

THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE FOREST AT THE TIME OF THE “DESAMORTIZACIONES” INSIDE THE DUERO BASIN

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The economic significance of “desamortizaciones” in the nineteenth century’s and changes in the ownership structure, they have conditioned on forgetting that have fallen transformations affecting the forest in the interior of the Duero Basin. In this wide space of plains formed by fields, high plateaus and valleys the vegetable landscape had a character determined by the secular human intervention, but at the end of the 18th century still it was supporting important extensions in wide zones, specially in the high plateaux and in the fluvial terraces.

The new forest landscape will be very different from that which existed a few decades ago: Still rural people in the seventeenth and eighteenth century’s maintained close relationships with the forest because it is an area that provides all kinds of benefits. In this situation the territory had a perfect distribution of functions, and are the forest which played a key role: A population that should had a forest they should protect it to prevent their destruction by surrounding villages who had cut down its forest, because the forest is a source revenue, at same time ensure that the future of their people through resort to temporary cultivation of the forest area. This meant that only a few years during the forest cultivation, but saving a portion of the wooded, from which later was recovered.

Undoubtedly the Modern Age, as had happened during the Middle Ages, represented at forest destruction of larges areas of forest as a deterioration of numerous forest organized in scrubland in terms of securing some immediate benefits. The first situation is because the forest was subject to obtaining resources from agriculture and animal husbandry, so that when both or one of the two required more land or a more intensive use of natural resources were coming to the forest, that became a reserve of the community. In the second situation the reduction in shift of felling prevented a tiny biological recovery and over-grazing deteriorated the brushes securing the renewal of a forest.

Bust it is rare a preconceived intent on the destruction of a forest, because there was no point in destroying a key area for economic opportunities, both present and future, with a

rural population that needs the resources of the forest. Further more common is the protection of woodland and its enlargement. In the first case was resorted to strict Decrees already occurring in the XIII and XIV centuries, regulating or restricting the forest exploitations. Although seldom got the desired result because the conflicting interests were very strong, between ranchers and farmers especially. As for the expansion of the forests the demand often started, in the Crown, expressed repeatedly since the sixteenth century for the increase in planted since the forest suffered a deterioration that put in serious jeopardy the supply of charcoal and firewood to cities (This happened around the area of influence of Valladolid, where the forest was becoming increasingly): However, the municipalities were not encouraged to participate in a recovery of the vegetation cover of the which didn't obtained profits in short or medium-term.

The eighteenth century represents a moment of becoming aware of the part of elites Illustrated in relation to the deterioration of the forest and pick their voice to claim reforestation of the lands in connection with a environmentalist spirit which also starts to spread in countries culturally most advanced in Europe: It is conveyed the image of a natural unwooded landscape particularly and that does not always correspond with reality (in the works of G. A Bowles or A. Ponz), transmitted to the European countries and penetrated in the society. Despite the obvious mistakes these writings have the courage to draw out from their refuge gold a concern that was in the offices but not between rural or urban population. Forest always, at least since that was written in memory in the villages been it had been managed in a certain way and it was not easy to make changes for which, moreover, lacked experience; and all this without offering any alternative to rural populations. Since then the eighteenth century prepares a small revolution in the design of a forest as a space with a value in itself, rather than depending on the resources that can be extract from it.

The Ancient Regime will conclude with a deep political and economic crisis that will last for several decades and which will have profound implications in rural areas and hence the situation in the forests. Not in vain successive "desamortizaciones" which begin at the end of the eighteenth century (Godoy), and will continue during the first third of the nineteenth century (José I, Triennium Liberal, Mendizábal) are merely the expression of some economic measures to alleviate the financial crisis the new liberal state. The process "desamortizador" during the second half of the nineteenth century (Desamortización Civil or Madoz) has a scope far greater than all previous, first because it speaks to the broader range of forests that exist in Spain, the "concejiles" or public forest, and secondly because of its long duration in time, it takes too long for the space of seventy years (with a few interruptions for political reasons).

This "desamortización" introduce significant developments in relations between the farmer and rancher with the forest; first to deprive at the peasant communities about common goods which had enjoyed for centuries, while there is a concentration of large tracts of forest in the hands of the urban middle class with an interest preferably agriculture; secondly there is a veritable assault the forest, scheduled by the State, without a prior recognition of the value, economic or sentimental, of forest exploitations for rural communities. Successive Forests Catalogues are made, truly worthwhile information, but little progress was made in terms of the real value of the forest area. Indeed auctions in the forest will have a value dependent on land values. So much so those forest lands of better quality are valued far more

than those of poorer quality: ultimately, the forest as wooded space has become a second term.

Thus, in this assault the forest the peasants on the one hand, initially, attends impassive to sales and, on the other, will participate in the same (when the forest is divided into small lots) in terms allow access to property earth. That is, there is a convenience in the distribution public forest for cultivation, thus giving access to a desire widely felt by the small farmer or labourer for generations, and that was reflected in continuing attacks or intrusions into the forest, either to cultivate small lands or to get firewood or wood illegal. However, auctions, aimed at getting maximum benefit to the State is not always facilitate the entry into the bid for the small farmers, who will see this in preserving the tiny forests an alternative to their low expectations to increase their property.

Only a few decades after the first "desamortizaciones" ever will arise more voices against the process of selling public property, and in the same context as peasant communities across the town's halls, as peasants, alone or in organized groups involved in defending few mountains increasingly reduced but still maintain a value, leading to the need to implant new sales. Not infrequently the defence of a forest, sometimes unwooded, was linked to the preservation of land in the hands of the community, because in this way could be further cultivated by farmers regularly. The expropriation of the forest of the peasant hands, who in one way or another had maintained the forest for centuries; will generate a break of an emotional bond with the forest that will facilitate the widespread yearning cutting peasant: The thought that stretches is that if forest is sold nothing better than appropriating at least of the earth. In fact, during the 70 and 90 of the nineteenth century there was a municipal opposition to the sale of its forests, claiming a vital necessity for the maintenance of livestock. In this struggle the municipal authorities will be supported by the government, namely Councils and the Ministry of Development, through the Engineers Corps will pose a new management and arrangement of the resources of the forest.

This change in management will not always be well received by farmers and municipal authorities, behaved a restriction, and sometimes elimination of certain secular rights, such as livestock grazing, the cutting of firewood or temporary cultivation of the lands. Since then must apply for authorization to the Forest District, and engineers are often reluctant to grant permission in the traditional conditions. So there will be a reduction in the number of cattle that can graze in the forests, and the goatish cattle will be especially reduced: A new field of conflict is opened at this moment, and that nothing will benefit the forest, because again the major stakeholders in the conservation of wooded masses look like their interests are violated so incomprehensible to them.

The future of a forest in the hands of the new owners wasn't always the wood cutting of woodland for the practice of agriculture, but it happened in many. In fact, even when the skills of agricultural land were somewhat or very unfavourable, appreciation in the price of grains spurred the elimination of wooded cover; again the forest remains unchanged in relation to some uses ranchers or "cinegéticos", which will let the identification of forest very characteristic in areas of the countryside and moors, especially now unwooded. The image which transmits the new fields to its inhabitants in many areas is an absence of a forest, which barely left isolated sports or forests in the form of low brushes and in the worst cases isolated trees, so where before there were forests now only remains the name of Monte

Carrascal on Torresandino an Monte Arriba en Tórtoles de Esgueva (Burgos), Monte of Alfoces on Palenzuela (Palencia), Monte Raso of Villalpando (Zamora), Monte de Abajo in Fombellida (Valladolid), Monte Alto de Madrigal de las Altas Torres (Ávila).

Certainly in the eyes of the contemporaries, the disappearances of a forest in some cases and its transformation into other was a necessity for the progress of the economy and modernization of the country, and perhaps the “desamortización” was inevitable, but its effects could had been less harmful or could had been linked to a better organization of forest exploitations unsold; however the most affected by this situation were taxpayers of an unfinished work: At first of the XX century will seek to recover the lost plant landscape through a work of “repladora” long-term involves the creation of new landscapes in the old forest. This policy “repladora” corresponds to a different history and a different age, but stems from the embers of the ill-fated “desamortizadora” political to public forests.