

French Rural Fieldsite

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Location of the fieldsite

The village of Monhiolas and Atignac are two small communes (180 and 120 inhabitants) of the Canton d'Aurignac a sparsely rural region in South-West France at 80 km from Toulouse.

Specific situation

The situation in this area is characterized by 2 opposite trends:
 (1) great changes in the rural life and exploitation of the land with agriculture abandonment and the arrival of new country people e.g. English or Dutch during the last ten years and
 (2) maintenance by adaptation of characteristics of the traditional social system due to geographical isolation.



Slaughtering a pig (photo: Anne Sourdril)



Working on a field (photo: Anne Sourdril)



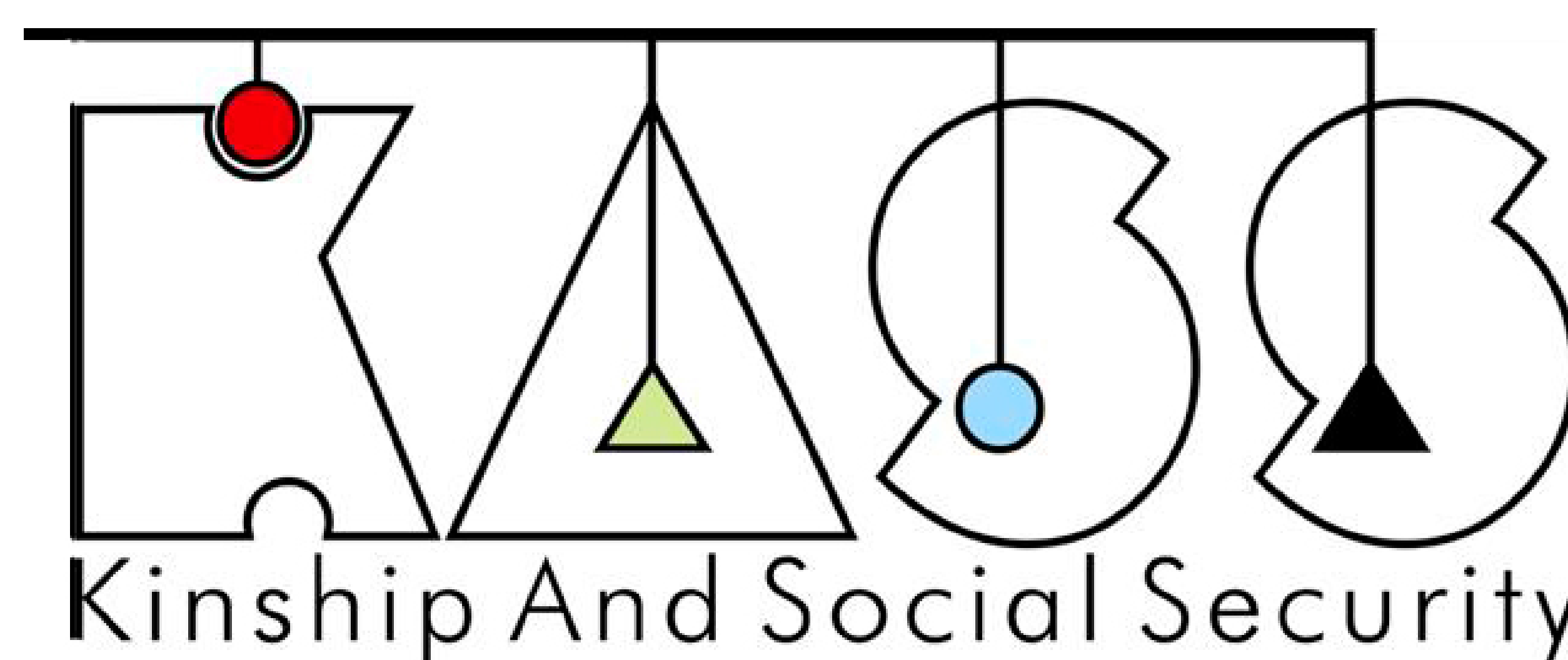
Landscape (photo: Anne Sourdril)

Social System

This social system is named the “stem family system” or “house-oriented system” and is based on a non-egalitarian way of passing on: a single heir and successor inherits of the property, the “house”, which is a social entity composed of material and non material goods (farm, land, tools / symbols, name, status). This way of inheritance leads to the constitution of a specific household: the stem family; this induces inter-generational solidarity with the elderly and the children and explains the high lack of social services in the area.

Relationships

The “houses” by reproducing themselves also reproduce relationships between the neighbours and in this area mutual aid between neighbours for agricultural work but also daily help or sociability during ritual events are strong. With the changes in the sociological composition of the country (arrival of new country and urban people / exodus of the young local population) the maintenance of the system and of the solidarities between generations is questioned.



An interdisciplinary project with an anthropological agenda funded by the European Union's Sixth Framework Programme.

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Layout: Kristin Magnucki, Oliver Wehmann
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