Changing identities over commons during the process of agricultural industrialization. The case of Galician (NW Spain) since 1960

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David Soto Fernández
Agro-ecosystem History Laboratory
Pablo de Olavide University
dsotfer@upo.es

Abstract:

In this paper, our aim is to explore the importance of cultural identities to understand the viability of common institutions. The idea developed here starts with a dialogue with Ostrom thesis that, for institutional analysis, although the analysis of the 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. The role of identities, central for understand the attributes of the community, has been examined much less by historians despite the enormous development of Cultural History in recent years. Our case study is the so-called Neighborhood-Owned Common Lands in North West Spain. In a economic context of agricultural industrialization, and in the political context of Spanish democratic transition, the perception of the local communities on the meaning of commons has changed. From a common interpreted as an essential resource for family reproduction, managed collectively but exploited individually, many owners start to think in a common understand as a public good, as an institution that can replace local governments. This changes play a central role in assure sustainability of common institutions today

1. Introduction:[1]

Few aspects of the rural world in Galicia (NW Spain) have attracted more academic interest than communal property. Although the amount of communal land today has fallen, it has done so less than in other parts of Spain and it still covers a very significant area. Of the 2.9 million hectares of the Autonomous Community of Galicia, something over 670,000 hectares are registered as collective property. In a region in which small property holdings predominate, common land is the only type of large-scale farming (237 hectares on average), which makes it an important institution in rural development and for the application of agricultural policy. In modern and contemporary

[1] This work springs from the international research project on Sustainable Farm Systems: Long-Term Socio-Ecological Metabolism in Western Agriculture funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC 895-2011-1020) and Spanish research project -"¿Sistemas agrarios sustentables? Una interpretación histórica de la agricultura en España desde la perspectiva Biofísica" (HAR2015-69620-C2-1-P) funded by Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (Spain).

times, the commons have played an essential role in balancing the peasant economy and in providing the basis for change in agriculture related to the first agrarian revolution. The predominant type of property was Germanic in nature (private, but collective, property with no distinction between holdings) and was, furthermore, previously unseen in the Spanish context. For these reasons, the Galician commons have been studied from different disciplinary perspectives: geography (Bouhier, 1979), history (Balboa, 1990; Rico 1995; Soto, 2006), economics (Fernández Leiceaga, 1990; Domínguez & Soto, 2013; Caballero, 2014), sociology (Lage, 2003) and forestry sciences (Marey & Rodríguez, 2009; Corbelle Rico et al, 2010). Several interdisciplinary projects, in which history has played a central role, have also studied the commons (Balboa et al, 2006; Cabana et al, 2012, Dominguez & Soto, 2013).

Although these papers have identified the positive characteristics of Galician commons for rural development, they have also highlighted their problems. Many communities are institutionally inactive or have only precarious activity. From the productive point of view, many *montes*[2] are underused and many only provide a very low income which offers little stimulus for collective action. The communal land of Galicia also suffers environmental deficiencies. The greatest impact in this regard is, perhaps, the numerous forest fires which have occurred repeatedly over the last four decades, although the importance of forest monoculture and the consequent impacts on biodiversity must also be highlighted. Research carried out in recent years has also underlined many examples of communities with innovative experiences in management and original alternatives for production which allow us to state that, in some places, the commons are being reinvented (Balboa et al, 2006; Cabana et al, 2012; Domínguez et al, 2014). This diversity cannot be adequately explained by a single theoretical tradition (institutionalism, ecological economy, cultural studies). This paper aims to show how, without the evolution seen in the commons in the recent past (especially in the final years of Francoism and the transition to democracy), it would be difficult to understand the current situation. The Galician case can also contribute to the debate on the survival of the commons, since it involves institutional, productive and identity aspects. The first section of the paper reviews the theoretical literature on the commons, from the perspective of both institutional economics and ecological economics. The second section describes the characteristics of the Galician commons today and their problems while the third analyses recent historical changes which help to understand the current diversity.

2. Beyond the institutions: Rules, material conditions and community.

The study of commons has become one of the most widely-discussed aspects in Social Sciences in recent decades. Their study is relevant if we are to understand problems of interest to different theoretical traditions and disciplines, especially to those interested in collective action.[3] 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 tragedy of the commons (1968) and his argument that commons brought about the exhaustion of resources since there were no

[2] 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.
[3] An state of the question can be found in Laerhoven and Ostrom 2007

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 which explain the success or failure of communal institutions. Ostrom (2011) 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 commons over time. Ostrom's work has been very influential among historians who have asked about the organization and regulation of commons in different historical contexts and about the reasons for their survival (Van Zanden, 1999; De Moor, 2009). 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 of the survival and change of the regulations of communal institutions (Lana, 2008; Warde, 2013; Laborda & Lana 2013).

The other great intellectual tradition which has influenced the work of historians is that of Ecological Economics (Martínez Alier, 2005) and, more recently, the implementation of the theory and methodology of Social Metabolism (González de Molina & Toledo, 2014). 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 (González de Molina & Toledo, 2014). 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 commons, but also in the socio-ecological transition processes which could bring about changes in their sustainability. (Guha, 1989; Martínez Alier, 2005; Soto et al, 2007, Herrera et al, 2010).

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 Ostrom (2009) offered a model for the analysis of the sustainability of Socio-Ecological Systems which integrates institutional, physical and social aspects. Likewise, Political Ecology and Environmental History studies have suggested that the changes seen in commons since the liberal revolutions would be misunderstood if we only considered public-private-communal tension, that is to say, considering only property rights. Martínez Alier

(1992, 1995) proposed the concept of the disarticulation of commons in order to explain the changes seen in commons since the 19th century after the 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 Ortega (2002) in the province of Granada, Spain, between the 18th and the 20th centuries.

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 (Ostrom, 2011). In the most recent version (Ostrom, 2010), 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 (Van Zanden, 1999; De Moor, 2009).[4] However, as stated by Warde (2013), 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 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 (2010), in response to her critics, underlined the fact that the expression "design principles" did not imply prescription or that the creators of successful communal systems had those principles in mind, and says that perhaps a better term would be "good practices".

In fact, a more careful examination of the general instrument designed by Ostrom for institutional analysis (Ostrom, 2013) shows that although the analysis of the 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 commons, but also introduces a third element which has appeared much less in the literature[5]: the role of the identity of the community, the collective construction of objectives and priorities and the evaluation of experiences (Gallego, 2013). Paradoxically, this question has been examined much less by historians despite the enormous development of Cultural History in recent years.[6] From our point of view, adequate comprehension of historical transformations in commons should examine the set of rules which regulated them (both formal and informal) but also the biophysical and material conditions (which, among other things, tell us what it is possible to do and

[4] The exercise undertaken by Laborda and Lana (2013), applying the concept of institutional nesting to the historical evolution of communes in Navarre, is, in my opinion, particularly interesting.

[5] In Ostrom's book, this aspect is covered in just one point, despite having the same theoretical hierarchy as the other two variables.

[6] A notable exception is to be found in Izquierdo (2002).

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 which 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, McCay (2002) states that concern for the exhaustion or degradation of the resources does not explain the emergence of communal institutions, but conflict over access to resources, coinciding with the view of Paul Warde (2013), 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 Guha (Guha, 1989; Martínez Alier, 2005). According to these authors, ecological struggle has existed in the past and exists today in communities which, 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 (Martínez Alier 2005). 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 (Soto, Herrera, González de Molina & Ortega, 2007), 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.[7] 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 commons 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 Galician commons since 1960 and that they have decisively influenced the transformation of the logic of communal institutions and in the perceptions of commoners about the meaning of the communal itself. From the case study of commons in Galicia, we intend to show how the changes in identities of the community, the biophysical conditions and the regulations have influenced the sustainability of the commons.

3. The recent situation of Neighborhood-owned common lands in Galicia.

The region chosen for this study displays unusual characteristics in the Spanish context. Galicia, the north-western 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

[7] 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).

the 19th and 20th centuries. Its specific characteristics include the great importance of the *monte*, a considerable part of which has been under communal ownership regimes until today. The majority of the commons in Galicia were held under a specific type of ownership, the *Montes Vecinales en Mano Común* (Neighborhood-owned common lands), a kind of common land under neighborhood ownership, and this ownership formula is what interests us here. 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 without quotas and did not prescribe and could not be embargoed.

The contemporary history of neighborhood-owned communal land in Galicia is paradoxical and conflictive. In the final years of the Ancien Régime, most of the uncultivated land in the region (almost two million hectares out of a total of 2.9 million) was of this type (Bouhier, 1979; Saavedra, 1995). After the Liberal Revolution, neighborhood-owned property (private but collective) disappeared from the legislation and it was made equivalent to municipal property (public), a situation that was to continue from 1812 until 1968 (Balboa et al, 2006). The absence of legal recognition did not mean that the communal land was no longer managed by communities of neighbors (until Franco's dictatorship), but it lent the conditions for many peasant communities to distribute and individualize the commons in order to prevent losing possession (Balboa, 1990; Fernández Prieto & Soto, 2004). This explains why, today, only part of the Galician *monte* survives as neighborhood-owned land. One of the paradoxes of the history of communal land in Galicia is that this situation began to be reversed in the period in which state intervention in the *montes* was most intense (under Franco). In 1968, the first law which recognized and regulated the existence of neighborhood-owned property was enacted (Law on Neighborhood-Owned Commons of 27-VI-1968).[8] The explanation of this paradox is one of the objectives of this paper and it is related to the fierce peasant conflicts which have arisen over communal land. Over the 15 years following the 1968 law, most of the *montes* were returned to the communities in a process which was also conflictive, in such a way that today, almost 2,800 *montes* are recognized as Neighborhood-Owned Commons. This history of dispossession and conflict, together with the changes in the production of Galician agriculture, has marked the institutional architecture of the commons, which no longer follow the same pattern of production as in the past, nor are they organized in the same way and they cannot even be understood in the same way by communities which have also changed their defining characteristics.

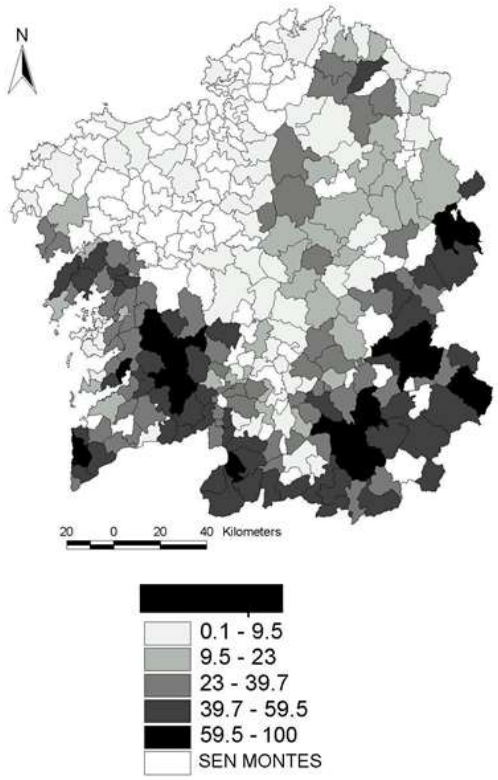
But what is the current situation of neighborhood-owned land in Galicia and how does it differ from the past? An interdisciplinary study by historians and economists drew up a database with information for the year 2000 for all of the neighborhood-owned *montes*, together with a detailed study of three representative districts (Balboa et al, 2006).[9] There are also more recent papers with localized case studies (Cabana et al, 2012; Domínguez et al, 2014). At the beginning of this century,

[8] Since the restoration of democracy, a second state law was passed in 1980, followed by another regional law in 1989.

[9] The district of *O Condado* in the province of Pontevedra, the district of *Sarria* in the province of Lugo and the district of *Baixa Limia* in the province of Ourense.

there were 2,835 communities occupying 673,681 hectares (23% of the total land area). Most of the commons are concentrated in the south of the region (in the provinces of Pontevedra and Ourense) while in the north, most of the land is individual private property (Figure 1). According to the estimates of the paper cited above, 150,000 households had property rights, which means that the total population involved in neighborhood-owned property comes to 530,000 persons (20% of the population). These figures are sufficient to illustrate the relevance of the commons to rural development in Galicia, but underlying these general figures, we find an enormous diversity in production and in the management of the commons. Although the main activity today is forestry, there is a variety of economic activity (livestock farming, wind energy, recreation, quarries, etc.) with some very active and economically profitable commons, together with others which are underused or abandoned.

Figure 1
Distribution of Neighborhood-Owned Commons in Galicia (%)



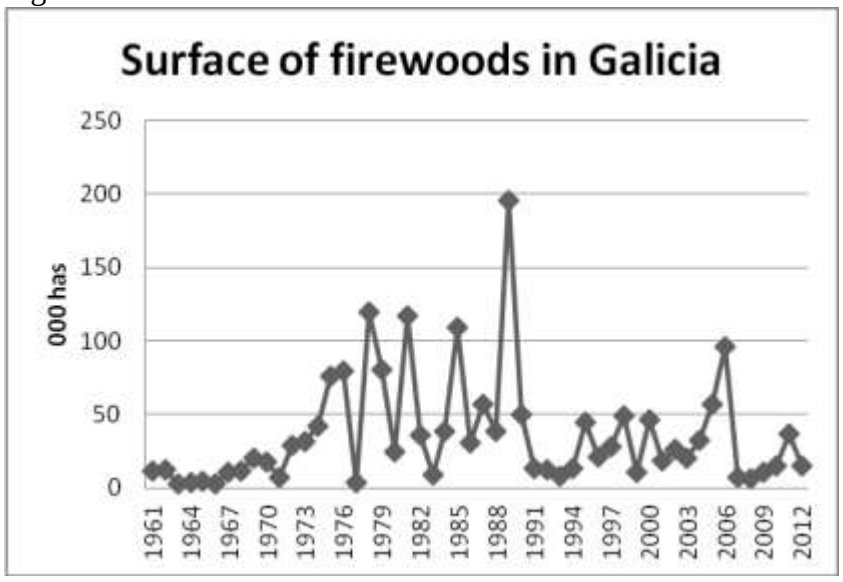
Source: Balboa et al, 2006

From the management point of view, we find some communities which are abandoned or where there is very little activity among the owners and others with much more participation. There are commons which are directly managed by the communities and others managed by the regional forestry authorities through agreements with the owners. There is some kind of activity in 64% of the communities and on 76% of the land, although the activities of 25% of the communities and 42% of the land are managed indirectly by the forestry authorities. A significant percentage (36% of the communities and the 24% of the land area) was in a state of abandonment in the year 2000. These cases are found in the zones which are suffering rapid depopulation and are one of the main problems facing the management of the *montes*, both for the economic underuse and the environmental vulnerability problems generated. We find, then, that

only 38% of the communities were directly managed by the owners. This is directly related to the demographic structure. Only 21% of them were active in the agrarian sector in the year 2000 as against 47% active in other sectors and 32% who were retired. The highest percentage of direct management is found in those zones where most of the population works in industry or in the service sector (Balboa et al, 2006). This tells us that most of the commons in which the neighbors are involved are not related to agricultural activity (with which the *montes* had been historically related) but to new ways of viewing the functionality of the commons (benefits to the community, recreational areas, a healthy environment, etc). An indicator of the dynamism in these communities (found especially in western Galicia) is the existence of conflict in such zones related both to management and access as well as to the exploitation of the commons, (Balboa et al, 2006; Gómez Vázquez et al, 2009). The most active communities tend to be mainly urban or periurban, with a significant presence of owners concerned with urban rather than rural activities.

From the environmental point of view, there is no better example of the problems facing Galician forests (both those which are private, individual property and neighborhood-owned forests) than the impact of wildfire (Figure 2). Since the beginning of the 1970s, this has been a recurring problem. It has been the subject of social and political debate and has occupied a good part of the research effort (Serrano, 1990; Lage, 2003). Leaving aside the debate about the culprits and the causes of the fires, there is no doubt that it is a relatively recent problem (which did not exist before the 1960s) and it is related to the disarticulation of forest spaces, the segregation of land usage and, in short, the breakdown of balance in the management of the landscape (Domíngez & Soto, 2013). Since a large part of the land burnt was and still is collective property, it is of interest to understand the logic which drives well-organized commons with the involvement of the communities, since these are the most resilient in the face of wildfire.

Figure 2



Source: Annual Agrarian Statistics and the National Statistics Institute (INE).

We believe that Ostrom's theoretical approach and, especially, her design principles (Ostrom, 2010) could be an interesting starting point in order to examine the problems of neighborhood-owned property in Galicia today, although in this case it is important to distinguish between the letter of the law and the real enforcement of the law and also to take into account the complexity of the situations involved. From a legal standpoint (Balboa et al, 2006; Caballero, 2014), there is no doubt that neighborhood-owned property meets practically all of the principles laid down by Ostrom. Clear limits are established for resources (the area of land legally recognized as neighborhood-owned) and for the owners (the neighborhood), clear rules which establish limits on appropriation, channels for participation, legal control instruments and even supra-community institutions, both those created by the communities themselves (associations of communities of neighbors) and by the administration. From the point of view of the system of property rights, the communities of neighbors have four of the five characteristics established by (Schlanger & Ostrom 1992, Caballero, 2014): the right of access, the right to obtain the resource (withdrawal), the rights to manage and the right of exclusion. Only the right of alienation is strictly limited by the permanent and indivisible nature of the property ownership regime. But in practice, we find numerous communities which stretch the law, or simply break it, with respect to both access to the resource and property rights. To understand this, it is essential to analyze how the commons are interpreted today, which is very different to the way in which they were interpreted in the past. This change is related to the productive changes which have occurred in recent decades but also to the logic of the law itself, which, attempting to recreate the traditional commons, in fact recreates an imaginary common which never existed in that form. This is not necessarily a problem for those communities which react reasonably to the new way of understanding the commons, but it may be a problem for those who still prefer the old logic, ill-adapted to the reality of production today and the stipulations of the law.

The old community, which preserved its essential characteristics, with small differences, until the mid-20th century, differs in many ways from the community of today but, perhaps, the most important differentiating element is that its main functionality was the maintenance of balance among the peasantry rather than the quest for equity (Balboa, 1990).[10] Neighborhood-owned land played a fundamental productive role as a pillar of the traditional agrarian system (Bouhier, 1979), but the changes in the intensity of the use of the *monte* allow us to understand the conditions of agrarian growth experienced in Galicia from the mid-18th century until the civil war (Soto, 2006).[11] As well as its productive importance, its role as a defining element of local identity should not be underestimated. Collective title to the *monte* in many cases became an element which defined status as a neighbor. The neighbor was the joint owner of the *monte* and this element could be even more significant than membership of a parish or of a municipality.[12] The communal land brought social cohesion to the local community. One of the central aspects of this was the balance between the household

[10] A similar characteristic was observed in Navarre by Lana (2008).

[11] Three basic resources are extracted from the communal land: feed for livestock, supplementary cereal crops and, especially, fertilizer. A description of these uses and their contemporary evolution can be found in Soto (2006).

[12] An important difference between the old and new community is to be found here. The property rights are granted by virtue of status as a neighbor and lapse when that status is lost, but this was not designed to cope with the arrival of migrants from outside (which was very rare) but in order to make room for the opening of new households for the inhabitants of the area. Today, this can cause conflicts with the arrival of immigrants in areas suffering depopulation (Balboa et al, 2006; Cabana et al, 2012).

and the collective group, exemplified in the joint title to and family exploitation (not strictly individual exploitation) of the *montes*. Three basic characteristics, then, define the old community. Firstly, domestic exploitation of collective resources is explained by the need for the existence of the *monte* in order to maintain agricultural and livestock productivity. Secondly, the exploitation was not, and was not understood to be, equitable. 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. In the same way, thirdly, although management was collective, it was not equitable. The inequality affected the decision-making process. This does not mean that collective title did not play a corrective role with respect to inequality in rural communities. Although access is not equitable, it does play an essential role in the maintenance of the most disadvantaged sectors of society (Saavedra, 1995), with these institutions, therefore, being important instruments for equity.

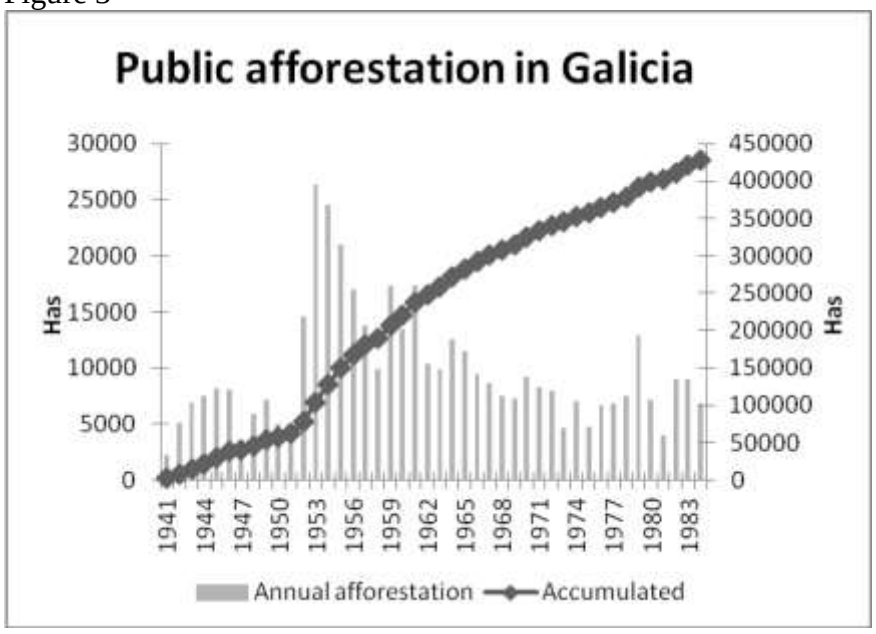
Some of the characteristic elements of this old community survive today, but mainly among the older population, mainly retired persons with little capacity for management of the *monte*. It cannot, therefore, be said that the old community has disappeared but it is receding before the new understanding of the community which has been given further impetus by the legislation. Although all of the laws since 1968 have recognized and legalized individual exploitation, the community recreated by the 1968 law, and especially by later laws, is undoubtedly based on an unambiguously equitable view of access and exploitation and on democratic management. This was favored by the fact that the process of devolution of neighborhood ownership coincided with the process of transition to democracy. In many places, the conflicts arising from both these processes ran in parallel (Balboa et al, 2004; Freire, 2013). These changes are obviously related to the transformations seen in usage (from agri-livestock use of the *monte* to mainly forest use). Furthermore, the collective perception of the distribution of the financial benefits among neighbors is negative. Most communities reinvest profits in the management of the resource or in public or community works. In the study of the three representative districts, we found that only 6% of the communities share the financial benefits among the neighbors (Balboa et al, 2006) and something similar occurs today, according to other case studies such as that in the district of Vigo (Domínguez et al, 2014). The commons are seen in these cases as an essential resource which provides services, sometimes substituting municipal management which does not always provide sufficient service to rural parishes. Although the commons are private, and are clearly perceived as private, their manner of functioning is closer to that of a public asset than an individually-used resource. The communities which have this new view of neighborhood-owned land are mainly the more active communities which manage the resources themselves. We largely find a divide between the old and new communities which is seen clearly in the way they perceive the situation of communal land. Most of the older neighbor-owners believe that the commons are less well exploited today than before the devolution of ownership and they are in favor of returning to traditional individual usage (though this would be done by the younger generation, not themselves) while, in contrast, the younger neighbors are in favor of this new way of understanding the community and they believe that the *montes* are better used today (Balboa et al, 2006). From the point of view of identity, the recent situation shows a transition from the old concept of the community to the new, although it is obviously hazardous to assure the future predominance of the new ways since, for many

communities, the fundamental problem is their very existence, for demographic reasons (Cabana et al, 2012).

4. From the "old" to the "new" community. Productive changes and property conflicts during Franco regime and transition to democracy.

The main explanation of the transition from the old to the new community lies in the long, conflictive process of the devolution of ownership to the neighbors which occurred at a historical moment in which two significant transformations took place in Spanish and Galician society: firstly, the political change, with the transition from dictatorship to democracy and, secondly, the productive change related to the process of the industrialization in agriculture and the breakdown of the previous agro-silvo-pastoral balance. Although it has been claimed, through institutional analysis, that the devolution of ownership to the neighbors and the consequent process of institutional change occurred progressively and gradually (Caballero, 2014), the truth is that there is a high degree of consensus in the historical literature about the conflictive and rupturist nature of the process (Rico, 1995; 2000; Fernández Prieto & Soto, 2004; Balboa et al, 2004; Cabana, 2006; Freire, 2013). All of these papers coincide in that the process began with opposition to reforestation and the segregation of uses enforced by the Francoist dictatorship. This conflict did not prevent the crisis of organic peasant agriculture but it did put the process of reforestation applied by the regime in danger.

Figure 3

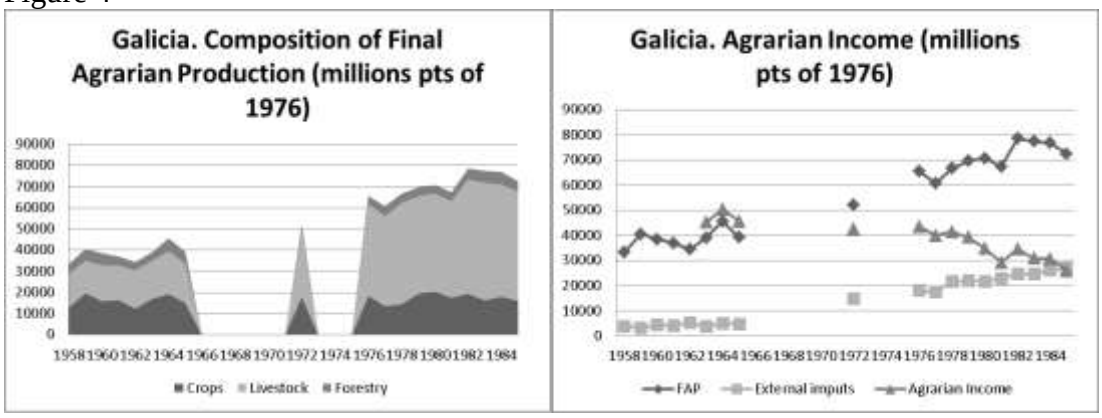


Source: Annual Agrarian Statistics

In the two decades in which autarchic policy was the main pattern of the Francoist economy, it became impossible to maintain the integrated management of the territory typical of Galician agriculture before the civil war, in which the balance between crop, livestock and forestry usage was a central element of the functioning of the agroecosystem. The regime imposed a process of dispossession of the commons and the creation of consortiums with local councils which led to the prohibition and exclusion of peasant usage. The multifunctional *monte* was transformed into a forest

monoculture which was incompatible with agri-livestock usage. In 1964, the state forestry services had included 475,000 hectares of Galician *monte* in consortiums, the immense majority being neighborhood consortiums, and more than 270,000 hectares had been reforested by the state forestry services (Figure 3). Intensive silviculture was manifestly incompatible with multifunctional peasant usage. But despite the repressive dictatorial context, reforestation generated considerable protest among rural communities which led the regime's forestry administration to fear that the reforestation policy was in danger (Rico Boquete, 2000; Fernández Prieto & Soto Fernández, 2004; Cabana, 2006). For many peasant communities, forestry usage became the enemy and there arose many, varied ways of opposing reforestation, including legal mechanisms and open resistance, as well as resort to fire (Cabana, 2007). These conflicts 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 which are relevant for the understanding of the maintenance of communal institutions. In a way, the protests would be successful and Franco's regime would be forced to recognize the neighborhood ownership of the *montes* in the 1968 law. But at the same time, this success occurred in a context of profound social and economic changes which altered the characteristics of the peasant community and the very functionality of the neighborhood-owned common lands.

Figure 4

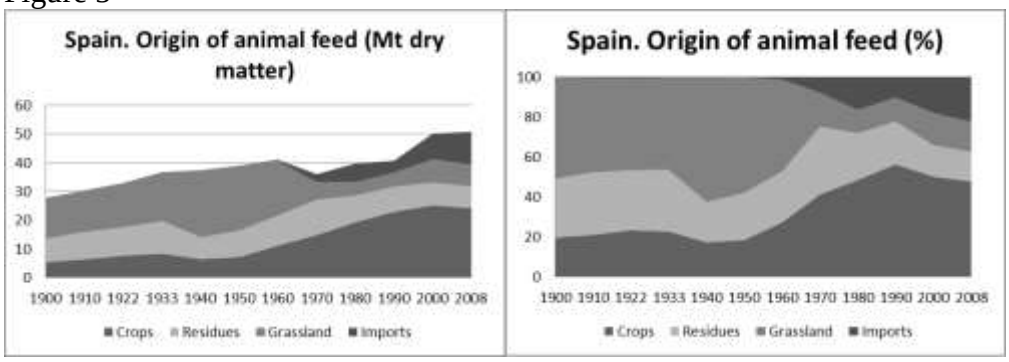


Source: Soto, 2006

The peasant community which protested against reforestation in the 1940s and the 1950s 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, but in the 1960s and 1970s, great changes were seen, among which the more significant were emigration, disagrarianization, or 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 against forestry usage and more about the conflict between forestry and livestock farming use of the *monte* (through the creation of grasslands). Figure 4 gives the main economic characteristics of the agrarian transformation process. As well as significant, though moderate, growth in Final Agricultural Production, we find an accelerated process of livestock specialization, which can be seen from the growth in its contribution to FAP (in which there is very little contribution from forestry). This process of specialization also runs in parallel to a process of agricultural industrialization which, in the 1970s,

made the sector ever more economically dependent on external inputs than on feed and seed re-use (Soto, 2006). This first element of change is relevant for an understanding of the changes in neighborhood ownership. It explains why large sectors of Galician society and, more importantly, some politically relevant sectors of the regime, favored and promoted the devolution of ownership to the neighborhood communities. The objective in this case was no longer the defense of peasant management systems but the promotion of livestock farming in opposition to forestry services, for which the devolution of ownership was simply an instrument to make the exploitation of the forests socially viable (Balboa et al, 2004).

Figure 5

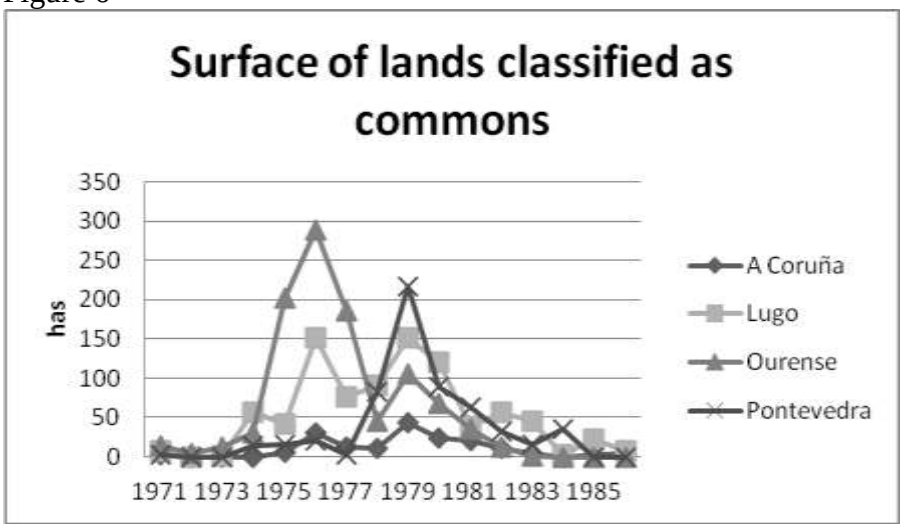


Source: Soto et al, 2016, Infante et al, 2014.

But the process of the industrialization of Galician agriculture, as in Spain as a whole (González de Molina et al, 2014), brought with it a sharp fall in agricultural income in absolute terms (Figure 4). This fall is, in turn, related to the fall in prices, the reduction of the active agrarian population (the fall is, therefore, not so pronounced in per capita terms) and, in the case of Galicia, the division of farms between those which were able to re-dimension and adapt to the new needs of agriculture (especially in the northern half of the region) and a majority of farms which eventually became part-time businesses or which disappeared as a result of ageing (Soto, 2006; Domínguez, 2007; Díaz-Geadás, 2013). This socio-economic fragmentation which began with the process of agricultural industrialization had a great impact on the productive and organizational diversity which had been seen in the communities since the devolution of ownership. But at the same time, one question remains open and that is why at least those communities involved in profitable livestock farming did not exploit the commons to reduce the cost of animal feed from the moment of the devolution of ownership. In fact, and despite some public programs to this effect, there has been very little creation of pastureland since the 1960s (López Iglesias, 1996; Balboa et al, 2006). This is explained by the dynamics of the industrialization process itself and its progressive dependence on the market. In fact, although the explanation of the specialization in livestock farming is in principle related to the comparative advantages of the territory, as industrialization progressed, there has been a disarticulation between livestock farms and territory, a process which is not exclusive to Galicia, but which can be seen throughout Europe. Our results about the Galician agrarian metabolism for the period (Soto, 2015) and do for Spain as a whole (Soto et al., 2016) could not be more unequivocal (Figure 5). While, until the 1960s, livestock feed depended mainly on pastureland (which explains the need to maintain the balance between different land uses and the functionality of institutions such as the commons), from that decade onwards, animal feed depended fundamentally on high-quality feed from crops and industrial processing. Since the 1980s, furthermore, a significant percentage of this animal feed was imported due to its

low cost, making it practically unnecessary to use the territory itself to guarantee feed for the livestock (Soto et al, 2016). It is not strange, then, that in recent decades it has been the periurban districts rather than districts with agrarian activity that have been most active, as seen in the previous section.

Figure 6



Source: Balboa et al, (2004)

Despite all that has been said, the commons were important and nothing demonstrates this better than the conflicts which arose in the 1960s and 1970s, before and after the devolution process. They were important because in the final years of Francoism, some of the changes described in this paper began to show their effects. They were also important for other, less material, reasons: because dispossession was seen as a manifest injustice, because the neighborhood-owned *monte* was seen as being of the neighbors and not public and because, in many places, the conflict over the devolution of the commons was accompanied by the struggle for democratization at a local level during the transition. In fact, the 1968 law, as it was conceived by the forestry services which promoted it, had fairly limited objectives.[13] The forestry engineers made no secret of the fact that they did not want the devolution of all of the commons, but of a significant number of them, especially those in the provinces of Ourense and Lugo, which would satisfy the neighbors through a share in the profits of forest exploitation and would ensure the future of reforestation. This is what happened in the early 1970s (Figure 6) with the devolution, at the initiative of the administration, of a significant part of the commons in those two provinces. The devolution of the commons in many places in the province of Pontevedra and in the south of the province of A Coruña, on the other hand, occurred after the Franco's death in 1975 and was related to fierce conflicts which gave rise to organizations which were more similar to new social movements than the traditional forms of peasant protest. One such organization was *O Monte é Noso* (The Common is Ours), which was, significantly, named in the Galician language in a context in which the demand for the common joined the struggle for democracy, regional autonomy and the regional language (CIES, 1979). In many municipalities, when it was not directly led by them, the demand for the

[13] A detailed analysis of the process of the elaboration of the law, of the sectors involved and the confrontation between different sectors of the regime which took it beyond the initial objectives of the project can be found in Balboa et al, (2004; 2006). An analysis of the process of devolution and related conflicts can be found in these papers and in Freire (2013).

commons enjoyed the support of members of the opposition parties. In these cases, the devolution of the commons was related both to ownership and to the political conflict for local power. It is not uncommon to find examples of neighborhood leaders who later occupied local political office in the different political parties (Balboa et al, 2006; Freire, 2013). But these conflicts also affected the process of institutional change and the configuration of the new community described in the previous section. In the context of the struggle for democracy, the idea of equitable, democratically managed commons was particularly strong, especially in areas where traditional management techniques were in disuse or had disappeared.

5. Conclusion.

Recent developments in the institutional analysis of the commons (Ostrom, 2009, 2013) have begun to draw attention to the need to take into account aspects such as the environmental-productive dimension or the characteristics of the communities, including aspects of identity. This will allow fruitful dialogue with other theoretical traditions such as Ecological Economics and Environmental History, which have also studied the matter of the survival of the commons and their contribution to sustainability. In this paper, we have analyzed a case study (neighborhood ownership in Galicia), studying the current situation and the recent past from a triple perspective: the evolution of property rights and associated rules, the productive changes and mutations in the functionality of the commons and the identity aspects which give meaning and which shape the way in which the communities themselves understand their relationship with the commons. This has allowed us to show how some of the Galician commons have reinvented themselves in recent decades, seeking new relationships between the community, territory and resources. But at the same time, the breakdown of the traditional peasant understanding of the community has led to the abandonment, underuse and environmental degradation of many of these spaces.

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