

Old solutions for today's problems in the Urbión Model Forest

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Abstract: The case in study involves internationally recognised Urbión Model Forest, a 35-municipality, 177 368 ha landscape that maintains a high degree of identity, both in economic terms (the National Employment Institute classifies it a single space in terms of employability, although it lies in two different provinces), and in social and cultural aspects (its 17 000 inhabitants share a common system of cultural traditions and forest governance systems). This conjunction, it is argued, has allowed the development of a forest governance system that keeps the different actors (municipalities, forest service, the population, and the private productive sector) responsible for their specific roles but aware of the whole mechanism. This landscape and system provides livelihoods for its inhabitants that, on average, are among the best in Spain.

Keywords: Forest governance, sustainable forest management, Model Forest, multifunctionality, concerted action, landscape identity

25.1 Introduction

The area that constitutes Urbión Model Forest is located in northern Spain, on the western slopes of the Iberian Range. The Duero River, which flows into the sea in Portugal, starts in this area. Distances to main cities in northern Spain range about 200 km, from Madrid in the south to Valladolid in the west, Bilbao in the north and Zaragoza in the east (see Figure II 25.1).

Human settlements in Urbión date from prehistoric times. The cave of Atapuerca, with the earliest-known Hominid remains in Eurasia (more than 800 000 years old), is located less than 100 km away. The transition from a culture of hunter-gatherers to the Neolithic culture took place here between 3000 and 2000 BC, and the area was conquered by the Roman Empire in 200 BC. Today's towns and villages date back about 1000 years, following the Moorish occupation between AD 700 and 900 and the Christian repopulation that took place from the 10th century. The oldest documentation on forest-use regulation, preserved in municipal archives, dates from the 13th century.

Population density has been traditionally low due to the harshness of the climate, which makes farming the land a difficult task. Even today, only 12.71 inhabitants/km² are distributed across 35 towns and villages, which average 512 inhabitants each. For at least 5000 years, the most common human activity has been raising livestock (both cattle and sheep). As a result, the forests have been greatly altered, but they have never disappeared altogether. The manufacture of charcoal and the collection of firewood were the second important use of the forests. The large distances between the area and the coast and main towns and cities hindered woodcutting for urban and naval construction. However, some of the main architectural projects in Spain after the 16th century used girders made of Urbión timber, such as the Seo (Cathedral of the Saviour) of Zaragoza, which in 2006, after 400 years, commemorated the substitution of its Urbión-originated girders with new ones of the same origin.

At present, forests cover 80% of the 177 368 ha of the Urbión territory (see Figure II 25.2), with no plantation area included. The dominant tree species are naturally occurring pines: *Pinus pinaster*,

known locally as *negral* or *resinero* pine, and *Pinus sylvestris* (Scots pine), known locally as *pino albar*. They grow next to small plots of *Pinus uncinata* and beechwoods (*Fagus sylvatica*) on shady slopes. The southern part of the territory is covered in limy soils that sustain stands of *Pinus nigra* (including some of the best in Spain), juniper groves (low forests with *Juniperus thurifera*), holm oak (*Quercus ilex*), and deciduous gall oak (*Quercus faginea*).

Technical management has evolved to enable new uses such as ecotourism and non-timber forest productions, while a main feature of the local governance, a benefit-sharing arrangement rooted in traditions dating back into the 13th century, has kept the population deeply linked to forests, its managers, and the common good. The key to this organisation has been ownership of the land, and (from the beginning of the 20th century) tenure arrangements that incorporate participative decision-making and benefit-sharing. The royal privileges on forest uses granted to villagers in order to colonize this border area in the 13th and 14th centuries, together with communal property of the productive areas in settlement surroundings, allowed populations to thrive and develop a vision of sustainability through self-management of the resources. This vision remains, and today management (although it has become more technical), local awareness, maintenance of forms of local distribution of the wealth generated, and a feeling of belonging facilitate the successful implementation of measures for forest protection and development.

In 2006, in order to serve and represent this long history of concerted action and the area's achievements in sustainability, the Asociación Monte Modelo Urbión (Urbión Model Forest Association) was created by a constituency of more than 60 public and private agents (municipalities, trade associations, unions, and civil society organisations). The association does not replace existing management arrangements but provides a local forum for the discussion of internal issues and a platform for external outreach, advocacy, and networking. The association joined the International Model Forest Network (IMFN) in 2007 with the aim of sharing Urbión's experience and learning. A Model Forest is a voluntary association of people, entities, organisations, etc., in a particular territory that are interested in discovering, defining, enhancing, and guaranteeing its sustainability and in sharing experiences and knowledge to contribute to global environmental goals. The IMFN is a voluntary network of landscape-level initiatives that has promoted sustainable land management at a landscape scale since 1992, when it was presented during the Rio Summit (UN Conference on Environment and Development) as a contribution of the government of Canada. The IMFN currently includes more than 60 landscape initiatives in more than 25 countries



Figure II 25.1 Urbión Model Forest.

(Arbour et al. 2012, Bonnell et al. 2012).

This presentation of the Urbión experience focuses on 1) technically sound coherence across a landscape larger than a single management unit; 2) a simple, participative and sensible benefit-sharing arrangement that keeps people linked to forests; and 3) a shared long-term vision. The case study demonstrates that these features can enable a forest-based landscape to provide dignified livelihoods for its inhabitants over an extended period of time (the 20th and 21st centuries are analysed here, but the system's main features have a much longer standing), while at the same time preserving and indeed enhancing the natural values at stake.

25.2 The evolution of land tenure and forest legislation

The concern for the use of the forests appeared as early as the 13th century when rules were drawn for commons and later given legal status. These rules institutionalised local residents' communal use of the territory, which under different legal arrangements exists until today. The Crown's intent was to consolidate and protect the territory reconquered from the Andalusian Arabs and then repopulate the lands abandoned by "the Moors". In the area of study, a system of communal forest management developed, in which every town kept a number of forest estates (*montes*) and established a system for sharing the proceeds among its inhabitants (see Box II 25.1). The administrative processes were meticulously supervised by the locals, who took great care to maintain legal protection and respect for local legislation by the new terms and conditions, especially in maintaining the registration of the *montes* as communal



Figure II 25.2 The Urbión landscape.

property of the neighbours (status defined in local ordinances). In 1748, Spain took steps to protect its forest resources and, via the By-law of Marina (Navy), prohibited woodcutting throughout the territory to allow forests to recover and to ensure the availability of timber for shipbuilding, a key factor in defence of the Spanish Empire and in its shipping trade with mainly the Americas and the Philippines. This measure led to protests by the locals of Urbión, who again obtained recognition of the exceptional nature of the territory from the king and continued their forestry work.

The present framework for forest management was established through setting up the first Forestry School in Madrid in 1848, creating the state Forest Engineer Corps in 1854, and the May 1, 1855, General Disentailment Law, also known as the Madoz Law. While forest title was kept in the hands of municipalities (installed during the 18th and 19th centuries), often in the name of communal, sub-municipal groupings such as villages, technical management was placed at an upper level of government, first at the national level and then, with the 1978 Constitution, at the regional level. This arrangement remains

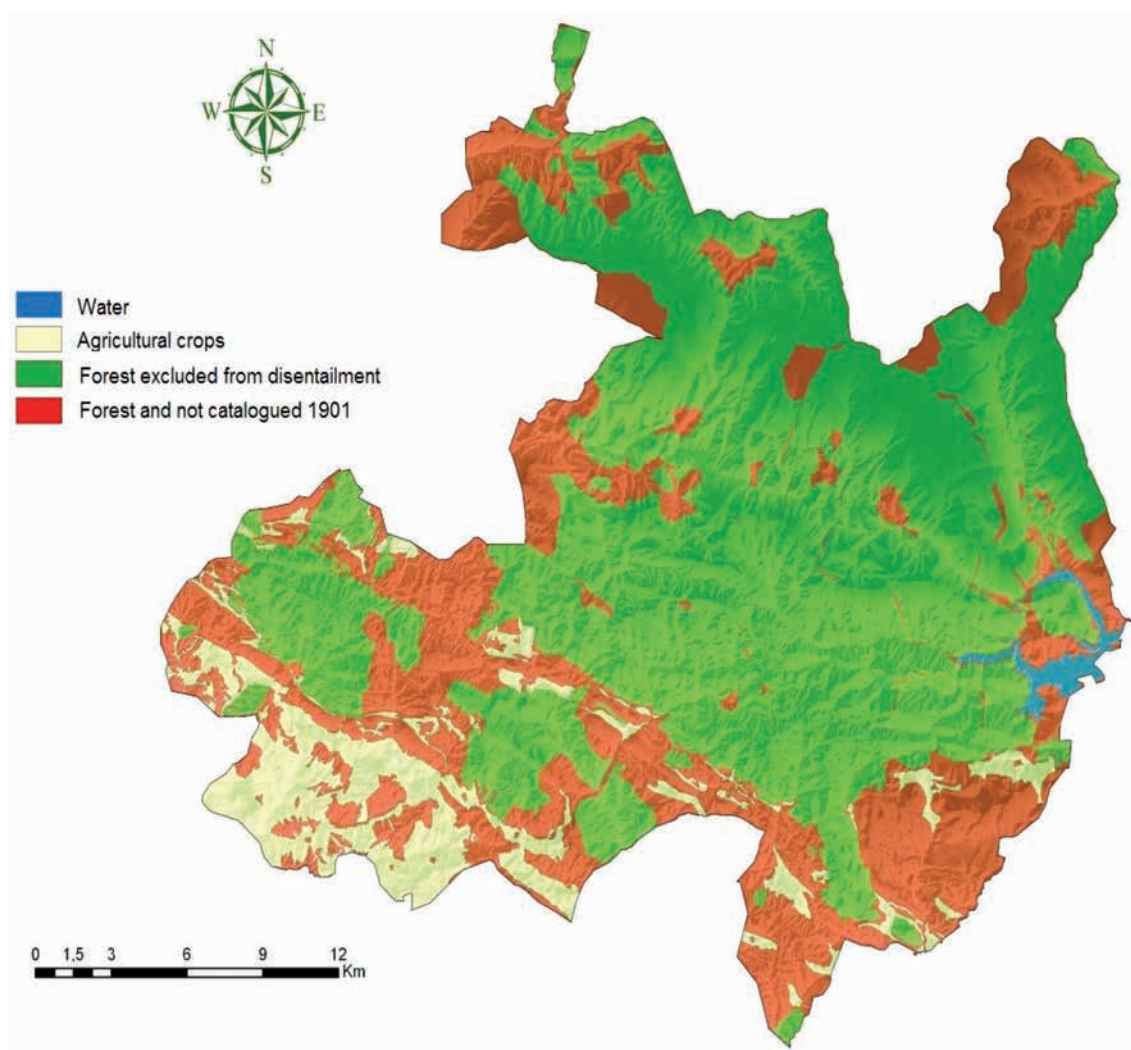


Figure II 25.3 Approximate map of the forests excluded from disentanglement (in green) as land of public interest (1901) for the Urbión Model Forest area. © SIGMENA, authors' own work.

today and this case study purports that its existence and permanence explains the successful management of forests in this area.

The inclusion in Article 1 of the Madoz Law (sellable properties) of town and village commons and estates was particularly important to the Urbión area since it referred to a large part of the area's forest. The disentanglement (privatisation) of public property (mostly communal property in this part of Spain) lasted almost 70 years and its level of intensity was ever-changing during that period. Overall, the disentanglement led to the sale of large areas of forest in the Urbión Model Forest area, which became private property. In the province of Soria alone, some 12 600 ha were disentailed, which suggests that the total figure for the territory could have been about 20 000 ha (Cuerpo de Ingenieros de Montes 1864–1866, ed. 1991a; Cuerpo de Ingenieros de Montes 1864–1866, ed. 1991b; Cuerpo de Ingenieros de Montes 1901; Ortega Canadell 1982; Castrillejo Ibañez 1987;

García Martino 1869; Sanchez Salazar 1988). However, forests in the area were mostly excluded from the disentanglement in the Madoz Law. A Catalogue of Public Forests excluded from selling was created in 1901 (see Figure II 25.3). This catalogue became the first network of protected areas in Spain. It still exists and is known as Catalogue of Public Interest Forests (*Catálogo de Montes de Utilidad Pública*, Spanish acronym CUP). The 1957 Forest Act reinforced what was ruled almost a century ago. The previous Forest Act was from 1863, in which the rights of the communities were already considered, although it gave management to the forest administration.

The Forest Act of 1957 provides that most of the forests with common use in the area are to be included in the catalogue and registered in the name of the local authority whose town or village benefits from the use: said use must be respected. This awards communal forests unseizable, indefeasible, and inalienable status, and they were placed under

Box II 25.1 Evolution of the local benefit-sharing system: An example of Covaleda 1983–2011*Amaya Martínez Rioja*

Estate No. 125 of the Catalogue of Public Interest Forests of the province of Soria corresponds to the village of Covaleda: the municipality is owner of the forest, which has been communal property since the 13th century. The Residents' Civil Timber Society of Covaleda manages the proceeds.

The Timber Society, formerly responsible for the sale of forest products, was incorporated as the Residents' Civil Timber Society of Covaleda in 1983. It is independent of the municipality. Its executive board is made up of 10 people (chairman, treasurer, secretary, and seven more board members). Board membership is renewed every two years and all society members can elect and be elected. Even though ownership corresponds to the municipality and technical management belongs to the Forest Service, association's constituency gives board members the duty of ensuring protection of the forest and correct management of forest use. They report annually to society members at the Ordinary General Assembly.

The society is fully integrated in the village and its members are aware of the forest's value as a valuable natural environment and historical heritage that needs to be passed on to future generations. Society by-laws provide for the care and protection of the area and convey a common understanding of its values.

The municipality and the Forest Service draw up the annual felling plan, which is then used by the executive board to allocate a starting price to each batch; the sale is made by public auction and the society shares the profits obtained among the members who have the right to receive them.

Each year, the municipal authority draws up the census of residents with the right to forestry proceeds, which is given to the society to be used in the allotments. The conditions for inclusion in the census have been provided in the by-laws that have governed the allotment and distribution of the communal uses of the pine trees of the forests of Covaleda since 1949.

technical management by the forest service (National Institute for the Conservation of Nature, Spanish acronym ICONA, and later, in the case of Urbión, by the General Directorate of Forests of the Junta de Castilla y León, the regional government). At the present time, most of the forest estates in the area are included in the Catalogue of Public Interest Forests (Gil 1994, Rojas Briales 1995, Asociación Forestal de Soria 2010). The economic benefits of forestry (which range from thousands to hundreds of thousands of euros) are collected and managed by the local residents, organised in local resident associations (*sociedades vecinales*) or by the local authorities themselves in accordance with local legislation (see Box II 25.1). Fifteen percent of the revenues from forests are allocated to an improvement fund for reinvestment in works designed to improve the estates, which are managed by the state forest service.

Legislation governing forest use was enacted in the mid-20th century in municipal by-laws in most of the towns and villages in Urbión. The by-laws, which vary from one village to another, in certain cases have changed very little. All of the by-laws of the mountain towns and villages contain two conditions for the use of pastures and pine trees: one of roots (being a descendant of parents or grandparents who had the right) and one of permanence (having a house in use year-round in the corresponding town or village). Between the 13th and 21st centuries, the

by-laws that regulate the use of forest resources have evolved according to the changing circumstances and social relations.

A survey and case studies were conducted by Urbión Model Forest in 2007 to systematise and share knowledge on the benefit-sharing system, which is managed in a quite secretive way by its managers due to the existing pressure against common arrangements in Western societies. Seven of the main towns' arrangements were studied, covering more than half of the population. Its results and recommendations were provided to the managers in the form of a guidebook (Segur and Rebollo 2007). The survey's main results are presented in Table II 25.1.

25.3 Evolution of the use of forests

Wood (including timber, firewood, and charcoal) has been harvested from the area during the past thousand years. The evolution of the international context brought formulation of long-term management plans in the past century (the first of these, the Pinar Grande estate, celebrated a century of implementation in 2007). The planning process and its implementation encompass previously existing, recognised multi-functionality. More recently, vol-

Table II 25.1 Main features of selected local benefit-sharing arrangements in Urbión.

Feature	Town						
	Cabrejas del Pinar	Coaleda	Duruelo de la Sierra	Navaleno	Palacios de la Sierra	Rabanera del Pinar	Vilviestre del Pinar
Jurisdiction	Municipality	Corporation	Corporation	Association	Multiple (municipality, association, and other)	Municipality	Association
Decisive body (for minimum bid prices and awarding)	Comission, neighbours	Comission, local market	Comission	Comission	Local offer	Comission, local market	Comission, neighbours
Economic volume (earnings in thousand €)	<300	>300	<300	>300	n.d.	<300	<300
Benefit-sharing, mean annual payment (thousand €)	n.d.	≈1200	≈600	n.d.	≈300	≈300	≈600
Social volume (number of people holding rights)	≈100	≈600	≈1000	≈700	n.d.	n.d.	≈320
Accountability	n.d.	Audited balance, offers, prices, annual report	Income and expenses report, prices, annual report	n.d.	n.d.	Audited balance, offers, prices	Audited balance, offers

untary sustainable forest management certification (in 2004, under PEFC system) and a seal of guarantee (Pino Soria-Burgos) have been incorporated into both forest management and timber marketing; a study conducted in 2009 by the technical manager of certification, the CESEFOR Foundation, found no proof of enhanced timber prices, but it did find qualitative indications that certification is improving the quality of management.

As already mentioned, from the Early Middle Ages to well into the 18th century, cattle farming was the main economic activity in terms of number of users of the mountain area. Sheep products were exported to northern Europe with hardly any transformation or manufacture. Cattle farming was so intense that it became regulated: the areas that corresponded to the villagers were marked out, the rights that had been acquired were claimed (uses immemorial, charters of nature given in royal privileges, or monastic orders), and agreements were reached. The regulations were laid down in every detail. At the end of the 18th century, La Mesta, the medieval

organisation that regulated and defended cattle and cattle farming within the overall society entered its decline. However, the forms of organisation it left in the territory influence the feasibility of solutions proposed for environmental problems even today, evidenced in the mycology regulations set up in the 21st century. It was found that use, freely available to the public, of mycological resources created a conflict between the sustainability of the resource, the rights associated with its collection, and the economic impact. Mechanisms were put in place to find solutions: meetings of owners and managers to reach agreements and clarify the rights of the owners, inventories and designation of observation areas, and, finally, drafting of appropriate legislation suitable to the needs. A present-day use thus benefits from cultural capital produced during the previous millennium.

The extraction of conifer resin, especially from *Pinus pinaster*, is another important use of the woodlands in the Urbión Model Forest (Hernandez Muñoz 2011). Spain's first distilleries were in Quintanar de

la Sierra and Hontoria del Pinar (Gil Abad 1986), both within the present territory of the Urbión Model Forest; the resin industry grew for several decades and by 1950, 87 distilleries were registered in Spain. This growth led to an increase in investments in social services and improvements to the quality of life in towns and villages that owned the raw material. The need for local labour fostered social stability and helped the local economy. As a result, the resin industry became a strategy for maintaining the rural population and generated wealth and prosperity, strengthening ties between people and the territory. This can be seen in folklore and traditions, architecture, and artistic motifs.

However, from the 1980s, the resin sector went into deep recession. With Spain's entry in the then European Economic Community in 1986, the protection from duties was removed and the high cost of national production became evident. In 1987, the Junta de Castilla y León sought to revitalise the sector by fostering creation of cooperatives and establishing prices for the raw material. This boost helped maintain a certain level of activity until 1990, after which disagreements between owners (industry) and worker co-operatives and the circumstantial drop in export prices accelerated the sector's decline. However, resin-gathering activity has seen a come-back since 2010 in forest estates in the towns of Cubilla, Espeja de San Marcelino, Espejón, and Santa María de las Hoyas.

During the present millennium, marginal economic interest has shifted towards mushrooms (Esteban et al. 2010), including both semi-cultivated truffles (*Tuber nigrum*) and high-value Basidiomycetes (*Boletus* sp, *Suillus* sp, and others), which are said to generate more value than timber in some of the management units in the area. The collection of mushrooms is regulated in the publicly managed units, thus producing traction for the regulation of the whole market in the area. A multidisciplinary, long-term effort concerted between the regional government, municipalities, universities, and the private sector is today producing economic activity around a low-intensity, high-added-value activity that generates EUR 8 of economic activity over the territory for each euro paid for mushrooms at their forest of origin (Esteban et al. 2010).

Extensive cattle-farming, resin-gathering activity, or mushroom-picking are all sustainable activities that have been successfully added to wood-oriented forest management and provide positive externalities and associated environmental benefits (high landscape and cultural value, compatibility with other uses, such as leisure, hunting, and energy production). The maintenance of this multipurpose nature of the woodlands is a priority objective of forestry planning.

25.4 Commons in the 21st century: Sustainable forest management in the Urbión Model Forest

As mentioned, when the current forestry administration was created (1854), the conditions for a multi-purpose approach and a focus on various interests were brought together and institutionalised, remaining valid today. Enabling the technical management of the woodlands (provided by higher public institutions at no cost to the municipalities) in benefit of the local population ensured a form of management that, first and foremost, provides owners and inhabitants with direct and indirect economic benefits from their forests. The lots (minimum forest unit for the sale of standing timber) have bonded the towns and villages to their woodlands to a detailed level. Even so, the system is not always sufficient: 2773 ha of pine grove were burned in the Pinar Grande estate in 1868 (García Martino 1869); however, one century later, that estate is an example of good management.

The forest management plans of the Urbión Model Forest were first drawn up in the 20th century, especially at the beginning and in the 1950s. The planning integrates local values with planning on a larger scale. Today, 67 management units encompassing 104 454 ha of forest are in place (see Figure II 25.4), by far the most widespread land use in the area. Possibilities for employment grew. With the rise in timber prices, prosperity increased in every municipality and reduced migration. The productivity of the woodlands multiplied: for example, in the Navaleno estate, the number of trees felled grew tenfold from 900 pine trees by privilege (1000 cubic meters with bark, m³wb) before the planning to 10 000 m³wb, with no compromise for the sustainability of the forest mass. In Talveila, the increase was elevenfold; in Muriel Viejo, thirteenfold; and in Cabrejas, eighteenfold (Lucas Santolaya and Ciriano García 2001; Lucas Santolaya 2011); see Table II 25.2.

An analysis (Pinillos et al. 2007) conducted on 65 490 ha of managed forest estates in the area showed mean standing volume of 98.12 m³wb (see Figure II 25.5), mean growth of 2.10 m³wb and mean potential (capacity of the estate to sustainably support tree-cutting) of 2.54 m³wb, the latter a result of the accumulation of un-realised harvesting potential during the decades and in line with global trends (FAO 2010b, Pan et al. 2011).

The improvement that came with the planning affected both quantity and quality: the felling moved from isolated, disperse actions, removing the best trees and leaving masses that were dominated and regressive, to group felling designed to regenerate and improve the forest mass. The Forestry Plan of Castilla y León, an example of this integral planning,

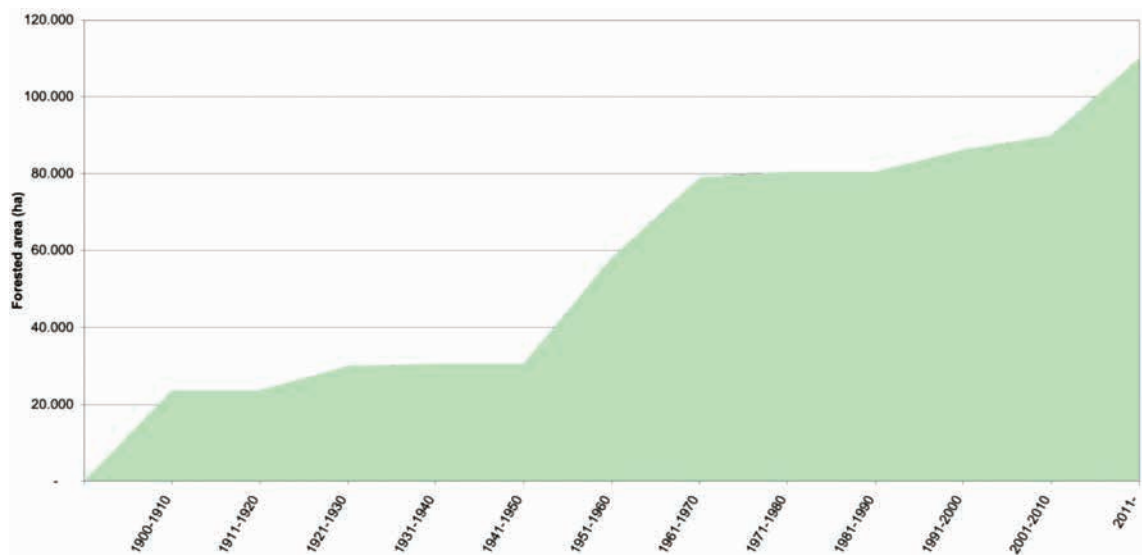


Figure II 25.4 Evolution of the area under forest-management plan in the territory of the Urbión Model Forest in the 20th century. Source: Authors' own work.

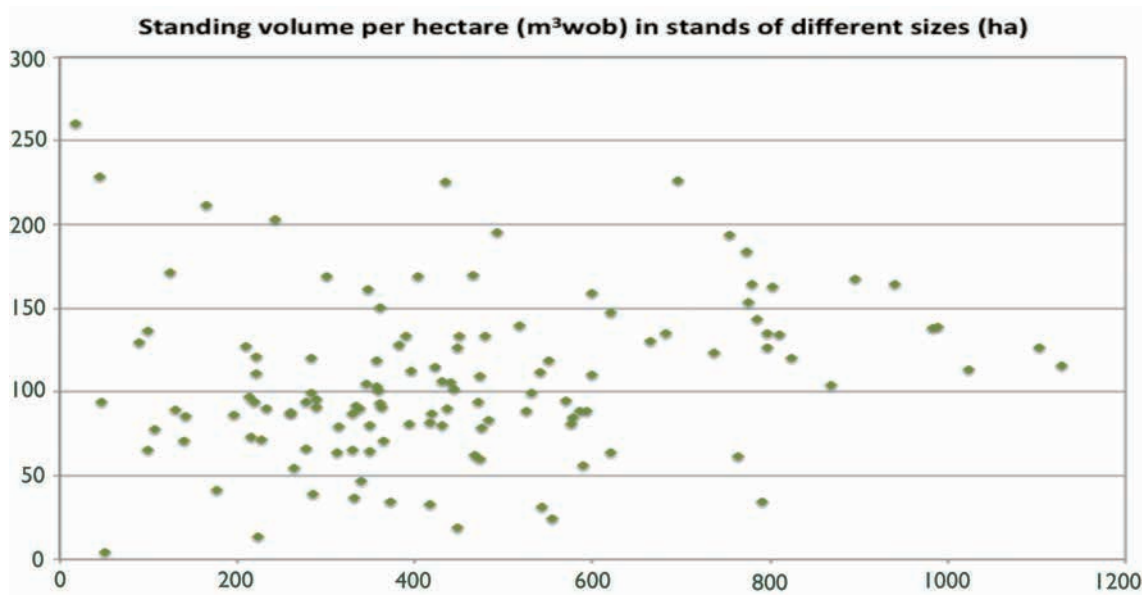


Figure II 25.5 Current standing volume in 124 uniform stands in Urbión forests (Pinillos et al. 2007).

has led to new, significant revenue, especially from hunting, the use of industrial timber from clearing operations, and mycology, as well as the associated tourism (Junta de Castilla y León 2007). This has stabilised income from the forests, which is the best guarantee for their conservation. The publication of the new *General Instructions for the Planning of Tree-Covered Woodlands in Castilla y León* in 1999 includes concepts of biodiversity conservation and sustainability, together with the application of new technologies for forest-mass inventories and monitoring. The certification of 104 454 ha of woodland in the Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) system in February 2004 and the development of the Soria-Burgos Pine seal of guarantee

provided the market with an indication of correct implementation of the plan through audits performed by an independent third party.

Finally, the system in place effectively incorporates the components of the sustainable development paradigm (Torre Antón 1999). The Urbión Model Forest has evolved in a positive and balanced way (as recognised by Joaquín Araujo and Maurice Strong⁽¹⁾, among other renowned observers). It is also

⁽¹⁾ Joaquín Araujo is a renowned environmental journalist and author in Spain. Maurice Strong is a former under-secretary general of the United Nations and the founding executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

Table II 25.2 Evolution of harvest potential in selected management units in Urbión.

Town (management unit)	Area (ha)	Potential before planning (m ³ wb)	Year of first management plan	Potential in first management plan (m ³ wb)	Current potential (m ³ wb)
Abejar (104, 117, 119)	1033	1500	1968	n.d.	n.d.
Abejar (119)	408	n.d.	1955	1022	1027
Cabrejas del Pinar and Abejar (117)	1131	240	1961	3792	4388
Cabrejas del Pinar (118)	1140	170	1954	1649	2347
Cabrejas del Pinar and Talveila (114)	763	n.d.	1952	1702	3249
Casarejos	1634	476	1957	2500	2758
Coaleda	9987	4000	1945	15 553	21 780
Cubilla	532	145	1953	919	1230
Duruelo de la Sierra	4230	1747	1953	6968	9720
Molinos de Duero	2610	210	1962	400	n.d.
Muriel de la Fuente	168	400	1960	542	n.d.
Muriel Viejo	674	86	1953	1188	n.d.
Navaleno	2437	1000	1961	10 248	9576
Salduero	244	215	1962	295	n.d.
San Leonardo de Yagüe (88, 90)	3486	1400	1951	5860	10 816
Talveila	1005	345	1955	2473	3906
Vadillo	890	177	1952	2027	2429
Vinuesa	2507	n.d.	1955	4343	n.d.

demographically healthy and unemployment levels are comparatively low (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2009). The quality of the forests has increased in the 20th century (Valbuena-Carabaña et al. 2010): they produce timber, quality meat, and mushrooms, and intentional fires are no longer an issue despite the accessibility of the forests and the number of visitors they receive. The inhabitants identify with their forests in a unique way. This is demonstrated by the stability of the rural population, as opposed to a decline during the 20th and 21st centuries across all developed countries. Though displacement has occurred in the Urbión Model Forest, it is only from

the smaller to the biggest towns – the population as a whole remains stable (see Figure II 25.6). Other indicators, such as the GDP, the level of literacy, and longevity, for which there are no breakdowns on a suitable scale, appear to indicate higher levels in the Urbión Model Forest than the European average.

The Urbión Model Forest Association was incorporated in 2007 to provide a local forum for the discussion of internal issues and a platform for external outreach, advocacy, and networking. It applies the following Model Forest principles (<http://www.imfn.net/?q=node/22>):

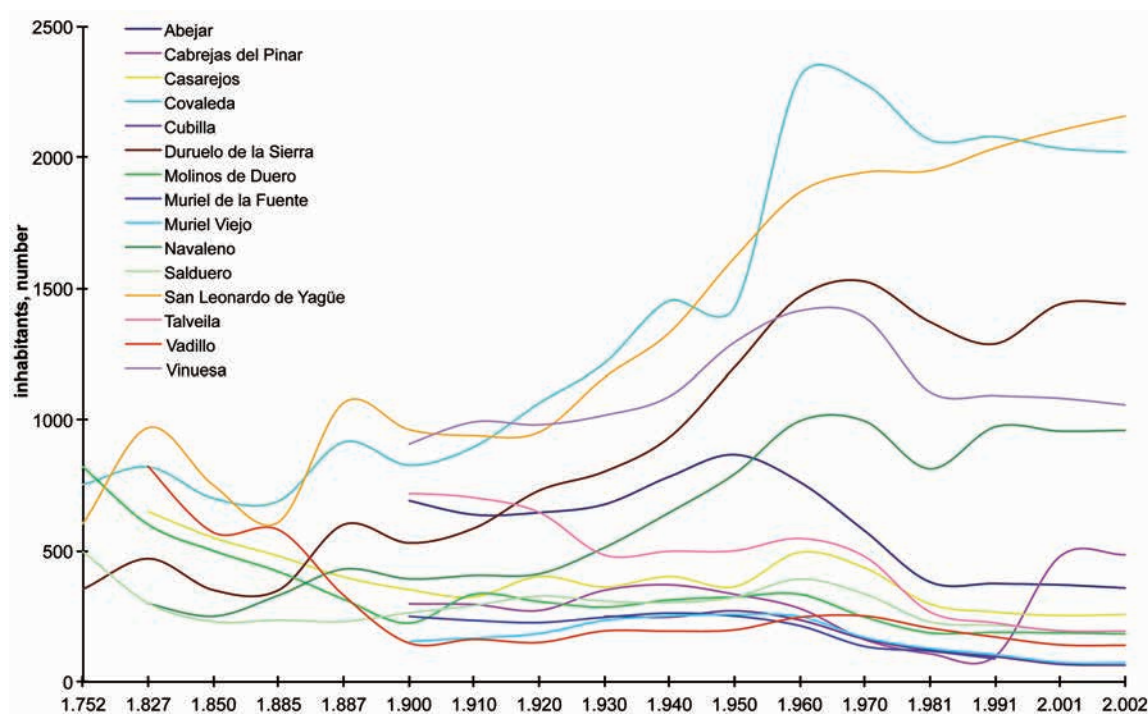


Figure II 25.6 Evolution of population by town (limited by data availability), 1752–2002.

1. Broad-based partnership: 60 institutions, ranging from the 35 municipalities and the regional and provincial governments (public sector) to industry associations, unions, and civil associations take part as partners in the Model Forest Association.
2. Large landscape: the Urbión area encompasses 175 000 ha in which a multiplicity of ecosystems, interests, and management systems are in place.
3. Commitment to sustainability: stakeholders are formally committed to the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources and the forested landscape.
4. Good governance: the association reports to its members on a regular basis, makes decisions in a General Assembly where each member has a vote, and systematically promotes collaborative work.
5. Broad program of activities: the association runs participative diagnosis through commissions, then establishes working programmes that respond to these, and opens its implementation to all interested members (see Box II 25.2 for an example).
6. Commitment to knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, and networking: one of the main exclusive duties of the association has been to provide opportunities for its members to engage in international cooperation activities, even beyond the IMFN mandate: it is the only Model Forest in the world to formally belong to two regional networks (the Ibero-American and the Mediterranean Model Forest Networks).

This case study shows the sustainable-development benefits that can be achieved from a high level of local-stakeholder participation in forest management (FAO 2010a, Porter-Bolland et. al. 2011). Since equity and gender issues are considered in the functioning of Urbión Model Forest, Sonia Martel, Urbión Model Forest Association manager, was awarded the 2010 Yves Rocher Foundation's Tierra de Mujeres (Women's Land) Prize. Similarly, corruption is systemically made difficult by the inhabitants' participation in the system. Legality is still an issue in non-timber forest products (mushrooms, hunting trophies, and others), for which a traceability system is being developed, once again benefitting from the high participation of people, which also puts a human face to locally originated produce. As for timber, the system in place is one of the most monitored, reported, and verified in the world. Almost half of the population receives monetary benefits (Segur and Rebollo 2007), which although of diminishing relative value, still account for more than the commonly accepted poverty-line income.

Box II 25.2 The information and support system for timber sales

Project started in 2011

Situation

- ◆ Local timber industry has been affected by the Spanish construction crisis since 2009.
- ◆ Most of the management committees maintain the timber as standing trees.
- ◆ The population prefers traditional extraction methods (skidder) for small industrial production.
- ◆ Hurricane Klaus flattened the French Landes forest and reduced prices.

Consortium

Local industry representatives, representatives of the local resident timber committees, representatives of the Burgos-Soria Pine quality seal, local authorities, and Forest Service.

Agreement

Measures for strengthening the timber market in benefit of industry, residents, and local authorities:

- ◆ Improvement in information: a web-based system that publishes the batches of timber as they are put up for auction. Information on geo-referenced location, working maps, information on tracks, etc.
- ◆ Volume use: unification of the date and place of sale of the pulpwood to favour access by timber companies, maintaining the independence of the competent bodies for the sale of timber and excluding sawn timber.
- ◆ Registration of bidders: simplification of the administrative procedures for access to auctions by timber companies and management entities; unified documentation.

After the adhesion document has been agreed, it is reviewed and valued by the local authorities and residents committees. Seven local resident timber committees have now approved their inclusion in the system.

25.5 Conclusions

Forest is life for the area's inhabitants (please see <http://vimeo.com/29084697> for inhabitants' testimonies; the video starts with the phrase – in Spanish – “forest, here, is life,” said by a local leader). Fifty percent of employment is directly related to forest management (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2003). Cultural links and the inhabitants' opinions are taken into account at every step of the forest management process. The Urbión Model Forest Association does not substitute or challenge any current form of government but adds a space where an important part of the system, which is the cultural bond between people and forest, is expressed and vindicated. Remarkably, that empowerment expresses itself in the form of reinforced cooperation with others: because of its incorporation in the IMFN, nearly 2000 practitioners from the five continents have exchanged, learned, and taught in the Urbión Model Forest Association.

Economic globalisation, the European financial crisis and other factors have dealt a deep blow to traditional timber-based small and medium enterprises in the area. Nonetheless, this crisis of the traditional businesses (furniture at a moment, resin at another, and so on) has led to new greener businesses such

as those involving mycology, rural tourism, a resurgence of resin activity, and others. The Urbión Model Forest Association makes efforts to render technical assistance fully available to all stakeholders, also by supporting mutual, self-originated capacity-building through courses, exchanges, and other activities. The delicate balancing, cross-checking, and incentives system involving municipalities, communities, and the forest service that has been presented seems to lie at the core of what can be understood as a successful sustainable forest management. The incorporation of Urbión Model Forest Association in 2007 has opened an important means of participation for this territory as a whole in the national public opinion and policy-making, a role that it has performed with remarkable effectiveness.

The association was created with the aim of enhancing landscape-level consensus building; it is not yet the moment to evaluate whether it has fulfilled this aim. The Urbión forests and the system with which its inhabitants and governments have managed it for the last millennium were created to provide the most good to the most people, which the association is committed to continue.

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