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D Sheeren, S Ladet, O Ribière, B Raynaud, Martin Paegelow, Thomas Houet

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Assessing land cover changes in the French Pyrenees since the 1940s

A semi-automatic GEOBIA approach using aerial photographs



D. Sheeren, S. Ladet
 DYNAFOR Lab.
 UMR 1201 INP-ENSAT / INRA
 University of Toulouse
 BP 32607, 31326 Castanet Tolosan Cedex, France

O. Ribière, B. Raynaud, M. Paegelow, T. Houet
 GEODE Lab.
 UMR 5602 CNRS / UTM
 University of Toulouse
 5 al. Machado, 31058 Toulouse, France

Introduction

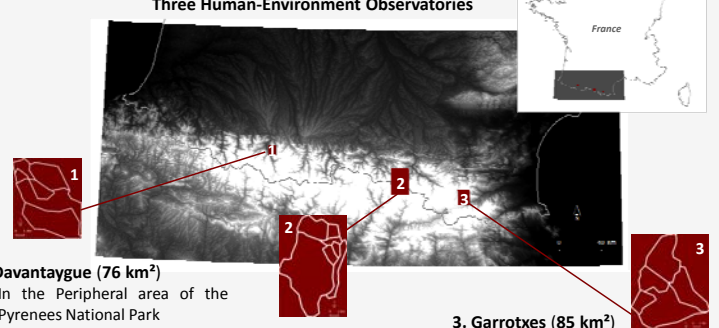


As in many mountain areas in Europe, **agro-pastoral landscapes** of the Pyrenees are subject to **fast spontaneous reforestation**. Encroachment is mainly related to the abandonment of farmland in combination with rural depopulation and agriculture modernization.

Observed changes of land abandonment or land-use extensification can be similar at the regional scale but the **dynamics at the local scale do not occur homogeneously**, as it is determined by specific conditions (environmental, climatic, socio-economic, anthropogenic).

The **objective** of this work (part of the MODE-RESPYR project) is to **assess the spatial patterns of land cover changes** during the last 70 years in three study sites of the Pyrenees, and to **compare the local dynamics** in order to **observe and to explain similarities and disparities**.

Study sites

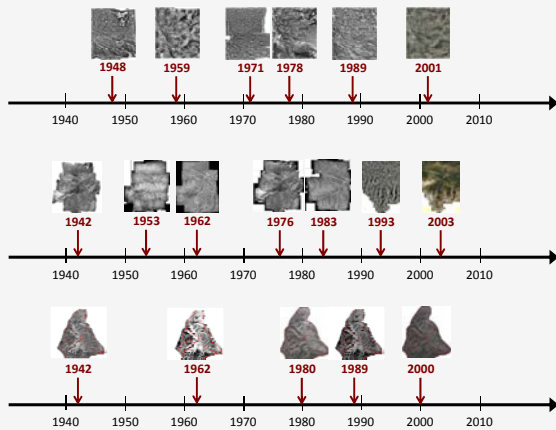


- 1. Davantaygue (76 km²)**
 - In the Peripheral area of the Pyrenees National Park
 - 6 municipalities
- 2. Haut-Vicdessos (244 km²)**
 - In the Regional Natural Park of Ariège
 - 7 municipalities
- 3. Garrotxes (85 km²)**
 - In the Regional Natural Park of the Catalan Pyrenees
 - 5 municipalities

Material and Method

Data

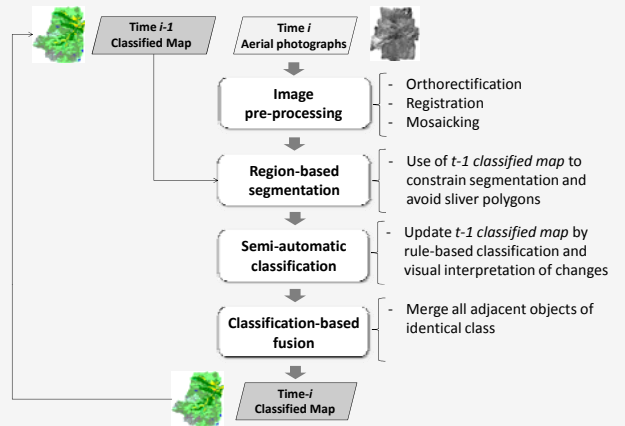
Historical panchromatic aerial photographs with recent true color digital images



- 1. Davantaygue**
 - Number of photographs: 67
 - 6 dates: from 1948 to 2001
 - Scale: 1:15000-1:30000
 - Spatial resolution: 0.5m
 - TIFF (8 or 24 bits)
- 2. Haut-Vicdessos**
 - Number of photographs: 286
 - 7 dates: from 1942 to 2003
 - Scale: 1:25000-1:30000
 - Spatial resolution: 0.5m
 - TIFF (8 or 24 bits)
- 3. Garrotxes**
 - Number of photographs: 104
 - 5 dates: from 1942 to 2000
 - Scale: 1:25000-1:30000
 - Spatial resolution: 0.5m
 - TIFF (8 or 24 bits)

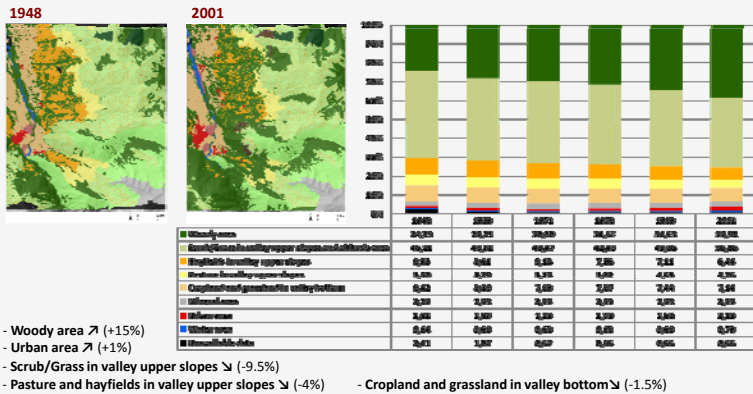
Methodological approach

Independently-generated land cover maps from a GEOgraphic Object-Based Image Analysis

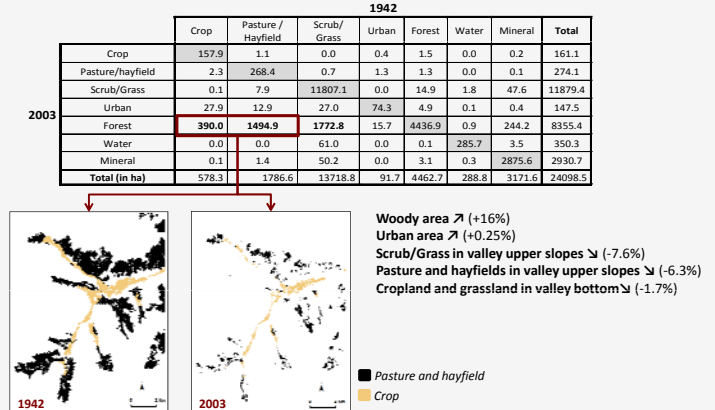


Results

1. Davantaygue



2. Haut-Vicdessos



Conclusions

- A similar spatial pattern of land cover changes for the 3 study sites (encroachment at low and medium altitudes) but with **different rates and extents**, and occurring at different periods.
- A spatial pattern highly related to pattern of **farmland abandonment** and depopulation.
- A **generic method** usable for various mountain areas
- Perspectives: developing an automatic classification procedure using very high resolution remotely sensed images for monitoring annual land use and cover changes.

3. Garrotxes

