

What do we want and need from EU forests?

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What do we want from EU forests?

Societal expectations towards forests have been rising over the last decades = **many and diverse needs and values** (environmental services but also economic and social welfare)

But a **high diversity** of forest types, diversity of ownership, diversity of goals and practices ...

Moreover, sometimes public and political signals regarding the role of forests to the EU's long-term objectives are **contradictory**.

Therefore, for **pragmatic and successful** EU forest-related decisions, we need to **understand** well our forests!

EU forests = a very complex situation, a challenging context



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Understanding our forests ...

First, we need to **understand** WHY we have WHAT we have!

= We **must identify** the **real causes** for the success stories and for the failures. Otherwise, decision making will be biased and not reach the ambitious goals sought at present.

Second, we **must accept** there are three **necessary** steps:

- a (very) large-scale approach
- a long-term perspective
- the dynamic nature of forests



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What do all these imply?



Large-scale & Long-term & Dynamic

A (very)large-scale approach = the **only chance** for significant impact at EU and Global levels; the **only chance** to accommodate for conflicting values in the same time (in different places) or for certain scale-dependent values (e.g. species connectivity)

A long-term perspective = the **only way** for producing or restoring certain features at large scale (for the large scale impact) and the **only chance** to fully address the dynamics of such long-living ecosystems

Natural dynamics = a **reality** which adds complexity! Even if it is not 100% predictable and controllable, ignoring it impairs our understanding and definitely proper decision making.



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What are the implications?



Large-scale approach - implications

Sometimes, the values we require from forests are not fully compatible. Some examples:

- bioeconomy vs. strict protection
- timber production vs. recreational functions
- close-to-nature forestry vs. aesthetics (the recent interpretations of close-to-nature forestry are not even close to biodiversity conservation)

These cannot be maximized in the same time in the same place. Many different places are needed, very large areas are needed.

CONCLUSION: For such large-scale approach, the only possibility relies upon the managed forests/landscapes ("*the nature with humans*")!



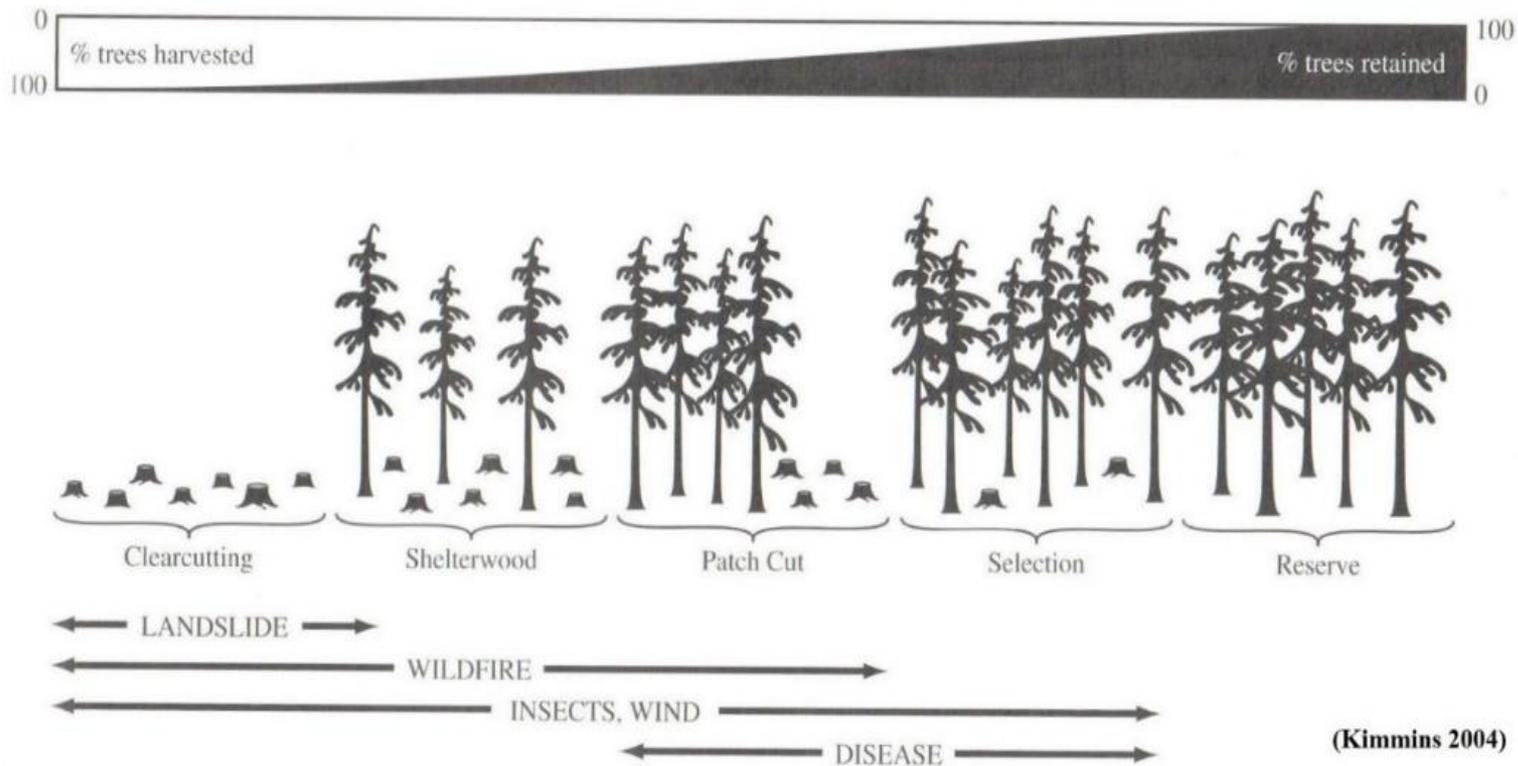
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Close-to-nature vs. aesthetics

Close-to-nature = emulating **what nature does** (natural disturbances of all kinds) **not** what would **please us** (from an aesthetical point of view)!



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Doing something similar = obtaining something similar



Close-to-nature forestry - challenges

Big challenge = doing something similar to very large and very intense natural disturbances (fires, landslides, windthrows) – NO PUBLIC SUPPORT!
Not applied in management!

However, nowadays there is a tendency to move to another **extreme** - even some smaller scale disturbances are considered far from nature!

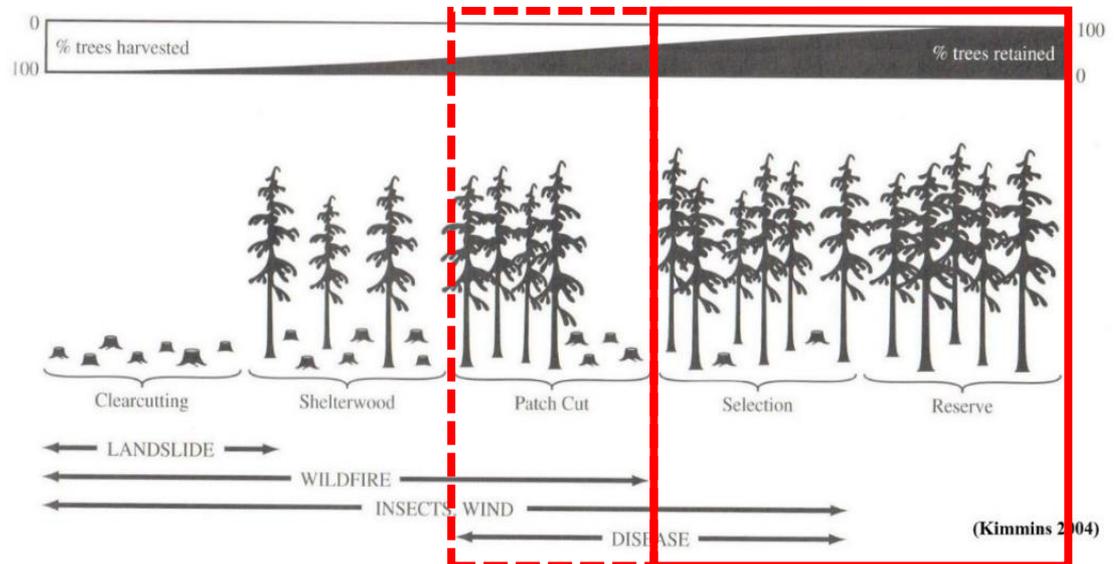
Question/Challenge

=

Stay Close-to-nature

or

Get Close-to-emotions?



The public tends to opt for **Close-to-emotions**.

Biodiversity and other values are dependent on **Close-to-nature!**



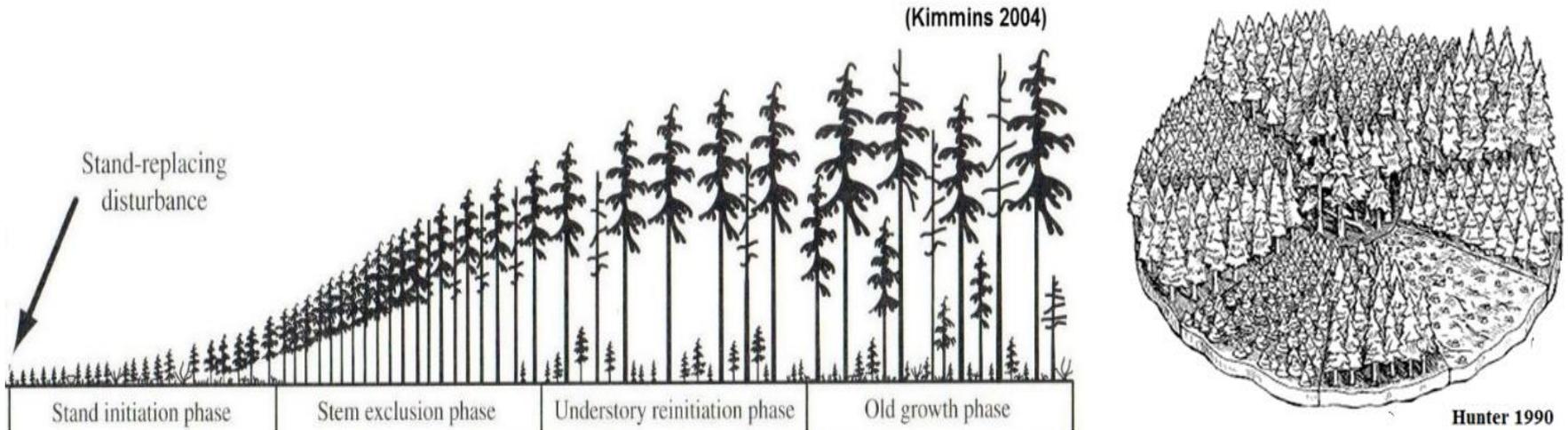
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Natural dynamics - implications

Forests are naturally dynamic even in the strict protected places! With and without natural disturbances!



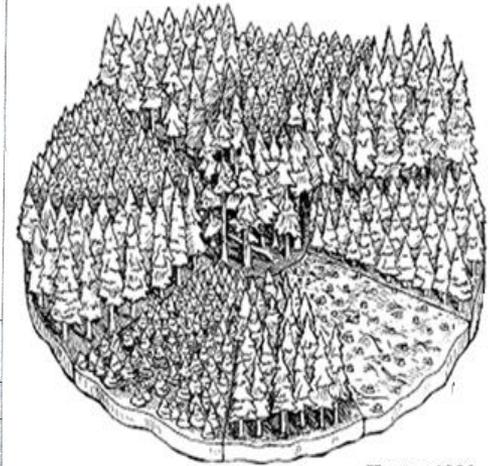
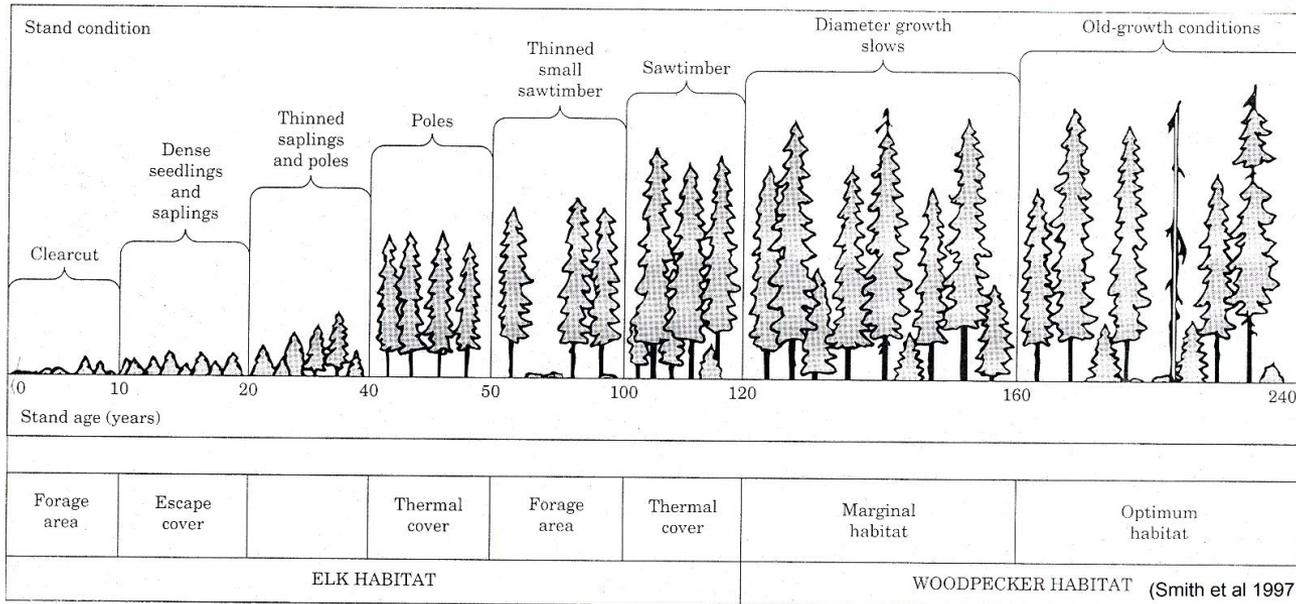
Biodiversity and all other values are also **dynamic** in time! How to have all of them and always?

Very **large landscapes** with a diverse **mosaic** of **all stages/structures** (the ***shifting steady-state mosaic*** – Kimmins 2004)!

For large, complete and complex mosaics, a large-scale approach is needed and therefore, the only possibility relies upon the managed forests again!

Nature dynamics and the old (growth) forest

Myth = the old (growth) forest is the only one that has them all (values, species, services)



Hunter 1990

Reality = each stage provides habitat to certain species! **No stage provides them to all!**

The mosaic is the key and the old forest just one component!

What is the key for having old forests in the mosaic?

Only strict protection or wise management?



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The old (growth) forest and its strict protection

Imposing strict protection on old forests **produced by management** but **misinterpreted** as old-growth = means shortening the rotation in the rest of the forests and this means ...

1. preventing such forest to occur elsewhere in the dynamic landscape mosaic (affects biodiversity at larger scale) and
2. does not guarantee the permanent presence of those placed under protection = their total area might decrease in time, naturally.



Hunter 1990

Overall, reducing the chance and area of having such forests!

Protection of **primary (true old-growth forests)** is normal!

Protection of managed forests **misinterpreted** as old-growth **leads to less!**



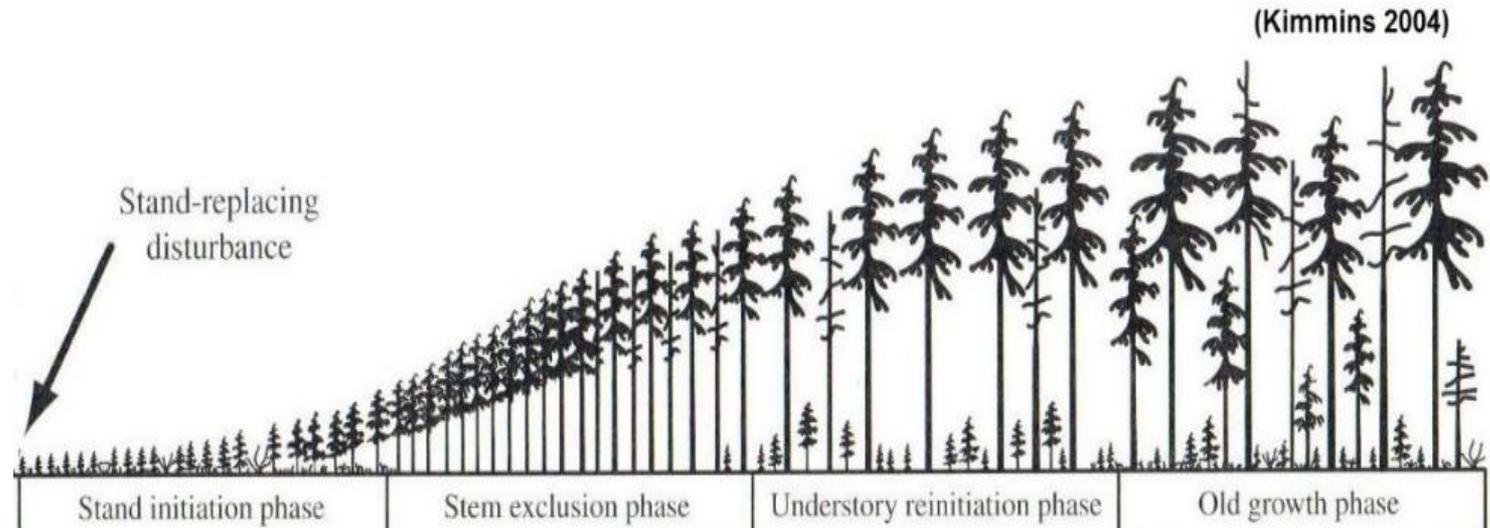
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The nature with and without us. What is the difference?

With us (Wise and controlled management) = manage and control change to fulfill needs of society; humans together with nature (something "natural" in Europe)



Without us (Strict protection) = no control over the change; humans expelled from nature (not something "natural" in Europe); not always the nice-looking scenery and not remaining unchanged!!



What is the solution = **Doing something** or **Doing nothing?** ...it depends what we want from our forests

Doing something vs. Doing nothing

Doing something = controlled change could ensure a perpetual, dynamic but complete, large scale, well-connected, coherent network of forests (= the *shifting* but *steady-state mosaic*).

Because it accepts/includes humans, it offers the very large areas of forests needed for EU or global impact!

Doing nothing = uncontrolled change (natural disturbances)

- might not ensure all values all the time, not even the highest biodiversity
- cannot cover large (significant, connected) areas in Europe (cannot be significant in terms of impact).
- could lead to more frequent and more severe disturbances

Result = Overall might provide **less** (even in terms of biodiversity)



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So, what shall we do?



What solution to choose?

A combination of both is probably better, but the **proportion of each** becomes important for practical implementation!

Placing under strict protection some places will **shift the burden** (all other values not compatible to strict protection) on the rest of the area.

Why increase Strict Protected Land? To learn more from nature? or To conserve more?

If it is about **conserving more** ... wise management (correct the mistakes) seems better and more viable. Examples of good and successful management can be involved in restoration.

If it is **to learn more** ... Do we need more area to learn more? Or we can learn from what we have already?



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**... and on top of all these, now we are
facing a climate challenge!**



The climate challenge ...

Probably the greatest challenge as it speeds up the dynamics but also makes hard to predict the outcomes.

Also requires different measures (as type, intensity, cover) across the very diverse conditions of Europe under the umbrella of *climate-smart-forestry*



The European context ...

very complex, very challenging.

How to deal with this?



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United in diversity ...

“**Think GLOBALLY**” = for significant effects at EU level (coherence, connectivity), when it comes to land area, similar efforts must be made in terms of percentages covering each state (***equal share***)



(<https://www.amazon.com/TOOLOUD-Think-Globally-Act-Locally>)

“**Act LOCALLY**” = Each Member state should assess the status, take into account the particularities of the state and make appropriate efforts (more in some cases, less in others = ***fair share***)



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Final messages...

It is a time of action (= of doing something) rather than doing nothing

Decision making is **very difficult** in the very **complex** and **dynamic** context

That is why it must be based on **sound science** and all gathered **experience** across Europe and other parts of the World. = This means **pragmatism** and **compromise** rather than **emotions!**

All efforts cannot be successful without the direct **involvement** of (and direct **support** for) the **true stewards** of the land (owners and managers).

We will be more efficient and effective if we will invest our efforts more into **doing the right thing** rather than doing nothing



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doing nothing ≠ the right thing



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION !**



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