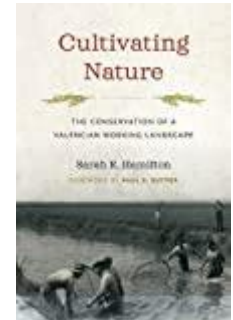


Sarah R. Hamilton. *Cultivating Nature: The Conservation of a Valencian Working Landscape.* Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books Series. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018. Illustrations, maps, charts. xx + 285 pp. \$40.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-295-74331-8.



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From the first minute of reading Sarah R. Hamilton's *Cultivating Nature*, I realized that the book joins the ranks of reference texts on environmental history in Spain. Within this book, Hamilton simultaneously consolidates existing lines of work in the field of environmental history in Spain and opens new research perspectives. In consolidating existing work, the text is solid in looking at the historical transformation of agrarian and forestry systems in the context of the Iberian Peninsula from the mid-eighteenth century to the present. In the last two decades, environmental history in Spain has paid significant attention to changes in modern state legislation that has implemented growing capitalization-commodification of land and water factors. Hamilton frames the construction of the Spanish modern state in a broader context, narrating it from the disappearance of the last vestiges of the imperial legacy, which permeates many of the reflections made throughout the nineteenth century from literature and history. Pessimism, decadence, backwardness, and the inability to modernize are some of the

topics raised in this narrative of the intelligentsia of the nineteenth century in Spain. In each of the chapters and periods analyzed in the book, this process of seeking to overcome the sociopolitical limitations of development is described clearly and precisely, both for readers seasoned in Spain's contemporary history and for those newer to the field.

In summary, the text raises three themes related to sectors already developed in the context of environmental history in Spain. The first is the socio-territorial tension between the power blocks that make up the modern state: church, monarchy, nobility, bourgeoisie, and peasantry. In the last two centuries, these social sectors have advocated different systems of relationships between society and nature. Using current concepts, Hamilton demonstrates well differentiated socio-environmental management models; while the sectors linked to the monarchy and the Catholic Church argue for a privatization of the productive factors (land-water) with which to prop up an unequal distribution of accessible wealth, urban and peas-

ant sectors continue to defend—with little success—the continuity of communal forms of ownership and management of land and water.

The second theme is the role of science and technology in the context of the model of academic knowledge in Spain. As Hamilton solidly argues in several chapters, especially with the arrival of Francisco Franco to power after the civil war of 1936-39, agronomic, hydraulic, and forestry sciences were put at the service of the state model of an extractivist nature for ecosystems. These sciences, at the service of Francoist power, took a further step forward in the conversion of Spanish agro-ecosystems by expanding the mode of commercial use with commitment to a mass tourism model, as is well evidenced in the case of Albufera and Devesa de Valencia.

The third theme, of enormous value, lies in the book's last chapters, which describe the initial steps of the consolidation of the environmental and ecological movements in the post-Franco and pre-democratic Spanish context. The 1970s and 1980s, characterized by socio-environmental struggles, are narrated with the voices of some of the leaders of those glimpses of environmental ethics. These voices balanced between defending conservation of unique places in the framework of protection models with legislative tools (national parks, natural parks, etc.) of a neoliberal matrix and defending the most radical sectors of a proposal for an alternative development model to the capitalist model.

These topics, narrated with a precise, agile style that envelops us in the Valencian territory, reveal a landscape, a territory, a place in which forms of traditional agriculture have coexisted, located in what we can consider as memory bioculturalism of the towns, together with an emerging intensive agriculture that has been "devouring" the territories of traditional crops. Simultaneously, a disruptive force emerges that comes from the developmental and colonial model of the nation-state of Spain with the promotion of tour-

ism since the middle of the twentieth century. In her book, Hamilton deftly describes the territorial tensions that are generated by these productive-extractive resource models.

In this context, we are presented with an interesting debate with a series of emerging questions: Can we consider that the modernization that the Spanish state imposes as a territory management practice is a colonial (internal) model similar to that developed in other nonexistent territories? Europeans? Can the environmental movements at the end of Francoism be conceptualized as a proposal for a (de-/anti-)colonial struggle against the nation-state? Is it feasible—as has been investigated for a long time—that the management of the territory, especially throughout the twentieth century, intensified a socio-metabolic rupture in the relationship between society and nature, which made it more vulnerable, and is Spanish society dependent on energy abroad? Are these patterns of territorial dependency rectified or accentuated by EU policies in recent years hand in hand with the Common Agricultural Policy? Answers to these questions are advanced within the book's pages, but new spaces for reflection are also opened.

In the chapter "Creating the National Territory (1874-1936)," some of the concepts analyzed above are made manifest. The technological optimism of the nation-state moved toward an agricultural modernization—imbricated in the interests of some of the sectors of power—that had the resistance of peasant sectors, in defense of a traditional agriculture. As the author indicates in the introductory chapter, the political system of the late nineteenth century (Monarchical Restoration) is defined by a reinforcement of pseudo-democratic and participatory systems limited to a set of citizen rights. The poor comprehension of cultural, political, and economic elites did not prevent scientific models from being oriented toward optimizing the potential of biological flows (with the creation of the Valencia Agricultural Society and

its Agronomic Station created in 1877, or the Swedish National Rice Station) betting on implementing an export agriculture model.

An important topic in several of the chapters is the conservation of natural spaces as a tool for territorial preservation. With the creation of national parks (with the well-contextualized figure of Pedro Pidal), using the case of the Covadonga Park, Hamilton shows a liberal conservation model, which preserves nature but excludes peasant societies, within the framework of a double logic. On the one hand, traditional uses threaten the continuity of natural landscapes and propose agricultural-territorial conservation as incompatible (even criminalizing traditional uses through forest legislation and creating a rural surveillance body, such as the Civil Guard), and on the other hand, the preservation of natural spaces for hunting or recreational uses for political and economic elites generate unequal access to those resources (new commodities).

In the chapter "Transformation and Conservation (1936-1970)," Hamilton explains how agricultural modernization and tourism was an agenda of the Francoist state after overcoming the autarky stage. The Franco state consecrated and sanctioned this agenda with a scientific model—after purging, assassinating, and exiling the most relevant scientists in the country after the civil war.

With the design of the hydraulic plan, since 1939, under the supposed protection of the peasant world, a basic element of social support for the Franco Regime opted for the breakdown of forms of self-sufficiency, replaced by a model that prioritized the production of large estates and hydro-electric energy with the construction of fifty-nine swamps, doubling the national irrigated land and expanding the agricultural frontier, even at the cost of marginal lands. In this context, the case of Albufera is presented as an exemplary model of this territorial transformation; it was not a unique case in the Spanish context. The whole chapter is dedicated to the comparison and the connections

with the other great wetland in southern Spain, Coto de Doñana, Huelva, to which rice products from Albufera migrated due to existing land access restrictions. These are episodes of what I have previously called a form of internal colonialism of the Francoist nation-state. This is a significant issue covered in this book.

Also of enormous relevance is an environmental discourse, crossed by identity profiles with the territory and with a dimension of a political program toward an eco-nationalism (as seen in Joseph Vicent Marques's *Pais Perplex: Notes sobre la ideología Valencia* [1974]), emerging in the first stages of the democratic transition in Spain since 1975. Diverse territories, languages, policies, and identities have coexisted under a national form that has subalternized or persecuted them, emerging in the transition to a new paradigm to reclaiming new nature rights. This is another story but one that covers topics that Hamilton cites.

Chapter 4, "Europeanization and the Albufera Park (1975-1990)," presents the debate on the impact of EU policies on the Spanish landscape and territory, widening the scientific debates ranging from the productive uses of nature to the conservation of natural resources. Debates are intertwined—very topical in these years due to the negative impact on soil and water pollution caused by intensive agriculture models on Mediterranean wetlands and the commitment to water management policies that prioritized commercial-extractive use over the maintenance of community use. Scarcity of water for human use, limitation of traditional agricultural systems, and conflicts over water have defined the debate on the Albufera in recent years.

The last chapter, "Crisis and Compromise (1991-2012)," and the conclusion, "Managing the Albufera in a Changing World," open a reflective dialogue on the future of Albufera. As a place of biocultural memory, the Albufera demonstrates the challenges of an agricultural model with strong socio-environmental limitations (pollution,

abandonment of traditional agricultural lands, urban pressures, expansion of infrastructures, etc.) in the face of new tools implementing material and symbolic production (protected designation of origin). The new frameworks of the Common Agrarian Policy (European Union) establish compensation mechanisms and environmental payments for the preservation of wetlands. As a proposal, it can take up constituent elements of a liberal policy of conservation of the territory, museification of the territory leading to a landscape increasingly fossilized and absent of human uses for sustainability. But the Albufera is a place of life, bird nesting, traditional architecture, orchards in production; it produces life. It is the challenge.

In conclusion, Hamilton's text is an excellent reference for environmental history in Spain, consolidating existing research and opening new lines of reflection toward the future. Future lines of research paths will build bridges of investigation and ecologies of knowledge.

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