
Landscape dynamics in a hunting estate: is the wildlife incompatible with forest? Example in the National estate of Chambord (France)

Amélie Robert*¹ and Sylvie Servain*^{†2}

¹Cités, Territoires, Environnement et Sociétés (CITERES) – CNRS : UMR7324, Université François Rabelais - Tours – 33 allée Ferdinand de Lesseps BP 60449 37204 Tours cedex 3, France

²École Nationale Supérieure de la Nature et du Paysage de Blois (ENSNP) – École Nationale Supérieure de la Nature et du Paysage de Blois – 9 rue chocolaterie 41000 Blois, France

Résumé

The national estate of Chambord is the largest walled-enclosed park in Europe. Nowadays, it mainly includes a forest, extending over more than 5.000 ha. It is dedicated to biodiversity conservation, nature tourism but also hunting. In fact, the estate is populated by an important wildlife, especially ungulates. In this paper, we would like to question the link between wildlife and forest, from a geohistoric viewpoint, basing on this case study. Our comments are results of a research we conducted in the framework of a project funded by the French Region Centre-Val de Loire. We compared old maps, aerial photographs and vectorial data in a GIS to identify the land use dynamics. To discuss the changes, we consulted archives and literature. Here, we will almost referred to the account of a forest ranger of Chambord. When the Chambord park began to be walled in 1524, the purpose was already to create a hunting estate. But forest was not so important than nowadays. The change occurred later, especially during the 19th century: like in the surrounding area, plantations programs increase the forest area inside walls. In the same time, agriculture declined. Since 1950's, the forest area remained stable, thus high. Consequently, analyzing the landscape dynamics, we could conclude that the willingness to favor hunting and, through this one, wildlife conducted to favor forest. But this idea is counterbalanced by the account of the first forest ranger, J. Thoreau, which was in charge of the management of the Chambord forest from 1947. His account is, in a way, representative of the point of view of the forest managers: hunting management is incompatible with forest management, because it implies high densities of game. Indeed, browsing by wildlife can compromise forest regeneration. J. Thoreau thus emphasizes the defense of " forest against game " and deplores the high populations, the priority given to game at the expense of forest, what is particularly problematic in an enclosed park. Nowadays, even if the forest is still not a production forest, the estate tries to find a balance, being more oriented towards biodiversity conservation and nature tourism.

Mots-Clés: Landscape dynamics, forest, hunting, Chambord, GIS, forest ranger account, geohistory

*Intervenant

[†]Auteur correspondant: sylvie.servain@insa-cvl.fr