

Community, institutions and environment in conflicts over commons in Galicia, Northwest Spain (18th - 20th centuries)¹

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ABSTRACT

In this article, our aim is to explore the importance of different factors in the explanation of the sustainability of common lands over the long-term. We will analyze the importance of the rules (formal and informal), but also the making of identities by local communities regarding common lands. We also explore the role of changes in the environmental and economic functionality of common lands. Our case study is located in Galicia in Northwest Spain. We will analyze a particular example of common lands not recognized by law until 1968, trying to show how the legal clarification and the construction of clear systems of rules are not sufficient to explain the sustainability of the commons. The Spanish liberal state did not accept the singular character of the Galician common property since the Cadiz parliament assimilated the Galician commons to the municipal property prevailing in other parts of Spain. From 1960 to 1985, the situation reversed due to a conflict between Galician communities and the Franco regime. In this conflict, two productive alternatives confronted each other: the productive use of forest lands defended by the forest services of the regime and the use of the land for livestock. The victory of the communities did not succeed in the growth of grazed lands, but neither did the forest option. On the contrary from 1970 onwards the common lands lost their productive functions and many left the common lands.

KEYWORDS

Galicia, 18th-20th centuries, Sustainability of common lands, Franco regime

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Introduction

The study of common lands has become one of the most widely-discussed aspects in the social sciences in recent decades. The study of this phenomenon is relevant if we are to understand the problems of collective interest in different theoretical traditions and disciplines, especially those interested in collective action.² Some of these traditions and debates have influenced the work of historians but, without doubt, the central debate in all of the literature has been the debate on the inefficiency of commons in ensuring the sustainability of natural resources, starting with Garret Harding's 1968 article the "Tragedy of the Commons"³ and his argument that common lands brought about the exhaustion of resources since there were no restrictions on their overexploitation. A significant part of the debate has centered on the precision of the terminology and the distinction between different common property regimes and common-pool resources, as well as the distinction between these and open access goods or club goods. Institutional analysis, whose leading exponent is Elinor Ostrom, has perhaps been the most influential intellectual tradition in the study of commons, focusing its research on the analysis of the rules that explain the success or failure of communal institutions. Ostrom⁴ believes that many communal institutions historically developed complex self-organization systems which enhanced cooperation and provided an escape from the tragedy of open access. Institutional analysis would, therefore, be a powerful tool to explain the survival of common lands over time. Ostrom's work has been very influential among historians who have explored the organization and regulation of common lands in different historical contexts and the reasons for their survival.⁵ A significant contribution to historical literature which has considered the ideas of Ostrom has been to locate social conflict at the centre of the explanation for the survival and change of the regulations of communal institutions.⁶

² The state of the question can be found in LAERHOVEN, F. and OSTROM, E. "Traditions and Trends in the Study of the Commons", *International Journal of the Commons*, Vol. 1, no. 1, 2007, pp. 3-28.

³ HARDING, G. "The Tragedy of the Commons", *Science*, n.162, 1968, pp.1243-1248.

⁴ OSTROM, E. "A General Framework for Analyzing Sustainability of Social-Ecological Systems", *Science*, 235, 2009, pp. 419-422.

⁵ VAN ZANDEN, J.L., "The paradox of the marks. The exploitation of commons in the eastern Netherlands, 1250-1850", *Agricultural History Review*, 47, 1999, pp. 125-144; DE MOOR, T. 2009, "Avoiding tragedies: a Flemish common and its commoners under the pressure of social and economic change during the eighteenth century", *Economic History Review*, 2009, vol. 62, n.1, pp. 1-22.

⁶ LANA, J.M. 2008, "From equilibrium to equity. The survival of the commons in the Ebro Basin: Navarra from the 15th to the 20th centuries", *International Journal of the Commons*, vol. 2, no.2, 2008, pp. 162-191; WARDE, P. "Imposition, Emulation and Adaptation: Regulatory Regimes in the Commons of Early Modern Germany", *Environment and History* 19, 2013, pp. 313-337; LANA, J.M. AND LABORDA, M. "El anidamiento institucional y su dinámica histórica en comunidades rurales complejas. Dos estudios de caso (Navarra, siglos XIV-XX)", *Documentos de Trabajo SEHA*, 2013. <http://ideas.repec.org/p/seh/wpaper/1307.html>.

The other great intellectual tradition that has influenced the work of historians is that of Ecological Economics⁷ and, more recently, the implementation of the theory and methodology of Social Metabolism.⁸ These schools of thought do not reject the importance of the institutional structure or of the production of rules which ensure sustainable ways of managing resources, but they place the emphasis of research on the material part, on the study of the biophysical flows of energy and materials between nature and society and also on the information flows which regulate them. The physical world is not considered here to be a static figure with which human institutions interact, but an active agent. The relationship between society and nature should, therefore, be understood as a process of co-evolution and mutual interaction. In this regard, attention has been paid to the different ways of organizing the social metabolism (hunting-collecting, agrarian and industrial), to the metabolic profiles of each of these types of organization and the socio-ecological transition processes between them.⁹ In this context, the types of property ownership and communal exploitation are not understood ahistorically as sustainable or unsustainable, but in terms of whether they can contribute to sustainability or not, depending on the organization of the social metabolism in which they exist. This tradition has also paid considerable attention to the role of social conflicts in the maintenance or breakdown of the sustainable use of resources. Conflict again plays a central role in the maintenance of common lands, but also in the socio-ecological transition processes which could bring about changes in their sustainability.¹⁰

Although both traditions place the emphasis on different aspects of the sustainability of communal goods, they should not be seen as contradictory or irreconcilable. In fact, in one of her latest papers, Elinor Ostrom¹¹ offered a model for the analysis of the sustainability of Socio-Ecological Systems that integrates institutional, physical and social aspects. Likewise, Political Ecology and Environmental History studies have suggested that the changes seen in common lands since the liberal revolutions would be misunderstood if we only considered public-private-communal tension, that is to say, considering only property rights. Martínez Alier¹² proposed the concept of the disarticulation of common lands in order to explain the changes seen in

⁷ MARTÍNEZ ALIER, J. *El ecologismo de los pobres. Conflictos ambientales y lenguajes de valoración*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2005.

⁸ GONZÁLEZ DE MOLINA, M. and TOLEDO, V. *Metabolismos, naturaleza e Historia. Hacia una teoría de las transiciones socioecológicas*. Barcelona: Icaria, 2011.

⁹ GONZÁLEZ DE MOLINA, M. and TOLEDO, V. *Ibid*; KRAUSMANN, F. (ed.) *The socio-metabolic transition. Long term historical trends and patterns in global material and energy use*, Social Ecology Working Paper 131, IFF, Vienna, 2011.

¹⁰ GUHA, R. *The unquiet wood: Ecological change and peasant resistance in the Himalaya*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989; MARTÍNEZ ALIER, J. *El ecologismo de los pobres...Op.Cit.*; SOTO, D.; HERRERA, A.; GONZÁLEZ DE MOLINA, M. and ORTEGA, A. "La protesta campesina como protesta ambiental, siglos XVIII-XX". *Historia Agraria*, 42, 2007, pp. 277-301.

¹¹ OSTROM, E. "A General Framework for Analyzing Sustainability of Social-Ecological Systems". *Op.Cit.*, pp-419-422.

¹² MARTÍNEZ ALIER, J. "Pobreza y Medio Ambiente. A propósito del Informe Brundtland". In: GONZÁLEZ DE MOLINA, M. and GONZÁLEZ ALCANTUD, J.A. (eds.) *La Tierra: Mitos, Ritos y Realidades*. Granada: Anthropos/Diputación Provincial de Granada, 1992 pp. 295-332; MARTÍNEZ ALIER, J. "Political Ecology, Distributional Conflicts and Economic Incomensurability" *New Left Review*, n. 211, 1995, pp. 70-88.

common lands since the nineteenth century resulting from changes in ownership (privatization), but also including the types of management and the functionality of the commons within the agro-ecosystems, and the social disarticulation of the communities which managed them. This process has been studied by Antonio Ortega¹³ in the province of Granada, Spain, between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. This article aims to deepen our comprehension of the processes that affect the relationship between communal institutions and sustainability through a long-term case study: the evolution of commons in Galicia from the eighteenth century until today. We have taken conflict as the centre of our study and we shall demonstrate how conflict is the result of the interaction of three sets of interrelated variables: the biophysical and material conditions, the rules and the attributes of the community.¹⁴ We shall show how these three sets of variables interacted, explaining conflict and modified by the results of that conflict. In the first part of the article, we shall develop recent theoretical arguments and in the second part, we will conduct a case study.

Beyond institutions: Rules, material conditions and community

One of the contributions of Ostrom's work which has most influenced the historical literature was her identification of the famous "design principles", the basic formative characteristics which explain the success and long-term survival of communal institutions.¹⁵ In the most recent version¹⁶, the eight design principles are: the existence of clear limits both for resources and for those who appropriate the resources; rules for appropriation and provision which are congruent with each other and with the local social and environmental conditions; channels for participation in the formulation and modification of the rules; instruments for the monitoring of resources and of the appropriators of the resources; a graduated scale of sanctions; mechanisms for conflict resolution; recognition of local rights by the governments; and vertical and horizontal institutional nesting systems. As we have indicated, some of the relevant historical research has attempted to project Ostrom's ideas onto the past in order to explain the survival of communal property regimes.¹⁷ However, as Warde argued,¹⁸ this way of addressing the question commits the error of ahistoricity, since the communal institutions do not exist in historical isolation in which the changing conditions lack significance. In

¹³ ORTEGA, A. *La tragedia de los cerramientos. La desarticulación de la comunalidad en la provincia de Granada*. Valencia: Fundación Instituto de Historia Social, 2002.

¹⁴ OSTROM, E. *Comprender la diversidad institucional*. Oviedo: KRK, 2013, pp.48-75.

¹⁵ OSTROM, E. *El gobierno de los bienes comunes. La evolución de las instituciones de acción colectiva*. Mexico: FCE, 2011.

¹⁶ OSTROM, E. "Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems", *American Economic Review*. vol. 100, 2010, pp.641-672.

¹⁷ VAN ZANDEN, J.L., "The paradox of the marks...". *Op.Cit.*; DE MOOR, T. 2009, "Avoiding tragedies...". *Op.Cit.* The exercise undertaken by Laborda and Lana, applying the concept of institutional nesting to the historical evolution of communes in Navarre, is, in my opinion, particularly interesting. LANA, J.M. AND LABORDA, M. 2013, "El anidamiento institucional y su dinámica histórica en comunidades rurales complejas..." *Op.Cit.*

¹⁸ WARDE, P. "Imposition, Emulation and Adaptation..." *Op.Cit.*

his paper, Warde shows how the formulation of rules for the management of commons could be the result of a complex process of conflict where the imposition by external powers, the emulation of neighboring communities or response to a crisis can affect the institutional design. In fact, Ostrom herself,¹⁹ in response to her critics, underlined the fact that the expression “design principles” did not imply prescription nor that the creators of successful communal systems had those principles in mind, and concluded that perhaps a better term would be “good practices”.

In fact, a more careful examination of the general instrument designed by Ostrom for institutional analysis²⁰ shows that although the analysis of rules has a central role, the same theoretical range of variables, which are exogenous to any situation of action, is occupied by another two elements: the attributes of the community and the biophysical and material conditions. This approach allows not only the reconciliation of the institutional and environmental perspective in the historical study of common lands, but also introduces a third element which has appeared much less in the literature:²¹ the role of the identity of the community, the collective construction of objectives and priorities and the evaluation of experiences.²² Paradoxically, this question has been examined much less by historians despite the enormous development of cultural history in recent years.²³ From our point of view, adequate comprehension of historical transformations in common lands should also examine the set of rules which regulated them (both formal and informal) and the biophysical and material conditions (which, among other things, tell us what it is possible to do and what it is not possible to do in a specific context) as well as the construction of the collective identity (which, among other things, explains the differences between what two different societies might understand to be rational).

But communities, rules and biophysical and material conditions are interrelated in historical contexts that are potentially conflictive. In fact, a significant part of the literature indicates that conflict is a central element to explain the emergence of institutions for the management of common resources. For example, McCay²⁴ states that concern for the exhaustion or degradation of resources does not explain the emergence of communal institutions, but rather conflict over access to resources, coinciding with the view of Paul Warde mentioned above. These approaches also agree with today’s widespread theory on environmental conflict and, especially, with the idea of the environmentalism of the poor put forward by Joan Martínez Alier and Ramachandra

¹⁹ OSTROM, E. “Beyond Markets and States...” Op.Cit.

²⁰ OSTROM, E. *Comprender la diversidad institucional*. Op.Cit.

²¹ In Ostrom’s 2013 book, this aspect is covered in just one point, despite having the same theoretical hierarchy as the other two variables.

²² GALLEGO, D. “Las distintas caras de la economía institucional”, XIII Congreso de la SEHA, Badajoz, 2013.

²³ A notable exception is to be found in IZQUIERDO, J. *El rostro de la comunidad. La identidad del campesino en la Castilla del antiguo régimen*. Madrid: CES, 2002.

²⁴ McCAY, B. 2002, “Emergence of Institutions for the Commons: Contexts, Situations, and Events”. In: OSTROM, E., DIETZ, T., DOLSAK, N., STERN, P. C., STONICH, S. and WEBER, E. U. (eds.), *The Drama of the Commons*. Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 2002, pp.361-402.

Guha.²⁵ According to these authors, ecological struggle has existed in the past and exists today in communities that, regardless of whether or not they hold an ecological ideology, defend access and the egalitarian distribution of natural resources. In accordance with this idea, conflicts over common pool resources, both today and in the past, are a variation on ecological-distributive conflicts.²⁶ Although we agree with the idea that conflicts over resources are environmental conflicts, regardless of whether or not they are conceived as such by the communities involved, we do not agree with the idea that access and distribution are the only relevant characteristics in the evaluation of the role of a conflict with regard to sustainability. Elsewhere,²⁷ we have indicated that those conflicts in which, as well as access and distribution, a change in the method of managing the resources is at stake are more relevant in terms of sustainability.²⁸ In those cases, the result of the conflict will affect not only the amount of the resource appropriated, or the groups who appropriate it, but also the way in which the resource is appropriated (reproductive conflicts), for example, in the case that the results of a conflict over common lands changes a system of agro-silvo-pastoral management by peasants for an intensive industrial management system. The hypotheses we wish to develop in this article is that it is precisely this type of conflict that is present in the process of the disarticulation of commons seen in many places at the end of the eighteenth century and that they have decisively influenced the transformation of the logic of communal institutions. From the case study of common lands in Galicia, we intend to demonstrate how the changes in the community, the biophysical conditions and the regulations have influenced in the appearance of conflicts and, in turn, have been modified by the results of those conflicts.

Common lands in Galicia in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century

The region chosen for this study displays unusual characteristics in the Spanish context. Galicia, the northwestern region of the country, does not match the recognizable characteristics of the greater part of the country. It has an Atlantic climate, small-scale peasant farming and an increasing specialization in livestock farming during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its specific characteristics include the great importance of the *monte*,²⁹ a considerable part of which has been under communal ownership regimes until today (Table 1). Despite the large-scale migration processes seen in the second half of the nineteenth century, the region has been densely populated by Spanish standards. In 1860, the population density in Galicia was 61 inhabitants per km²,

²⁵ GUHA, R. *The unquiet Wood...Op.Cit.*; MARTÍNEZ ALIER, J. *El ecologismo de los pobres...Op.Cit.*

²⁶ MARTÍNEZ ALIER, J. *El ecologismo de los pobres...Op.Cit.*

²⁷ SOTO, D.; HERRERA, A.; GONZÁLEZ DE MOLINA, M. and ORTEGA, A. “La protesta campesina como protesta ambiental...” *Op.Cit.*

²⁸ The work cited makes a conceptual distinction between environmental conflicts (those in which only access or distribution is in question), environmentalist conflicts (in which, in addition to access and distribution, the method of management is also in question) and ecological conflicts (where there is also an explicit ecological language).

²⁹ The Spanish term “monte” is difficult to translate into English since it does not refer exclusively to forests, but also includes wooded landscapes, scrub, pastureland and even shifting crops. See

though with significant variations. The provinces of Pontevedra and A Coruña had 98 and 61 inhabitants per km², whereas the inland provinces of Lugo and Ourense had 44 and 50 respectively. The livestock density was also very high. The first livestock census, in 1865, showed a density of 22.9 livestock units of 500 kg per km² (mainly cattle), which contrasts with the Mediterranean model. In some municipalities in Andalusia, the livestock density was no more than 8 units per km² in the mid-nineteenth century.³⁰ How can such a high density be explained with such a small area devoted to crops? Firstly, it should be noted that there are serious edapho-climatic limitations on the expansion of the cultivated crop area. Secondly, Atlantic agriculture allows high physical productivity of the land. For example, while Spanish agriculture as a whole produced 1.5 tons of dry matter per cultivated hectare in 1900, with the province of Cordoba being characteristic of the Mediterranean model, with 0.9 tons of dry matter.³¹ Yet the productivity of the land in the province of A Coruña was 3.7 tons of dry matter per hectare in 1900 and 5.8 in 1933.³² These figures put Galician agriculture among the most productive in Europe at that time.³³

Table 1

The *monte* area and common lands in Galicia, 1750-1989 (thousands of hectares)

	1	2	3	%	%
	Total Area	<i>Monte</i>	Communal	2/1	3/2
1752	2957	2425	2050	82	85
1950	2957	2004	943	68	47
1989	2957	1968	674	67	34

Source: 1752 data: estimates based on Saavedra³⁴ and Pérez García³⁵. 1950 and 1989 data based on Soto³⁶.

³⁰ GONZÁLEZ DE MOLINA, M.; HERRERA, A.; SOTO, D.; CRUZ, S.; ACOSTA, F., *Historia, identidad y construcción de la ciudadanía. Por una relectura de la Historia Contemporánea de Andalucía*, Centro de Estudios Andaluces, Sevilla, 2007. http://www.centrodeestudiosandaluces.es/datos/paginas/factoria/ideas/historia_identidad_yconstruccion_ciudadania.pdf

³¹ SOTO, D.; INFANTE, Juan; AGUILERA, Eduardo; CID, Antonio; GARCÍA, Gloria Guzmán Roberto; GONZÁLEZ DE MOLINA, Manuel. "The social metabolism of Spanish agriculture, 1900-2010: First results". Paper presented at the Congress of the European Society for Environmental History, "Circulating Natures: Water-Food-Energy", Munich, August 21-24, 2013.

³² FERNÁNDEZ PRIETO, Lourenzo; SOTO, David; CABO VILLAVERDE, Miguel; LANERO TÁBOAS, Daniel. "Diffusion of agricultural science and technologies: the innovation system in Galicia (Spain), 1880 – 1936". Paper presented at the Rural History Conference, BERN. August 19-22, 2013.

³³ KRAUSMANN, F.; SCHANDL, H.; SIEFERLE, R. P. "Socio-ecological regime transitions in Austria and the United Kingdom", *Ecological Economics*, 65, 2008, pp.187-201.

³⁴ SAAVEDRA, P. "O que non se pode medir: Os recursos do comunal nas economías campesiñas de Galicia de 1600 a 1850". Actas do Congreso de Montes Veciñais, 14-16 de Decembro de 1995, Xunta de Galicia, Santiago.

³⁵ PÉREZ GARCÍA, J. M. "Las utilidades del inculto y la lucha por sus aprovechamientos en la Galicia meridional (1650-1850). *Obradoiro de Historia Moderna*, 9, 2000.

³⁶ SOTO, D. *Historia dunha agricultura sustentábel. Transformacións productivas na agricultura galega contemporánea*. Santiago de Compostela: Soto Xunta de Galicia, 2006.

The difference in yields between Atlantic and Mediterranean agriculture is explained by the differences in net primary productivity due to the climate, but the high productivity cannot be explained without taking into account agro-silvo-pastoral integration. The area of *monte* plays a central role in the agro-ecosystems of the North West, being the basis for feeding the livestock, the maintenance of fertility and the provision of complements to the human diet. In this regard, the role of the *monte* in peasant agriculture before the liberal revolution has been defined by historians as a *support* for the agrarian system.³⁷ As well as animal feed and the production of food by shifting cultivation, it has been established that one of the main functions of the *monte* was the transfer of fertilization to crops through the collection of high-nutrient scrub species (gorse, *ulex europaeus*).

The importance of the *monte* in the context of peasant agro-ecosystems in preindustrial Galicia is shown in Table 1. But equally significant is the fact that most of these resources were subject to some form of communal ownership or management. Apart from the insignificant *montes de propios*, (municipal property which was common in other parts of Spain) and the somewhat more frequent *montes de varas* (a type of club good), most of the *montes* in Galicia were held under a specific type of ownership, the *Montes Vecinales en Mano Común* (MVMC), a kind of common land under neighborhood ownership, and this ownership formula is what interests us here.³⁸ Until the liberal revolution in Galicia, there were very few municipalities and so municipally owned *montes* were also scarce. Ownership of the MVMC was allocated to the neighbors in the territory (usually a parish) to which the *monte* belonged. They were normally defined as neighborhood-owned, common *montes* where property rights were obtained by being a neighbor and lost by ceasing to be so. In institutional terms, ownership was collectively held by the peasant community, did not prescribe and could not be embargoed.

What type of community and institutional arrangements managed these resources? Xesús Balboa³⁹ noted that although Galicia was an area of small peasant farms, this did not in any way mean that they were homogenous communities. Social differences, related to different degrees of access to land and livestock (and, therefore, to the ability to work), also affected the capacity for appropriation of commons during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although ownership was held by all of the neighbors without distinction and use was legally equal, exploitation was greater in the case of those farms with more land, livestock and workforce. Even in the case of areas devoted to shifting cultivation, Balboa found examples of the allocation of plots which were strictly equitable, but also examples of unequal distribution, depending on the capacity of each

³⁷ BALBOA, Xesús L. *O Monte en Galicia*. Vigo: Xerais, 1990; BOUHIER, Abel. *La Galice. Essay géographique d'analyse et d'interprétation d'un vieux complexe agraire*. La Roche-Sur-Yon (Vendée): Imprimerie Yonnaise, 1979, 2 vols.

³⁸ The *montes de varas* all disappeared through privatization in the nineteenth century. See BALBOA, Xesús L. *O Monte en Galicia*. *Op.Cit.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

farm. This led him to conclude that although the neighborhood-owned common *monte* played a central role in maintaining the balance of agro-ecosystems, it was not at all an equitable or democratic model (since social differences also supposed a different capacity to influence their management). This coincides with the opinion of Lana⁴⁰ in Navarre, where the notion of equitable common access was very recent. Although there can be no doubt that these communities were far from homogenous, and much less equitable, I believe that the conclusion is based on an excessively restrictive view of equity and democracy.⁴¹ Although access is not equitable, it does play an essential role in the maintenance of the most disadvantaged sectors of society⁴² with these institutions, therefore, being important instruments for equity. Obviously, both the importance of the resources to the peasants and the high population density of the territory explain that the history of *montes vecinales* under the Old Regime was plagued with intra-community and inter-community conflict.⁴³ These conflicts served to clarify limits and to adjust and modify rules. In all events, the institutional organization of the commons matched the criteria laid down by Ostrom fairly well. We believe, though, that its success was due not only to that, but also to the existence of a strong, cohesive, though heterogenous, community, and that it played a central role in maintaining the balance of the agro-ecosystems. The fact that the *montes* were functional for different sectors of the community (landless peasants, landed peasants, wealthy peasants) and outside the community (minor nobility, religious institutions) explains the social consensus in favor of their survival during the liberal revolution and the success of the peasants' resistance to disentanglement of municipal property.

Neighborhood-owned common *montes* between the liberal revolution and the Civil War

Two great changes were to take place in the nineteenth century that would alter both the institutional arrangements and the functionality of the *montes*. The first of these changes was related to institutional transformations resulting from the liberal revolution and from the construction of the nation state in Spain that would lead to the *de iure*, though not *de facto*, disappearance of the MVMC. The second was related to the transformation in production brought about in the transition from an organic agriculture model to an advanced organic agriculture model between the mid-eighteenth century and the agrarian crisis of the turn of the century and the beginning of the industrialization of agriculture with the introduction of chemical fertilizers between this period and the Civil War (these being the first two waves of the socio-ecological transition in agriculture).

⁴⁰ LANA, J.M. "From equilibrium to equity. The survival of the commons in the Ebro Basin: Navarre from the 15th to the 20th centuries". *International Journal of the Commons*. vol. 2, no 2, 2008, pp. 162–191.

⁴¹ GONZÁLEZ DE MOLINA, M.; HERRERA, A.; SOTO, D.; CRUZ, S.; ACOSTA, F., *Historia, identidad y construcción de la ciudadanía... Op.Cit.*

⁴² SAAVEDRA, P. "O que non se pode medir..." *Op.Cit.*

⁴³ REY CASTELAO, O. *Montes y política forestal en la Galicia del Antiguo Régimen*. Santiago: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 1995.

These changes brought about an agricultural intensification that increased productive pressure on the *monte* and significant changes in management.

Table 2

Main legislation governing the MVMC since the liberal revolution

Regulation	Effects
Royal Decree 14-I-1812	Ownership legally given to the municipalities
Royal Order 22-V-1848	Confirmation of municipal ownership
General Law on disentailment 1855	Privatization of commons
<i>Montes</i> Law 24-V-1863	State responsibility for the management of <i>montes</i>
Creation of the PFE 1-III-1941	Effective expropriation of neighborhood-owned common <i>montes</i> /reforestation program
<i>Montes</i> Law 8-VI-1957	First explicit mention in Spanish legislation of neighborhood-owned common <i>montes</i>
Law on Neighborhood-Owned Commons 27-VI-1968	Recognition of private, collective neighborhood ownership
Law on Neighborhood-Owned Commons 11-XI-1980	Acceleration of the devolution of ownership
Regional Government's Law on Neighborhood-Owned Commons 10-X-1989	Competence taken on by the Galician Regional Government

The Spanish liberal revolution, among other results, was to bring a profound change in territorial organization, standardizing the administrative division into provinces and municipalities along the French model. At the same time, it would also cause profound legal changes in the ownership structure which, among many other institutions, would affect neighborhood-owned common *montes* in Galicia. From very early on in the legislation enacted by the Cadiz Parliament, the neighborhood-owned common *montes* legally disappeared on being converted to municipally owned *montes* (Table 2). From this moment on and until 1968, the neighborhood-owned *montes* were legally public and their management was the responsibility of the local councils. But here, there is an interesting paradox in that, despite not legally existing, the management remained, in practice, in the hands of the neighbours. The existence of significant social consensus regarding the central role of the *montes*, between peasant communities, the elites and the newly created local councils, which did little to exercise their competence, meant that the action of the nation-state on the *montes* was ineffective.⁴⁴ The existence of conflicting interests within the administration, which varied from privatization (the disentailment of 1855) to the public management of resources by the State forestry services (Law of 1863) contributed

⁴⁴ BALBOA, Xesús L. *O Monte en Galicia. Op.Cit.*

to this. The fact that these actions were not successful does not mean that institutional change did not very significantly affect communal ownership. In fact, one of the main instruments adopted by many communities to safeguard ownership and resolve the conflict in their favor was the individualization of ownership in the hands of the peasants.⁴⁵ From the point of view of the peasant community, individualization would accentuate internal differences since, although in many cases the distribution was equitable, there was no small number of cases in which the distribution took into account the varying productive capacity of the neighbors.⁴⁶ In this way, and although the disentanglement of common lands would not be very relevant, in institutional terms, many *montes* were privatized (as shown in Table 1), but remained in the hands of the peasants.

At the same time, though, there was to be a productive change that would heighten the importance of the *monte* in the peasant economy. Between 1752 and 1900, agricultural production in Galicia (in monetary terms) grew by 1.15% annually and the productivity of labor by 0.88%, compared with 0.9 and 0.24 in the provinces of the old Kingdom of Castile as a whole.⁴⁷ Between 1900 and 1933, growth accelerated as a result of the introduction of chemical fertilizers.⁴⁸ This growth is partly explained by the increase in the crop area, but also by the intensification of crop rotation (adoption of mixed farming) and the growth in the productivity of the land. In both processes, neighborhood-owned common *montes* played a central role, becoming the driving force behind intensification.⁴⁹ The *montes* also saw the intensification of some usages and the disappearance of others. On privatized land, the conversion of *montes* into pastureland began (though it was limited) but, fundamentally, there was an increase in the production of scrub from the time when it began to be cultivated as, until then, it had been collected directly from the communal *monte*. This intensification also allowed the development of an incipient private reforestation that increased the area of woodland and allowed the development of the timber industry in the first third of the twentieth century. In this way, changes in production represented a stimulus for the individualization among peasants of common lands at the same time that they were incentivized by that individualization. In all events, and despite this intensification, the *monte* remained fully integrated into the agrarian system without losing its functionality within the peasant economy. In the same way, in those areas where the *monte* remained neighborhood-owned, the previous means of exploitation and use survived and even intensified, though not to the same extent as on the privatized land. Without the *montes*, in short, it is impossible to understand not just

⁴⁵ARTEAGA, A.; BALBOA, X., "La individualización de la propiedad colectiva. Aproximación e interpretación del proceso en los montes vecinales de Galicia". *Agricultura y Sociedad*, 65, 1992, pp. 101-120.

⁴⁶BALBOA, Xesús L. *O Monte en Galicia. Op.Cit.*

⁴⁷FERNÁNDEZ PRIETO, L.; SOTO, D. "El Atlántico no es El Mediterráneo. El cambio agrario al otro extremo de la Península Ibérica: El mismo Estado, otros paisajes, ¿Los mismos campesinos? In: ROBREDO, Ricardo (ed.), *Ramón Garrabou. Sombras del progreso. Las huellas de la Historia Agraria*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2010, pp. 231-264.

⁴⁸FERNÁNDEZ PRIETO, Lourenzo; SOTO, David; CABO VILLAVERDE, Miguel; LANERO TÁBOAS, Daniel. "Diffusion of agricultural science and technologies..." *Op.Cit.*

⁴⁹SOTO, D. *Historia dunha agricultura sustentábel...* *Op.Cit.*

the maintenance of the peasant economy in Galicia, but also its intensification in the context of the development of capitalism in the countryside.

The neighborhood-owned common *montes* under Franco and during the transition. The definitive (?) disarticulation of the *montes*. The management conflict

The changes brought about by the liberal revolution significantly modified the institutional architecture of the neighborhood-owned common *montes*, their productive functionality and even, in many cases, their very existence. In practice, however, control of the management of the *montes* remained in peasant hands until the Civil War. Franco's dictatorship decisively changed this situation, forcibly taking control of management and imposing an intensive reforestation policy from the 1940s onwards which definitively broke the agro-silvo-pastoral balance, decisively promoting the industrialization of agriculture from 1960 onwards. Reforestation was one of the most substantial manifestations of Spanish fascism in the rural world. In historical terms, it is also possibly the most well known tip of the iceberg of this historical development thanks to successive generations of researchers.⁵⁰

Over the two decades in which autarchy was the main feature of the Francoist economy, the integrated territorial management typical of prewar Galician agriculture would be impossible. In 1964, consortiums between the PFE (State Forests Administration) and local councils occupied 475,000 hectares of *monte* in Galicia, the immense majority of which was neighborhood-owned common land, and over 270,000 hectares had been reforested.⁵¹ But reforestation also led to considerable protests among the rural communities which have been closely studied by historians, and which combined many different resistance strategies, from the most direct and violent to legal challenges and the use of strategies exploiting the “weapons of the weak”. These conflicts

⁵⁰ The evolution of the neighborhood-owned common *monte* in Galicia under Franco and, especially, the conflicts, have been minutely studied by historians, including RICO BOQUETE, E. *Política Forestal en Repoboacións en Galicia (1941-1971)*. Monografías de la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, n. 187, Santiago de Compostela, 1985; RICO BOQUETE, E. *Montes e industria forestal en la provincia de Pontevedra (1900-1975). Antecedentes y desarrollo de la Empresa Nacional de Celulosas, SA*. Santiago: Tórculo, 1999; RICO BOQUETE, E., “Política forestal y conflictividad social en el noroeste de España durante el primer franquismo, 1939-1959”, *Historia Social*, 38, 2000, pp. 117-140; SOTO, D.; FERNÁNDEZ PRIETO, L. “Política forestal e conflictividade nas terras comunais de Galicia durante o franquismo (1939-1975)”. In: DULCE, Freire; FONSECA, Inês and GODINHO, Paula (eds.) *Mundo Rural, Transformação e resistencia na Península Ibérica (século XX)* Lisboa: Colibri, 2004, pp.225-249; GEPC. “La devolución de la propiedad vecinal en Galicia (1960-1985). Modos de uso y conflicto de propiedad”, *Historia Agraria*, 33, 2004, pp. 105-130; GEPC. *Os montes veciñais en man común: o patrimonio silente. Naturaleza, economía, identidade e democracia na Galicia rural*. Vigo: Xerais, 2006; SOTO, D. *Historia dunha agricultura sustentábel...Op.Cit.*; CABANA IGLESIA, A. “Minar la paz social. Retrato de la conflictividad rural en Galicia durante el primer franquismo”, *Ayer*, 61, 2006, pp. 267-288; CABANA IGLESIA, A. *Entre a resistencia e a adaptación: a sociedade rural galega no franquismo (1936-1960)*. Santiago de Compostela, Tesis doctoral, USC-Editora Universitária, 2006; FREIRE, A. 2011, *En defensa de lo suyo. Propiedad forestal y conflictividad social durante el franquismo: los montes vecinales de Cerceda (A Coruña)*. Universidade de Santiago de Compostela/Fundación Juana de Vega, Santiago de Compostela; DOMÍNGUEZ, D., SOTO, D. “From an “integrated” to a “dismantled” landscape”. In: VAN DER HEIDE, C. Martijn and HEIJMAN, Wim. (eds). *The Economic Value of Landscapes*. London, Routledge, 2012, pp. 204-223.

⁵¹SOTO, D. *Historia dunha agricultura sustentábel...Op.Cit.*

were widespread throughout the territory of Galicia and this is especially significant, since they occurred during a dictatorship. This process throws light on several questions that are relevant for the understanding of the maintenance of communal institutions. In the first place because, in a way, the protests would be successful and Franco's regime would be forced to recognize the ownership of the *montes* in the 1968 law (Table 2). But at the same time, this success occurred in a context of profound social and economic changes that altered the characteristics of the peasant community and the very functionality of the neighborhood-owned common *montes*.

Firstly, the peasant community that protested against reforestation had the same characteristics as it had during previous times and, in this regard, the traditional role of the *monte* in the peasant economy was being defended. However, in the 1960s and 1970s the region witnessed great changes, among which the more significant were emigration, abandonment of rural activity, and the disarticulation of many communities, but there was also the industrialization of agriculture and the commercial specialization in dairy farming. In the 1960s, this resulted in the conflict being less about the maintenance of peasant usage rather than forestry usage and more about the conflict between forestry and livestock farming use of the *monte* (through the creation of grasslands). In this case, it was a conflict over access to resources, but also about the different means of management of this resource. As in the nineteenth century, the success of the peasantry is not explained solely by endogenous reasons, but by the support enjoyed by some of the elites of the Franco regime with interests in livestock farming.

But here arises one last paradox and that is that although the people won recognition of their ownership and, in a long, conflictive process, the effective devolution of the *montes*, this did not suppose an impossible return to previous management methods of the *monte* (by now decoupled from agriculture), but it also meant the victory of the livestock farming alternative. On the contrary, changes in international markets and, especially, in the price of animal feed would end up making it more profitable to feed livestock on imported industrial animal feed than by using fodder, a process which is characteristic of the third wave of the socio-ecological transition in agriculture.⁵² From this moment on, two models of community would live side-by-side: the eroded traditional model, characterized by a progressive ageing and abandonment of farming and the model of specialized industrial livestock farming.⁵³ The relevant aspect, from the point of view of the *montes*, is that both types of community were either incapable of or uninterested in the management of the *montes*. In this way, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a significant number of communities of neighborhood owners had not set up management organs. This was despite the fact that successive regulations had clarified the institutional structure of the MVMC. Only since the end of the 1990s can the appearance be detected of a new model of community, made up of young people with no links with nor tradition of farming, usually in areas near cities and with a concern for the resources based more

⁵² GEPC. "La devolución de la propiedad vecinal en Galicia (1960-1985)..." Op.Cit.

⁵³ An accurate analysis of this process, which is also much more nuanced than is possible here, can be found in DÍAZ GEADÁS, A. *Mudar en común. Cambios económicos, sociais e culturais dorural galego do franquismo e da transición (1959-1982)*, Tesis Doctoral, Universidade De Santiago de Compostela, 2013.

on recreation, conservation or the dynamization of the community than on production. This new model of community is also reinventing the meaning of the communal institution in a more democratic and equitable manner, which contrasts vividly (and sometimes conflicts) with the logic of the traditional community.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The analysis of the long-term evolution of Galician commons (the neighborhood-owned common *montes*) shows that the reasons for the long-term stability (or the disarticulation) of the institutions which manage the commonly-used resources owe much to the manner in which they adopt their regulations and, especially, to the design principles described by Ostrom. But it also shows that institutional analysis is not enough, on its own, and that complex factors should be taken into account, in which the articulation of the community (including the construction of the community identity) must play a central role. Likewise, material and biophysical factors cannot be viewed simply as static factors or factors which depend exclusively on the rate of extraction, but that the long-term changes in the means of management and the organization of the social metabolism play a central role in our understanding of the functionality of communal institutions. Since the end of the Old Regime until the mid-twentieth century, the neighborhood-owned common *montes* were essential to the reproduction of peasant agro-ecosystems and, as such, they were at the centre of peasant concerns. Since the process of agricultural industrialization, however, the *montes* in general and, among them, the neighborhood-owned common *montes*, have been disconnected from agricultural and livestock farming activities, putting their survival in doubt. Lastly, the historical change in communal institutions depends directly on the results of social conflicts, which are not only about ownership or about access to and distribution of the resources, but also about the manner in which those resources are managed and perceived by the community.

⁵⁴ GEPC. *Os montes veciñais en man común...* Op.Cit.