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The Long Shadow of the Pines: Vegetation in the Birth, Destruction and Reconstruction of Madrid's University City (1927–1956)

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ABSTRACT

At the intersection of environmental histories of war, fascism and urban parks, this article analyses the transformation of the political meaning attached to the green spaces of Madrid's University City. Conceived in the late 1920s as a 'university park' inspired by North American academic campuses, the 'Ciudad Universitaria' was heavily damaged during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). The subsequent campus' reconstruction and reforestation project aimed to transform the battlefield into a war memorial made of trees. By the 1950s, this discourse had shifted to a more technocratic vision of trees and their role in monumentalising physical access to the Spanish capital. The project of the 'university park' was abandoned when the campus' vacant areas began to be developed during the 1960s. By using trees and other vegetation to articulate a narration of the campus' transformation over forty years, we emphasise the potential of environmental history to contribute to political histories of war and fascism.

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KEYWORDS

Urban parks, environmental history of war, fascism, reforestation, Spain, Francoism, university campuses

1. INTRODUCTION: WAR, FASCISM AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF URBAN PARKS

On 12 October 1943, Spanish dictator Francisco Franco and top officials of his regime gathered at Madrid's University City (Ciudad Universitaria) to celebrate its reopening to academic life. Four years had passed since the end of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), during which time the campus, then still under construction, unexpectedly became one of the most strategic and symbolic battlefields of the conflict. After managing to seize part of the university grounds in November 1936, the insurgent troops of General Franco had been stopped by Republican militias and the International Brigades. A stone's throw from the heart of the capital, Madrid's University City remained divided throughout the war, crisscrossed by trenches and shaken by underground warfare. By the end of the conflict, when Franco emerged victorious, the modern campus lay in ruins. The fields between the faculties, once covered with trees and verdant vegetation, were devastated.

By October 1943, after four years of reconstruction, the first university buildings were ready to be reopened. 'Here the earth was soaked with the generous blood of our fallen soldiers', proclaimed the dictator at his opening speech, portraying the deaths of Francoist soldiers as a fertile sacrifice for the nation: 'They were buried among the ruins, and today the ruins have disappeared to give way to these colossal buildings, which are now like monuments to the glory of the dead'. There was no other university in Europe, claimed Franco, that could take pride in such a record.[1] But, as put by the Spanish Minister of Education, the project of reconstruction would be incomplete without an ample reforestation to restore the landscape that was 'mutilated and wounded by the lead of the enemies of Spain'.[2] In accordance with this aim, by the autumn of 1943, recently planted young and thin trees could be seen by the faculties and along the campus avenues. During the 1940s and 1950s, under the direction of the School of Forest Engineers (Escuela Especial de Ingenieros de Montes), first the University City Construction Board (Junta Constructora de la Ciudad Universitaria) and then the State Forest Heritage (Patrimonio

1. *ABC*, 13 October 1943, 7–8.
2. J. Ibáñez Martín, 'Un Año de Política Docente' [One year of educational policy], *Revista Nacional de Educación* (October 1941): 26.

Forestal del Estado, PFE) funded and coordinated the efforts to reforest the campus.[3]

The restoration of 'the most beautiful park of the capital' – as described by the secretary of the University City Construction Board[4] – began in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and was part and parcel of the remaking of Madrid during the formative years of the Francoist dictatorship. Accordingly, by examining the role of trees in Madrid's University City, this article contributes not only to literature on the history of urban parks, but to the growing works on war and the environment as well as to studies on the environmental history of fascism. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, research has increasingly addressed the environmental transformations caused by armed conflicts and militarisation.[5] With some exceptions, this literature has paid little attention to urban spaces and focused more on the impacts of warfare than on the environmental aspects of reconstruction efforts taking place after the cessation of hostilities. In addition, the militarised landscapes of the Spanish Civil War remain under explored.[6]

Literature on the environmental history of fascist and authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, has examined reforestation discourses and projects as examples of the political efforts aimed at the nationalisation of nature and

3. Many works have addressed the history of Madrid's University City, but the role that reforestation played in its construction and reconstruction has barely received attention. On the history of Madrid's University City, see P. Chías Navarro, *La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid: Génesis y Realización* [*Madrid's University City: Origin and Development*] (Madrid: Editorial de la Universidad Complutense, 1986); C. Rodríguez-López, *Paisajes de una Guerra: La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid* [*Landscapes of a War: Madrid's University City*] (Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2015); S. Michonneau, C. Rodríguez-López and F. Vela Cossío (eds), *Paisajes de Guerra: Huellas, Reconstrucción, Patrimonio (1939-Años 2000)* [*Landscapes of War: Traces, Reconstruction, Heritage (1939-2000s)*] (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2019); R.R. Tranche, *La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid y la Casa de Velázquez: escenas y huellas de una guerra* [*Madrid's University City and the Casa de Velázquez: Scenes and Traces of a War*] (Madrid: Ediciones Complutense, 2022); C. Rodríguez-López and J. Muñoz Hernández (eds), *Hacia el centenario: la Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid a sus 90 años* [*Towards the Centenary: Madrid's University City at 90 years*] (Madrid: Ediciones Complutense, 2018); A. González Ruibal, C. Marín Suárez, M. Sánchez-Elipe and S. Lorente Muñoz, 'Guerra en la Universidad: arqueología del conflicto en la Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid' [War at the university: Archaeology of conflict in the University City of Madrid], *Ebre 38: revista internacional de la Guerra Civil* **4** (2010): 123–43.

4. C. Sánchez Peguero, 'La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid' [Madrid's University City], *Revista Nacional de Educación* (February 1941): 73; The same expression is used in the editorial 'En Favor de la Ciudad Universitaria' [In favour of the University City], *Revista Nacional de Educación* (January 1943): 82.

5. See L.M. Brady, 'War from the ground up. Integrating military and environmental histories', in M.D. Hersey and T. Steinberg (eds), *A Field on Fire. The Future of Environmental History* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2019), pp. 250–62.

6. C. Pearson, 'Researching militarized landscapes: A literature review on war and the militarization of the environment', *Landscape Research* **37** (1) (2012): 115–33. See specifically 125–126.

the implementation of autarkic policies. Several works have discussed the role of reforestation in the political and symbolic construction of landscapes, from the projects launched in Fascist Italy[7] to the attempts of the Vichy Regime in France to appropriate the forest in symbolic terms.[8] In Spain, the Francoist dictatorship also mobilised nature for political and nationalistic goals, with engineers playing a key role in putting the Spanish environment at the service of the construction of the dictatorship.[9] Since the 1990s, research on reforestation during the Francoist regime has paid attention to its social and economic dimensions, in connection with autarkic policies.[10] More recently, the aesthetic aspects of reforestation efforts and how they intertwined with fascist political discourses about the regeneration of the Spanish nation have also been highlighted.[11] Gonzalo Madrazo and Ester Sáez have examined the role of reforestation as part of the construction of the landscape of the Valley of the Fallen (Valle de los Caídos), a massive monument 50 kilometres west of Madrid commemorating those killed in the Spanish Civil War, which eventually became Franco's own mausoleum.[12] Urban parks, however, have received almost no attention in these studies, perhaps due to the alleged antiurban character of fascist ideology.[13]

Finally, recent contributions to the environmental history of urban parks have pointed to the importance of considering their role in connection to major socio-political events and underlined how the changing approaches to their

7. M. Armiero and W.G. von Hardenberg, 'Green rhetoric in Blackshirts: Italian Fascism and the environment', *Environment and History* **19** (3) (2013): 283–311.

8. C. Pearson, '"The age of wood": Fuel and fighting in French forests, 1940–1944', *Environmental History* **11** (4) (2006): 775–803.

9. M.Á. del Arco Blanco and S. Gorostiza, '"Facing the sun": Nature and nation in Franco's "New Spain" (1936–51)', *Journal of Historical Geography* **71** (2021): 73–82. On the role of engineers, see L. Camprubí, *Engineers and the Making of the Francoist Regime* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014).

10. E. Rico Boquete, 'El rechazo de una opción conservacionista e integradora. Galicia en el Plan General de Repoblación Forestal de España de 1939' [The rejection of a conservationist and integrative option: Galicia in the 1939 General Plan of Reforestation in Spain], *Historia Agraria* **9** (1995): 155–73; J. Gómez Mendoza and R. Mata Olmo, 'Actuaciones forestales públicas desde 1940: objetivos, criterios y resultados' [Public forestry actions since 1940: Objectives, criteria, and results], *Agricultura y Sociedad* **65** (1992): 15–64.

11. C. Píriz, 'Entre la palingénesis y la estética fascista: la repoblación forestal en el oeste español (c. 1938–1943)' [Between palingenesis and fascist aesthetics: Reforestation in Western Spain (c. 1938–1943)], *Ayer* **107** (2017): 183–204.

12. G. Madrazo García de Lomana and E. Sáez Pombo, 'Escenarios de la memoria y el poder: La construcción del paisaje de El Valle de los Caídos' [Scenarios of memory and power: The construction of the landscape of the Valley of the Fallen], *Scripta Nova Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales* **22** (600) (2018).

13. G. Alares López, 'Ruralismo, fascismo y regeneración. Italia y España en perspectiva comparada' [Ruralism, fascism, and regeneration: Italy and Spain in comparative perspective], *Ayer* **83** (2011):127–147.

design throughout time reflect different social and political purposes.[14] Along these lines, Alan Tate has shown how the prospect of armed conflict with Germany in the early twentieth century fuelled British efforts to create urban parks as places for sports and recreation, intended to prepare young men for war. In contrast, during the post-war reconstruction in Germany, parks became symbols of urban revival and recovery from the traumas of war.[15] Multiple cases illustrate how gardens and parks can be associated with remembrance, peace and contemplation, but also with protest and political mobilisation.[16] During the nineteenth century, different styles of cemeteries manifested diverging views about the role of gardens and woods in spaces of remembrance.[17] In the early twentieth century, and particularly in the aftermath of the First World War, memorials in multiple countries mobilised nature to worship fallen soldiers.[18] In the case of Fascist Italy, the creation of Parks of Remembrance (Parchi della Remembranza) in every town was ordered in November 1922, only a few weeks after the March on Rome. Throughout the following years, trees honouring the fallen in the First World War – as well as fascist martyrs – spread in towns and cities across the country and became spaces of worship, as well as tools used to control collective memory.[19]

At the intersection of environmental histories of war, fascism and urban parks, this article explores the vegetal landscape of Madrid's University City as 'an evolving site of translation, negotiation and transformation'.[20] Building on the records kept at the General Archive of the Complutense University of Madrid (Archivo General de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, AGUCM) and the Documentary Collection of the Forest (Fondo Documental del Monte), among other sources, we analyse how the political meaning applied to campus' vegetation evolved from its origins before the war to the postwar years. First, we cover the origins of Madrid's University City as a 'university park'

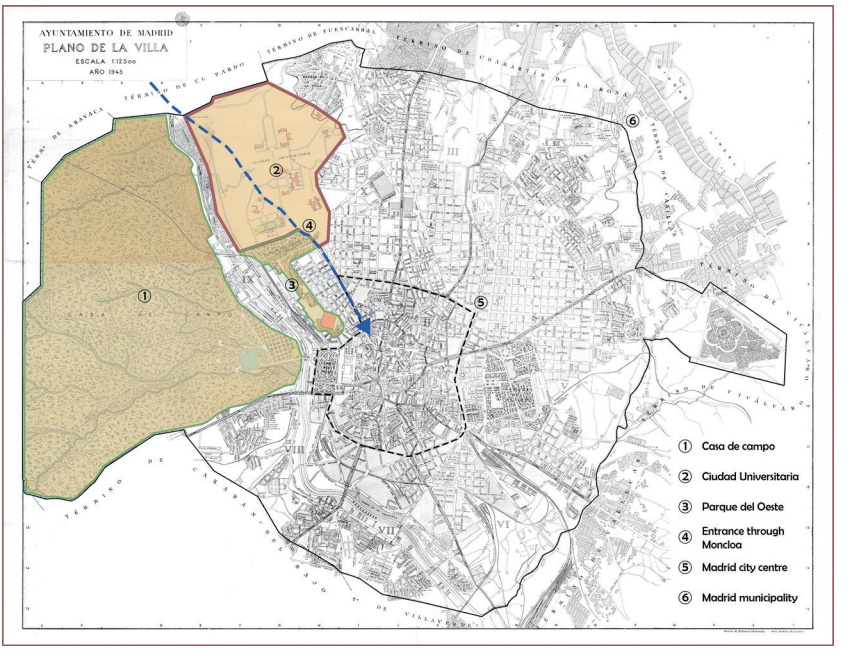
14. A. Tate, 'Urban parks in the twentieth century', *Environment and History* **24** (1) (2018): 81–101. See specifically 81.
15. Ibid., 81 and 95.
16. P. Gough, 'From heroes' groves to parks of peace: Landscapes of remembrance, protest and peace', *Landscape Research* **25** (2) (2000): 213–28; D. Mitchell, E. Jönsson and J. Pries, 'Making the People's landscape: Landscape ideals, collective labour and the People's parks (Folkets Parker) movement in Sweden, 1891–present', *Journal of Historical Geography* **72** (2021): 23–39; B. Özkaynak, C. İskender Aydın, P. Ertör-Akyazı and I. Ertör, 'The Gezi Park resistance from an environmental justice and social metabolism perspective', *Capitalism Nature Socialism* **26** (1) (2015): 99–114.
17. G.L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 41–44.
18. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, pp. 88–90.
19. P. Bernasconi, 'A Fairy Tale Dictator: Children's Letters to the Duce', *Modern Italy* **18** (2) (2013): 129–40; M. Armiero, *A Rugged Nation: Mountains and the Making of Modern Italy* (Knapwell: The White Horse Press, 2011), pp. 88–93.
20. K.R. Jones, '"The lungs of the city": Green space, public health and bodily metaphor in the landscape of urban park history', *Environment and History* **24** (1) (2018): 39–58. See specifically 39.

inspired by North American academic campuses during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–1931) and the unexpected transformation of the area into a battlefield during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). Second, we examine the reforestation project led by the University City Construction Board during the 1940s and the accompanying discourse celebrating trees as symbols of the spiritual and material rebirth of the Spanish nation and a homage to the fallen Francoist soldiers. The involvement of the State Forest Heritage in the campus' reforestation after 1951 signalled an increased attention to the role of trees in monumentalising the northwestern entry to the Spanish capital. Our narrative finishes in 1956, when authority over the reforested land was returned to the University City Construction Board. In the years that followed, many of the vacant areas of the campus began to be built upon, abandoning the idea of a coordinated plan and the notion of a 'university park'.

2. THE BIRTH AND DESTRUCTION OF A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

In May 1927, coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the rule of the Spanish King Alfonso XIII, the government of General Primo de Rivera approved the creation of the University City Construction Board (Junta de la Ciudad Universitaria). Central to the policies of economic modernisation enforced during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–1931), the reform of higher education and the necessity of providing 'a distinctly Spanish scientific and cultural education' to students intending to study abroad had been discussed for years.[21] In this context, the Spanish King supported the creation of a prominent university in the country's capital, which he envisioned as his legacy and was publicly presented as his initiative.[22] Appropriately, the site chosen was an estate formerly owned by the Spanish Crown which, as in other European capitals, had been ceded to the State and opened to the public during the late nineteenth century.[23] The Moncloa estate – and particularly its gardens – had since become a popular recreation area. However, it also supported agricultural activities and livestock farming.[24] Situated on the outskirts of Madrid, the site of the future campus had the Guadarrama mountain range as its backdrop – a key symbol of Castile and the Spanish nation.[25]

21. Chías Navarro, *La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid* [*Madrid's University City*], p. 29.
22. I. Pérez-Villanueva Tovar, 'La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid. Cultura y política (1927–1931)' [Madrid's University City: Culture and politics (1927–1931)], *Historia y Política* **35** (2016): 47–70.
23. Jones, 'The lungs of the city', 44 and 51.
24. Chías Navarro, *La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid* [*Madrid's University City*], pp. 31, 60–72.
25. N. Ortega Cantero, 'Paisaje e identidad: la visión de Castilla como paisaje nacional (1876–1936)' [Landscape and identity: The vision of Castile as a national landscape (1876–1936)], *Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles* **51** (2009): 25–49.



Map 1. Map of Madrid, including the location of the University City district and the Casa de Campo. Source: Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya, RM. 162081 and Secundino Zuazo and Hermann Jansen, *Anteproyecto del trazado viario y urbanización de Madrid,* 1929–1930 (Madrid, Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid, 1986).

The ambitious project of constructing a large university campus from scratch, bringing together the facilities that had previously been scattered throughout the capital, quickly garnered international attention. At the invitation of the Rockefeller Foundation, several members of the University City Construction Board embarked on a two-month tour of Europe and North America in September 1927, visiting numerous universities. Among the participants was Modesto López Otero, director of the school of architecture and soon-to-be head architect of the future Madrid campus. In North America, López Otero saw firsthand the rationalism of the Chicago School of Architecture, in particular the work of Louis Sullivan, as well as recently constructed modern university campuses (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), others undergoing renovation (St. George Campus, University of Toronto) and some about to be built (River Campus, University of Rochester). These visits influenced López Otero's views for the future of Madrid's University City and, back in the Spanish capital, he was one of the most enthusiastic supporters

of adopting the American campus style: functional, monumental and largely landscaped.[26]

The University City project, led by López Otero, conceived the campus as a 'university park', aiming at 'attenuating the density of the capital and constituting a filter between the capital and the countryside'. In his view, the green space of the campus should be designed as a combination of a Spanish garden and a natural forest, inspired by the existing remnants of vegetation in the area.[27] Overall, the nearly 360 hectares of University City would be 'an immense park in which no more than ten percent of the area should be built upon'.[28] Such vision, however, involved the challenge of combining the architectural and pedagogical avant-garde of the time with the production of green spaces. The materialisation of the University City largely ignored local topography and required extensive earth-moving operations, as well as the construction of viaducts and reinforced foundations. Large platforms and retaining walls were built to support the individual faculty buildings, and some of the gardens that existed before 1928 were lost. At the same time, the construction of the campus, largely inspired by American examples, involved the planting of thousands of new trees.[29]

While the buildings adopted a rationalist and art deco style in architectural terms, the relevance and the extension of the project represented, in urban terms, a 'city that could function autonomously from the rhythms of the capital'. The campus was divided into areas for each academic faculty, a medical area, a fine arts area and a student residence area. The main hall, designated for official ceremonies such as the inauguration of the academic year, was planned to be erected in the central part of the campus.[30] The university library, the School of Nursing, the Clinical Hospital and a power plant would complete a campus envisioned, in line with contemporary debates, as a separate city designed for higher education, similar to American campuses. However, the university was connected to the city centre via a 40-metre-wide avenue that was more than three kilometres long. The avenue's projected function was beautifying the northwest access to the capital in connection with the West

26. T. Sánchez de Lerín García-Ovies, *Modesto López Otero. Vida y obra* [*Modesto López Otero: Life and work*] (PhD Thesis, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2000), pp. 28, 87, 156, 190 and 221; B. Gumprecht, 'The campus as a public space in the American college town', *Journal of Historical Geography* **33** (1) (2007): 72–103.

27. Chías Navarro, *La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid* [*Madrid's University City*], pp. 63–65, 79.

28. M. López Otero, 'La Arquitectura de la Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid' [The architecture of Madrid's University City], *Revista Nacional de Educación* (April 1941): 62.

29. Chías Navarro, *La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid* [*Madrid's University City*], p. 105.

30. P. Campos Calvo-Sotelo, *75 años de la Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid. Memoria viva de un campus trascendental* [*75 Years of the University City of Madrid: A Living Memory of a Landmark Campus*] (Madrid: Ediciones Complutense, 2004).

Park (Parque del Oeste) , which had been opened to the public in 1905 (see Map 1).[31]

The construction of Madrid's University City, initiated in 1929 and continuing throughout the 1930s, sparked debates similar to those occurring in other European capitals. These discussions revolved around urban expansion into outlying areas and the significance of urban green spaces and their use by the city's residents. Moreover, in the case of Madrid, the transition from the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–1931) to the Second Republic included opening large swathes of royal land to the public and transforming them into urban parks. As a result, municipal authorities assumed the management of these green areas.[32] This was the case of the Casa de Campo, a large estate of land belonging to the king that was located close to Madrid. Less than two weeks after the municipal elections that led to the proclamation of the Second Republic in April 1931, King Alfonso XIII had taken the path of exile, and the ministry of finance formally handed the Casa de Campo to the City of Madrid. The legal decree establishing the cession echoed international debates about the adequate extent of green surface per inhabitant that cities should have, stating that 'the City of Madrid does not currently have forests, parks and gardens in the proportion required by the density of its population'.[33]

However, the intense use of Casa de Campo by Madrid's citizens quickly drew criticisms from the press.[34] Similarly, the University City construction works were targeted by authors pointing to the deterioration of Madrid's former green areas – some with political motives. In 1934, for instance, Tomás Borrás published an article in the monarchical newspaper *ABC* titled 'While Madrid loses its forests'. Borrás, a famous conservative writer, reported on a fire caused by 'two marxists' at the University City and claimed that 25,000 pine trees had been burnt across the campus. This figure was undoubtedly inflated (an earlier press account referred only to 700 trees burnt), but it reinforced his portrayal of Madrid as 'the capital of Spanish dendrophobia'. In Borrás' narrative, the case of University City was equated to that of the Casa de Campo, 'topped, amputated, removed' by Madrid's masses, eager to mistreat the former possessions of the monarchy.[35]

But the true devastation of the green areas on the outskirts of Madrid was to come from a much more unimaginable cause. Led by the Spanish military, the coup d'état of 18 July 1936 against the Spanish Second Republic started a

31. Chías Navarro, *La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid* [*Madrid's University City*], pp. 45–47.

32. S. Miguel Salanova, 'Providing the modern city: Urban patterns of socialist municipal action in Madrid (1905-1936)', *Journal of Urban History* **50** (3) (2024): 601–28.

33. I. Pérez-Soba Díez del Corral, 'El parque de la Casa de Campo en la estructura urbana de Madrid. Evolución histórica' [The Casa de Campo Park in the urban structure of Madrid: Historical evolution], *Estudios Geográficos* **58** (228) (1997): 425–450, p.431.

34. Pérez-Soba Díez del Corral, 'El parque de la Casa de Campo' [The Casa de Campo Park], 431.

35. T. Borrás, *ABC*, 8 Sept. 1934, 8–9; *La Vanguardia*, 4 August 1934, 17.

civil war that lasted nearly three years. The inauguration of most of the faculty buildings and other facilities of the University City, scheduled for October 1936, was cancelled.[36] Instead, the campus became the unlikely site of one of the most iconic battles of the war. After the failure of the military uprising in Madrid, capturing the capital became the rebels' main objective. During the following months, their military columns advanced swiftly towards Madrid, assaulting the city from the west in November 1936. On 15 November, the rebels managed to cross the Manzanares River and reach the Republican lines near the university, where fierce combat ensued amongst the buildings of the newly constructed campus.[37]

The Republican defenders, supported by volunteers from the International Brigades, managed to stop the rebels, and the front stabilised days later in the shape of a sharp wedge, which reached up to the edge of the Clinical Hospital, right at the limit of Madrid's streets. Both sides fortified their positions, and they remained largely unchanged during the following years, as the capital remained besieged for the rest of the war. Along the campus frontline, hostilities took on some characteristics of the First World War, with lines of trenches stacked close together. The operational stalemate and the entrenchment of some of the units in campus buildings, along with the existence of underground passages and personnel capable of exploiting them, favoured underground warfare, primarily by the Republican forces defending the city. Until the end of the war, the ignition of more than two-hundred underground mines, by both sides, buried numerous combatants and severely damaged the foundations of the recently constructed campus buildings.[38]

As Joseph P. Hupy has pointed out, the repertoire of warfare characteristic of the First World War had a devastating impact on the environment along the front lines.[39] In the case of University City, the combat triggered a widespread upheaval of the landscape both above and below ground. Up to 50% of the structures were destroyed by artillery fire, mines and countermines. The vegetation cover of the campus was decimated, littered with craters, as it endured the relentless transformation of terrain that accompanies trench war-

36. Chías Navarro, *La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid* [*Madrid's University City*], pp. 149–151.

37. J. Aróstegui and J. A. Martínez, *La Junta de Defensa de Madrid: Noviembre 1936–Abril 1937* [*The Defense Council of Madrid: November 1936–April 1937*] (Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid, 1984).

38. Servicio Histórico Militar, Estado Mayor Central del Ejército, *Guerra de Minas en España (1936–1939): Contribución al Estudio de esta Modalidad de Nuestra Guerra de Liberación* [*Mine Warfare in Spain (1936–1939): Contribution to the Study of this Aspect of Our War of Liberation*] (Madrid: Imprenta del Servicio Geográfico del Ejército, 1948); S. Gorostiza and D. Sauri, 'Salvaguardar un recurso precioso: la gestión del agua en Madrid durante la guerra civil española (1936–1939)' [Protecting a precious resource: Water management in Madrid during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)], *Scripta Nova: revista electrónica de geografía y ciencias sociales* **17** (457) (2013).

39. J.P. Hupy, 'The environmental footprint of war', *Environment and History* **14** (3) (2008): 405–21. See especially 412–414.

Figure 1. View of Madrid from the University City battlefield, 19 May 1938. Source: Frente de Madrid, Ciudad Universitaria, V (material gráfico). GC-CAJA/61/17, Biblioteca Nacional de España.

fare. Testimonies and images left by the conflict are eloquent in this regard (see Figure 1).[40] By the end of March 1939, as Francoist troops advanced on various fronts in Madrid to occupy the capital, the once magnificent University City had been turned into a collection of ruins. Two and a half years of fierce fighting had disfigured the landscape of what had been one of the most modern university complexes in Europe just a few years earlier, rendering it practically unrecognisable. Of the 40,000 trees planted before July 1936, few remained standing.[41]

Immediately after the end of the war, the ruins of University City aroused mixed reactions. The evocative power of the material and human ruin of this symbolic space did not pass unnoticed: its conservation could be used to capture and control the memory of the conflict. On 3 April 1939, the General Commander of Engineers of Franco's Headquarters directly proposed to Franco that the University City be declared a national monument 'as it stands today and to be preserved indefinitely'. This proposal aimed to maintain and reinforce the ruins of the battlefield as a monument for the future, with a view to preventing, 'due to lack of material traces', foreign historians from reducing

40. F. Calvo González-Regueral, *La Guerra Civil en la Ciudad Universitaria* [*The Civil War in the University City*] (Madrid: La Librería, 2012), pp. 129–137.

41. López Otero, 'Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid' [Madrid's University City], 62.

'our greatest epics' to mere legends. There was also consideration of including the campus in the tours offered by the National Tourism Service to the main war sites. However, Franco rejected the preservation of the ruins, 'because he does not believe that vestiges of this war should be preserved once the necessary purging has been done'.[42] Instead, the reconstruction and resignification of University City's buildings and green spaces was soon underway.

3. A WAR MEMORIAL MADE OF TREES: REFORESTATION AND REBIRTH OF MADRID'S UNIVERSITY CITY

The trees and vegetation populating the open spaces around the University City's buildings were not the only ones destroyed during the war. Other green zones of Madrid, such as the Casa de Campo and the West Park, witnessed prolonged combats which left scars in its vegetation. After almost two and a half years of siege, even the urban greenery that was not close to the trenches had been damaged. As there was a scarcity of energy sources for cooking and heating, much of the vegetation in these parks had been cleared. Echoing the prewar accounts of Madrid's populace damaging the trees of Casa de Campo, the state-controlled press portrayed the devastation of city parks as the result of the 'reds' disregard for life, pointing out that the need for heating or cooking was a mere excuse for cutting the trees.[43] After the devastation caused by 'the monster of marxist revolution', Madrid had become 'the city without gardens'.[44] The slow restoration of urban greenery during the following years was praised by the press as part of the reconstruction efforts led by the new political regime.[45]

However, Madrid's University City was not just an ordinary park. Already before the war it was celebrated for its connection to the Spanish King and the creation of an ambitious academic centre in the country's capital. During the Republican years, it became the crown jewel of higher education. And in the war's immediate aftermath, it adopted a new symbolic dimension in

42. Cuartel General del Generalísimo – Estado Mayor. Sección 1ª, asuntos generales. Monumento Nacional Ciudad Universitaria [Generalissimo's Headquarters – General Staff. Section 1, General Affairs. National Monument University City], Archivo General Militar de Ávila, AGMAV [General Military Archive of Ávila], C.2326, 50, 31; S. Holguin, '"National Spain invites you": Battlefield tourism during the Spanish Civil War', *American Historical Review* **110** (5) (2005): 1399–1426.

43. 'Los rojos se ensañaron con el arbolado' [The reds viciously attacked the trees], *La Vanguardia Española*, 5 April 1939, 9; F. Castillo Cáceres, *Capital Aborrecida: La Aversión hacia Madrid en la Literatura y la Sociedad del 98 a la Posguerra* [Hated Capital: The Aversion Towards Madrid in Literature and Society from 1898 to the Postwar] (Madrid: Polifemo, 2010).

44. E. Carrere, 'La ciudad sin jardines' [The city without gardens], *ABC*, 10 June 1939, 6.

45. 'La reconstrucción de los jardines destruidos por los rojos' [The reconstruction of the gardens destroyed by the reds], *ABC*, 22 August 1942, 4.

the narrative of the 'New Spain', as a representation of the sacrifice of thousands of rebel army soldiers for the victory of the 'Crusade'. According to the Francoist Minister of Education, José Ibáñez Martín, the devastating work of war had become a symbol at Madrid's University City. On the campus, 'fire and lead roamed throughout the battlefield to purify the spirit locked behind [the university's] walls'. Ibáñez Martín narrated the arrival of the rebel army from the north early in the war using an environmental analogy of cleansing. The troops brought to Madrid 'the clean wind from the heights of Somosierra and the Velazquian[46] peaks of the Guadarrama' so that 'the pure air of our immortal and theological Castile could wipe out once and for all … the ideological and doctrinal shadows' of the Spanish university. After all, he followed, the war was waged to eradicate 'an era in which thought and intelligence, the cultivation of letters and the consecration of the arts … and the University, everything, in short, had lost its way.'[47]

Fascists celebrated the wasted fields and the ruins of University City as 'the highest symbol of our war of liberation',[48] to the extent that some advocated leaving them just as they were, as a monument to the war. Against this push, the new regime announced in February 1940 the creation of a new Construction Board – presided by Franco – to reconstruct University City. 'From the newly established University will emerge the brain of the future Homeland' stated the decree founding the new Board, which also made evident the powerful connection between the future and the immediate past of the campus: 'From the revered ruins must arise the transcendent endeavour of reconstruction.'[49] The purge of University City required the reformulation of both its form and content to accommodate the educational project of Franco's 'New Spain', as was also the case with other academic spaces in Madrid.[50] The new symbolic dimension of the campus materialised in numerous plaques and memorials distributed throughout the reconstructed faculty buildings.[51] But also in the efforts aimed at restoring its green cover.

46. In reference to Spanish painter Diego Velázquez (1599–1660), main artist in the court of King Philip IV.
47. *ABC*, 13 October 1943, 15.
48. 'Se reconstruye la Ciudad Universitaria' [The University City is being reconstructed], *Azul, Diario de FET de las JONS*, 10 May 1941, 8.
49. 'Ley de 10 de febrero de 1940 organizando la Junta Constructora de la Ciudad Universitaria' [Law of February 10, 1940, organising the Construction Board of the University City], *Boletín Oficial del Estado* **48** (1940): 1192–1194.
50. C. Rodríguez-López, 'Scenarios of Science and Symbols of the New State: Political Resignification of the University City of Madrid', in M. Janué i Miret and A. Presas i Puig (eds) *Science, Culture and National Identity in Francoist Spain, 1939–1959* (Cham: Springer International Publishing: 2021), pp. 83–108.
51. J.A. González Cárceles, 'El frente de la Ciudad Universitaria' [The frontline of the University City], in S. López-Ríos Moreno and J.A. González Cárceles (eds), *La Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de Madrid en la Segunda República: Arquitectura y Universidad durante los años 30* [*The Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of Madrid in the Second Republic: Architecture and*

According to the Francoist Minister of Education, the reconstruction and reforestation of University City went hand in hand. The general workplan of reconstruction included a plan to restore the landscape – 'mutilated and wounded by the bullets and projectiles of the enemies of Spain'– with an extensive reforestation.[52] The rebirth of vegetation was to heal the wounds of the land and produce a landscape of imperial and immortal connections. In a few years, among the trees surrounding University City, 'the silhouette of the oaks and holm oaks will stand out, which in Madrid's pale sunsets brought to the doors of the capital of Spain all the greatness and all the immortal severity of our Castile.'[53] This mission was entrusted to forest engineers, 'the captains of reconstruction,' who were leading the vast autarkic plans for the reforestation of Spain.[54] They eagerly embraced the task, envisioning the reforestation of the campus – where a new Forest School was under construction – as a patriotic duty.[55]

In November 1941, the director of the Forest School, Pío García Escudero, announced that the University City Board had approved a project to transform the land's 'piles of rubble' into wooded parks.[56] Beyond aesthetic justifications, García Escudero underlined that the project had to become 'a work worthy of the epic that a handful of Spanish heroes lived through during the long months they held their positions'. In contrast to the reforestation prior to the war, the narratives accompanying the new project emphasised spirituality in the aesthetic appeals to reforestation. Only 'Nature' (with capital 'N') could transcend 'the cold and inanimate limits of marble and bronze' to erect 'triumphal arches' for the fallen. But the 'natural forest' which was to be produced as a result of reforestation was not conceived as a homage to all the lives lost on university grounds. The restored greenery of the campus was portrayed as the best monument to the sacrifice of the Francoist soldiers, therefore nationalising nature as a homage to those who died 'for Spain' and thus became 'an example for the future generations of young students'.[57]

In sum, in the immediate post-war period, forest engineers envisioned the reforestation of the University City grounds as an act that would heal the

University during the 1930s] (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, 2008), p. 571.

52. Ibáñez Martín, 'Política Docente' [educational policy], 26.
53. Ibáñez Martín, 'Política Docente' [educational policy], 26–27.
54. A. González del Castillo, 'Los capitanes de la reconstrucción' [The captains of reconstruction], *Nueva Economía Nacional* 238 (21 May 1942): 1–2; Gómez Mendoza and Mata Olmo, 'Actuaciones forestales públicas desde 1940' [Public forestry actions since 1940], 15–64.
55. 'Repoblación forestal de la Ciudad Universitaria' [Reforestation of the University City], no date [1951]. Ciudad Universitaria, Patrimonio Forestal del Estado, Fondo Documental del Monte (MAPAMA), box 1742.
56. P. García-Escudero, 'Creación de un parque en los terrenos de la Ciudad Universitaria' [Creation of a park on the grounds of the University City], *Revista Nacional de Educación* (Nov. 1941): 100–101.
57. García-Escudero, 'Creación de un parque' [Creation of a park], 101.

wounds inflicted on the landscape by the 'enemies of Spain'. Simultaneously, they conceived the project as a monument to the fallen of the Francoist side.[58] The restoration of the university's trees thus represented a spiritual cure for the land's 'wounds' and 'deep scars', where the restorative effect of vegetation became associated with the spiritual repose of those fallen in battle and the rebirth of vegetation symbolised their memory. Far from a typical reforestation project, forest engineers saw their efforts as a chance to 'create something new among us in the lands of the University City.' Notably, the campus housed one of the spheres over which the dictatorship exercised its control most fervently: education. Accordingly, the new trees of the University City were conceived 'materially and morally' as an inseparable part of the 'transcendental educational mission' directed towards the Spanish youth.[59] Beyond the aestheticization of the landscape, reforestation was depicted as part of the resurgence of the 'New Spain'.[60]

Nonetheless, the main guideline of the reforestation project was based on the aesthetic values of vegetation, depending on its proximity and visibility from the avenues. In extensive and less visible areas, the main species used were stone pines (*Pinus pinea*), accompanied by radiata pines (*Pinus insignis*) and some specimens of cedar and cypress. In the more visible areas near the avenues, it was proposed to plant groups of angiosperms, chosen based on soil quality and irrigation possibilities (prioritising poplars, willows, elms and plane trees in the best-conditioned areas). These were to be accompanied by dense plantings of *Pinus pinea* and small groups of cedars and cypresses. Finally, in those plots where ornamentation and coverage were considered particularly important, plants with flowers were prioritised (oleanders, Spiraea, strawberry trees, almond trees), accompanied by some prominent specimens of conifers and deciduous trees. Additionally, the University City Construction Board prioritised linear plantings along the walks and avenues, as well as around sports fields and at their entrances (see Figure 2).[61]

58. On the cult to the Francoist fallen in the Spanish Civil War, see M.Á. del Arco Blanco, *Cruces de memoria y olvido: los monumentos a los caídos de la Guerra Civil Española (1936–2021)* [*Crosses of Memory and Oblivion: The Monuments to the Fallen of the Spanish Civil War (1936–2021)*] (Barcelona: Crítica, 2022); J. Rodrigo and J.L. Ledesma, 'Caídos por España, mártires de la libertad: víctimas y conmemoración de la Guerra Civil en la España posbélica (1939-2006)' [Fallen for Spain, martyrs of freedom: Victims and commemoration of the Civil War in Postwar Spain (1939-2006)], *Ayer* **63** (2006): 233–55.

59. 'Repoblación forestal de la Ciudad Universitaria' [Reforestation of the University City], FDM-MAPAMA, box 1742.

60. Píriz, 'Entre la palingénesis' [Between palingenesis], 183–204.

61. 'Recopilación documental, incluyendo planos, del Proyecto de Repoblaciones Forestales en la Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid de 1941 a 1945. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Vicegerencia de Obras. Edición Facsímil. Diciembre 2000' [Documentary compilation, including maps, of the reforestation project in the University City of Madrid from 1941 to 1945. Complutense University of Madrid. Vice-Chancellery of Works. Facsimile Edition.

Figure 2. One of the avenues crossing Madrid's University City, 1947. Replanted trees and hedges are visible on both sides of the road. Source: Secretaría de la Junta de la Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid, *La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid* (Madrid: Gráficas Uguina, 1947).

In practice, however, reforestation encountered numerous obstacles. First, after more than two years of combat, the University City environment was full of battlefield remains and its soil was in poor condition. It was necessary to close trenches, clear unexploded bombs, dig holes for the seedlings and, due to the lack of organic matter, organise irrigation and ensure the supply of manure as fertiliser for the new plants. Without sufficient fertiliser and adequate watering, the contrast between the winter and summer climates made it difficult for the seedlings to survive. Furthermore, the lack of tree nurseries in Madrid forced the importation of thousands of plants from outside the province, especially from nurseries in Cuenca, León, Valladolid and Ávila. Additionally, grazing activity was still common on University City grounds in the early 1940s, although forest engineers later achieved its 'absolute suppression' throughout the area.

Disciplining humans, however, proved to be more challenging.[62] The director of the Forest School believed that the University City park could 'contribute

December 2000], Archivo General de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid (AGUCM), 179/16-105.

62. 'Repoblación forestal de la Ciudad Universitaria' [Reforestation of the University City], FDM-MAPAMA, box 1742.

to the education of Spanish youth' by disseminating the national forest wealth.[63] Yet, in the context of hunger and scarcity of the postwar years, a significant part of the population of Madrid had different needs, including the search for fuel. To prevent tree cutting, the city council had closed the access to Casa de Campo already after the end of the war, warning that cutting and foraging wood was prohibited; in addition, building caretakers throughout the city were instructed to control the transport of wood without permission.[64] While forest engineers worked to transform the war-torn landscape of University City, they felt increasingly frustrated and furious at the groups of families that scattered around the campus on weekends and holidays, particularly in the summer, sometimes damaging the newly planted trees. The worst of them, they fumed, were 'the rabble of the suburbs', whom they accused of stealing anything valuable, from tools, pipes, hydrants and wire fences to whole plants.[65]

Despite these difficulties, reforestation activity progressed steadily during the early 1940s, with over 250,000 plants reforested between 1941 and the end of 1943. However, the funds allocated to reforestation by the board began to decrease after the inauguration of the new University City in October 1943. During the second half of the 1940s, the available resources were only sufficient to take care of the lands already reforested, and the project stalled.[66] At the turn of the next decade, a powerful new actor became involved to ensure its completion.

4. SHOWCASING THE CAPITAL OF THE NEW SPAIN: THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE STATE FOREST HERITAGE

At the beginning of the 1950s, the reforestation of Madrid's University City was only halfway complete. According to forest engineers, the project was totally fulfilled in 40 per cent of the campus area, while 29 per cent still required additional works. No intervention had yet taken place in 31 per cent of the land included in the project.[67] Considering the limited resources allocated by the University City Construction Board to this task, the possibility

63. García-Escudero, 'Creación de un parque' [Creation of a park], 100–101.

64. 'Para evitar la tala de árboles' [To prevent the felling of trees], *La Vanguardia Española*, 14 June 1939, 8; A. Pérez-Olivares, *Madrid cautivo: Ocupación y control de una ciudad (1936–1948)* [*Captive Madrid: Occupation and Control of a City (1936–1948)*] (València: Universitat de València, 2020). D. Oviedo Silva, *El enemigo a las puertas: porteros y prácticas acusatorias en Madrid (1936-1945)* [*The Enemy at the Door: Concierges and Accusatory Practices in Madrid (1936–1945)*] (Granada: Editorial Comares, 2023).

65. 'Repoblación forestal de la Ciudad Universitaria' [Reforestation of the University City], FDM-MAPAMA, box 1742.

66. 'Recopilación documental…' [Documentary compilation…], AGUCM, 179/16-105. 'Repoblación forestal de la Ciudad Universitaria' [Reforestation of the University City], FDM-MAPAMA, box 1742.

67. 'Repoblación forestal de la Ciudad Universitaria' [Reforestation of the University City], FDM-MAPAMA, box 1742.

of entrusting it to the State Forest Heritage – the flagship institution of the Francoist regime's reforestation push – began to be considered at the highest levels. Finally, in July 1951 the Minister of Education requested the participation of the State Forest Heritage from the Minister of Agriculture, receiving a positive response.[68]

Established by decree in 1939 and developed by law in 1941, the PFE's aim was the restoration, conservation and increase of state forests, with the goal of achieving 'its national, economic and social purposes'. During the 1940s, it evolved into an administrative entity fully dedicated to reforestation, undertaking various works considered of special importance. Some of these involved the production of highly politicised trees, such as the forestation of Cuelgamuros, site of the Valley of the Fallen and future mausoleum of Franco. In the early 1950s, PFE's involvement in the reforestation of Madrid, encompassing both University City and Casa de Campo, signalled their priority of beautifying the entrances to the Spanish capital.

The commissioning of the campus reforestation project to the PFE materialised through a state's decree published on 12 October 1951, signed by the Minister of Agriculture and Franco himself. The text highlighted the 'high national purpose' of the reforestation works and the need to 'finalise them quickly'. While recognising the efforts made by the University City Construction Board, the decree justified the involvement of the PFE for its capability of 'employing means whose acquisition is only economical for the reforestation of large areas'.[69] However, it explicitly stated that the PFE could delegate the project's implementation to the forest engineers at the Escuela de Montes. Beyond the reforestation of the campus area (360 hectares), the PFE was entrusted with the administration, conservation and surveillance of the trees in University City.[70] With the enhanced economic capacity of the PFE, forest engineers saw an opportunity to enforce more severe control of the visitors that infuriated them. As such the creation of a 'Special Surveillance Corps', composed of guards vested with 'the utmost authority' and 'certain military discipline', was proposed.[71]

Overall, the state's decree presented the reforestation works of University City as a 'worthy complement' to the ongoing reconstruction of the campus. Similarly, according to an internal communication from the director general of Forest Heritage, trees were conceived of as a contribution to the 'ornamentation

68. 'Correspondencia: Repoblación forestal de la Ciudad Universitaria' [Correspondence: Reforestation of the University City]. AGUCM, UCM, 06.0.06. D-1765, 3.

69. 'Decreto de 28 de septiembre de 1951 sobre repoblación forestal de los terrenos que comprende la Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid' [Decree of September 28, 1951, on reforestation of the land comprising the University City of Madrid], *Boletín Oficial del Estado* **285** (12 Oct. 1951): 4613.

70. 'Decreto de 28 de septiembre de 1951' [Decree of 28 Sept. 1951], 4613.

71. 'Repoblación forestal de la Ciudad Universitaria' [Reforestation of the University City], FDM-MAPAMA, box 1742.

of Madrid, the dignity of the University City, and the road from Puerta de Hierro to El Pardo'.[72] More than a decade after the end of the war, the urban and monumental logic of reforestation was taking over the spiritual discourse that dominated the first half of the 1940s. The political course of the dictatorship had also changed. Franco's regime, born on the battlefield with the key support of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, was now negotiating economic and military agreements with the US, in the context of the Cold War. In the early 1950s, the symbolic value of the campus was primarily represented as a showcase in which the capital's significance, the increasing attention of an emerging tourism sector and the monumentalisation of the entrance to Madrid converged. Instead of recalling the history of the civil war and vindicating the blood-soaked roots and foundations of Madrid's University City, forest engineers now underscored that they had been 'tasked with performing on a stage, exposed in the capital of Spain to the scrutiny and commentary of the entire world'.[73]

The status of Madrid as the capital of the 'New Spain' was central in this justification. The post-war urban plans regarded University City as one of the 'leading national functions' of the capital, at the same level as high military command or national exhibitions. Moreover, according to Pedro Bidagor, the main author of Madrid's post-war urban plans, the location of the campus fulfilled a key purpose, since the capital status of the city had to be 'organised, exalted and represented in the Manzanares River Valley'.[74] Madrid had a national mission: symbolising religion, culture and the single party; and an international one: organising foreign representations and hosting honoured guests. All of this was to be materialised in the vicinity of University City, in the Argüelles-Moncloa neighbourhood.[75]

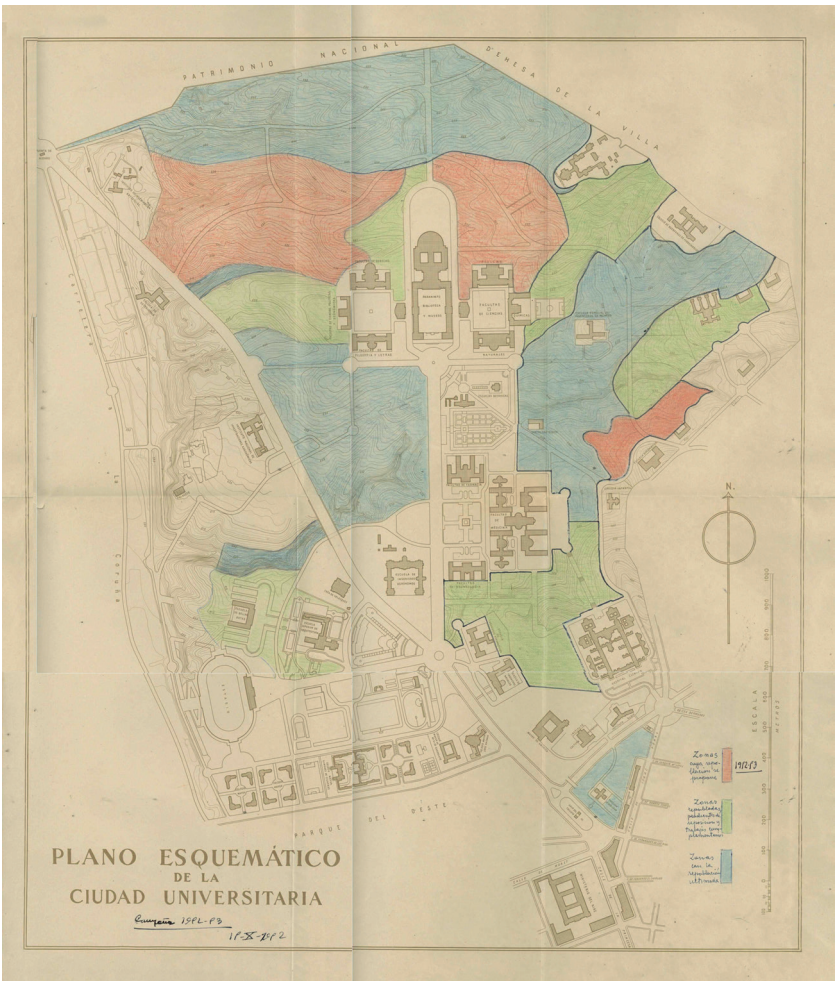
Heavily damaged during the war, this urban area had been historically associated with the Modelo prison (Cárcel Modelo), and industrial activity. But in the postwar years, the space at this edge of the campus' limits was renamed as the 'Plaza of Martyrs of Madrid' and reconfigured. From 1943, a massive, monastery-like building for the Francoist Ministry of Air was constructed on the ruins of the prison. In front of the Ministry, starting in 1945, the Military Construction Service (Servicio Militar de Construcciones) started building several blocks of housing for military officers, which led to a significant

72. 'Proyecto de repoblación' [Project of reforestation], 23 October 1952. Ciudad Universitaria, Patrimonio Forestal del Estado, MAPAMA, box 1742.

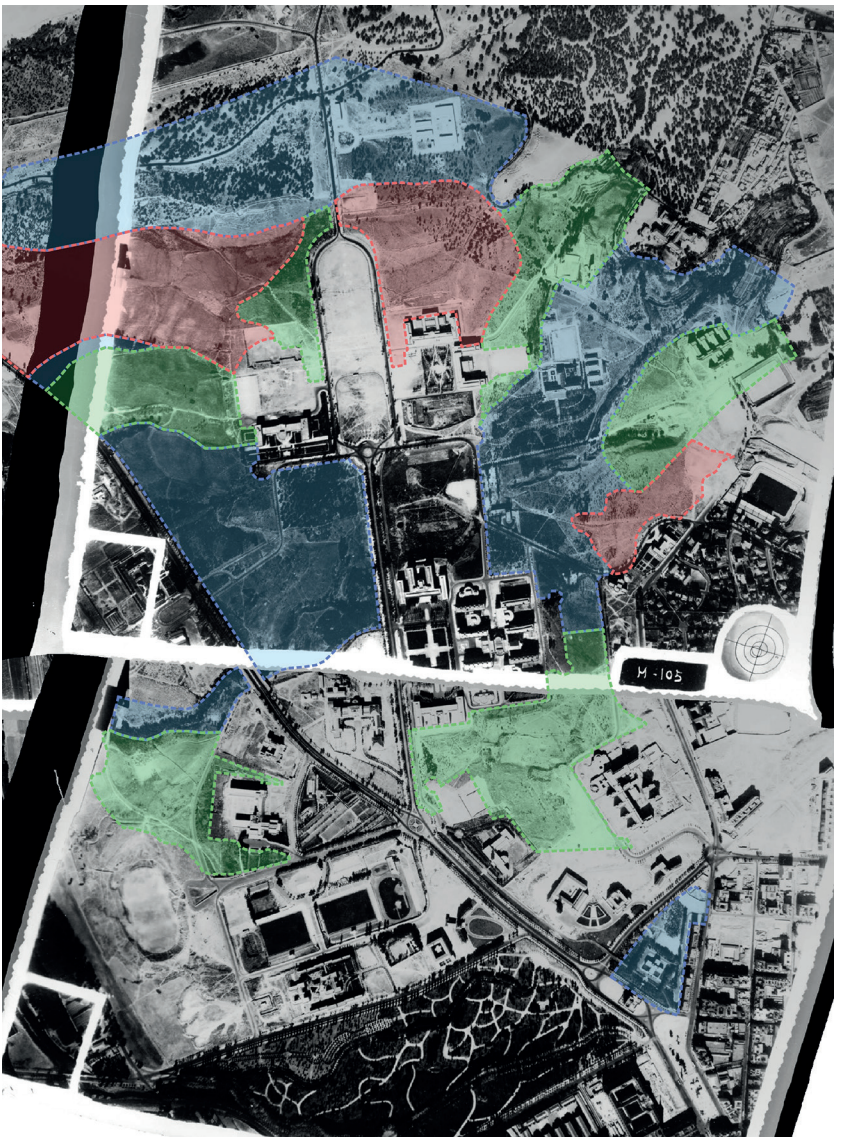
73. 'Circunstancias que definen la naturaleza de los trabajos' [Circumstances defining the nature of the work], no date. Ciudad Universitaria, Patrimonio Forestal del Estado, MAPAMA, box 1742.

74. L. Rodríguez Avial, 'Pedro Bidagor Lasarte', *Urbanismo* **2** (1987): 80.

75. C. Sambricio, *Madrid, vivienda y urbanismo: 1900–1960* [*Madrid, Housing, and Urbanism: 1900–1960*] (Madrid: Akal, 2004), pp. 289–328; O. Muñoz-Rojas, *Ashes and Granite: Destruction and Reconstruction in the Spanish Civil War and Its Aftermath* (Eastbourne, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2011), pp. 41–67.



Map 2. Reforestation work scheduled for 1952–53. The colour codes correspond to the proposed reforestation (red), areas replanted and pending replacement or complementary work (green) and areas with reforestation completed (blue). Source: Ciudad Universitaria, Patrimonio Forestal del Estado, MAPAMA, box 1742.



Map 3. Aerial photograph of University City, 1956. The coloured areas indicate the reforestation work scheduled for 1952–53, including proposed reforestation (red), areas replanted and pending replacement or complementary work (green) and areas with reforestation completed (blue). Sources: For the photographs, Geoportal del Ayuntamiento de Madrid - Área de Gobierno de Urbanismo, Medio Ambiente y Movilidad. Coloured areas added by the authors, based on Ciudad Universitaria, Patrimonio Forestal del Estado, MAPAMA, box 1742.

sociological reconfiguration of the neighbourhood in the years to come. This process of symbolic resignification also included the building of a triumphal arch, the Arch of Victory (Arco de la Victoria) and the Monument to the Fallen for Madrid (Monumento a los Caídos por Madrid), both still under construction in the early 1950s.[76]

According to the forest engineers, the University City was like no other project started by the PFE.[77] In practice, the annual campaigns driven by the PFE from 1951 to 1956 divided the campus in sections based on the progress of the reforestation: areas with completed reforestation, replanted areas pending replacement or complementary work and areas proposed for reforestation. Generally, the zones with most advanced vegetal cover corresponded to the areas more open and distant from the buildings, as can be seen in maps two and three. Between 1951 and 1956, the PFE reforested 104 new hectares, while at the same time complementing additional works and completing 'special works of vegetal ornaments' in 30 more hectares.[78]

Comparing the reconstruction and reforestation work scheduled for 1952–53 (Map 2) with aerial photographs of Madrid's University City from 1956 (Map 3) validates the assessment of reforestation progress made by the forest engineers. However, it also shows that the slow advance of the green in certain zones of the campus corresponds with areas where planned faculty buildings and other facilities had not yet materialised. In fact, forest engineers complained that the dynamics of reconstruction of the urban environment compromised the reforestation efforts: 'Against our original plan and desire, we have been instructed to refrain from any action in the areas of the entrance through Moncloa and Parque del Oeste, where ongoing and planned construction works advise further delaying plantations.'[79] The date and location indicated suggest a connection between the challenging reforestation of the campus borders and the final stages of the construction of the Arch of Victory (completed in 1955), the Monument to the Fallen for Madrid (whose foundation stone was laid in

76. A. Pérez-Olivares García, *La victoria bajo control: ocupación, orden público y orden social del Madrid franquista (1936-1948)* [*Victory under control: occupation, public order, and social order in francoist Madrid (1936–1948)*], (PhD Thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2017), pp. 369–72; N. Santiáñez-Tió, *Topographies of Fascism: Habitus, Space, and Writing in Twentieth-Century Spain* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 226–44.

77. 'Circunstancias que definen la naturaleza de los trabajos' [Circumstances defining the nature of the work], no date. Ciudad Universitaria, Patrimonio Forestal del Estado, MAPAMA, box 1742.

78. M. Fernández de Sevilla Morales, *Historia jurídico-administrativa de la Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid* [*Legal and administrative history of the University City of Madrid*] (Ph.D. Thesis, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1993), pp. 140–41.

79. 'Propuesta de repoblación de 50 ha' [Reforestation proposal of 50 ha], no date. Ciudad Universitaria, Patrimonio Forestal del Estado, MAPAMA, box 1742.

October 1954) and the stadium in the south (where works had barely started in 1956).[80]

In January 1956, the PFE returned the management of the lands to the University City Construction Board, marking the end of the reforestation works as a campus-wide project.[81] In the coming years, the coordinated plan of construction was abandoned, along with the very idea of the campus as a 'university park'. Instead, the 1960s and 1970s witnessed rapid urban growth throughout the campus, including university residences and other buildings that occupied areas which had, until then, remained vacant.[82] Ironically, from the 1960s onwards, the growth of vegetation (and unplanned urbanisation) not only helped to conceal the scars left by the war on the campus landscape but also obscured the political nature of reforestation projects.

5. CONCLUSIONS

To this day, the weight of history in Madrid's University City remains imposing. On the main campus of the Complutense University of Madrid (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) – the public university that boasts the highest enrolment of students in Spain – bullet and shrapnel damage to the facades of the buildings is hard to miss. The plaques that survived the end of the dictatorship coexist with a disparate array of monuments, including recent memorials that spurred significant controversy, such as the one dedicated to the International Brigades. At the same time, almost half a century after the death of Franco, access to the campus from the Argüelles-Moncloa neighbourhood is still marked by the Francoist Arch of Victory, a decaying remnant of the post-war years, targeted for demolition by leftist political parties. In comparison with such politically loaded spaces and war remains – memories carved in stone of perhaps the most symbolic battlefront of the Spanish Civil War – the reforestation plant pots found by archaeologists excavating the campus grounds may seem trivial. Accordingly, the history of the campus' greenery has tended to pass unnoticed, or to be regarded as politically neutral by students, passersby and even historians.

By unearthing the political history of the campus' trees across different periods of the twentieth century, this article has argued otherwise. The notion of a 'university park' was key to the origins of University City, and the campus development transformed the landscape of the former royal estate where it is

80. *ABC*, 30 Oct. 1954; Chías Navarro, *La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid* [*Madrid's University City*], pp. 225–53; Tranche, *La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid y la Casa de Velázquez* [*Madrid's University City and the Casa de Velázquez*], pp. 10–14.

81. Fernández de Sevilla Morales, *Historia jurídico-administrativa* [*Legal and Administrative History*], pp. 140–41.

82. Chías Navarro, *La Ciudad Universitaria de Madrid* [*Madrid's University City*], pp. 225–53.

located. Largely inspired by North American campuses, the trees planted in the pre-war years embodied the ambitions of modernity and the international projection of Spanish education coveted by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. The unexpected and unthinkable devastation brought about by the civil war in 1936 represented the harshest rupture in the campus' history. However, the idea of a 'university park' remained strong in the post-war years, albeit wrapped in a discourse of spirituality, national rebirth and remembrance of the fallen of Franco's side. In this context, the similarities between the discourse on the restoration of the campus vegetation and the 'Parks of Remembrance' of Fascist Italy are remarkable. Beginning in the 1950s, the involvement of the State Forest Heritage placed a significant emphasis on monumentalising access to Madrid and connecting to a new, technocratic modernity. However, it wasn't until the 1960s that the project of a 'university park' was abandoned and the disorderly growth of faculty buildings, student residences and other uses began to take precedence – sometimes even at the expense of the trees.

Despite its high ambitions and exalted political tones, the post-war reforestation projects directed by forest engineers faced significant shortcomings. First, after the campus inauguration in 1943, funds for reforestation remained limited, eventually necessitating the involvement of the State Forest Heritage in the early 1950s to continue. Moreover, the slow pace of campus urbanisation stalled reforestation efforts, which could not commence until the buildings were in place. Additionally, the varying growth rates of tree species, along with the campus' soil and climate, imposed certain limitations. It was not the grand oaks and holm oaks envisioned by the Minister of Education in 1942 that came to dominate the campus landscape, but rather ubiquitous pine trees, chosen for their promise of quicker green cover. Their long shadows remain as a metaphor for a time of economic autarky and geopolitical isolation, in which many of the projects designed by the authorities could hardly be implemented. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the forest engineers' reforestation of Madrid's University City was also an attempt to discipline and transform a landscape used by both animals and humans. While they succeeded in suppressing grazing activities during the 1940s, controlling human activity proved much more challenging and remained a matter of discussion throughout the 1950s.

Following Karen R. Jones, this article has focused on the green spaces of Madrid's University City as 'an evolving site of translation, negotiation and transformation' between the origins of the campus and 1956.[83] Overall, we have argued that the reforestation of Madrid's University City during the postwar period must be understood at the intersection of reconstruction, resignification and monumentalisation of the urban environment where the campus was located with high symbolic and political value. Our case study highlights the urban dimension of the nationalisation of nature in fascist and authoritarian regimes, a topic that has received significantly less attention than national

83. Jones, 'The lungs of the city', 39.

parks. Our study also illustrates how the history of city parks is intertwined with the evolving function of the buildings these parks encompass. Similar to other landscapes in postwar Madrid, the reforestation projects of University City 'later received new senses, different materialities that modified or superimposed other meanings'.[84] The abandonment of a coordinated construction project and of the notion of a 'university park' during the 1960s partly explains why the political dimension of the campus has become more associated with the buildings – and their memorials – than with the trees.

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84. E. Canosa Zamora and Á. García Carballo, 'Madrid Km 0. La intervención franquista en la construcción de algunos paisajes simbólicos de la capital' [Madrid Km 0: The Francoist intervention in the construction of some symbolic landscapes of the capital], *Estudios Geográficos* **77** (281) (2016): 415–42.