

What do we want and need from EU forests?

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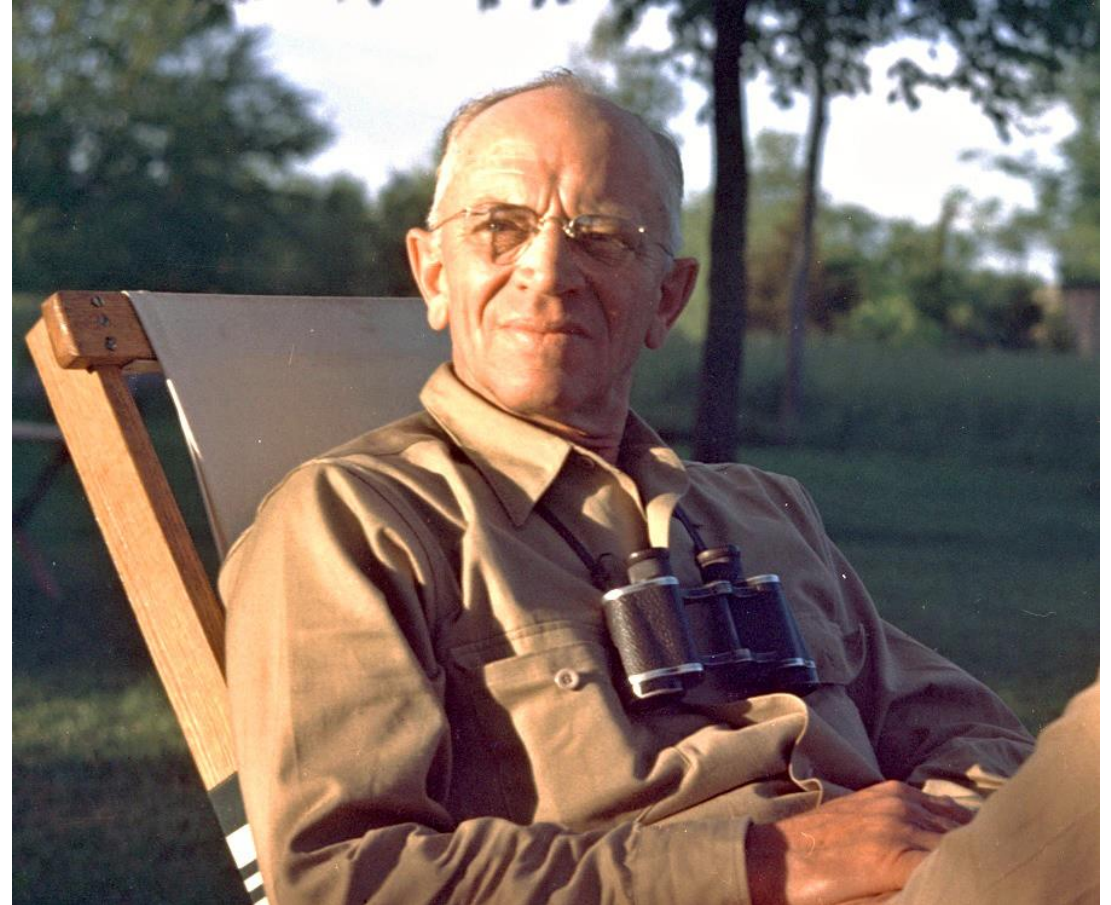
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Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (1949)

“There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm...

one is the danger of supposing that *breakfast comes from the grocery*, and the other that *heat comes from the furnace.*”



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What do we want and need from our forests?



Many and diverse needs from the same 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 (e.g. management vs. strict protection)**.

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

Defining the needs and finding the tools

We need ...

- better monitoring,
- a close(r)-to-nature management,
- save the old-growth forests,
- climate mitigation and adaptation,
- implement a circular bioeconomy
- ...

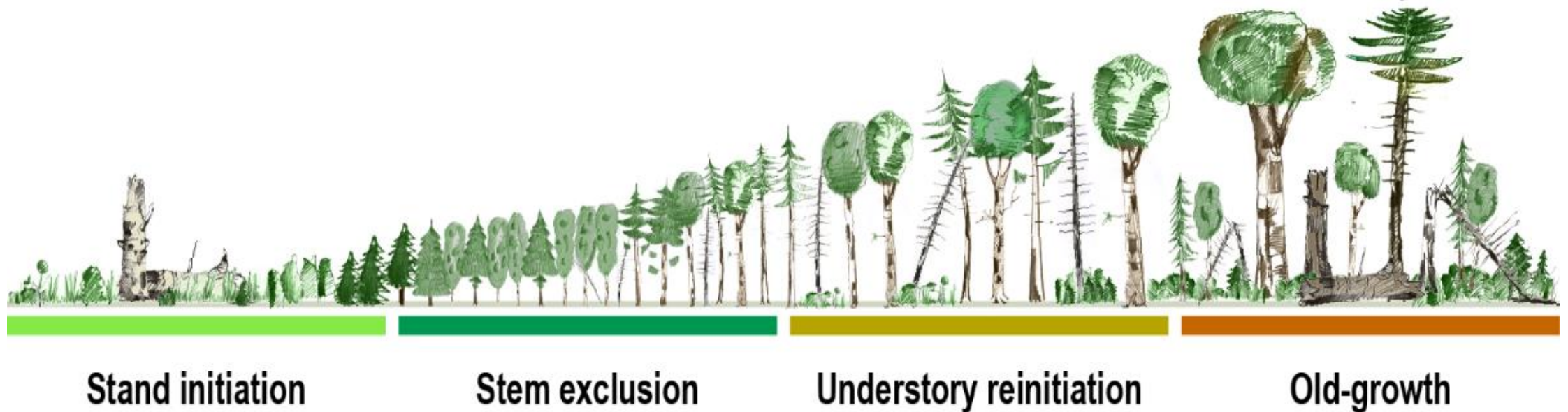
How to get all these?

After defining what we needhow we get there is the **job of professionals** and the **burden of owners and managers**

After defining what we needthey could tell us whether is possible or not, **how long it takes** and **how much it costs** (i.e. can we afford it?)

We need to better the monitor change in our forests

... but first we really need to understand **change** as a **natural and inevitable process** and also its effects (change is always good news for some species)



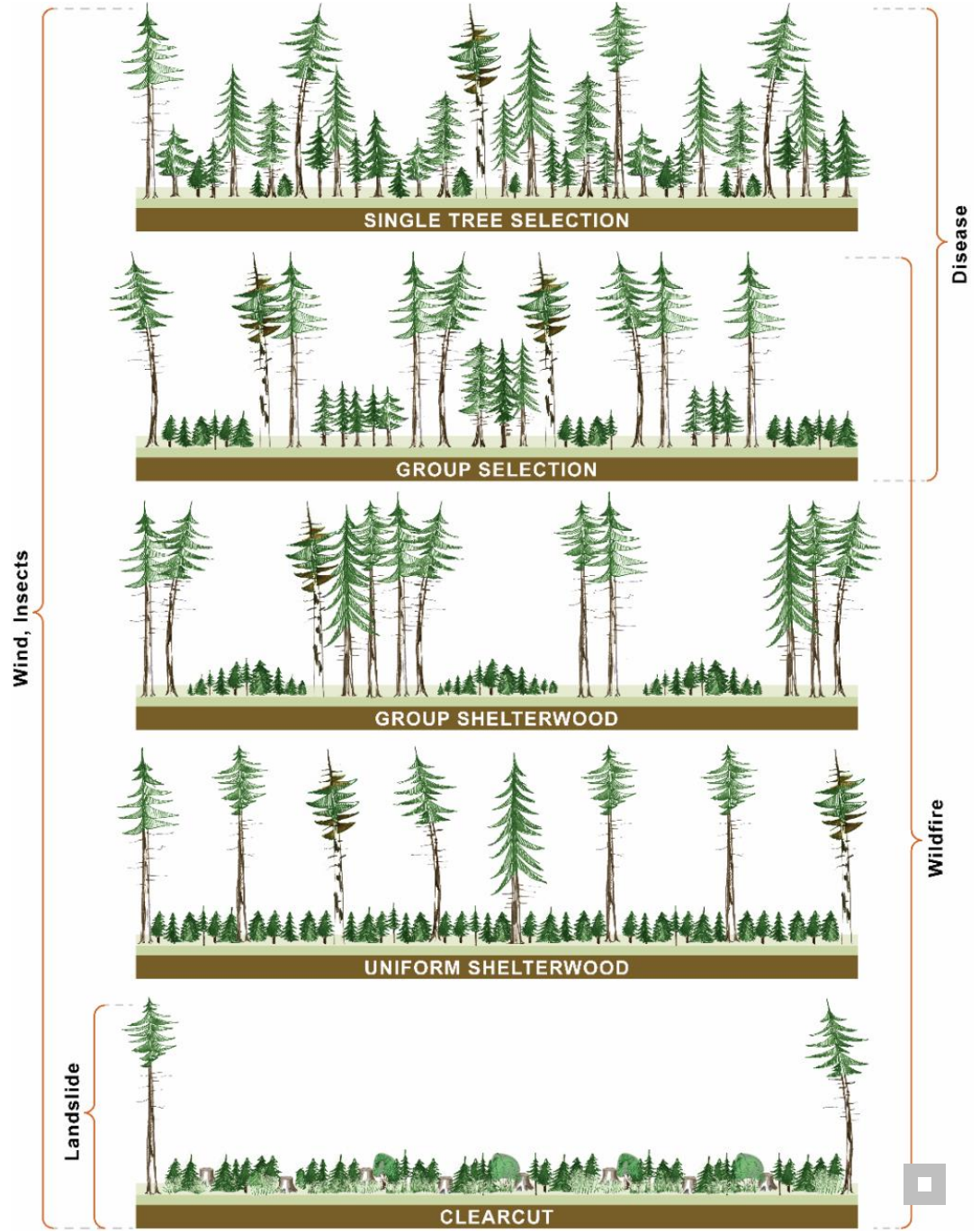
We concentrate to often only on one side of the change (only on the affected species not also on those favored by the change)

**harvesting \neq forest loss or deforestation
(haircut \neq hair loss)**

We need to do close(r)-to-nature management

... but it seems we want to stay *close-to-emotions* when we decide how to do it

We concentrate mostly on types of change (management) which are producing less visible disturbance (**more aesthetically pleasing for the public**) although common natural disturbances (windthrows, insect outbreaks, fires) are also producing **very different outcomes** while providing **unique habitat for many species**



Aesthetics vs. Nature



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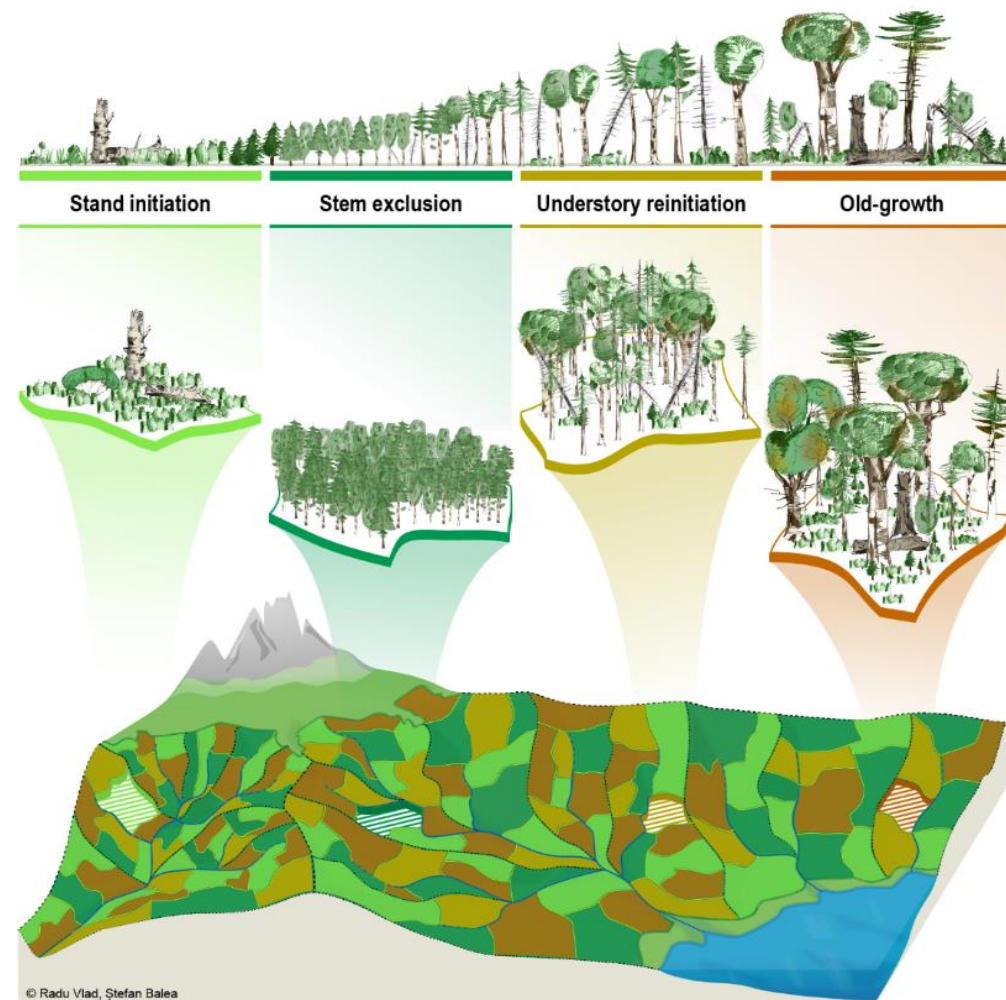
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We need to save old-growth forests

... but we tend to misinterpret them and/or overestimate their role

old-growth = last stage of development, when former dominant trees are approaching senescence and die in an irregular fashion (**not the mature forest, managed for long rotations**); a matter of time (= **possible to attain but not overnight**)

their role = they are just one of the development stages (one type of habitat) in the **landscape mosaic with all stages** (= **the real key for conservation and sustained yield**)



Old growth ≠ mature forest, managed for long rotations

Old growth does not provide all values and services

We need stable, vigorously growing, biodiverse forests!

... but many voices insist that this goal can be better achieved by doing nothing (= **strict protection or land sparing**)

*“Conservation is paved with good intentions which prove to be futile, or even dangerous, because they are devoid of **critical understanding either of the land, or of economic land use**”*

[Aldo Leopold “The Land Ethic”, in A Sand County Almanac (1949)]

We have been talking lately about the role of strict protection in mitigating climate change and saving biodiversity ... **without a thorough “critical understanding either of the land, or of economic land use”** ...not even of biodiversity itself

Final thoughts ...

We should **use wisely the tools** we have and choose the best option to **fit the local context!**

There are **no magical, one-type-fits-all, overnight solutions**. Such solutions could be indeed dangerous (e.g. land sparing everywhere; selection systems everywhere)

Land sharing is **the best** as it gives chances for large enough areas (**viability** for species but also for human needs) and better **connectivity** and **is NATURAL** (we are part of the ecosystem)

Europe is an example of land sharing for ages. Even if in some places we failed, in many others we succeeded!

Land-sparing is **counterproductive** in places **where land-sharing works already** (shifts the burden on the rest, increases management intensity, fragments).

Stewardship ... for multifunctional forests

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

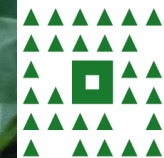
Strong bioeconomy, climate mitigation and conservation are possible ... but cannot be successful without the direct **involvement** of (and direct **support** for) the **true stewards of the land** (owners and managers).

Rewarding efforts for getting there but also **for being there!** So far is only the first (which, from the point of view of those falling in the last category, might seem to be giving the prize to losers)





**THANK YOU
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