

The “Parzonerias”, an old type of community conserved area active in the mountains of the Basque Country, Spain.

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Our presentation will discuss the model of « *parzonería* » an old type of community conserved area still alive in the mountains of the Basque Country of Spain. We will focus on a case study : the *Parzonería General de Entzia and Iturrieta*, in Spanish, *Entzia eta Iturrietako Partzuergo Orokorra*, in Basque (from now on, The Parzonería), which is found in the Province of Álaba / Araba, northern Spain.

The Parzonería is located in a mountain area, around 1000 m of altitude, and has about 5000 ha of size. The cultural landscapes of the Parzonería are mainly forestlands and pasture-lands, including some of the oldest and most biodiverse beech forests of the region. Because of its outstanding natural heritage values, the entire Parzonería area was included in the European Natura 2000 network.

Although the origin of this community conserved area goes back to the prehistory, the Parzonería model was established in the Low Middle Ages. The current juridical status of the Parzonería was defined in 1989, acknowledging that it is local body with full legal status, although its legal rights as a land manager are somewhat unclear. The governance of the Parzonería includes a General Assembly, made of 16 elected members coming from the four municipalities that have lands within the Parzonería; a Board, elected by the Assembly; and the President. The Manager of the Parzonería is responsible for implementing the decisions of the Board, and doing a number of other significant jobs, both administrative and in the field.

In 1994 a management plan was drawn, defining specific goals for all the land uses of the Parzonería. In addition, to respond to the modern challenges, during the last years several regulations have been established regarding the main uses of the Parzonería: pasture, forestry, hunting, and diverse public uses, such as recreational, cultural and scientific.

Economic revenues of mountain forestry and livestock have been steadily declining during the last years, to the extent that the maintenance of both forest and pastoral activities, essential for the conservation of the cultural landscape, is currently jeopardized. Another challenge is obtaining full legal recognition of the Parzonería management responsibilities from the Local and regional governments, namely the Diputación Foral de Álava and the Basque Government.



Up: Managers inspecting livestock in pasture-lands of the Parzonería.
Down: A shepherd moving his flock.

