

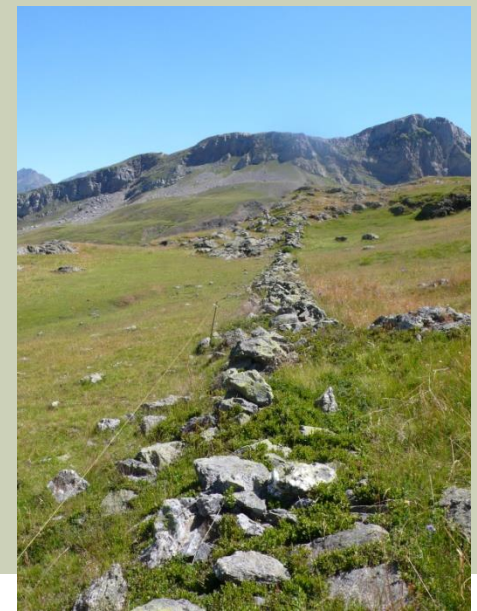
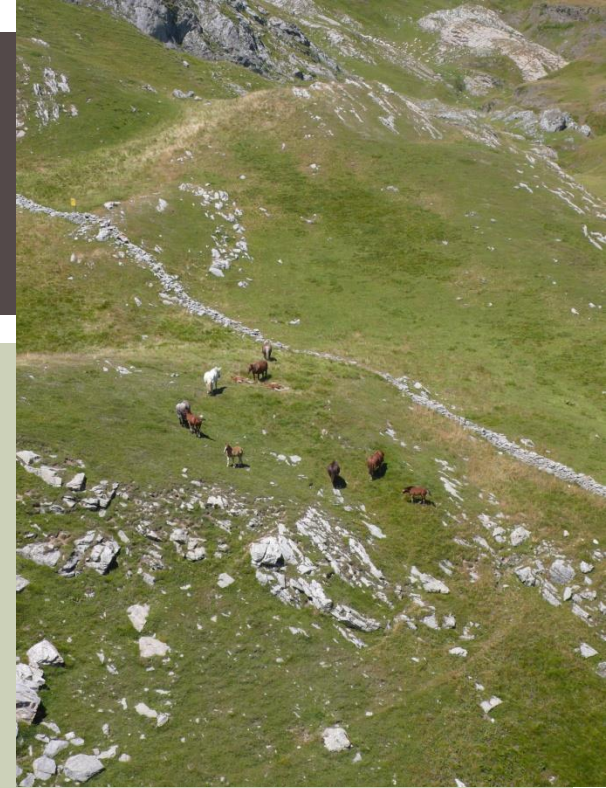
# HISTORY AND ARCHEOLOGY OF COMMONS: GAMES OF SCALE AND CASE STUDY

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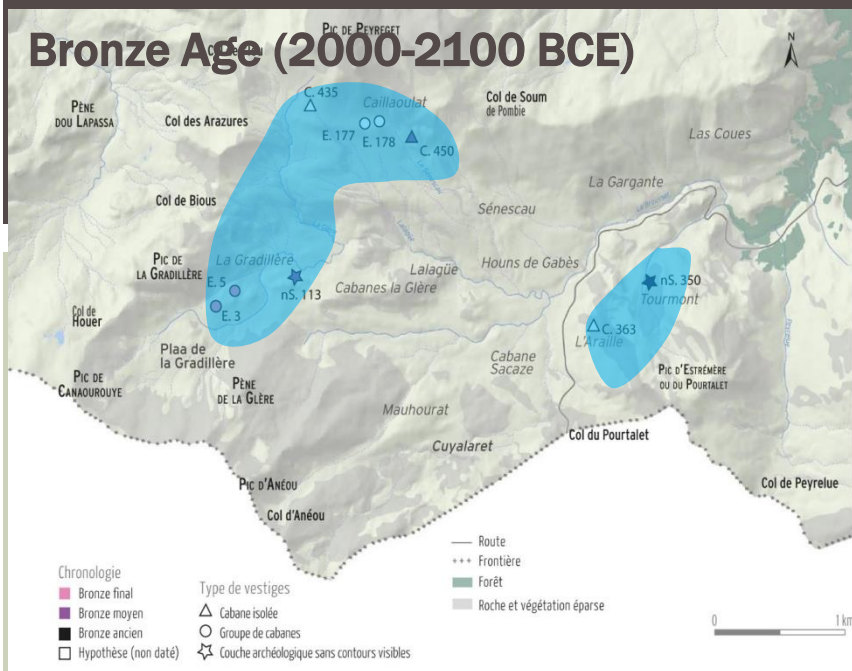
Commons, environmental resources and cultural heritage  
Università di Genova  
25-26 September 2017

# Archaeological corpus

Huts, enclosures, walls of demarcation



## Bronze Age (2000-2100 BCE)



## Late Antiquity (c. 300-600 CE)

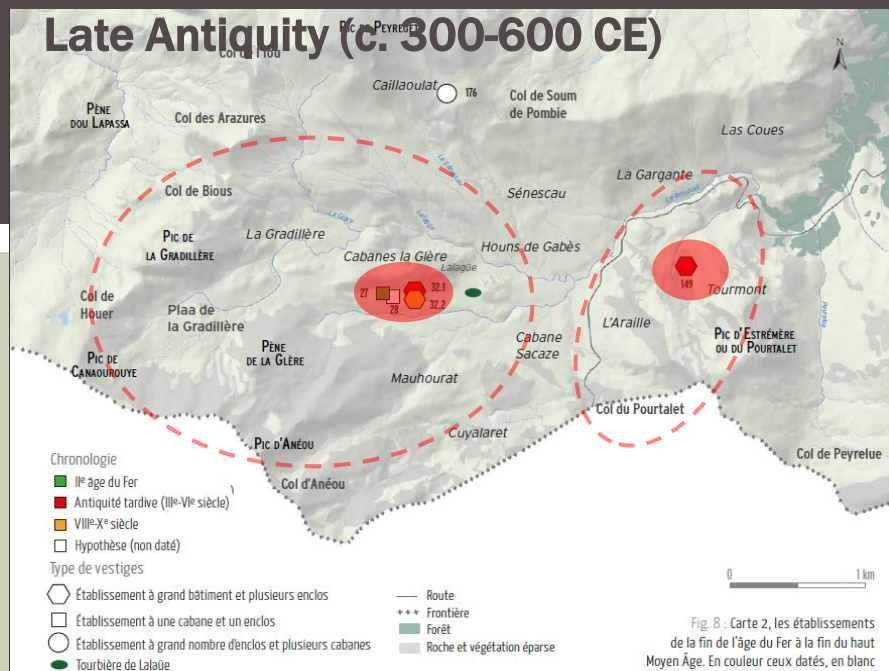
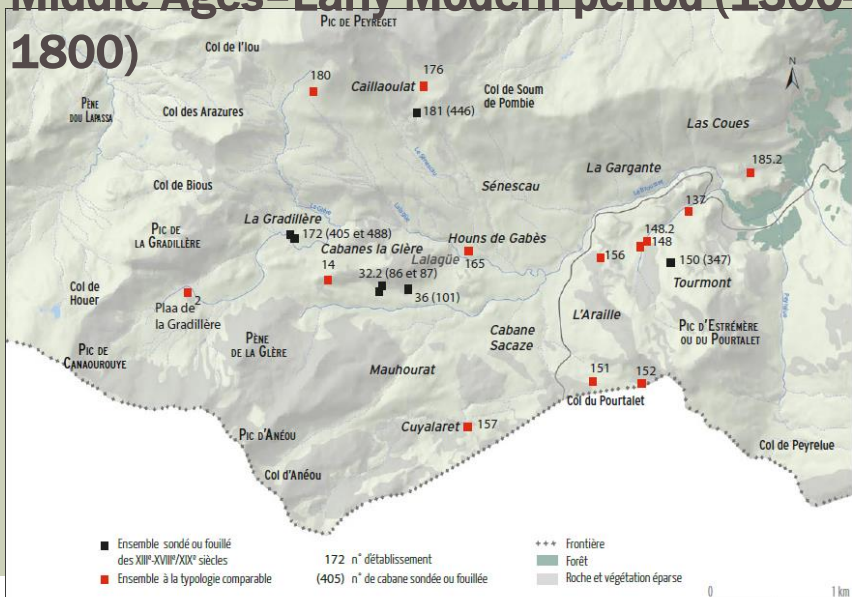
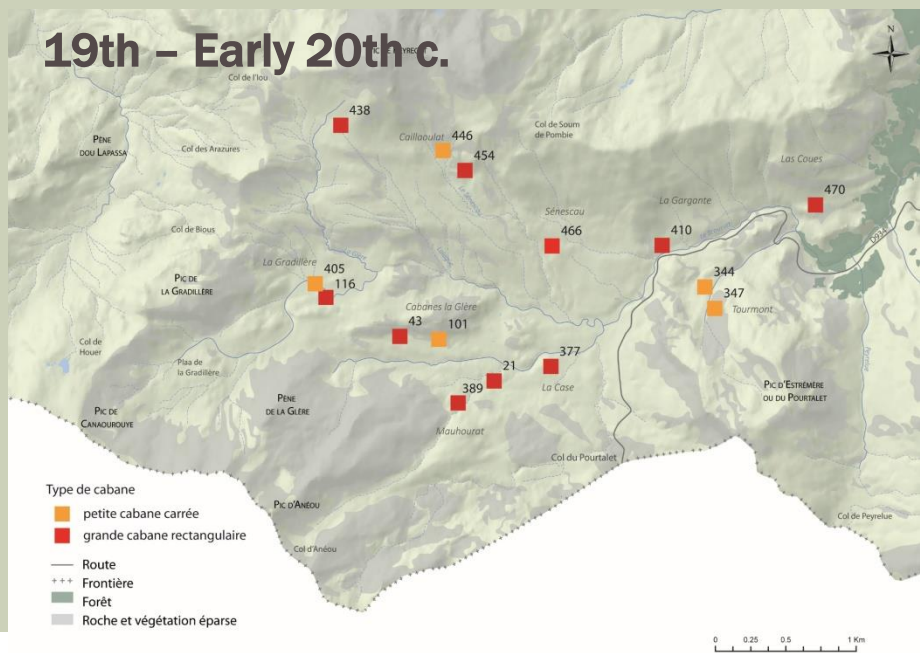


Fig. 8 : Carte 2, les établissements de la fin de l'âge du Fer à la fin du haut Moyen Âge. En couleur ceux datés, en blanc

## Middle Ages – Early Modern period (1300-1800)



## 19th – Early 20th c.



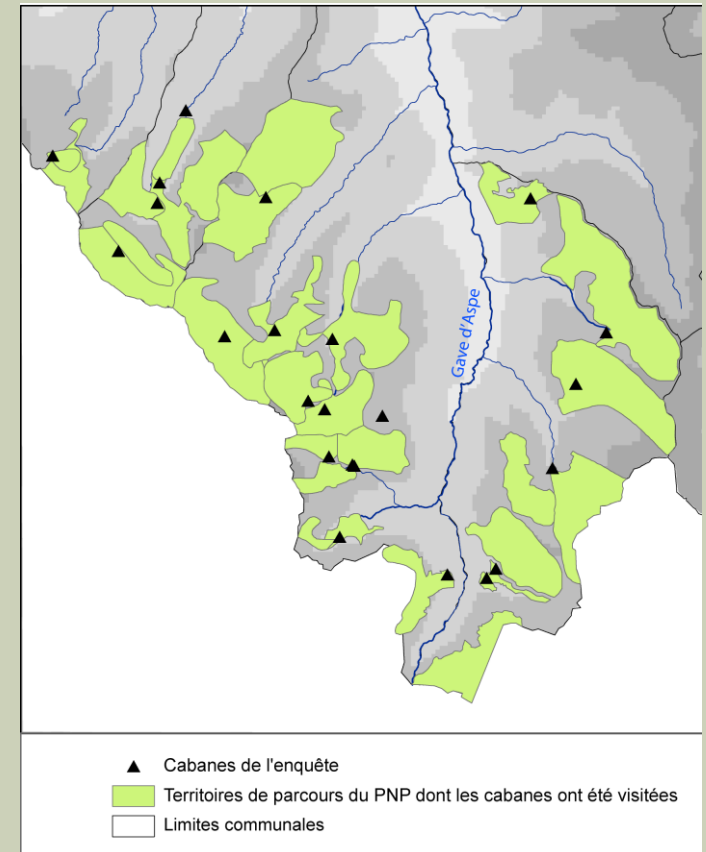
# From the archaeological corpus...

## ■ Questions

- Are sites common or individual? Collective or private?
- How is the space all around shared, exploited?
- What are the material correlates of the collective use of the resources?

- It seems difficult to see what is common or not from the archaeology alone
- To work on the question of the uses and the question of the practices of exploitation of the resources? We can call on to the written sources, the planimetric sources or to the ethnology
- Examples from investigation in western Pyrenees, which present various solutions of division of the resources. Examples in the closest to the practices, in micro-scale

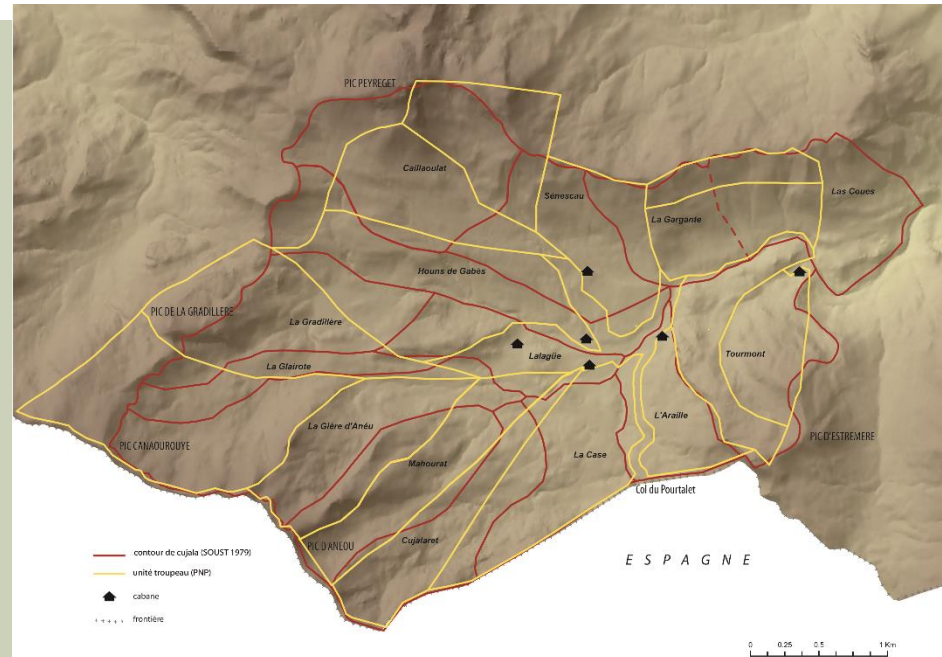
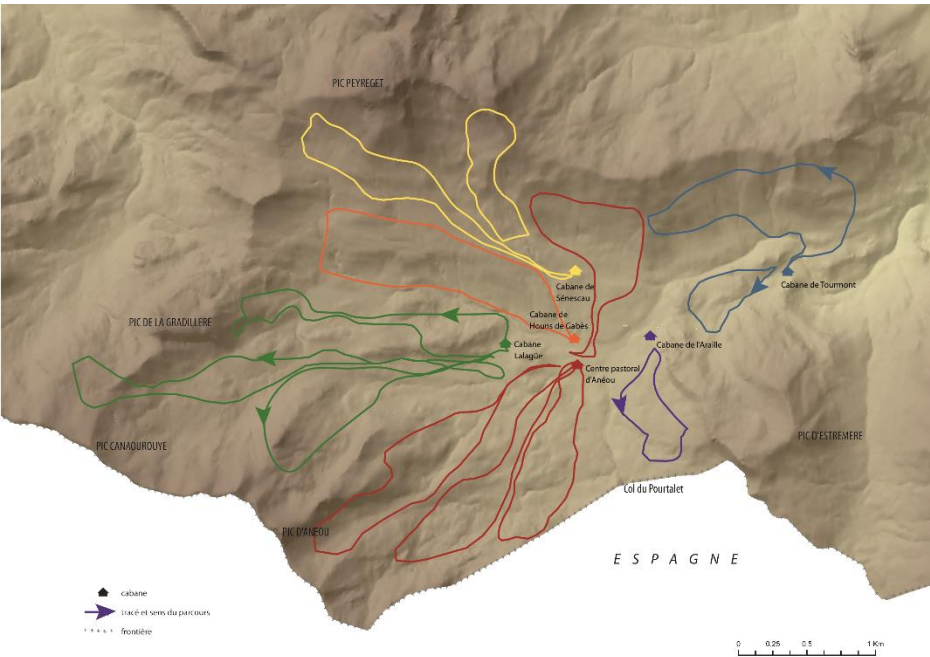
# The Aspe Valley (Béarn): well-delimited territories



# Hut of Lalague (Ossau Valley): 3 shepherds in one hut



# The appropriation defines itself by the practice, during the circuit of the herd



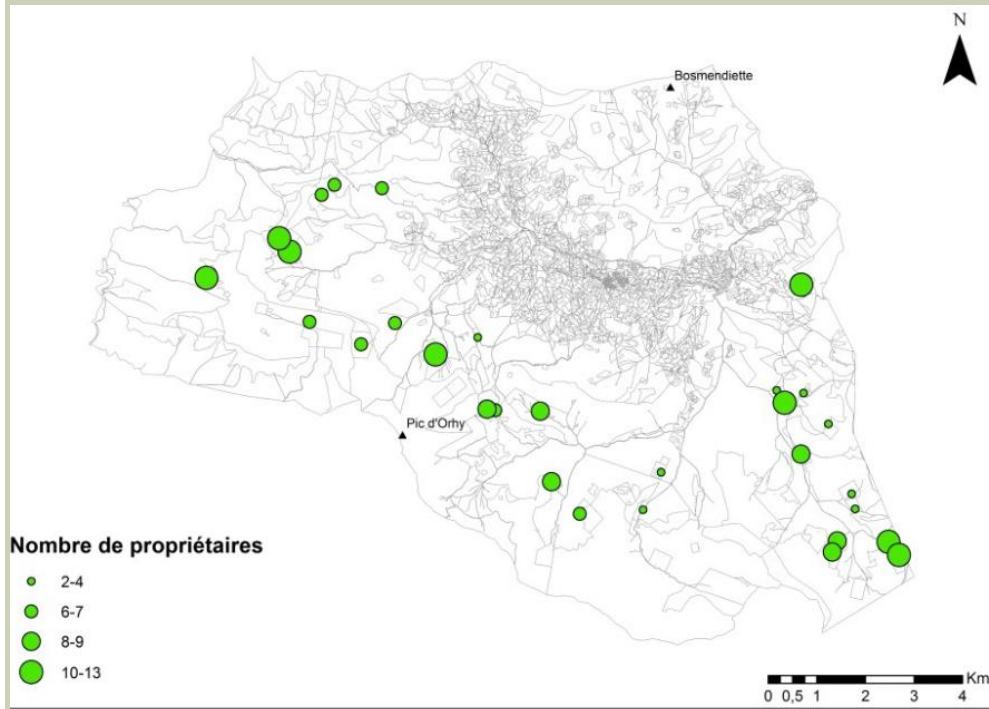
# Soule (Basque country): Collective property of the hut

Ex: 9 owners for a *cayolar*, from the napoleonic land registry

section	numéros des parcelles	contenance	observations	lieux dits	Nature de culture	noms, prénoms, profession et demeures
A	1	0,00,40	par égale portion	Cihigolatcegagne	grange	<b>Basterreix les héritiers, propriétaires à Alos</b>
A	1	0,00,40	par égale portion	Cihigolatcegagne	grange	<b>Garostordoy Michel, cultivateur à Barcus</b>
A	1	0,00,40	par égale portion	Cihigolatcegagne	grange	<b>Udoy, cultivateur à Roquiague</b>
A	1	0,00,40	par égale portion	Cihigolatcegagne	grange	<b>Lopé Pierre, cultivateur à Roquiague</b>
A	1	0,00,40	par égale portion	Cihigolatcegagne	grange	<b>Oyhanondo, cultivateur à Roquiague</b>
A	1	0,00,40	par égale portion	Cihigolatcegagne	grange	<b>Papax Jean, cultivateur à Roquiague</b>
A	1	0,00,40	par égale portion	Cihigolatcegagne	grange	<b>Metheol Jean, cultivateur à Mauléon</b>
A	1	0,00,40	par égale portion	Cihigolatcegagne	grange	<b>Etcheber, cultivateur à Chéraute</b>
A	1	0,00,40	par égale portion	Cihigolatcegagne	grange	<b>Hégaburu, cultivateur à Barcus</b>



# Number of owner by undivided *cayolar* to Larrau from the napoleonic land registry (1830): From 2 to 13 owners



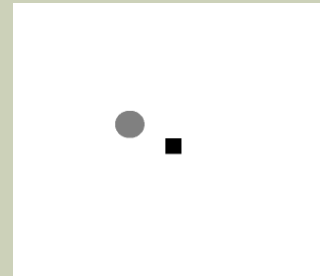
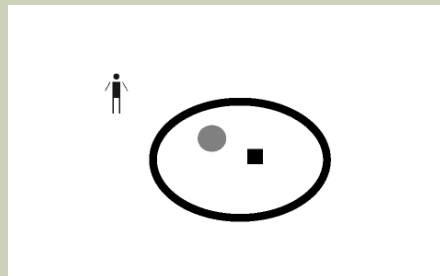
- Collective management of the herd
- 2 to 13 owners
- 1 hut
- 1 herd
- In the practice : rotation every week for the guarding and the milking, (or employed shepherd)

# Back to Archaeology...

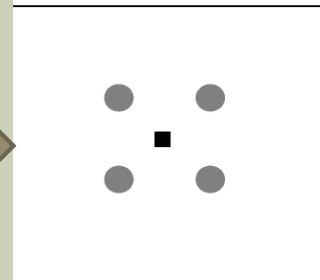
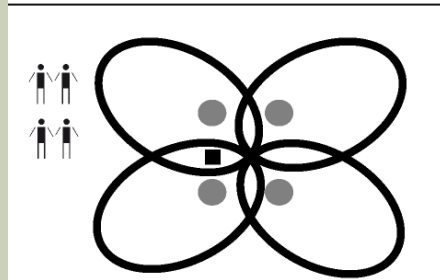
Ethnographic observation

Material

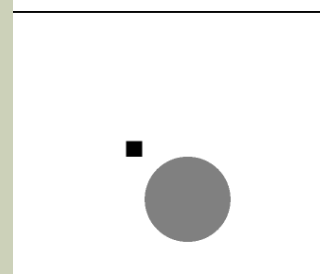
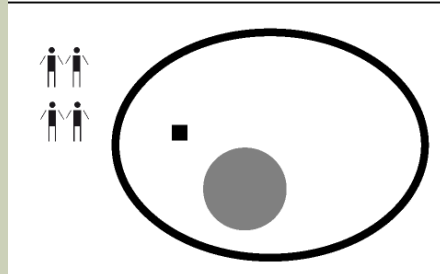
■ Aspe, Cize



■ Ossau



■ Soule

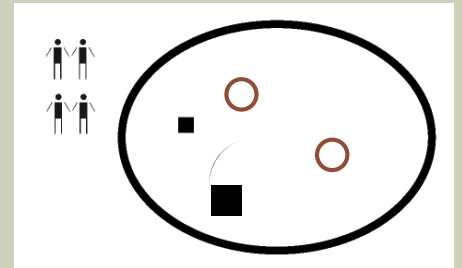


■ Number of pens

■ Size of pens

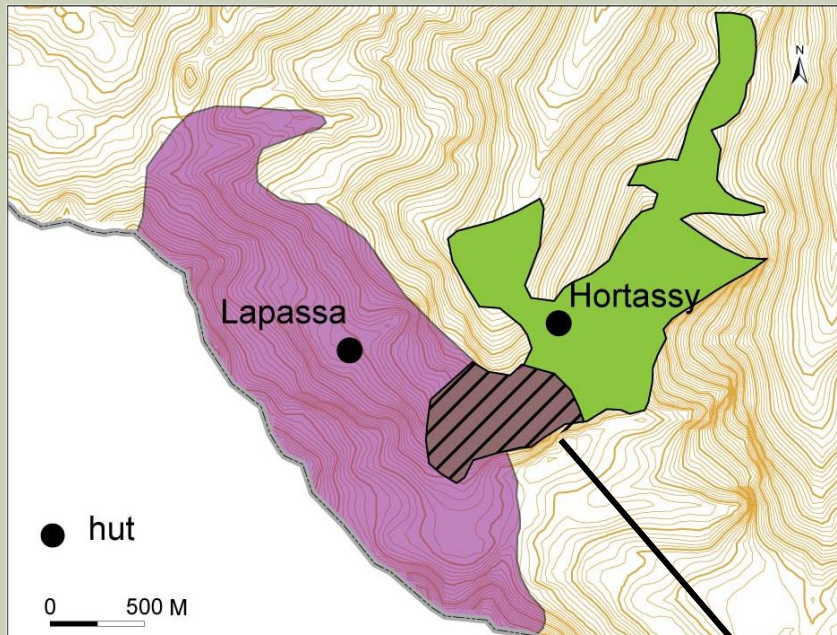
# Variants. Cize (Basque country)

Two huts, two shepherds, two herds reunited during the path

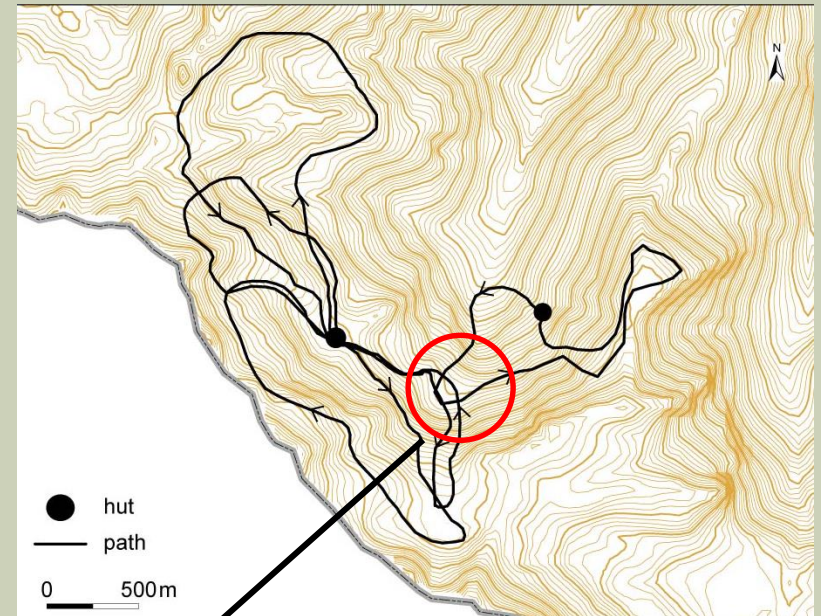


# Variants. Compaucuity near two huts exploited individually

summer, territories of paths



day, paths of herds



Aillary Contendé  
Undivided property of two villages

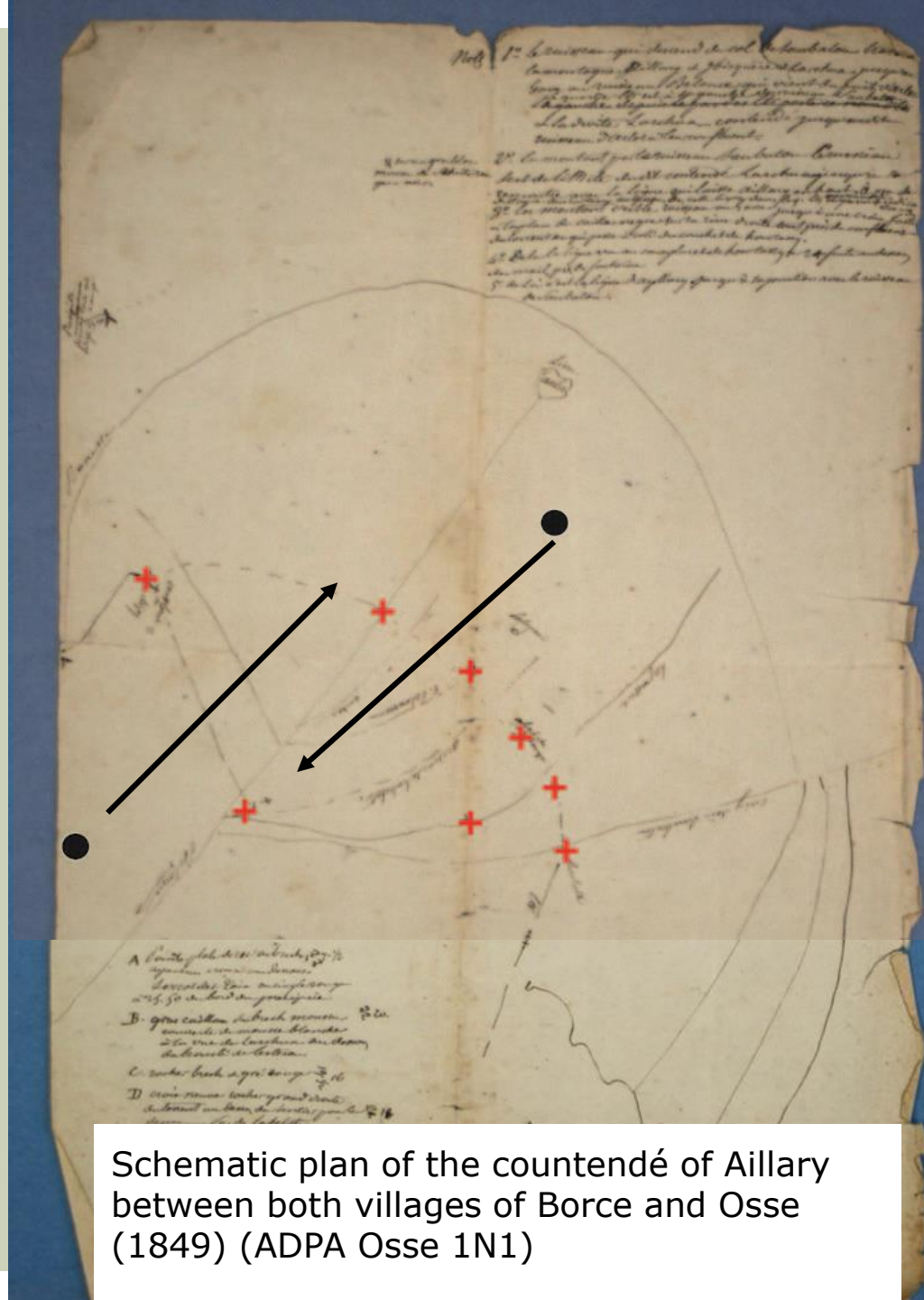
In the practice, the progresses of the herds follow one another during the day. They form a complicated labyrinth with crossed ways.

# Hortassy, lapassa, An exemple of compascuity

1589

"The inhabitants of Borce being able to rise up to the highest crosses and those of Osse come down to the lowest crosses [...] so that all which is in the limits between the highest and the lowest crosses is common and countendé for ever between the aforementioned parts »

(ADPA Osse DD2)

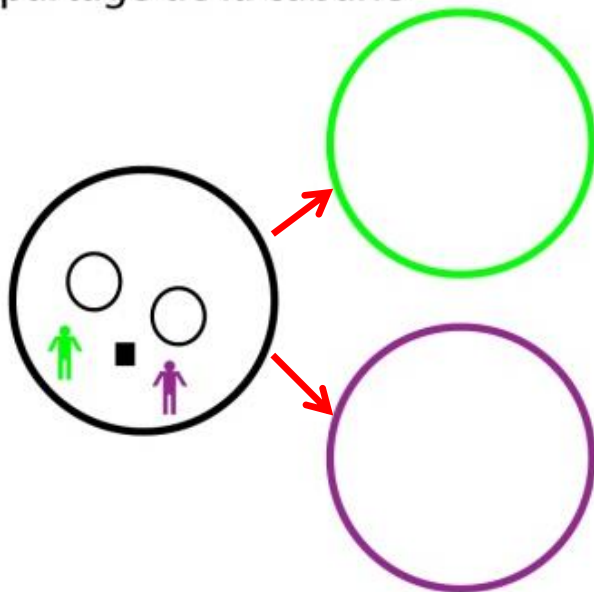


Schematic plan of the countendé of Aillary between both villages of Borce and Osse (1849) (ADPA Osse 1N1)

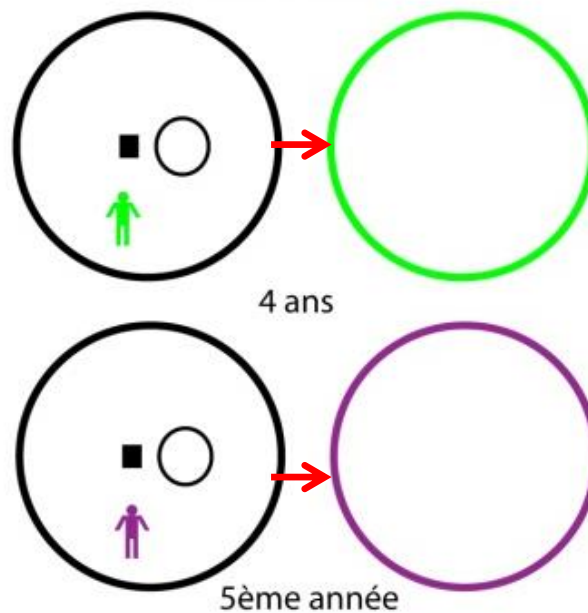
# Variants. Daily Sharing or annual rotation

## Indivision

partage de la cabane



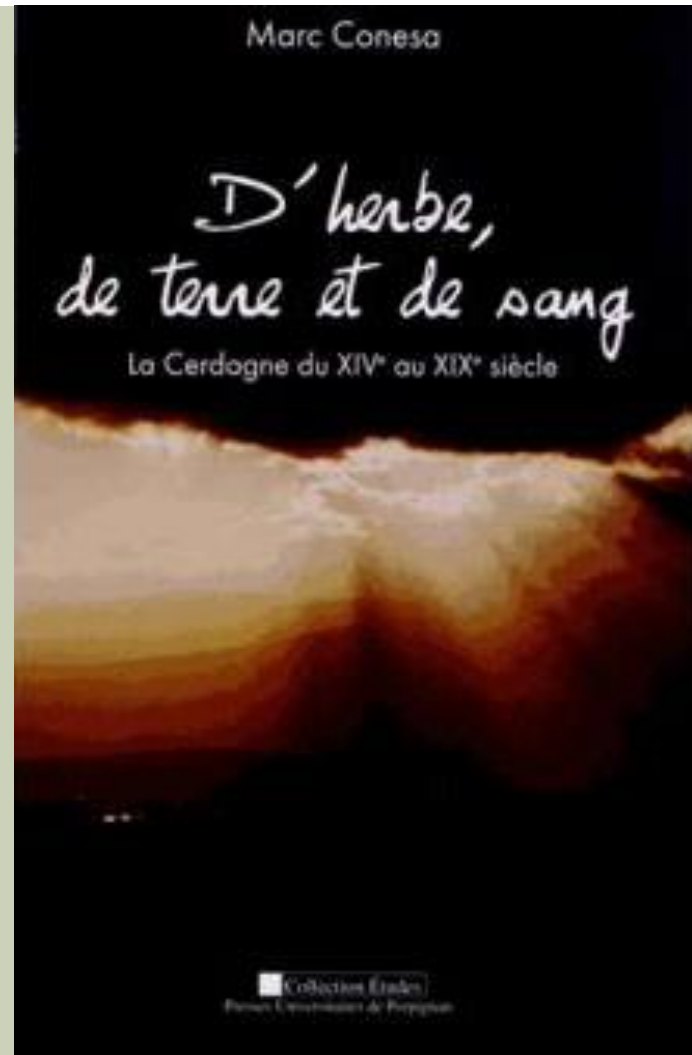
droits tournants



# Historical point of view

## Introduction

- General reflection based on **historical documentation** and ten years of hindsight on this question on various subjects, from **livestock farming to mountain agriculture**, including the **social dynamics of capitalism in modern societies**.



# 1. WAYS OF WRITING THE HISTORY OF THE COMMONS

- There are two ways of doing the history of the commons. **The first is genealogy** . It seeks in the past less the affiliations than an evolution leading to making the commons the outmoded, outdated vestiges of a past world, which must now be integrated into the present, that is to say privatize them, value them, exploit them. This story seems done, so more to do. The commons are largely the witnesses of a bygone past, very often an outdated past, sometimes still a little present, but often without a future. For the populations of today's world, social, economic, environmental and political emergencies are not less common but more common because these remain vital. They allow to cultivate, to breathe, to drink, to express oneself politically. A new enclosure of the world is at work. From now on, water is bottled, paid for, the living patented without even speaking of flouted democracy : **the commons do not necessarily belong to a bygone past, rather to a past which remains a possible dimension of our present.**



# 1. WAYS OF WRITING THE HISTORY OF THE COMMONS

- Doing the history of the commons is then for the historian a crushing question, and yet an emancipatory one, because that requires our duty of critical distance, towards the sources, the historiography, the tools and techniques used, the definitions which fix, which freeze, without explaining, but above all, a critical duty with today. Faced with the ideological domination of liberalism, writing the history of the commons forces us to overturn the table, even if it means feeling the loneliness of the historian that others have written. History is not a colonization of the past by the present, it is also a critique of the present because it is constitutive of it, neither completely nor entirely detached from it. It is this second way of doing reflective , **critical history** that I would like to focus on.

## 2. ARCHEOLOGY OF THE HISTORY OF THE COMMONS

- **“ archaeology of the history of the commons”** . Not to produce or relay the usual discourses, but to grasp their bias, deconstruct a history without breaks, without changes, just an almost natural evolution of the collective towards privatization, instituted in an opaque layer The two major constituent strata of this discursive doxa are the following:
  - the question of the common good as a moral evidence, as the object of a “moral discourse” and overarching policy, that of the Church. The latter claims to define this “common good” as turned towards a higher good, obviously for its benefit, individuals having to participate in the great moral and collective work.
  - The commons as a political question, seen from above, the State or the political powers also define the commons as the basis of a general interest of which they are the guarantors (and the beneficiaries), with a legislative production aiming to define the rules of law of the appropriation of the private and the collective.

## 2. ARCHEOLOGY OF THE HISTORY OF THE COMMONS

- Making a history of the commons first requires undertaking a short but necessary “**archaeology of the history of the commons**” . Not to produce or relay the usual discourses, but to grasp their bias, deconstruct a history without breaks, without changes, just an almost natural evolution of the collective towards privatization, instituted in an opaque layer The two major constituent strata of this discursive doxa are the following:
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  - 2.2. The commons as a political question, seen from above, the State or the political powers also define the commons as the basis of a general interest of which they are the guarantors (and the beneficiaries), with a legislative production aiming to define the rules of law of the appropriation of the private and the collective.

## 2. ARCHEOLOGY OF THE HISTORY OF THE COMMONS

- In both cases, the commons are goods or things , allowing their inclusion in the economy defined as production, distribution, consumption, economy in which the Church like the State , or other powers, control, participate in the control. The Church and purgatory: it pays off and the State is the main creator of the markets, even of the market. In the historiographical production, dense and old, on which we will not dwell here, we can emphasize that:
  - The commons exist with private property, the latter being a possibility, not a fatality;
  - That they are framed by moral or political powers;
  - That individuals or groups of individuals are incapable of managing them themselves without these superior guardianships, disqualification of “agents”, individuals or communities in particular in the 18th century.

### 3. DECOLONIZE THE COMMON

- **Economic nature** (the commons are goods), **moral** (the commons must constitute an idea of the good) and **political** (the commons are objects of property rights and political intervention). This discourse of nature finds in the famous article *Tragedy of commons*, showing the inability of local actors to manage a limited resource themselves and concluding in the necessary need to privatize the resource, individuals being motivated only by their own interest. . The commons should not or should no longer exist and the State must intervene to make them disappear before withdrawing from the game. Regardless of whether the article questions the link between resources and demography, it was understood, and it could only be grasped and criticized from this liberal perspective. Actors are seen only as troublemakers

- Hardin, Garrett. "The tragedy of the commons (1968): 1243-48 .

Fall 2001

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

## The Tragedy of the Commons

by Garrett Hardin

At the end of a thoughtful article on the future of nuclear war, Wiesner and York<sup>1</sup> concluded that: "Both sides in the arms race are...confronted by the dilemma of steadily increasing military power and steadily decreasing national security. *It is our considered professional judgment that this dilemma has no technical solution.* If the great powers continue to look for solutions in the area of science and technology only, the result will be to worsen the situation."

I would like to focus your attention not on the subject of the

nuclear world) but on the kind of conclusion they reached, namely that there is no technical solution to the problem. An implicit and almost universal assumption of discussions published in professional and semi-popular scientific journals is that the problem under discussion has a technical solution. A technical solution may be defined as one that requires a change only in the techniques of the natural sciences, demanding little or nothing in the way of change in human values or ideas of morality.

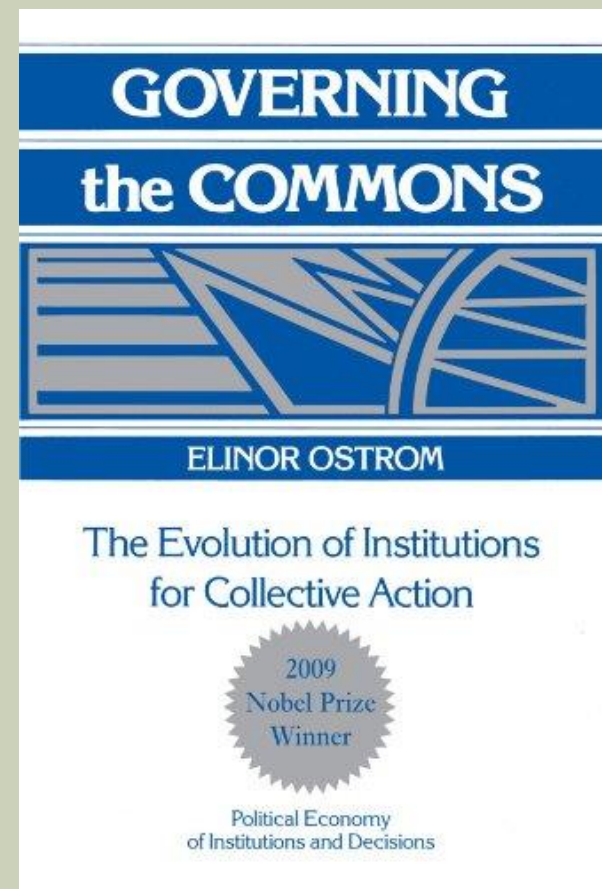
In our day (though not in earlier times) technical solutions are always welcome. Because of previous failures in prophecy, it takes courage to assert that a

of tick-tack-toe. Consider the problem, "How can I win the game of tick-tack-toe?" It is well known that I cannot, if I assume (keeping with the conventions of game theory) that my opponent understands the game perfectly. Put another way, there is no "technical solution" to the problem. I can win only by giving radical meaning to the word "win." I can hit my opponent over the head; or I can drug him; or I can falsify the records. Every way in which "win" involves, in some sense, an abandonment of the game, as we intuitively understand it. (I can also, of course, openly abandon the game — refuse to play it. This is what most adults do.)

### 3. DECOLONIZE THE COMMON

- Elinor Ostrom's counter example is that of a secretary who attends, at the same time as her work at the University of Los Angeles, a political seminar on the social management of water, showing that the pumping of water by multiple actors does not exhaust for as much the resource; then through a series of empirical surveys, it presents a way of reconciling a liberal economy and its protesting fringes . This work is expressed in terms of management, classical economics, statistical tools, with attention given to organizations such as business managers. This study of the commons is not centered on the terms and logic of the commons but on those of classical economics. But when the economy, to the exclusion of the social or the political, is very interested in an object - here the commons - we can fear a sort of colonization of discourse, an integration into discursive formations that prevent us from thinking about the subject in other terms than those proposed.
- But The commons are not just goods; because by categorizing them in this way, in the sole economic dimension, we put their social and political dimensions relegated to the background. Clearly, there is no common in itself, there is no common by nature; water, air, grass, pastures, shores are resources and become common through social, technical, political and economic practices that recognize them, invest them and build them as such.

- Ostrom, Elinor. *Governing the commons: the evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, 1990.



# CONCLUSION

- We worked on the commons of the Pyrenees. The commons are in the register of water, woods, crops and pastures. It is not the nature of the soil, it is not the situation of the soil that makes the common, it is society that builds the common.
- This local example invites us to break with an overhanging history, with aerial documentation that speaks only of pasture limits and property rights to grasp what is common in societies. We would have liked to be able to develop these cries in the Pyrenees (*via fora*, literally: "outside!") which are places of politics and which are common in the territory of the pastures in the same way as choosing the drawing of lots or the election to give themselves representatives. We would have liked to be able to take seriously these peasants who declared to the lord that they were the masters of the territory in the middle of the 17th century, and preferred to show that the commons can transcend social differences or, on the contrary, reinvent them.
- We have tried to demonstrate that the commons are complex, that their history is not determined by a single and equivocal trajectory, that the commons are not only spaces or resources, that they are inseparable from social practices and political choices. ; the role of the historian as of the archaeologist is never to give in to complexity. In this doxa, social relations and relations of domination are left hollow. Getting rid of this history of discourses aims to bring out the possibility of another history, more material, social and political of the commons.