongside low voter turnout supports prior predictions regarding e-governance. As e-governance scholars Tony Susanto and Robert Goodwin indicate, awareness and benefits of SMS-based e-government does not ensure that it will be used or trusted.[50] Instead, it may be that

45 Tomic, 2013, p. 348
46 Tomic, 2013, p. 355
47 ErikF, 2015
48 Geismar, 2015
49 Namkhaijantsan, 2015
50 Susanto and Goodwin, 2013, p. 486

e-governance requires that a government work harder to prove that the vote is valid. There may have been openings for this type of validity-proving work during the 2015 referendum, but these were not seized upon by the government. Rather than report on or reply to public skepticism, the government focused on statistical outcomes and implied that the referendum provided a mandate to go ahead with mining contracts. This reporting was supported through the government's strategic reframing of the results and subsequent deferral to the referendum's results to dispel later skepticism toward its policies.

## Reframing the Results

The results of the referendum were announced on national and international media. Although the vote was sent to 3 million SIM cards, only 356,841 votes were cast and 302,008 votes counted with 56.1% of voters in support of option one. Coverage of these results was split. the Mongolian media proclaimed the vote to be a "flop" by emphasizing the low voter turnout and the small margin of error between yes and no votes.[51] *Asia One* indicated that "netizens ridiculed the exercise, decrying the poll as a 'sham' and an 'obvious attempt by the government to divert liability.'"[52] And Kip Keen, editor of *Mineweb*, suggested that the 12% gap between voters supporting options one and two was not a disaster, but did indicate the need for caution among investors.[53]

Reports referring to Saikhanbileg's administration or in major mining publications took a different angle. In these publications, the vote was reframed to support for all international mining. For example, B. Anhbayar, the Mongolian Investment Group CEO, indicated that Mongolia was about to approve the Oyu Tolgoi contract.[54] One online mining journal ran an article titled "Mongolia Text Poll Impact: Dust off Your Exploration Plans."[55] Additionally, the international press, such as *Reuters*, largely overlooked the lack of political authority of the vote, instead indicating that Mongolians had voted and implying that the vote occurred via a valid, democratic process.[56] Larger press outlets such as the *International Business Times* reported that

51 Graubner, 2015
52 Asia One, 2015
53 Keen, 2015
54 Edwards, 2015b
55 Els, 2015
56 Edwards, 2015a

the vote gave Saikhanbileg a mandate to negotiate the mining contract.[57] Similarly, *Bloomberg News* interviewed Dale Choi, head of Independent Mongolian Metals & Mining Research. Choi said, "I give [the Prime Minister] credit for going to the public because the one thing that all these people will listen to is the public opinion."[58] It is unclear what "public" means in this report. Instead, the author indicates that the vote was a convenient way to smooth over controversies relating to mining by producing the appearance of public support. Finally, Jason Cox, Chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, is quoted as saying "the results of the poll provide a strong case for investment and moving projects forward. We hope these results will create the momentum that this economy needs."[59]

When declaring public support, the government frequently used an appeal to authority. They did not include voting percentages or any questions regarding the validity of the vote. Instead, they made overarching claims about public deliberation and support. Then, the government and trade organizations operationalized these reports to encourage investment and assert that Mongolians had finally come around to supporting international mining.

## After the 2015 Referendum Vote

Habermas argues that public argument has an emancipatory potential, and, in Mongolia, the involvement of the public in mining policy is precisely the type of emancipation that is needed.[60] The ongoing herders' protest at the World Bank indicates that herders want to be, and expect to be, consulted regarding policy decisions, especially those that affect their lands. The 2015 referendum came close to meeting this demand for consultation. But it fell short due to an artificial time constraint, four days of voting, after which Saikhanbileg declared that the public supported mining contracts. It was also subjected to questions of legitimacy, about its legality, and if owners of multiple SIM cards were given multiple votes. Yet, the process of holding a referendum had lasting effects on the expectations of herders in Mongolia. The 2015 referendum was unlikely to resolve complex, national questions regarding mining politics and economic policy. However, the referendum might have led to greater participation by producing an expectation or habit of voting

57 Neicho, 2015
58 Kohn, 2015
59 Edwards, 2015b
60 Habermas, 1984

throughout rural communities. While Mongolia has a small population, it is geographically larger than all of Western Europe, and is a common test case for emergent democratic policies and rural projects. Polls similar to Mongolia's referendum via text message have been held in Armenia and Georgia.[61] It is likely that more examples of referendums conducted via text message and deliberative polling will become available as research on the COVID-19 pandemic becomes available. The example of Mongolia's 2015 referendum is informative to international efforts that encourage voter deliberation and participation by even the most rural voters. Voter turnout for the Mongolian 2015 referendum was low, and the margin of success was minimal. However, the trend of digital deliberation is remarkable. Even if Mongolians did not participate in the 2015 referendum, the Mongolian government may have set a precedent for future public political argument. For example, in January 2016, the Mongolian parliament announced that it was working on a law on public referendums. The drafted law would put any issue that had not been resolved after three parliamentary sessions to a public referendum.[62] From herders' statements and changes in political rhetoric, it is evident that even if the referendum itself was a flop, the 2015 referendum will have a long-lasting impact on the ways that herders engage in public political argument in Mongolia.

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61 Harutyunyan, 2014; Barradas, 2015

62 Khuder, 2016

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# 7. Sámi Protests to Preserve the Arctic

**Abstract**
The Sámi of Finland, Norway, and Sweden have turned to online petitions, protests, and campaigns as a way to fight against deep-sea drilling, oil extraction, and railway development. The Sámi's protests are made difficult because on paper these seem like ecologically sound developments, but in reality they damage the pastures and herds in the region. Through Twitter and YouTube, the Sámi have launched a diversity of campaigns to maintain and reclaim their rights. This chapter also examines the role of international agreements for a transnational herding community.

**Keywords:** Sámi, Finland, Norway and Sweden, Arctic, green technologies, Twitter

The most recent generations of Sámi reindeer herders of Northern Europe have seen the permafrost begin to melt, icebergs slip away, and the snowfalls become unpredictable. These changes make it difficult to herd reindeer, which are dependent on eating lichen which can only grow on permafrost. The warmer landscape also opens up the possibility of new diseases and different growing seasons. As the landscape becomes less hospitable to reindeer, it becomes more enticing to developers, who have begun looking to the north as a place to find oil, establish wind farms, and expand the railway to transport energy generated in the region.

These development projects have received international attention because they will affect the economy of all Arctic nations, resulting in energy independence and cleaner energy production. International commenters have celebrated the expansion of the railway, which would connect the Arctic to the rest of the EU. Supporters are proud of this ecological method of travel, and the new connection for Arctic communities. Yet the Sámi fear that building the railway will result in the loss of herding lands that they will never be able to regain. In this chapter we will examine the ways that supporters of the railways have tried to frame the Sámi at odds with

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sound ecological policy and national growth. Sámi activists describe this paradox by stating that Sámi livelihoods – including reindeer herding – are among the "greenest" there is. They argue that the Sámi have always used and are still using their traditional areas in an ecologically responsible and sustainable manner. As a result, Sámi lands show few traces of habitation. That policy makers have tried to develop what the Nordic peoples define as "green energy" is a paradox that illuminates the contemporary struggles that mobile and nomadic communities face.[1]

This chapter investigates the concept of a green paradox by examining how the Sámi, a herding community with approximately 90,000 members living in Finland, Sweden, Norway, and the Kola Peninsula of Russia, are responding to new "green" energy policies. The response to these policies varies between each nation, and the rights of the Sámi in each country. For example, Sweden recognizes the Sámi as an indigenous people with rights to consultation. Legislation is very different across the border in Russia, which does not recognize consultation rights. While many of these conflicts occur in the interior of a nation, they also cross the nations in which the Sámi live, and many of their protests, especially those occurring on new and social media, demonstrate this transnationalism. In their complaint to the UN regarding mining politics, the Sámi argue, "without reindeer herding, the Sámi culture and society cannot survive. On an individual level, reindeer herding constitutes the most central element of Sámi reindeer herder's cultural identity."[2] These complaints are powerful both for their rhetoric and grounding in history. They are also internationally approachable as the Sámi strategically utilize image testimony to invite an international audience to understand their pastures, which are further north and much colder than most visitors choose to travel.

We'll begin with a brief overview of the threats that the Arctic Railroad poses to the Sámi. Then, we will explore the ways that the Sámi are responding to this threat through in-person protests, which are recorded and distributed across an assortment of languages, new media platforms, and communities. Their success in blocking the development of the railway – and the public response to this success – points toward the potential for new and social media to build new networks among communities, and strengthen historic networks of community and protest across herding communities.

1 Saami Council, 2017, pp. 4-5

2 Girjas Sami Village, n.d., p. 3

## Arctic Corridor and Arctic Railway

As mineral extraction an energy production increase across the Arctic, developers are pushing for new ways to quickly move those resources and energy to consumers in Southern Europe. These plans became necessary after Arctic oil exploration sped up in 2013 when Norway issued licenses for drilling in the Hámmárfeasta, the Svalbard archipelago, and Arctic Russia regions. Geologists have known that oil exists in this region for a long time. Similarly, they have been aware of the ore deposits at Kiruna and other enticing sources of minerals and oil in the region. However, these deposits were not explored until recently when the Arctic climate began to change. Today, warmer weather and melting glaciers simultaneously make the region more difficult for herders to carry out their tasks and yet easier for miners seeking to access the region and exploit its resources.

Plans for mineral extraction and transportation have been collected together in the Arctic Corridor Proposal, which aims to capitalize on the deep-water ports of the Arctic Sea, as well as the oil and gas production along the sea route. This expanded transportation network will bring together the Northern Sea Route and a newly established railway. This railway, if completed, would provide a continuous link from the Mediterranean to the Arctic Ocean. At a cost of approximately 3 billion euros, the project is in the planning stages with five different active proposals under review.

For the Sámi, the railway threatens to disrupt pastures and pathways that are used to cross the Arctic landscape. Railroad lines would require reindeer to stay in smaller and smaller pastures to avoid moving trains, railway lines, and railway support structures such as depots and towns. These new construction projects would prevent the Sámi from migrating to new pastures, and, as a result, their reindeer herds may quickly consume the food and resources in the region. This process of enclosing a community through railway lines and then forcing that community's herds to graze on too-small patches of land has occurred in East Africa, setting an example for the Sámi of the dangers that railways can pose to herding communities. Veikko Feodoroff, a herder from Näätämö, Finland, argued that the train's path would cut through the Inari swamp and that if the railway is built, "herding in its present form would crumble."[3]

The Sámi have worked hard to be ready for these types of challenges and have a number of governing and advising bodies that are designed to participate in these types of projects. For example, the Sámi Parliament, protected by

3 Åkerholm, 2018

the Finnish Sámi Parliament Act, is supposed to be involved in determining any policies that affect the Sámi language, culture, or existence as indigenous peoples. Yet, despite these guarantees of consultation, Tiina Sanila-Aikio, chairman of the Sámi Parliament, indicates that true consultation did not occur before Norway and Finland announced which of the five routes they would support.[4] While the Sámi were made aware of five different options for the railway, their opinion was not taken or considered in selecting the Rovaniemi-Kirkenes option. The Sámi are opposed to this option as it will cut across the Sámi's pasturelands and does not provide for any specific remedies for the communities that will be affected. Sanila-Aikio argues that every time they raise an objection to the plans, they are told that the objection will be dealt with at some indefinite time in the future. The fear is that the planning committee will never get around to addressing the Sámi's concerns and will instead continue to push forward with the railway, despite the harms that will occur to the community. The Sámi successfully stalled, and potentially ended, the plans to build the Arctic Railroad in early 2020. The *Barents Observer*, an independent, online newspaper based in Norway, declared in a headline that "The Dream of Arctic Railway Fades as Sami Herders Signal 'Veto.'"[5] The story did not get much international attention, and the development companies proposing the railway have not yet updated their web pages or released any statements about the veto. While government officials do not seem to be pushing the project any further, international corporations do appear to be continuing their planning and investment in the project.

Yet, the Sámi do not totally reject all railway plans – members of the Sámi Parliament such as Anu Avaskari have argued that while there are disadvantages to the plan, the community should not say no to the railway all together.[6] Instead, the Sámi are demanding to participate in the decision-making process in the ways that are constitutionally guaranteed for them. This determination to participate is based on Sámi tradition and herding activities. Both, they maintain, are in line with green energy initiatives.

## The Green Energy Paradox

The Sámi acknowledge the need for more power across the Arctic region, the establishment of new transportation networks and the general push

4 Åkerholm, 2018
5 Nilsen, 2020
6 Åkerholm, 2018

toward ecological energy production and transportation. They note that conflicts which had been emerging over the production and use of green energy have intensified recently. And they indicate that these conflicts are calling attention to the way that the Sámi are discussed in both national and international politics. Oliver Truc, an author who writes about Arctic issues, indicated that "[t]here is significant discrimination against the Sámi, and things are getting worse because of the pressure put on the [northern] territories by mining and other industries."[7]

Evidence of these increased tensions can be seen in the ways Sámi parliaments and councils have been ignored in decision-making processes, as well as in small interactions between Sámi protesters and the police. For example, on April 11, 2018 a Sámi *kåta*, which is similar to a teepee, was burned by Swedish police who, with the backing of the local government said that the *kåta* was a new, and therefore illegal, building. The Sámi owner, Anita Gimvall, argues, however that there has always been a *kåta* on the land, and that the 2010 building was simply the updated version of historic structures. In her interview with Swedish Radio, Gimvall argues that the issue at hand is the land rights of the Sámi, particularly those that do not herd reindeer. While reindeer-herding Sámi have been consulted in Sweden, Gimvall contends that they are only a small number of the community, and that many more consultations would be necessary if all Sámi were appropriately consulted regarding policy decisions.[8]

In protesting against these new plans, the Sámi have the dual goal of portraying their communities as ecological defenders of the Arctic and supporters of green technologies. They also are working to explain the ways and reasons that they are specifically opposed to the technological developments and changes that are underway. One way that the Sámi are making these arguments is through the use of online and social media platforms. Emergent protests come from youth groups, speaking through tweets, YouTube videos, and in-person protests against specific problems and general degradation of their homelands. Through imagery and videos, these Sámi advocates are able to bring images, sounds, and information about the Arctic to supporters who may never visit the region. They are able to show the Great Northern Forest in which they live, and which serves as the largest carbon store on Earth. And they are able to demonstrate how protecting these lands is critical to both their own community but also all human communities which are dependent on clean air and water.

7 Local, 2016
8 Local, 2018

Few people are able to travel to the Arctic, and even fewer are able to quickly find and participate in protests in that region. Sámi activists reflect on this problem of bringing in international supporters to join their protests. While they aim to have as many members of their community at each protest as possible, those community members are often consumed in the day-long, time-intensive process of herding. This requires constant attention to the herds, which cannot be left alone while a herder attends a protest. Speaking to a protester against a new oil and gas platform, reporters from *Occupy.com* found that "more people support her than actively protest, but the livelihoods here are such that the reindeer herding is time-demanding and herders have their own battles to fight over land rights."[9]

The Sámi have also reached out to international organizations and other herding communities for support. Members of Canadian First Nations and Maori communities in New Zealand have attended their protests and Sámi community members have also traveled internationally to present their arguments. The connections formed by these protesters are apparent in events such as the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in which a video of "50 protesters in Hámmárfeasta illustrating the dangers of Arctic drilling was shown to the negotiators."[10] Many of the Sámi protests are in the Arctic, and it is unlikely that they will have thousands of international activists appear at their events. For this reason, they need to work hard to ensure that activists and supporters, no matter where they are located, are able to participate in and understand their protests.

The Sámi organization Suoma Sámi Nuorat has been integral to addressing this problem of remoteness and the need to control the ways that the Sámi are portrayed nationally and internationally through new and social media. In September 2018 they joined with Greenpeace to protests against the many projects that threaten the Great Northern Forest. Protesters from Suoma Sámi Nuorat carried out the event by marking four areas with red poles, banners, and chains of Sámi community members holding hands. These locations were chosen along the proposed railway lines and hold significant meaning to the Sámi. The filming of these protests shows a real view of Sámi herders standing in a line, holding posters reading "Eennam Lii Eellim" (Forest is life) as well as the English "Our Land, Our Future." The edited and distributed version of this film features English-language captions overlaid on images of the Sámi landscape. "Finland's indigenous people are taking a stand to protect their homeland." The video introduces the issue of industrial

9 Rushton and Malinen, 2017
10 Rushton and Malinen, 2017

railway building, a project that the video suggests will cost $3.6 billion and cut through herding lands. Petra Biret Magga-Vars, a member of the Sámi Parliament, is featured, telling viewers that this is an example of "how the state of Finland despises indigenous people like the Sámi." A second member of the Sámi Parliament, Tiina Sanila-Aikio, historicizes the problem and the way that the Sámi have not been able to get information about the planned railway or its effects on the Great Northern Forest. The video then includes the kind of image that has become predominant in these kinds of media – that of a village elder declaring through social and new media that a protest is about to occur. In this video, Tuula-Maija Magga-Hetta, an elder from the Vuotso village, indicates "we now have a voice and we are going to use it." This video, and other productions like it, are one way that the Sámi are strategically utilizing image testimony

*Our Land, Our Future* was distributed across the Internet, on the Twitter feeds of Sámi politicians, and in Greenpeace materials. It also serves as supporting evidence of the Greenpeace petition, titled "Protect Forests, Protect Life," which aims to force the Finnish government to respect the Sámi's rights as indigenous peoples. The letter is signed by an assortment of herders, musicians, conservationists, teachers and academics. Following the Twitter feeds of these participants indicates a wide set of online engagements occurring both among the Sámi and between the Sámi and other communities.

The images that resulted from this protest and video demonstrate the power of an image event, a communicative activity that Kevin DeLuca describes in his book *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism*. In this text, DeLuca discusses the ways that organizations such as Greenpeace intentionally design photographs for international distribution.[11] He then argues that images can do things – in the case of the Sámi, they can bring attention to a problem, frame the problem in a unique light, and encourage new debates about politics in remote regions. This ability to present their own arguments through words and visual images is particularly important for communities such as the Sámi, who, like many remote peoples, face difficulties bringing international observers and other protesters to the locations that they are working to protect.

This video ties into other activities undertaken by Sámi activists and educators who are working to ensure that the Sámi have an equal right and a place in deliberation about their ancestral homelands. The petitions have been sent to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of

11 DeLuca, 2012

Racial Discrimination. The Sámi argue that many of the difficulties that they face are based on generations of discrimination from their nonherding neighbors. Evidence of this continued discrimination includes assumptions by government agents that the Sámi should assimilate into mainstream culture, to the use of Sámi images and traditional clothing in marketing campaigns. Additionally, the Sámi are at times spoken of only as an unknowable, distant group rather than individuals, and Sámi children are at times forced to speak non-Sámi languages at school, even during out-of-class times. This desire to speak one's own language at school, especially during extracurricular activities, is particularly important for communities such as the Sámi who have a history of being forced to attend boarding schools which did not allow the speaking of their own languages. The result of this language loss, and the resulting implications, including spiritual, intellectual, mental and physical harm, continue to affect indigenous communities such as the Sámi.[12] "There is a mutual distrust between the Sámi and the authorities at local and national level, which is rooted in historical unrighteousness."[13] Government projects have been designed to address these historic problems. For example, a truth commission is underway in Sweden to study the human rights abuses that the Sámi have faced.[14] This commission is designed as a way to both better understand the historical interactions between the Sámi and the government and the ways in which the Sámi can work to ensure their human rights in the future.

Sámi youth have also turned to social media to address these historic problems and are attempting to repair the relationship between the Sámi and their neighbors. For example, in 2017, Sámi activists from Sweden were using a set of hashtags to rally together support for an antiracism campaign. As a part of this campaign, the organizers wanted to call attention to the problems that the Sámi face and the ways that non-Sámi citizens might work with the Sámi to create more inclusive public spheres. Writers were asked to post to hashtags over a period of three days. The inclusiveness of this project is readily apparent in the text of the hashtags made available in Swedish as well as Sámi languages: Swedish (#vardagsrasismmotmigsomsame), Northern Sámi (#árgarasismamuvuostásápmelažžan), and Southern Sámi (#aarkerasismamovvööstesaemine). Translated into English, the hashtag would be #everydayracismtowardsSámi. The English-language hashtag did not receive much use, but the Swedish- and Sámi-language hashtags were

12 Juutilainen et al., 2014
13 Samediggi, 2018a
14 Samediggi, 2018b

used for a wide assortment of tweets. The posts in Swedish ranged from support for the Sámi from the broader Swedish citizenry.[15] They also show the difficulties that Sámi activists and educators face. For example, Johan S. McGuinne, president of the Saami Writers' Centre, wrote about a recent lecture, "You can't talk about Sámi in ordinary clothes. People have come for something exotic."[16] Or, in another example, journalist Anna-Helen Laestadius spoke about the award-winning move *Sámi Blood*, which shows the injustices that the Sámi faced from the 1930s to the present day. "I ask teachers at a school if they are to see *Sámi Blood* with the students, [but they answer], 'No. Because the movie shows a one-sided image.'"[17] Reflecting on the use of the hashtag, Sámi Parliament member Oscar Sedholm indicated that,

> It's good because it encourages people to come forwards with their stories. Bad, because there are few things that people enjoy as much as questioning other people's stories. [...] I clearly see the risk of hijacking, especially from the extreme right, which has a strong online presence, far beyond what we as a minority group can organize.[18]

Evidence of this hijacking can be seen in the Swedish-language posts, which are accessible to both Sámi community members and non-Sámi speakers of Swedish. Posts such as Henrick Blind's tweet, "You are Swedes. Why should tax funds go to translations of books to Sámi then you can read Swedish?"[19] demonstrate the difficulty that the Sámi face in justifying to their fellow citizens that their language should be preserved and protected. A much more violent example of these difficulties was experienced by the Sámi Journalist Anne Marit Päiviö, who tweeted her interaction with a 22-year-old Swedish male. Päiviö wrote that she had "received at least 20 PMs [private messages] by his friends, who all say that I should not believe I am special and that I am Swedish for I live in Sweden. And that I should be fucked Swedish."[20] Her Twitter feed provides images of these interactions, calling attention to the continued pressures that Sámi face on an individual level as well as the difficulties that they face in pressing for Sámi rights to be recognized as a minority among a much larger Swedish population. This dual need to

15 Nikki, 2017
16 McGuinne, 2017
17 Laestadius, 2017
18 Roden, 2017
19 Blind, 2017
20 Päiviö, 2018

participate while justifying one's own participation makes it more difficult for the Sámi to engage in online deliberations, but also shows one of the ways in which digital media is being adapted by pastoralists communities to engage a larger world.

Unfortunately, those who oppose the Sámi are using similar platforms. In January 2020 the Sámi of Sweden won a court case guaranteeing their ability to control hunting and fishing on their lands. This upset many non-Sámi, who wanted free access to those lands for hunting and did not want the Sámi's reindeer to be able to move freely. Soon after the diction was made, posts began to appear on Jodel, a platform which is similar to YikYak, that allows anonymous messaging to other Jodel users who are in proximity. Jodel promotes itself as a platform to "share news, events, funny experiences, discussions and jokes faster than ever!" Protesters were also able to share their hate speech directed at the Sámi. Liisa_i used Instagram to share one post that she received on Jodel. In part, posted in English, it says, "Save a wolverine kill a sapmi!!"[21] Within the week, at least ten other instances of hate crime had been reported to the police, and it is expected that more instances of hate speech occurred but were not reported.

## "We Are Still Here"

Sofia Jannok's song "We Are Still Here" is accompanied by artists painting in the tundra. They are standing in the snow, deep in the forest surrounded by reindeer. This is an area without buildings and walls, which has been continuously inhabited by the Sámi. To create a canvas, an artist, Anders Sunna, has wrapped plastic wrap between the trees, creating a transparent canvas onto which they illustrate the Sámi's struggles and connection to other struggling indigenous peoples and herders from around the world. Jannok sings,

> Kill the bison, dig out the reindeer's land
> Gold and iron, blood on greedy hands
> Drown the *lávvu*, burn the *tipi* down
> We raise new ones, survivors we are now
> We are still here[22]

21 Liisa_sol, 2020
22 Jannok, 2016

In Northern Europe, Sámi herders are continuing to protest against threats to their land, climate, and lifestyle. This chapter has examined how the Sámi are utilizing new and social media to record and explain this complex identity to local and international publics. Among the herding communities in this book, the Sámi have been most successful at realizing some of their goals. Many communities have established constitutional protection of their language and culture. Educational programs are in place to encourage young people to study their traditions and pass them on to future generations. However, the Sámi continue to face discrimination and conflict over the local and national development schemes. As this chapter has demonstrated, the Sámi are responding to these new pressures while contextualizing their struggles within centuries of colonization and discrimination. They are also forming new alliances, networks, and deliberative bodies. In the next chapter we will see how the Sámi participated in the 2016 Standing Rock protests.

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# 8. Standing Rock Unites International Protesters

**Abstract**

This chapter examines the involvement of youth members of the Lakota Sioux's organization and promotion of the Standing Rock protest of 2017 through new and social media. This protest against the expansion of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) brought together many Native American communities as well as their supporters from within the United States and around the world. This chapter focuses on the ways that international herding communities, including representatives of Sámi and Bedouin communities, joined and supported the Standing Rock protests. It also examines activities prompted by herding activists who took part in the DAPL protests.

**Keywords:** Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), NoDAPL, Lakota Sioux, Standing Rock, networked publics

Herding communities around the world face similar pressures from climate change, land loss, and cultural change. Many forums have worked to bring together elders from these communities, but seldom have the youth of each community been able to meet and create their own connections. This chapter examines the youth members of the Lakota Sioux's organization and promotion of the Standing Rock protest of 2017 through new and social media. This protest against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) brought together many Native American communities as well as their supporters from within the United States and around the world. This chapter focuses on the ways that international herding communities joined and supported the Standing Rock protests, creating a quilting point in which the youth of herding communities expressed support in person and online for each other's struggles.

Exploring the ways that these protesters utilized social media to gather supporters and send out news regarding their events, this chapter asks how

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the encampment in South Dakota garnered so much attention, and how that attention was used to create new networks between stakeholders. The networks discussed in this chapter emerge from a long history of local and international struggle, often centered around the Standing Rock reservation.[1] These historic connections are particularly noteworthy because even though the Sioux and Lakota have a tradition of herding akin to those practices seen among the Sámi, Bedouin, Maasai, and Mongolians, these Native American communities do not currently practice herding on a sizable level. Future researchers should investigate if this historic cultural connection might be demonstrative of a larger sense of community among these protesters around the world who appear to use both contemporary and historic similarities as rally points for resistance. In this chapter we are interested in the ways that protests against DAPL utilized new and social media, and how their messages helped to form an international community which continues to oppose the destruction of sacred sites, environmental pollution, and the breaking of treaties.

## Dakota Access Pipeline

In December 2014, Energy Transfer Partners applied to the US government to build a 1,100-mile-long, underground pipeline to carry crude oil through North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Illinois – the Dakota Access Pipeline. Part of this pipeline would travel underneath Lake Oahe in South Dakota, an important water source for the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. According to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the proposed pipeline violated Article II of the Fort Laramie Treaty, which guarantees the "undisturbed use and occupation of reservation lands surrounding the location of the pipeline."[2] The Standing Rock Sioux tribe expressed their opposition to the DAPL plan through meetings, petitions, various government channels, and, most famously, through an on-site encampment. Reports, images, and videos from this opposition drew national and international attention, calling together what would be known as "water protectors" from many different indigenous, native, and traditional communities as well as their allies and supporters.

When it was proposed, DAPL was advertised as creating 160 permanent jobs in each of the four states that the pipeline would travel through. Additionally, the pipeline was expected to produce $9.6 billion in total output,

1 For a detailed discussion of these connections, see Estes, 2019.

2 Smithsonian Institute, 2018

though that revenue would be distributed to multiple stakeholders.[3] The resulting tax revenue was expected to have a significant, positive, effect on local and national economies.[4] When predicting DAPL's success and funding, many reports focused on the specifics of propane and oil costs. Few reports directly addressed groups such as the Standing Rock Sioux, local farmers, and local residents who opposed the pipeline and would be negatively impacted by its construction. While DAPL planners did speak with local stakeholders, former Standing Rock Sioux councilman Randy White stated that those talks could not be considered authentic attempts at consultation as the plans were prepared before they were brought to the Sioux. White's testimony indicates the problem that the Sioux encountered; they were not invited for consultation until after the plans had been created. And even then, the Standing Rock Sioux contend that the pipeline was always already illegal as it violated the Standing Rock Sioux's treaties with the United States federal government.

Beginning in 2014, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council held meetings with DAPL representatives in an attempt to establish connections between the lands that were threatened by DAPL and the rights of the Sioux to protect those lands. Using public testimony and private meetings, the Sioux sought to control who had access to their information and how that information was used or distributed. Testimony provided at this time includes information about reservation boundaries, broken treaties, and environmental assessments. One advocate, Wasté Win Young, argued for the proper contextualization of what the project was – a pipeline that would cross both water and village lands, which had already been declared too dangerous for other cities. Additional information was given by Standing Rock Sioux's tribal historic preservation officer, Terry Clouther, who reported that the tribe has traditional knowledge of the region which is documented through oral history. That knowledge proves the importance of the location and reasons why the pipeline should not be built. However, Clouther did not want to provide that information for the written reports that would be published online and could reach anyone. Instead, he wanted to provide that information individually with decision-makers. This reticence, to make oral history and sacred history public, is common among the communities discussed in this book. Clouther's desire to share oral history in person, and to know who it was shared with, makes sense especially within the context of this book, which draws so many sources from online archives and media.

3 Siegelman, Lipsman, and Otto, 2014

4 Siegelman, Lipsman, and Otto, 2014, p. 8

## Establishing an Encampment

The encampment at Standing Rock started out small, at first as a project by Native American youth who built a small "prayer camp" on the north end of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.[5] The grassroots group Chante tin'sa kinanzi Po (People, Stand with a Strong Heart!) announced the opening of the camp on April 1, 2016, via Facebook:

> This camp will be called Iŋyaŋ Wakȟáŋağapi Thípi, translated as Sacred Rock, the original name of the Cannonball area. The Spirit Camp was dedicated to stopping and raising awareness of the Dakota Access pipeline, the dangers associated with pipeline spills and the necessity to protect the water resources of the Missouri river.[6]

The introduction and use of the Lakota language positions DAPL in the context of historical land ties and cultural significance of those land ties for the indigenous tribes in the area, attempting to effectively demonstrate the Sioux's claim to the land in a way the public and political system can recognize. A press release from the time of opening makes further historical connections by drawing parallels with quoting historic figures such as Chief Sitting Bull, who was killed on the Standing Rock River Reservation in 1890.

> "They claim this mother of ours, the Earth, for their own use, and fence their neighbors away from her, and deface her with their buildings and their refuse." – Chief Sitting Bull. His way of life is our way of life – standing in opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline is our duty.[7]

The group continued to make historic references to Sitting Bull, as well as protesters who fought in the Wounded Knee Occupation in 1973.[8] These historic ties placed the Standing Rock protests within a long history of protecting both land and culture.

Many press releases from this time emphasize that the land on which DAPL would be constructed was "sacred lands," which cannot be disturbed. To protest the construction of DAPL across this land, youth and elders called for a wide range of meetings, protests, and deliberations. This chapter focuses

5 Elbein, 2017
6 Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, 2016d
7 Camp of the Sacred Stones, 2016
8 Rich, 2004

on the work and supporters of the Native American youth who designed this encampment. They were first called the One Mind Youth and later the International Indigenous Youth Council (IIYC). The IIYC describes itself as "an organization that was started and led by womxn and two-spirit peoples during the Standing Rock Indigenous Uprising of 2016, while peacefully protecting the Cannonball and Missouri Rivers against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline."[9] The complex markers of identity in this statement, including "two-spirit peoples," which refers sometimes to individuals who have both male and female spirits, and other times to a third gender which is separate from both male and female, signals the inclusivity of this movement. While members of IIYC were at first ignored or opposed by their communities,[10] these youth continued to gather both local and international attention and support.

Soon, the camp grew exponentially, drawing protesters and supporters from around the country and around the world. It became what *The Nation* called, "the largest mobilization of Native American activists in more than 40 years – and one of the most vital campaigns for environmental justice in perhaps as long."[11] Calling themselves "water protectors," more than 10,000 protesters and supporters, including politicians such as former vice president Al Gore, visited the camp. Environmental groups, cultural groups such as the Rainbow Family, and international supporters also visited the camp. When the US Army Corps of Engineers announced that it would deny an easement on the Dakota Access Pipeline, thousands of military veterans joined the camp. Many of their remarks were recorded at #NoDAPL. As they emphasized work at DAPL, water protectors also worked to make connections between the actions at Standing Rock and the need for water protection in other areas, such as Minnesota, Oregon, British Columbia, and Louisiana.[12] Images of violence at the camp, often brought on by security, police, and guards who utilized violence, tear gas, mace, and attack dogs, brought further attention to the camp.

The encampment grew in part because the protesters' actions were not constrained to Standing Rock. Activities included a 500-mile relay run between the Sacred Stone Camp and the Omaha Army Corps of Engineers office. After the success of that run, protesters organized a longer run, this time 2,000 miles long, between Standing Rock and Washington, DC, to attract

9 IIYC, 2019a
10 Elbein, 2017,
11 Ratner, 2016
12 Pember, 2019

attention and gather supporters. The camp also included outward-facing media activities, using social media to gather friends and supporters, to ask for supplies, and to raise awareness of the risks posed by DAPL.

The importance of these youth protesters as organizers and community activists has been articulated in a variety of ways across many media platforms. As an organizer for the Indigenous Environmental Network told the *New York Times*, "The hope [is] that our generation will see a significant shift toward community renewal and nation building and the reminder that our communities expect big things of us."[13] Members of the Sacred Stone Camp spoke specifically about an age group known as the "Seventh Generation." Those born into this age group are roughly the same age as millennials, but their grouping holds special meaning and a unique history for this community. For many communities, these are the first children raised at home, who were not forced into boarding schools and who did not face as strong persecution as their ancestors. Due to ICT access, the ability to travel freely, and dispersed family groups, many of these youth are well versed in multiple cultures. They are unique among their communities because "they are familiar with their ancestors' scars but also fluent in mainstream American culture."[14] As such, they are expected to have special responsibilities, roles, and (hopefully) protective status among their communities.

Even after the DAPL camp closed, water protectors continued working to preserve the community they had created. As one of their many efforts, the IIYC sought to establish housing for those that had become to depend on the camp for a place to live. They also focused on improving support networks within their community. For example, they organized in December 2019 to repair the homes of families who were affected by hail storms in Pine Ridge, SD.[15] The many arrests at the protests against DAPL also required networking and organizing for long-term legal support and assistance from legal advocates. Long after the camp closed, court cases have continued. When his case was completed, James "Angry Bird" White released a statement which indicated in part,

> We all need to come to an understanding that we are killing the earth for money and profit. But we forget what we are destroying for our future generations. We need to come together as one – not as one better than

13 Elbein, 2017
14 Elbein, 2017
15 IIYC, 2019b

> the other – and to remember it's [sic] going to take us all to help fix what we're destroying. If not for us, then for our children and children's children to live.[16]

Statements like this were made by many activists who attended the Standing Rock reservation.

Live streaming of the Standing Rock protests and subsequent recordings, coupled with visual testimony from the event, have been widely distributed across a diversity of social media platforms. These oral histories, photographs, and videos record many aspects of the encampment and protests. Some are mundane, showing day-to-day activities. Others celebrate the many networking moments that emerged from this gathering space. And another recorded the many instances of altercation between protesters, police, and private security, who often brutally engaged with the protesters. One recorded video, produced by *Democracy Now!*, has garnered 1.3 million views on YouTube and more on the news program's homepage.[17] These media artifacts, combined with the international attention to the NoDAPL movement, provide a detailed look into the ways that the encampment and protests forged new networks among the many herding and mobile communities discussed in the book.

## Drawing Together Movements and Protesters

Speaking of the protests, Standing Rock Sioux chairman David Archambault II said, "The highlight was when our tribal communities came together and showed support. That was where I saw for the first time tribes across this nation, from around the world, come to Standing Rock and stand together."[18] Supporters came from many different social groups and organizations from around the world. The attendance, both physically and virtually, by herding communities is unique as these communities face many of the same pressures – from their position as trapped minorities, pressures from mining corporations, environmental risks, and a shared experience with colonial education. When they came together, many of these groups were able to use the protests to oppose the DAPL, but also as a vehicle for networking, discussion, tactic sharing, and fellowship. This networking was similar to

16 Water Protector Legal Collective, 2018
17 Democracy Now!, 2016
18 McKenna, 2017

the ways that indigenous peoples coalesced around the term "indigenous" during the United Nations International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples (1995-2004). Dorothy L. Hodgson writes:

> [I]n recent decades, scattered disenfranchised groups have coalesced into a broad-based, transnational social movement as they have recognized the similarities in their historical experiences and structural positions within their respective nation-states; consequently they have transformed formerly "domestic" disputes into international claims for recognition and rights.[19]

As this book has demonstrated, transnational social movements are continuing to coalesce around environmental issues, human rights, and land tenure. One moment of this coalescence was the visitation of Sámi community leaders to the DAPL protests. There are several artifacts of this visit found in print media, Facebook and Twitter.

*Yes!* magazine published a picture of Frank Cooper and Kaya Littleturtle of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina greeting Sámi representatives from Norway; Inger Biret, Kvernmo Gaup, and Sara Marielle Gaup. The accompanying story announced their arrival and contextualized it's meaning, saying

> This resistance campaign, many say, has emerged as part of a greater global crisis – a united struggle in which indigenous lands, resources, and people are perpetually threatened by corporations and governments often using military force. Integral to this shared narrative is the routine ignoring of treaties.[20]

This and similar reports positioned the Standing Rock encampment as a connector between many different indigenous movements. In recorded interviews and visual testimonies, participants reflect on the unifying themes of direct encroachment on their indigenous lands and lives by corporations and governments. As then Standing Rock chairman David Archambault II said, "To see tribes from all over the world who are having the same experiences – it was powerful to see that we aren't alone in our struggle."[21] These many connections have been collected in the "related struggles" page of the NoDAPL archives. This page is unique in that it shows

19 Hodgson, 2002, pp. 1039-1040
20 Monet, 2016
21 Monet, 2016

the expansiveness of the NoDAPL movement and documents the many ways that supporters directly connected with one another and formed new networks. Their narratives demonstrate the many different people and groups that came together to show their support and find new connections to struggles across the world. Some supporters, such as the Sámi, were able to send representatives while others used social media to send visual testimony of their support. In the next part of this chapter we will see examples of the ways that support was expressed online and the ways that protesters debated the authenticity of what *Yes!* magazine and others called "a global indigenous movement."[22]

## Bedouin Support

Bedouin tribal members, led by Salman Sadan from the Wadi Aricha village in Israel, wrote in to voice their support for the peoples of Standing Rock. In their letter, they drew connections to the traditions shared between the Bedouin and those at Standing Rock. They also highlighted their similar struggles and the challenges that they faced. Ending their letter, they stated, "Both of us face the challenge of maintaining our traditional way of life, which I believe has a very important role in the world, even in a technologically developed society."[23] The Bedouin from Wadi Aricha village may have found commonalities between their struggles due to the events that their own community members have faced with land loss. This "unrecognized" village in Israel is between the border and an Israeli Defense Force officer's school. Writing from Standing Rock, activists from the Trystan Foundation, which works in both the Negev and American West, indicated that they were working to enhance the connection between these two communities. While it was unlikely that the Bedouin from Wadi Aricha would be able to travel to Standing Rock, through the sharing of letters and pictures they were able to voice their support and connection with NoDAPL protesters.[24] The Trystan Foundation's team facilitated these engagements, which are digitally recorded on their web page. Additional connections between DAPL protesters and the Bedouin were forged at the NoDAPL protests and resulted in a traveling educational program between Travis Harden, a Lakota Hochunk activist, and Khalil Alamour, a Bedouin lawyer and

22 Monet, 2016
23 Sadan, 2016
24 Sadan, 2016

historian. Together, they traveled the American northeast to bring attention to multiple ongoing struggles.[25]

## Mongolian Support

Mongolians showed their support for NoDAPL protesters in many ways, most of them appearing digitally on Facebook. For example, the group Тэнгэр Монгол Газар (Mongolian Heaven and Earth) wrote in English on their Facebook page, "We are from Mongolia, group of Shamans are supporting the Standing Rock protest against the North Dakota Pipeline. Here are, we joined and sending our voice to the world. We live in one Earth. Save Water. Stop Nature terror."[26] The page then provides many links and summaries of the NoDAPL protests in Mongolian. These links serve to educate the group's 40,677 followers about the risks that DAPL would pose to the environment. This long posting was accompanied by images from the Mongol Tenger Unen Shaman Association which showed Mongolian herders and shamans supporting Standing Rock protesters. These images showed Mongolians in traditional shaman's attire, standing in front of a herder's tent (***ger***) and holding a sign which reads (in English): "I'm with Standing Rock: From Mongolia."

Mongolian herding traditions were also frequently referenced when reporters and supporters discussed images of the Standing Rock protest camp, which included several Mongolian *ger*s (also called yurts). These circular tents are used by Mongolian herders and can be quickly set up and broken down during migrations. Their walls are made of several layers of felt, often collected from the wool of their animals. By adding new felt layers, and controlling the central fire lit within, a *ger* can keep a family warm even in the -40 degree Mongolian winter. It is perhaps for these reasons that Mongolian *ger*s were used at the Standing Rock encampment for both a home school and for a women's camp. As a photographer Camille Seaman describes it, "The blowing winds, frigid winters and treeless terrain of North Dakota are similar to the Mongolian steppe, and the design of these ancient structures is well suited to provide shelter during the daunting cold of the coming winter."[27] While some of these *ger*s may have come directly from Mongolia, others were sent by supporters of the encampment. For example,

25 NENJP, 2017
26 Mongolian Heaven and Earth, 2016
27 Seaman, 2016

American Actress Jane Fonda sent 20 *gers*, as well as 2,700 pounds of meat to support the protesters.[28] As the one camp newsletter reported, "We now have the biggest Mongolian village, aside from Mongolia! 29 now, 16 more on the way! Preparing for winter! Along with a school, kitchen, medic, herbal, and we just keep on building. Making sure families have teepee's and yurts for winter."[29] Mongolian *gers* can be spotted throughout the images of the NoDAPL encampment, leaving a lasting connection between these communities.

## Samburu (Kenya) Support

East African support for the NoDAPL movement came from many sources and communities. One of the most noteworthy for this book's focus on the difficulties herders have in authenticating their participation emerged on March 12, 2017, when Professor Walter Echo-Hawk, a Pawnee author and lawyer, sent a short tweet: "Support from Africa," accompanied by an image of Samburu herdsmen. In the image, four men stand with Kenyan flag and a sign stating "Samburu Stands with Standing Rock #NoDAPL"[30] The comments after Walter Echo-Hawk's post point to the skepticism that this kind of solidarity is even possible. One commenter, Craig Charbonneau Fontaine, wrote, "The 4 dudes were merely walking pass the camera person, and he or she asked them, 'hey hold this sign for a minute.'"[31] A second commenter, Em Killinem, wrote, "I support this but it's definitely photoshopped."[32] Even after linking to a *Cultural Survival* article, which features the same image as well as a lengthy discussion of the issues that the Samburu face, commenters continued to question the authenticity, leaving posts such as "looks shopped, but anyways,"[33] which expressed their skepticism coupled with general support for NoDAPL protesters.

*Cultural Survival*'s reporters indicated that the Samburu in Kenya had held a demonstration in January 2016 to support DAPL. A Samburu leader, Naomi Leki, is quoted in the article, stating, "Myself and the women of Samburu stand with the women and families of Standing Rock who are

28 Fulton, 2016
29 Cosmic Reality, n.d.
30 Echo-Hawk, 2017
31 Fontaine, 2017
32 Killinem, 2017
33 Mase Mase, 2017

facing great injustice on their ancestral lands."[34] The Samburu face similar threats as their lands have been searched and targeted by development projects, including two oil pipelines, a highway, railway, dam, and three airports. All of these projects threaten to disrupt their herding lands, and through the disruption of herding lands will make it increasingly difficult for the Samburu to continue their traditional lifestyles. The Samburu's support therefore makes sense. And it is authenticated immediately by Echo-Hawk, who is a highly regarded historian, educator, and lawyer. Yet, the questions that were posted regarding the images' validity and the Samburu's knowledge of how their image was to be used, point to the many difficulties that mobile and nomadic peoples face when presenting their standpoints to the world.

## Sámi Support

Sámi youth were among those international supporters who were able to travel to the Sanding Rock River Reservation and participate in a set of discussions, musical exchanges, and debates. Contextualizing their participation, Delbert Black Fox Pomani sat with Sofia Jannok, Inger Biret Kvernmo Gaup and Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska to discuss their similar experiences in boarding schools, colonization, and the effects of climate change. Sámi delegation members also displayed traditional skills, an activity recorded by Ruth H. Hopkins on Twitter and shared as a bright moment at the camp.[35]

Beyond traveling to the reservation, the Sámi also led divestment initiatives in Europe. While the protests were going on, Sámi herders were effective in persuading Norwegian companies to divest in the DAPL project. This divestment occurred when the Sámi Parliament lobbied the Norwegian pension fund KLP to sell its $58 million worth of shares in the companies that were building the pipeline. Speaking to *The Guardian*, the president of the Sámi Parliament, Vibeke Larsen, explained their activities: "We feel a strong solidarity with other indigenous people in other parts of the world, so we are doing our part in Norway by putting pressure on the pension funds."[36] Efforts to further divest were led by groups such as the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN), which pressured the Bank of

34 Cultural Survival, 2017
35 Hopkins, 2016
36 Fixsen, 2017

Norway, Credit Suisse, and Deutsche Bank to divest from the DAPL pipeline, as well as Line 3 in Canada and the Keystone XL pipeline.[37] The protesters chose to focus on German, Norwegian, and Swiss banks because "these countries are home to some of the largest institutions financing extraction across North America and around the world."[38] Similarly, the Norwegian financial group Storebrand and Nordic bank Nordea divested from the pipeline companies. Sámi youth also held a flash mob protests against the DNB Bank in Trondheim in an attempt to encourage further divestment.[39] These acts of divestment are important in the effort to stop the construction of projects such as DAPL which is funded in part by international banks. They are also an important way in which stakeholders and citizens are able to hold international organizations accountable for their participation in the construction of pipelines.

## Using Social and New Media

Even as the camp was broken up by local and national law enforcement, journalists and supporters of water protectors continued to utilize the affordances of social media. This included live streaming the camp's break up. As *The Guardian* reported, "A live stream from independent journalist showed officers in military fatigues and riot gear marching through camp, some with rifles drawn, while a helicopter hovered overhead and heavy machinery began demolishing remaining structures."[40]

ICTs were critical to the nonviolent resistance seen at the encampment. A range of activities, from document sharing, organizing, and countersurveillance techniques were used to provide structure for the events occurring on the ground as well as those occurring online. The ability of supporters and opponents to view online videos and live-streamed events brought in even more attention, and may have changed the outcomes of many protest events at Standing Rock.[41] One digital platform, studied by Michelle Martini from Cambridge, was the Digital Smoke Signals Facebook page that became one of the most commonly followed information access points for protesters and supporters. The Facebook group draws parallels across the

37 Maida, 2018
38 Maida, 2018
39 Schanche, 2017
40 Wong, 2017
41 Martini, 2018

Americas, with information about the problems that indigenous peoples face in South America through to Canada. These movements were drawn together by DAPL, but the ending of the encampment did not signal the end of their connections.

## Lasting Effects of the Standing Rock Protest

Long after the camp had closed and many protesters had returned home, activists continued to reflect on the meaning of the pipeline and the international response. Speaking of DAPL, former Councilwoman Phyllis Young stated, "We realize we are in a national sacrifice area. [...] This is Dakota Territory, this is treaty territory – this is where you agree not to come into my territory. We signed a treaty of peace that you would not come here."[42] Yet, despite the many protests, meetings, encampments, and social media posts, the DAPL pipeline was finished and became operational in 2017. Since then, it has been moving 50,000 barrels of oil each day, radically increasing North Dakota's oil production.[43]

Even though the pipeline was eventually built, the encampment and the networks that coalesced around its construction have long lasting implications. Feminist Rauna Kuokkanen notes, "indigenous peoples' struggle for self-determination, therefore, is also a struggle to exist as a collective in the future, which implies being able to decide about and have control over that future as a people." This control over their future was demanded and organized by young people and their multigenerational supporters. For many, this was their first large protest. For others, this was the first time that they drew international parallels between their struggles and the struggles of other herding and nomadic communities. These participants frequently shared the sentiment that they might not yet feel ready for this responsibility, but they would try their best to assume and respect their new roles as leaders and protectors.

Many of the arguments advanced during the encampment were similar to those being made by indigenous and herding communities in other conflicts. Recall former Standing Rock Sioux councilman Randy White's objection that it is not consultation when plans have already been created. This is very similar to the arguments that are being made by Sámi protesters against the proposed railroad and by Mongolian herders against open-pit mining. The

42 Earth Justice, 2016. p. 36
43 McCown, 2018

postings to social media examined in this chapter demonstrate the ways that this similarity in objection has drawn together herding communities. Even though the NoDAPL campaign ultimately failed to block the pipeline, it did provide a rallying point around which international movements, including those of herding communities, could coalesce.

Just as with many contentious issues, protests against DAPL took on many forms. Some protesters focused on environmental problems, others on federal treaties. Some were specific to Lake Oahe, or the boundaries of the Standing Rock Sioux, and others were concerned about the whole world. What is unique is the number of different organizations that were drawn together in this effort. For example, on November 30, 2016, an open letter signed by more than 400 international civil society organizations was released demanding that banks stop financing DAPL.[44] The letter contextualized the international support that Standing Rock protesters had received: "DAPL is the subject of a huge international outcry, led by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, but supported by the tribal governments of over 280 other tribes and allies from all over the world."[45] Even though DAPL was completed, these networks of supporting organizations and communities have continued to work together, forming new assemblages that have prompted international activities.

In the spring of 2017, after the DAPL protests had concluded, a group of women organized through WECAN organized meetings and talks about the consequences of oil extraction and the regulations outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which includes the requirement for informed consent before extractive projects begin.[46] As part of the trip, members of the Standing Rock Sioux were able to meet with representatives from the Sámi community in Norway, including Vibeke Larsen. These meetings further solidified connections established at Standing Rock. Since the return of the first group delegation, a second delegation has been sent to Europe, further expanding these networks. Contextualizing the delegation's work, Osprey Orielle Lake, a founder of WECAN, told *Cultural Survival*:

> We're really trying to bring to light these frontline struggles because they're going to continue. A part of demanding accountability from financial institutions is showing them that this fight is not over. The

44 Cultural Survival, 2016
45 Cultural Survival, 2016
46 Maida, 2018

> delegation is a definite follow up to the Dakota Access Pipeline resistance effort, demanding accountability for what happened there and that the egregious injustices that occurred there must be responded to.[47]

This divestment delegation of indigenous women traveled through Europe. They visited financial institutions in Switzerland, Germany, and Norway, urging banks to divest in programs like DAPL as well as other pipelines being built in the Americas such as Line 3 and the Keystone XL.

The effects of the DAPL protesters also continue to be felt by those who were arrested during the protests and have continued to face pressures due to their legal responsibility to travel to court and arrange for lawyers. New networks of lawyers emerged from this need as well as political responses to both the protests and what they would mean for future activism. As Michelle Cook, who is Diné/Navajo and a member of WECAN, stated, "I hope that we can use the encounter at Standing Rock to advance Indigenous Peoples' rights in the United States into a safe, secure, and peaceful future."[48] Cook's vision is apparent in the ways that the protests continue to be framed in mass media and remembrances of the protest. For example, when mass media journalists have reported on indigenous issues, particular those of herding communities facing pressures from extractive oil projects, reference is typically made to DAPL. In their report regarding Khanty reindeer herders in Russia who were facing the expansion of oil pipelines, *The Guardian* stated, "the real story is an escalating conflict between extraction companies and vulnerable native peoples – similar to battles in the US over the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines, in the Peruvian Amazon and in the Queensland region of Australia."[49]

Politicians and new organizations have also frequently discussed their own participation in the Standing Rock Protest milieu. Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez stated:

> I first started considering running for Congress actually at Standing Rock in North Dakota. […] It was really from that crucible of activism where I saw people putting their lives on the line […] for people they've never met and never known. When I saw that I knew that I had to do something more.[50]

47 Maida, 2018
48 Maida, 2018
49 Luhn, 2017
50 Solnit, 2019

The lasting effects of DAPL and the Standing Rock River encampment continue to be debated by scholars. And the threads that connect these protesters will continue to emerge, traced through social media platforms and in-person meetings.

This chapter has demonstrated the ways that new and social media have been used by activists and protesters to organize for both in-person and online events. Many of these networks existed before the NoDAPL protests, and continued even after the camps were closed. While there are many debates to be had over the longevity of these protest and the international connections which they engendered, the protests served as a flashpoint, a moment of time when many different movements were able to join together, uniting for both a common cause and their individual struggles. This chapter has demonstrated the difficulties that some supporters had authenticating their voices and perspectives, such as the Samburu, whose sincerity was doubted in online forums. Yet, for the Samburu and those on the ground at Standing Rock, those questions of legitimacy might not matter. Instead, what is important is the potential for future movements to join together, perspectives to be shared, and, even after the protests have ended, connections to continue through new and mobile media.

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# 9. New Herding Networks

**Abstract**
This chapter examines the multiple meanings that the case studies presented in this book hold for development politics, programs, and research. This analysis does not point to a winner or singular conclusion. Instead, it indicates that many herding communities are producing data, narratives, images, and films that enrich and advance academic and international understanding of moments of crisis. This chapter examines how herding communities deliberate through frames of "nomadology," proleptic elegies, and settlement. It concludes with an examination of the roles of academics in ensuring that nomadic and mobile communities are accurately represented, discussed, consulted, and collaborated with in future research projects.

**Keywords:** ICT, consultation, networking, research methods, nomadology, proleptic elegy

On October 14, 2015, a Sámi herder, Sara Marielle Gaup Beska, posted a YouTube video. She began by identifying herself as a member of the Sámi and discussed the problems that they are facing in the Arctic. Beska reports in her video that temperatures in her area have risen by 1.5 degrees, creating melting snow and destruction to the permafrost. The video presents her plan to convince politicians and corporations to work to stop this warming. Beska recorded this video before she and other Sámi activists traveled to the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris. She also asked for viewers to participate in an online performative event, showing their support for the Sámi, for the planet, and sensible reactions to climate change.[1]

The performative event that Beska launched was the singing of a *yoik* or Sámi song, titled "Gulahallat Eatnamiin." She performed the song herself, and then asked that viewers film themselves also singing the *yoik*. The call

1 Máilbmi, 2015

Hahn, A.H., *Media Culture in Nomadic Communities*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021. DOI 10.5117/9789463723022_CH09

was taken up by individual supporters who filmed themselves performing in the countryside, in cities, and in classrooms.[2] Then Beska's video was reedited by supporters to show other footage: choruses, images of Northern Europe,[3] and young Sámi herders speaking about community values and practices.[4] The homemade quality of these videos provides a humanizing lens which allows outside viewers to see daily life and activities of the Sámi and their reasons for protest. Some videos received only a few views. Others, such as that by Sofia Jannok, a Sámi singer from Sweden, have close to 9,000 views.[5] In the introduction to her *yoik*, Jannok draws connections to the movie *Avatar*, thinking about the ways that climate warming has resulted in rainy winters and starving reindeer.

Even after the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris, the *yoik* continued to be used in protest videos posted to YouTube, such as the one posted on April 18, 2016, by Sámi Manifeasta, who narrates the activist Mimie Märak's protests against mining operations in Gállok, Sweden.[6] In the video, the combination of traditional Sámi music alongside video and protest demonstrates only one of the many ways that herding communities are utilizing new and social media to advance their arguments and protect their communities.

The use of social media and multimedia to distribute messages is noteworthy, in part, because it is not exclusive to a particular indigenous population. Instead, this book demonstrates that the use of platforms like YouTube is increasingly common among indigenous populations fighting to protect and maintain their way of life. Across the globe, Maasai women have posted their own videos of traditional protests. Dressed in traditional attire and speaking from their pasturelands, the Maasai demanded that their perspective be heard and acknowledged by both local and international governments. One woman, speaking from Loliondo, Tanzania, stated, "I am holding this microphone to air views that need to be heard. As women, we have the right to be heard. Women have the right to freedom of speech. Whenever a woman speaks on an issue, that issue should be attended to. She is a human being, too."[7] These videos, created by herders and their social networks, serve the dual purpose of documenting protests and inviting new supporters to learn about the struggles of herders.

2 Mackhé, 2015
3 Boareserke, 2015
4 Laura, 2016
5 Jannok, 2015
6 Sámi Manifeasta, 2016
7 Insightshare, 2014

The demands that herding communities be listened to, respected, and, at times, protected are inscribed in documents created by bodies such as the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC). They are also listed in provisions such as Article 135 of the 2015 Paris Agreement, which

> Recognizes the need to strengthen knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and Indigenous Peoples related to addressing and responding to climate change, and establishes a platform for the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner.[8]

In this chapter I ask how the goals of international agreements, such as Article 135, might be advanced by academics who study and research alongside local and indigenous communities through the use of new and social media. Historically, government officials who are not from herding communities have made decisions about how their land should be used, how development should occur, and where their children should go to school. As Inka Saara Arttijeff, a Sámi herder in northern Finland, told PRI radio, "It sounds very weird, but before, the non-Sámis and nonindigenous were actually deciding for us. Now, we can be part of the decision-making, and they actually take us into account."[9]

## Viewing and Seeing Nomads

These demands also include a demand to be seen. In *Image Testimonies: Witnessing in Times of Social Media*, Schankweiler, Straub, and Wendl remind us that the emergence of technologies that allow many individuals to record, upload, share, and report about current events in real time has dramatically affected the ways we witness events and are able to participate in events unfolding half a world away. Their term "image testimony" has been explored throughout this text, and in each chapter I have tried to remind readers that the media discussed here is not randomly created or unintentionally produced. Instead, this book is focused on the strategic, informed, and transformative uses of media by nomadic and rural communities. Continuously clarifying this use is necessary when we break beyond our academic colleagues to speak with students and across fields. When I survey

8 IIPFCC, 2017
9 Narang, 2018

my undergraduate students at the beginning of the semester, I often ask them to think about an indigenous community and the ways in which that community is communicating with their nation. I do this knowing that my students probably haven't read much about indigenous communities. Sometimes they know about one or two indigenous communities. They might know about the local communities near our school, or the communities that their own grandparents were born into. Seldom do they have anything to say about the ways in which indigenous communities are actively engaging in scholarship. This lack of knowledge is not their fault, but it is symptomatic of the ways that indigenous communities, including many pastoralists, are overlooked in academia.

Looking to publications within my own field of communication studies, there is a growing movement pressing for an international outlook. Take, for example, one the most prominent journals, the *International Journal of Communication*, published out of the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. This journal has a spectacularly broad approach to communication. It is an open-access, fully online, multimedia publication, currently ranked second by Google Scholar among all humanities, literature and arts journals. Few articles in the journal focus on mobile and nomadic communities, however. Those that do each highlight the potential for digital scholarship and digital citizenship among even the most rural communities. As Martin Emmer and Marlene Knust from the Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society, Germany, write in 2018, "the studies of ICT use in Africa are highly fragmented and mainly applied case study or action research approaches, and, therefore, mostly found no global state or research."[10] The challenge issued by Emmer and Knust is to "capture the creative and non-Western forms of participation with qualitative methodology and to subsequently apply quantitative methodology to test the effects of access to ICTs."[11] Doing so is possible within academia but it would require clear intentions and definitions to insure that the resulting scholarship reflects the true and varied experiences of herders.

## Imagining and Engaging Nomadism

A few weeks ago I met with a faculty writing group to review a grant proposal to study herding communities' responses to climate change. After a few

10 Emmer and Knust, 2018, p. 2196
11 Emmer and Knust, 2018, p. 2200

rounds of questions it became clear to each of us that how we envisioned a "herder" was radically different. For myself and the other faculty member who had worked among herding communities in the past, the definition of herders is highly nuanced, dependent on the individual's age, education, goals for herding in the future. However, as we chatted with other faculty members, we were reminded that such a definition is not universal. One faculty member seemed to be imagining something akin to a dusty American cowboy. Another had a lot of references, all taken from PBS nature shows. Their understanding of our grant to study herder use of new technologies was heavily influenced by their imagined images of herders. While it doesn't much matter to the world if we receive a small university grant, this imagining is especially important to herding communities which are applying for international aid, large grants, new education programs, and working to gain access to decision-making forums.

Effectively engaging herders is important because these communities still exist and are actively fighting for their ways of life and livelihood. Zygmunt Bauman's writings about liquid modernity express his worry that these communities might be skipped over by the development of new and social media. He writes that in our current, fluid stage of modernity "the settled majority is ruled by the nomadic and extraterritorial elite."[12] In this reference Bauman is thinking of the once-settled and now mobilized individuals who might live between Beijing, New York, and Paris. He is not directly writing about the mobile and nomadic communities on which this book is based, but he is building upon the experiences of herders, nomads, and mobile peoples to make his metaphors of the "tourist" and "vagabond," which are then used to explain the positive and negative sides of modern mobility. Herders and nomads, as discussed in this book, have a difficult time fitting into the metaphor created by Bauman – or other metaphors created by theorists such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who built a metaphor of "nomadology" upon the experiences of multiple mobile communities.

Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of nomadology is best explained in "1227: Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine."[13] In this text, nomads are distinguished by their *nomos* of pastoral flock distribution, an occupation held on a smooth space that allows nomad societies to avoid the coding of territorial assemblages and striated space of the state. To support this differentiation, Deleuze and Guattari draw from ethnographic texts with special attention toward nomads who have overturned and/or opposed

12 Bauman, 2000, p. 13

13 Deleuze and Guattari, 1987

the state. Several of these examples directly cite Mongolia, such as the description of Chinghis (Genghis) Khan. This representation of Mongolian herder/nomads as intentionally living alongside but opposed to the state cuts against the narrative of salvation presented by the governments and development workers whereby nomadic populations have lived outside of the state because they were too impoverished, undereducated, or oppressed by classism to create their own cities or complex civilizations.

The metaphor of nomadology can be used to explain the complex terrain of political struggle in a hyper-globalized, internetworked society. The importance of this metaphor, and their greater body of Deleuze and Guattari's work was indicated by Foucault's statement in 1970 that, "one day, perhaps, this century will be called Deleuzian."[14] While Foucault did not live to verify his statement, his prediction has been supported by Ronald Bogue, who writes that Deleuze and Guattari's "notion of the 'nomadic' [...] has been emerging as the concept of choice for theorists of various stripes."[15] Additionally, Emory psychologist James William calls Deleuze's work "one of the key reference points in Continental philosophy, literary theory, film theory, aesthetics and politics."[16] Today, a plethora of scholars ranging from Jean Baudrillard to Rosi Braidotti, Manuel DeLanda to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Edward Said to Giorgio Agamben use nomadism and nomadology as critical figures to assess critical consciousness, postcolonialism, and resistance movements. As a result, a rich, vibrant, and significant body of academic and political work has arisen about and around nomadology.

However, Deleuze and Guattari's work has also drawn criticism. Anthropologists have argued that that Deleuze and Guattari's production of the metaphor of nomadology to resist late-modern capitalism has misappropriated ethnographic texts. For example, Professor of French and African Studies Christopher Miller argues that nomadology is prefaced on sanitized ethnographic representations that have produced a romanticized and subjugated depiction of real nomadic communities. He argues that a better approach would be to produce a "less utopian, less contradictory, less arrogant, and less messianic theorization of movement, a positive cosmopolitanism that remains meticulously aware of localities and differences."[17] While anthropologists and cultural studies scholars have

14 Foucault, 1970
15 Bogue, 2007
16 Williams, 2009
17 Miller, 1993, p. 32

embraced this call, many of their works investigate ethnographic depictions of people not discussed by Deleuze and Guattari. For example, the article by Stephen Muecke, Professor of Writing at the University of New South Wales, Australia, "The Discourse of Nomadology: Phylums in Flux," is an excellent study of representational clash between Aboriginal tradition and Australian policy makers.[18] Although Muecke proves that the Aboriginal experience provides a single exception to nomadology, that exception is found by mixing sources and drawing between types of nomadic lifestyles. An even more complete study would investigate the nomadic communities used by Deleuze and Guattari – such as Mongolians – as the vehicle in the metaphor of nomadology to address the complexity of nomadic experience, and to investigate the transformation of those complexities into a sign of nomadology.

A detailed examination of the effects of these metaphors on modern herding communities is far beyond the parameters of this book. What is important here is to pause and examine the middle space in which contemporary herders and nomads occupy. How their experiences have been used to imagine how settled peoples might liberate themselves to a more mobile space, and the ways in which they are able to take advantage of both settled and mobile medias inform academic understanding of both nomadic and settled communities. Additionally, the ways that academics have imagined the world of herding and nomadic communities – sometimes with little reference to the actual lives and struggles of contemporary nomads. This book has examined the ways that herding communities respond to concerns such as liquid modernity as presented by Bauman. Herders may have initially been left behind by ICT development, but through technological leapfrogging, we've seen the ways that communities are participating in online debates, engagements, protests, and policy making. But for their actions to work, these communities must be seen. And for their demands to be considered fairly, policy makers must understand both what has been lost and what is at stake.

These arguments and actions are occurring at a critical time. For many communities, this is the first generation of herders who were not forced into boarding schools. Their families are slowly moving away from the harms caused by such schools, and their youth beginning to engage narratives of the state on their own terms. Using tools such as new media and social media, these communities are able to access alternative narratives, produce their own narratives, and to distribute those texts in new networks that

18 Muecke, 2001

are not always regulated by the state. The excitement and potential of these movements is found in the many different media productions and interviews given by herding communities. Examples of this participation are found throughout this book, from Sámi activists tweeting about political participation to Maasai producing YouTube videos to present their arguments for international audiences. Critics might argue that these productions are not fully emancipated – they are still dependent on international media production, networks of activists and their supporters, and demonstrate technical and social inequalities in herding communities. All of these criticisms are true, but they should not dissuade the study of these new narratives, which have the potential to change power dynamics in debates about how and where herders should live.

## True Images of Herding

Herding communities have been studied extensively by anthropologists, ethnographers, photographers, and "explorers." They are photographed continuously, reproduced on postcards, and human camps and human shows. Oftentimes, the production and reproduction of their images and accompanying descriptions are used to produce narratives of backwardness and primitivism which continue to affect today's deliberations. In the past, pastoral nomads were not permitted to engage in deliberations until they acquiesced to a state's definition of presentable citizens, sometimes with the state going as far as giving direct orders for how citizens should appear.

The struggle to control how their communities are presented to the world is intrinsically linked to how a community presents its vision for the future. Each of these cases, from determining the right to present a cultural event for tourists that demonstrates critical elements of "Sáminess," to the right to screen print a Maasai design, shows evidence of the respect that the world holds for herding communities and the international expectation that herding communities still exist. And about the way that they are represented, and the ways in which the community anticipates participation in international commerce.

It is therefore critical that herding communities are able to construct and distribute their own images. However, while they often have the ability to do so, the willingness of the outside public to accept those images is at times lacking. One flashpoint in debates to control the images of herders is seen in attempts to prevent tourists from wearing traditional clothing, or to keep international organizations from co-opting traditional symbols. For

example, the Sámi Parliament has implemented the Culturally Responsible Sámi Tourism Project, which works to ensure that tourism service providers are from the Sámi community. These are different from tour providers which capitalize on "Sáminess" without having any direct ties to the Sámi community or benefiting the Sámi through their activities. The goal in promoting these ties is that tourists encounter an authentic, community-created narrative of Sámi culture, the community's development, and their vision for the future.[19]

The desire to create community images is also reflected in Inner Mongolia, where Cambridge anthropologists Christopher Evans and Caroline Humphrey report that China has prefaced the eviction of herders from their pasturelands on the presumption that they are leading "backward" and "unhealthy" lifestyles. In some parts of Inner Mongolia the only reminder of herder communities, as found by Evans and Humphrey, is tourist camps and ethnographic parks where "Mongolian culture" is presented for international visitors.[20] I have visited several of these ethnographic camps in both Beijing and Inner Mongolia. In each I found cement *gers* rather than the traditional felt. At the Beijing Ethnographic Park, visitors are able to tour through homes built to resemble those of 56 ethnicities of China. The Mongolian homes are placed in the green space, in the south section of the park near other herding communities, such as the Ewenki, Kazak, Kirgiz, Uzbek, and Yugur. When I visited the park in 2016, guests were able to drink traditional tea, and see traditional Mongolian dances. But guests left with little understanding of what Mongolian culture is today, or even that Mongolians still intended to herd in their pasturelands. I have found the same in other ethnographic cultural parks in Central Asia, such as the Ethnographic Museum of the People of Transbaikalia Culture in Ulan-Ude, Russia. These parks preserve the heritage and architecture of herding communities, but do not always point toward their future.

Similarly, in East Africa, Maasai herders have worked to preserve and control the way that their culture and cultural symbols are represented to the world. In 2018 online magazine *Quartz* reported that you can buy a "'Maasai' bathing suit" (for $300) as well as a "Maasai mosh dress" featuring a motif of a screen-printed image of Maasai women's traditional beadwork necklaces printed over a grey tribal pattern.[21] Sales such as this were not approved by the Maasai, nor did any of the profits go to Maasai communities.

19 Samediggi, 2016
20 Evans and Humphrey, 2002, p. 189
21 Livni, 2018

In an attempt to control the use of their images and artwork, the Maasai Intellectual Property Initiative (MIPI) was formed in 2009 to demand that the Maasai be consulted before their image is used in international advertising and product development. In a partnership with Ron Layton (who had previously succeeded in gaining rights for Ethiopian coffee manufacturers), MIPI has been successful in recovering trademarks from global brands and putting pressure on brands such as Calvin Klein, Jaguar Land Rover, Louis Vuitton, and Ralph Lauren. Their work advocacy and legal work designed to regulate the ways that Maasai images are use in international publication, as well as educate the local community about their rights to copyright protection. This work is accomplished through initiatives such as a Maa-language workbook that educates Maasai community members about their international intellectual property rights. These community engagements, coupled with international connections, have provided a framework for contemporary, ongoing deliberations in which herding communities demand that their voices and perspectives be acknowledged and respected by both local and international decision-makers.

## Contemporary Engagements and Debates

This book has examined the implications of these decisions for herding communities. We've seen the ways that the Maasai in East Africa have protested the loss of their lands. And we've seen the way that Sámi herders in Northern Europe are increasingly losing their land both to development and to climate change. In Inner Mongolia, we've examined how herders are losing their land to open-pit mines and the ways in which their pasture lands are being cut across by coal trucks and other transportation infrastructure. We've also seen the ways these communities are coming together, both online and in person, as in the example of the Standing Rock encampment and protests in North America. In all of these examples, herding communities have demanded that their traditions, perspectives, and opinions be respected.

For many of the communities discussed in this book, there were already documents and treaties in place that should have prevented the use of land for new mining, pipelines, and energy production. Yet, those documents were disregarded, violated, or reinterpreted to allow development projects to continue. As shown in Chapter 7, the governments of Sweden, Finland, and Norway have already agreed to consult the Sámi Parliament and respect its opinions regarding the development of Sámi lands. Yet, proposals such

as the Artic Railroad demonstrate the ways that private companies have circumvented consultation and the Sámi have had to turn to courts to defend their rights.

Similarly, the Lakota Sioux have attempted to enforce the parameters of the Treaty of Fort Laramie, which was signed in 1868 and described the boundaries of the Great Sioux Reservation. The treaty also allowed the Sioux to maintain hunting rights outside of the reservation and prevented any further land loss unless three-quarters of the male members of the tribe voted to approve a modification to the treaty. This treaty was made between the United States federal government and the sovereign Sioux nation. Yet, soon after the treaty was signed, the United States Congress voted to divide the reservation into smaller parts, restrict hunting lands, and otherwise modify the terms of the treaty without consultation, let alone by a vote from the Sioux. The contemporary debates over DAPL and the requirement for local consultation are informed by this treaty violation and the ways that the United States federal government has sought to limit herder and community access to land.

There is also much in common with the Maasai, who signed treaties with the British in 1904 and 1911. These treaties were signed by the sovereign Maasai nation and stipulate Maasai land access. Yet, Maasai analysts such as George Ogendi have interpreted these treaties as an attempt to ensure that the Maasai would be removed from their land permanently. Some Maasai activists expected that their land would be returned to them in the 1960s when Kenya and Tanzania became independent nations. The Maasai United Front (MUF), a constituent organization of the Kenyan African Democratic Union (KADU) led by Justus ole Tipis, represented the Maasai in these negotiations with the British.[22] The MUF held that the 1904 and 1911 agreements were binding treaties between the Maasai and the British and as such the world should recognize Maasailand as a separate nation from Kenya. This recognition would have allowed the Maasai to bargain directly with the British government pursuant of an independent Maasai nation on the borders of Kenya and Tanzania. The Maasai continually pressed this interpretation, including attempts to bring their case to courts in Kenya, The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (located in Gambia), and the UN.[23] However, the MUF's case was never accepted and today the Maasai are split between Tanzania and Kenya. In the framing provided by

22 The inclusion of MUF in these deliberations points to the radically different position of Maasai community leaders in Tanzanian and Kenyan politics.

23 UNPO, 2006

Yiftachel, they are living as a trapped minority despite treaties designed to otherwise protect their rights.

Each of these communities has turned to new and social media to present their arguments and protest on an international stage. As the examples discussed in this book indicate, they are overcoming the digital divide, which earlier scholars predicted would leave underdeveloped nations far behind in terms in technology, access to economics, and finance. Each community has experienced the great loss that can occur through unenforced treaties, nefarious decision-making, and cultural misunderstandings. Their experiences point to the need for enhanced networking, and for external decision-makers to respect and engage in those networks. Unfortunately, much of the scholarly research and education that guides decision-makers focuses on urban communities, missing the richness of the many experiences presented in this book.

## Studying the New Digital Divide

Much of the academic research regarding the use of new and social media focuses on settled, rich, and Western countries. When the developing world is mentioned in the study of cellular phones and mobile media, it is often done through examples of raw materials needed to make new technology. For example, in Agar's *Constant Touch: A Global History of the Mobile Phone*, readers learn about rare earth minerals that come from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and China. This information is indeed valuable, but the text also implies an absence of cell phone users in those countries. For example, while Finland's production of Nokia phones plays a critical role in Agar's book, the experiences of the Sámi, who live in Finland and use Nokia phones, are absent.[24]

Overlooking the ways that mobile communities use new technology produces a lasting effect within academia. When writing of the Western world, scholars predict that technologies will enable a new type of mobility which these technologies encourage – that of ideas, finance, and media. Zygmunt Bauman refers to these movements as "liquid modernity." He argues that the pace of change has increased – our world and experiences are changing much more quickly than that of our ancestors. For example, in my lifetime I have experienced the change from rotary phones to cordless telephones to cell phones and smartphones. While video chats were once

24 Agar, 2013

only imagined on cartoons like *The Jetsons*, they are now ubiquitous to the modern office and almost all forms of private and public interaction. While your own experiences differ from mine, Bauman argues that we are united in the "fragility, temporariness, vulnerability, and inclination to constant change. To be 'modern' means to modernize – compulsively, obsessively, not so much just 'to be', let alone to keep its identity intact, but forever 'becoming', avoiding completion, staying undefined."[25] These many changes apply to citizens from across the world, but they are not always applied to mobile and nomadic communities. As Edward Said argues, the West likes to view the Orient as static, unchanging, and frequently paternalistic. Said's argument is important because it helps us to understand the paradox of viewing nomadic and mobile peoples as both static and changing in the ways that Bauman describes. The examples in this book show that nomadic and mobile peoples, especially their youth, are experiencing liquid modernity in many of the same ways as settled youth. Recall the Inner Mongolian rapper's expression of his identity – he only speaks Mandarin, but yearns for a life in the grasslands, one that is connected to his ancestors. The complexity of his relationship with Chinese censorship, access to new media, knowledge of his community's history, and desire for their safe future embodies the vulnerabilities and process of becoming that Bauman is working to describe.

Other scholars, such as sociologist John Urry, argue that new technologies support a "borderless" world, in which new ideas are able to travel quickly around the globe, and an individuals' physical location, nationality, physical abilities no longer restrict access to information or participation in deliberations. Urry has much to say about the emergence of digital nomads – those professionals who can work from almost anywhere so long as they have access to a strong Internet connection.[26] In this description, he agrees with Bauman who had in 2000 examined the ways that digital nomads, or those from settled communities who are flying between offices and cities, might use phones.[27] These theories gain a richness when they are applied to herding communities, which by definition embody the forms of mobility and nomadism that Bauman and Urry are describing.

When studying the ways that new ICTs have become available to nomadic communities, scholars caution that we do not overstate the specific technology's importance. These communities, like all human communities, have used technologies since the beginning of time. Put another way, cell phones

25 Bauman, 2000, p. viii
26 Urry, 2012
27 Bauman, 2000

are not any newer to mobile communities than they are to settled communities. And as this text has demonstrated, sometimes mobile communities adapt new technologies quicker, and with more skill, than their settled neighbors. Expressing this criticism, Bilal Butt argues that "transformational" narratives of new media overlook preexisting relationships both within herding communities and between herders and their other communicative networks. To avoid these pitfalls, scholars argue that cell phones and other new technologies need to be contextualized within a larger political and economic context. This complex system of human and nonhuman actors needs to be studied to understand how new technologies affect both herding and nonherding communities. Among the topics that need to be considered for herders are the ways that they have previously been framed in academic studies and media analysis. Then, to understand a herder's historic place in international communicative networks, I suggest we turn to two topics – that of the expectation that herders will settle, and the expectation that herders who do not settle are somehow less human than their settled neighbors.

## Framing Herders in Academic and Mass Media

Historically, scholars and policy makers have addressed herding and nomadic communities as distant, unknown people who were in need of study before they could be brought into modernity. Such studies often clashed with herders' own interpretations of their own history. For example, in Mongolia, scholars have long argued that mobile communicative technologies have the potential to facilitate herders' participation in public deliberations while not threatening their traditional lifestyles. Among Mongolian scholars, the integration of new technologies into a herding lifestyle can be traced back to Chinghis (Genghis) Khan and his adaptation of mobile technologies during military campaigns.[28] By juxtaposing modernity and tradition, these scholars indicate that herding communities have a strong future outlook – and can most likely prevent the disappearance of their communities. This means that they will utilize new technologies to facilitate the continuation of traditional lifestyles. Such a conclusion may be already obvious to readers of this text, or to anyone who has spent time with herding communities. However, it is not always so obvious to outside observers and theorists.

Some writers have framed Mongolian and North Asian use of technology as stagnant. For example, Lewis Mumford alludes to Tibetan Buddhist monks (Mongolians are/were Tibetan Buddhists) when he writes, "Western

28 Bold, 2014; Enkhtuvshin, n.d.

monks gave rise to more fertile and complex kinds of machinery than prayer wheels."[29] Similarly, Karl Marx believed that "Asiatic societies, burdened by bloated and despotic but highly centralized governments, had stagnated for centuries and fallen behind the West."[30] Marx also believed that technology would break apart the constraints of superstition and poverty that he believed were holding back Asian societies. This break in tradition was assumed to come alongside community settlement, which would allow herders even more access to technology, which would in turn further encourage their settlement. These expectations linger in literature about herders as development planners, government officers, and academics frequently expect that herding communities want to settle. The need and desire to use new technologies is often cited as an encouragement for this settlement. Yet, as this book has demonstrated, herding communities need not settle to access these tools. These mixed expectations have a gatekeeping effect for herders where they are expected to desire technological innovations, while simultaneously are expected to not understand what those innovations mean or can do until they are settled.

Many studies of technological expectation are rooted in colonization and religious missions which attempted to change the ways that children behaved, thought, and spoke. These behavior modifications frequently occurred in boarding schools where children were intentionally removed from their families and their community traditions. Today, even though many of these boarding schools have closed or radically reformed, the expectation that mobile and nomadic communities are somehow underdeveloped or backwards lingers. We find an example of this prejudice against mobile and nomadic communities in the work of education scholars Rowena Fong and Paul Spickard who in 1994 interviewed Han Chinese university students about their fellow countrymen. In these interviews, the students were tasked with using English terms to describe ethnic minorities living in China. Their report indicates a statistically significant trend among Han Chinese students to use the word "primitive" to describe Mongolians and "barbarian" to describe Tibetans.[31] These labels bolster claims that herders are less evolved, less sophisticated, or completely different species than those that live in settled communities. Similar studies have been conducted in the United States. For example, in 1997 Tan and Fujioka asked 191 white American students to list adjectives that described how Native Americans

29 Mumford, 1963, p. 35
30 Adas, 1989, p. 238
31 Fong and Spickard, 1994

are portrayed in the media. They found that students listed on average more negative than positive traits, including dumb, savage, violent, and uncivilized.[32]

Student knowledge, interest, and acceptance of herding communities in their nations can have broad-reaching implications when determining who is granted bank loans, hired for new projects, and invited to serve as an "expert" in decision-making processes. When students encounter herders and mobile community members, they are more likely to view them as fellow humans, deserving of full human rights. Gordon Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice*, published in 1954 and revised in 1979, describes the ways that stereotypes are used to rationalize behavior – to justify an activity that would be unacceptable for one's own group, but is acceptable when inflicted on another group because they are viewed in some way as less than human.[33] The mobile and nomadic communities discussed and studied in this book are often subjected to these kinds of stereotypes, which are informed by scholarship premised on their lesser status among other human communities.

Much of this problematic scholarship is grounded in the theory of Social Darwinism. These scholars frequently build upon the metaphor of "survival of the fittest" to assert that herders have no place in the modern world. In *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races*, Patrick Brantlinger, the James Rudy Professor Emeritus at Indiana University, Bloomington, argues that "whether seen as antiquated or infantile, all savages were lost, misplaced in time [...] in contrast to the ancestors of the progressive races, modern savages were like dead branches on the tree of life, born out of their due time."[34] Brantlinger argues that people labeled as "savages," including herding communities, are discursively held in a lose/lose situation; either they uphold traditions in a losing battle with modernity or they embrace modernity at the risk of debasing herder and modern identities. To understand the effect of this discursive space, Brantlinger proposes scholars utilize and examine the term "proleptic elegy."

An elegy, which laments the dead, is typically presented after death. Proleptic elegies also express grief, but are presented in anticipation of death or extinction.[35] This rhetorical tool is commonly used by development planners, national governments, and social scientists who conceptualize

32 Tan and Fujioka, 1997, p. 276
33 Allport, 1979
34 Brantlinger, 2003
35 Cox, 1982

mobile and nomadic communities as dying cultures. These statements are presented in the future perfect, speaking about a future loss of identity. Production of and resistance to proleptic elegies is not new. Brantlinger tracks the use of this rhetorical tool from the 1800s to the 1930s, when literary theorists, anthropologists, and cultural historians used both sentimental and scientific justifications for eliminating "savage" people. Proleptic elegies were used by missionaries who needed to explain why they had failed to recruit communities into their fold, or by governments when they encountered pressure from their constituents to stop battling with indigenous populations.

The implications of modern proleptic elegies are different from historic examples of the same rhetorical act. Governments have come to expect that herders will settle and become farmers rather than expecting that they will vanish or die off. Yet, many similarities in framing and presentation of the proleptic elegy remain. Today, governments, nongovernmental organizations, and development projects identify herder communities by their presumed primitive, barbarian, savage, underdeveloped, uneducated, and impoverished traits. Then, they justify their disappearances as evidence of national progress. For example, in 2008 Mongolian prime minister Nambaryn Enkhbayer used a proleptic elegy when he stated, "to survive we [Mongolians] have to stop being nomads."[36] This proleptic elegy does not require Enkhbayer to celebrate the loss of nomadism, but does allow him to call for international aid, development projects, and government programming to facilitate the end of nomadism. Thomas Hall, a world systems analyst, argues that these labels are used in complex arguments prefaced by the superior qualities of modern life.[37] These "superior" qualities are, possibly ironically, among those discussed in this book. The ability to communicate online, engage in educational programs, and participate in public debate are among the many activities which herders can participate in while still in their pastures.

Ignoring herders' realities and calling for the end of nomadism, herding, or traditional lifestyles is a dangerous rhetorical maneuver that has real-world implications for marginalized communities, such as the herders discussed in this book. Drawing from a Social Darwinist classification of nomads and herders as lower humans, proleptic elegies have been coupled with metaphors of illness to claim that nomads are either terminally ill or not at all human. This expectation of disappearance has deep roots in Western studies of human evolution. And often, it was indigenous communities such

36 Marin, 2008
37 Hall, 1991

as herders who were used to explain human development and justify the superiority of settled communities. Many of these ideas are found in the theory of Social Darwinism and the rhetoric of savagery used in modern proleptic elegies that emerged from older schools of cephalic indexing, a nineteenth-century method of measuring skulls to differentiate between races and classify racial libido. This theory progressed in the 1930s to argue for inherent racial differences in intelligence. John Jackson of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania writes that the development of these studies demonstrates an argumentative move from attributes that can be observed (skull shape) to those that are only understood via essence (mental and moral characteristics).[38] The ways that these pseudoscientific methods were used are demonstrated in contemporary movies such as *Sámi Blood*, which show how the heads and facial features of members of nomadic communities were measured, their skin color checked, and their skeletons examined, all in an attempt to determine how they specifically were different from their settled neighbors.[39] Similar studies were conducted in the United States and Australia. Modern Social Darwinists have advanced these studies and their arguments by highlighting the lack of knowledge, education, religion, or morals of nomadic and herding communities. While herders are no longer subjected to things such as cephalic indexing, many polices do, still, expect that they are somehow less intelligent, fit, or human than settled communities. Recall the tweeter who alleged that images of the Samburu supporting the Standing Rock encampment "must" have been photoshopped based on the presumption that the Samburu were too out of touch with modernity to participate in the protests on their own. These expectations of underdevelopment are reinforced by the ways that herding communities are depicted and framed in mass media, such as the Samsung commercial using the Maasai and Mongolians as members of communities from "the ends of the earth." These prejudices and assumptions are deeply rooted in settled ideology. In each example, settled citizens, scholars, and development workers wonder, Why do herders not want to settle? Based on their expectation that settlement is the superior way to live, these stakeholders have pressured or forced many herding communities to settle and blend into other cultures.

The experiences of Eastern European Roma demonstrate the stakes for herding communities such as Bedouin, Maasai, Mongolian and Sámi herders that experience this form of discourse. Roma communities are

38 Jackson, 2013
39 Kernell, 2016

frequently described by politicians via rhetorical constructions that couple subhuman species classification and metaphors of illness. For example, Dez Csete, mayor of Csur, Hungary, stated in 2000, "I believe that the Roma of Zmoly have no place among human beings. Just as in the animal world, parasites must be expelled."[40] This is only one of many statements collected by Vileriu Nicole, who demonstrates how the Roma are consistently framed as subhuman. Then, because they are understood to be subhuman, government officials like Dez Csete are able to call for inhumane treatment, often without any objection from local or international stakeholders. This book has shown how similar statements have been made by Han Chinese residents regarding herders in IMAR. Recall the Han Chinese truck driver who ran over and killed a protesting Inner Mongolian. He later told reporters, "my truck is fully insured, and the life of a smelly Mongolian herder costs me no more than 40,000 Yuan (approx. 8000 USD)."[41]

Theoretically, herders can respond to these proleptic elegies by contradicting the expectation of future disappearance and demanding action from the state to secure their community's livelihood. Yet, governments, international aid organizations, and development projects often drown out or ignore herder arguments, opting instead to focus their attention on settlement and development as opposed to demands to maintain or return to traditions. In 2017, I reviewed hundreds of development reports and project proposals regarding the Mongolian *dzud*, a type of winter storm that can include severely low temperatures, ice storms, and/or blizzard. These reports were often written by development workers who completed rapid assessments in order to quickly deliver aid. The majority of these reports were written from the perspective of development officials who were intent on finding ways to provide aid in the short term, but expected that in the long term, Mongolian herders "must" settle.[42]

Herders who face these kinds of problems are stuck waiting for remedies which many not actually help their communities, or meet their community's long-term plans. Unable to find traditional forums for their arguments, and needing to portray themselves as living communities, herding communities have utilized ICT affordances, such as social media platforms and smartphones, as discussed in this book. Maasai communities in Tanzania have used YouTube to present their protests and arguments on a global stage. Similarly, Mongolians in Inner Mongolia have turned to road blockades and

40 Nicolae, 2006, p. 138; Baykal, 2009
41 SMHRIC, 2011c
42 Hahn, 2018

protests, reported via social media, to combat state-sponsored proleptic elegies. What is incumbent for international researchers is that they do not reproduce this expectation of disappearance while writing about or studying with herding or mobile communities. For example, in Mongolia, when asked what kind of aid they would most appreciate after a *dzud*, herders consistently ask for money to restock their herds. They do not ask for money to move or settle if it is possible for them to rebuild their herds and continue their traditional lifestyles. Yet, this request is often absent from the published development reports and projects which instead choose to support settlement projects, frequently based on the expectation that herding is no longer possible. Herders are then pressured to adhere to these expectations – both by adopting "modern" clothing and by settling.

**Pressured to Act and Appear "Modern"**

Many different herding groups across the world have been told that they must settle and give up their nomadic and herding traditions. For example, at the beginning of Tanzania's independence, the government designed projects to "civilize" the Maasai and appointed officials like Mkwang'ata to direct policies to Maasai communities. *Time* reported on Mkwang'ata's success in an article titled "Tanzania: Dressing up the Masai." This article reports that Mkwang'ata has demanded that Maasai herders stop wearing their traditional clothing and "dress in something better than a dirty sheet or a meager yard of cloth that exhibits your buttocks."[43] The Maasai refused to accept these new policies, a resistance which is also discussed in the *Time* article. The reporter indicated that in a few weeks 250 Maasai men were arrested for refusing to adhere to the new dress code. And, Mkwang'ata was ready to "herd the Masai [sic] into mass baths, burn their ceremonial garb in public and shave off their ochered hair."[44] This forced changing of clothing, hair, and grooming echoes the policies enacted around the world where indigenous communities were forced en masse to mimic their colonizers and often violently punished if they refused. The plan to force the Maasai to abandon their traditional clothing did not work, and today many Maasai continue to wear traditional clothing and hairstyles. But the force and intention of statements made by officials such as Mkwang'ata remain. Today, when attending boarding school, Maasai youth still dress in British-inspired school uniforms. And in protest videos, Maasai still authenticate

43 Time, 1967
44 Time, 1967

their Maasai-ness by wearing and displaying traditional clothing. For the Maasai and many other herding communities, images of their attire and their cultural uniqueness are so important that they are in the process of trademarking and copyrighting their designs, patterns, jewelry, and names.[45] Around the world, other minority, indigenous, and marginalized communities have pressed for trademarking and copyright – at times with tremendous success, as was the case in *Navajo Nation v. Urban Outfitters*, which resulted in the American clothing company Urban Outfitters acknowledging Navajo trademark rights to their name and traditional arts.

The expectation to appear in traditional attire is complicated. On the one hand, governments like that of Tanzania want the Maasai to appear in modern – meaning Westernized – attire. On the other hand, to be taken seriously, many audience members expect that herders should be wearing traditional clothing.

**Pressure to Settle**

In other places, herders were collectivized into group ranches, allowing them to keep some, but not all of their herds. In Mongolia, the *negdel kolhoz* collectivization campaign began when animals were forcibly seized from herders and assigned to collective ownership. *Negdel kolhoz* members still worked with herds of animals, but they received wages, holidays, and pensions from the state and were not allowed to own their own animals. They were no longer herders but instead had become livestock keepers. This payment scheme built a reliance on other state systems such as banks and stores that provided goods previously produced at home or communally traded. Additionally, *negdel kolhoz* members were encouraged to imagine retirement in settled communities where their children gained factory, office, and education jobs but did not have the option to become herders.[46] Some aspects of the social safety net which accompanied collectivization, such as community health and education, were accepted by herders.[47] Yet, the determination to keep their herds was apparent in the initial failure of the collectivization campaigns, and the amount of force that was required to move herders onto collective farms. Across the border in China, the government has also attempted to collectivize herders and then begin using land once used for herding for other purposes. Gabriel Lafitte, an

45 Oyange Ngando, 2018
46 Maekawa, 2013, p. 235; Humphrey and Sneath, 1999
47 Gantemur, 2012, p. 53

Australian academic and development policy consultant to the Tibetan government in exile, writes that China has traditionally held a deep-seated mistrust of nomadic communities. "The mobility of the nomads was always the core of imperial fears and strategies. Mobility was an ever-present problem for successive dynasties facing their nomadic neighbors so closely to the north, and so far away in the west. Centuries of managing the risks arising from mobility left a deep imprint on Chinese minds, and a major repertoire of governmentalities to deal with it."[48] Foucault shows these governmentalities to be dynamic and diverse in nature, yet each approach to governmentality is related to ideas of control which require varying degrees of accounting, tracking, and categorizing that operate in stark contrast to nomadic tradition.[49]

Today this mistrust manifests itself in Inner Mongolia as herders have been moved away from their animals and settled into apartment blocks. While accounts differ, by 2008 more than 70% of Chinese grasslands had disappeared and the remaining grasslands are expected to continue disappearing at a rate of 3,900 square kilometers per year.[50] Desertification puts a heavy burden on herders, who are forced into smaller pastures, which in turn only increases desertification. As anthropologist Dee Mack Williams argues, the experience of Mongolian herders is one of recent policy initiatives that are designed to increase herd productivity and often result in exploiting local residents in an effort to control natural resources.[51] Instances of this marginality are seen in China's use of "environmentally driven resettlement" which aims to move herders from pasture lands which are determined to be at risk of desertification. As of 2011, 650,000 herders had been evicted from their traditional pasturelands as a result of these programs.[52] While the number of forced evictions decreased after 2011, they have not stopped. The government has continued to highlight the advantages of education, public health, and housing services that are provided for these newly settled communities. Yet, as the case studies presented in this book show, not all herders are supportive of this settlement.

Similar efforts at settlement affect many of the herding, mobile, and nomadic communities discussed in this book. Some communities have been settled for decades, but are determined to return to their pasturelands as

48 Lafitte, 2011
49 Foucault, 2007
50 Futrell, 2008
51 Williams, 1997, p. 775
52 SMHRIC, 2013a

soon as a war ends or a government changes. Other family members, like the night guard that I befriended in Tanzania, are working in a settled job for a short time while preparing for their own herding future. And some are moving back and forth between the pastures and cities on a frequent basis. Recognizing and understanding these many different ways of living as a mobile community enables stakeholders and decision-makers to enact meaningful policies that meet the needs of everyone involved. At the very least, it will help policy makers to understand and expect that there will be resistance to plans for settlement. The most important element is determining a herding family's future outlook – for themselves, their retirement, and their children.

**Determined to Herd**

Social Darwinism is apparent in government and development organizations' expectations that once settled, herders will stay settled. However, in the case of Mongolia we see that when given the chance, settled herders will sometimes return to their pastures, buy new animals, and regain their herding traditions. This transition occurred when the USSR collapsed, severely impacting food and resource imports into Mongolia. At this time, many families left cities and returned to herding lifestyles. This movement has been attributed to many things, including a quest for food security, a determination to regain cultural heritage, and a response to unemployment. When the economy improved and it seemed that there were more jobs available in the cities, these herders returned, many now living in *ger* districts on the outskirts of Mongolia's capital, UlaanBaatar.

Similarly, in Egypt in the 1950s, President Gamal Nasser's government attempted to convince the Bedouin to settle and give up their herding practices. This was done through a series of enticements, such as subsidized state services and access to better educational programming. Through these development plans, Egypt hoped to redefine the national culture to include the history and experiences of Bedouin citizens. The resiliency of herders was demonstrated by their responses to this program. This government's use of proleptic elegy presumed that Bedouin would also settle, celebrating their past while living in an urban future. Yet, in this Egyptian scheme, the government's services actually encouraged herders to maintain their practices of mobility. The state provided free fodder for herders, and located that fodder in a centralized location. The goal was that herders would stay near the fodder, and would eventually settle in those locations. In this way, the herders would "choose" to settle thanks to the state's services. However,

with the ready food supply their herds grew quickly and it became impossible to keep so many livestock close to the free fodder. This meant that herders had to return to their migration patterns with their now larger herds to ensure that the environment was maintained.[53] This was only one instance of interaction between Bedouin communities and the government of Egypt. Today, Bedouin continue to live in Egypt, and modern political analysts note that both Bedouin and Egyptian government groups hold great suspicion of one another due to generations of attempts at settlement and resulting conflicts. The question of citizenship is central to many of these problems. Many Bedouin community members in Egypt have inherited lands that have been in their families for generations. However, under Egyptian law, only Egyptian citizens can own land. If a Bedouin, who was born in Egypt, cannot prove Egyptian citizenship then they are also not legally allowed to own their ancestral lands. The loss of land can result in the movement to other pastures, or possibly settlement for a time in the city. It can also force a family which had settled in homes on their own land to once again become herders if those lands are seized because the family cannot prove citizenship and ownership.

This movement from pastures to city and back again is found throughout history. For herders it serves as a way to compensate for changing landscapes, climates, and family dynamics. For researchers, these movements can at times make it difficult to determine who is from a herding community and who has assimilated into settled communities. This circular progression is studied by scholars, but not often attended to in long-term development planning. Scholars such as Dawn Chatty, of Oxford University and former chair of the Commission on Nomadic Peoples, has written in great detail about Bedouin communities across the Middle East and North Africa. Her work ranges from the need to include Bedouin community members in forging peace in Syria to questions about forced migration, especially of unaccompanied Bedouin youth. What stands out in her work, in relation to this book, is the continual focus on the resiliency of nomadic and herding communities, despite the pressures that they face to settle.

Other scholars, such as Mark Dowie, have written about the ways that nomadic communities have become conservation refugees. Dowie has documented the many communities that live a sustainable lifestyle, who could very easily continue to live that sustainable lifestyle, but who are frequently at odds with other goals, such as conservation. He argues that when the government has to make a decision between an indigenous

53 Abu-Lughod, 1984

community and a conservation problem, they frequently side on the behalf of conservation. Herding communities often oppose this type of decision. They claim that herders are in favor of conservation, and they point to how well protected and maintained their herding lands are compared to cities, farms, and other regions in their countries. At times, herders have proven themselves to be much better conservators than their settled neighbors. The question then becomes, How can academics enable or support this link between herders and conservation? Or, How might herders be connected with development programming that joins the expertise with international programming and financing? One way to overcome these questions is to engage and encourage academics from herding communities.

**Engaging Nomadic Scholars**

Many scholars argue that herders must be included as speakers, sources, writers, and resources in research about their lands, herds, and community future. Yet, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith has written in her seminal textbook, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, it is often much more difficult for a scholar from a local or indigenous community to become recognized as an expert in their own community's way of life and expectations for the future.[54] Part of the work that needs to be done is capacity building, ensuring that more children from herding communities are given educational opportunities that make it possible for them to become internationally recognized as experts. This requires insuring that indigenous and local community members are participants in deliberations that occur when projects are designed, research is being collected, and data is being analyzed. They also need to be included in presentation and publication, both in the effort to make information about their community known to the larger world, and to make local communities aware of the research that has been done about their communities. There are too many historical examples of herding communities being studied, photographed, and exhibited for and by the West. Oftentimes the academics conducting these studies published their work at home, far from their ethnographic subjects. Those academics are seldom held accountable to the nomadic communities which they were representing. For example, in a study of early documentaries of nomadic peoples, Hamid Naficy writes that by focusing on tribes, early filmmakers were able to provide visual evidence for their arguments regarding Social Darwinism. In the collected images, they argued that tribal peoples were

54 Smith, 2013

at the lowest rungs of human evolution, and that settled communities, including those that the filmmakers came from, were at the highest point of evolution.[55] These studies and images became the foundation for future policies and programs.

The need to change this method of representation is seen in the ways that media and scholarship about herders is used to produce programs and policies. Frequently, those representations became law and policy. When I traveled through Tanzania and Kenya, I took every opportunity to visit a local or regional library. From large university depositories to kindergarten book rooms I found the same thing – the materials that were available to students were largely those produced in the West. Items such as the BBC's *Earth* and *Tribe* were being shown in classes that dealt with conservation topics.[56] And *National Geographic* magazines were being admired by school children. The problem here is twofold. First, the authors of those publications are rarely from the communities that are being reported about. Even when their intentions are ethical, these authors will likely never have the depth of knowledge or experience of a herding community member. Second, the works produced by more local scholars that focus on local knowledge and experience are not as accessible to students. The concern is that students studying to become conservation biologists and politicians are being educated by texts produced in the West, which frequently use proleptic elegies in their discussion of who is a good conservationist or what is the ideal livelihood for human communities. These texts often omit the local traditions, knowledge, and expectations on which herding communities traditionally educate their youth.

Yet, communities are beginning to experiment with ways to overcome the limitations of these texts and engage their youth in the study of traditional knowledge, language, and stories. One exciting example is the video game *Never Alone*, which was developed in partnership between Iñupiat community members and E-Line Media. In the game, players follow the story of Kunuuksaayuka, a Iñupiat boy who is looking for the source of a savage blizzard. Using traditional stories, music, and languages, the game engages players in an immersive space in which they can learn more about the Iñupiat culture. Speaking of the game's creation, Amy Freden of E-Line Media reflected on her work and conversations with the Cook Inlet Tribal Council. "We all agreed that, if done well, a video game had the best chance of connecting Native youth with their cultural heritage."[57] While

55 Naficy, 2006, 139
56 Caplan, 2005
57 Parkin, 2014

many members of the community were initially worried that the project would essentialize their community or misrepresent their heritage, it gradually gained support. By the end of the project, elders, traditional language instructors, and children had all played a part in the game's creation. Once released, *Never Alone* won the 2015 BAFTA award for the best debut game, and was named both the "Game of the Year" and "Game with Most Significant Impact" by Games for Change. Not all academic or development projects can be designed to work as smoothly or cohesively as *Never Alone*. But, as this book demonstrates, many communities are already working to present their community narratives to the world in a way that respectfully presents their culture and knowledge, and presents media artifacts that they are proud to share with their children.

## Conclusion

This book began by thinking about how mobile and nomadic peoples have been understood as "trapped minorities." Many of the communities discussed in this book, from Maasai to Inner Mongolians are indeed trapped into geopolitical spaces, identity constructions not of their own making, long histories of oppression, and attempts by contemporary governments to settle their communities. Yet, as this book has demonstrated, members of mobile and nomadic communities, particularly their youth, are utilizing new and social media to imagine new forms of engagement, protest, deliberation, and identity. It would be impossible to catalogue all of the ways that these communities are utilizing these new tools and interpreting the affordances of each new innovation. What is important, however, as we end this exploration, is the clear, continuing statement that mobile and nomadic communities are still present in our contemporary nations, deliberations, and communities. Through the affordances of new and social media they are reachable and can be consulted on a multitude of projects.

These communities are at times drawn together by quilting points, such as when Inner Mongolians took to microblogs to organize protests and share songs. Often times, image testimony is critical to these quilting points, such as how Inner Mongolians have accessed to social media platforms in a diversity of languages and the ability to produce image testimony has bolsterer Inner Mongolians' connections to networks beyond China. And when Sámi artists used YouTube to encourage international singing of a *yoik*. In each of these moments, the social fabric of a mobile and nomadic communities have been drawn together. The quilting points found in this

book differ – from protests, to votes, to poems. Some have occurred through images that require detailed knowledge of a community to interpret, and others have been produced for international networks. What is important here is that in each example, herding communities from around the world have come together – both in person and online – to exchange ideas and tactics as well as to develop new networks of communication. These quilting points happen, and then herding communities again disperse. The resulting transnational and transcontinental deliberations are one way in which this book finds parallels in the communicative strategies of mobile and nomadic communities.

In 2009, the Maasai activist Eliamani Laltaika reflected on these quilting points and their effect in Tanzania. He argued that the government of Tanzania must accept the Maasai as citizens of the country, participants in the economy, and people worthy of attention. Laltaika's call could be interpreted in many ways – as a rejection of the Tanzanian government's plans, a call for engagement rather than violence, or new connections between governments, conservation organizations, and herding communities. These connections are not always easy, yet, they are promising. As Laltaika concludes, "I'm positive that where we are heading, pastoralism will be recognized and pastoralists will be given their rights. […] It's certainly going to be very tough, but we will reach there. I'm positive. We are heading there."[58]

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58 Laltaika, 2009

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# Index

*Media Culture in Nomadic Communities* examines the ways that new technologies and ICT infrastructures have changed the communicative norms and patterns that regulate mobile and nomadic communities' engagement in local and international deliberative decision-making. Each chapter examines a unique communicative event, such has how the Maasai of Tanzania have used online petitions to demand government action, how Mongolians in northern China have used microblogs to record and debate land tenure, and how herding communities from around the world have supported the Lakota Sioux protests at Standing Rock. Through these case studies, Hahn argues that mobile and nomadic communities are creating and utilizing new communicative networks that are radically changing local, national, and international deliberations.

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