

Can we change forests & forestry?

Two perspectives



1. Thinking small (conservative)

- Forests grow slow, foresters like the old way of doing things, there is little you can do...
- We often simulate small deviations from the present to support the conclusion above

2. Thinking big (systemic)

- Place yourself 100 years back: forests looked and were managed quite differently in year 1919!
- It is likewise very likely that forests in 2119 will look quite differently from today's forests.



What will forests be in 2119?



Depends on multiple interdependent factors that steer the land-use and forestry decisions

from individual needs of a landowner....

including the **national forest policies**
where most of the steering decisions are taken

... to global processes and agendas such as
climate change (and related policies)

Example 1: Portugal



Today:

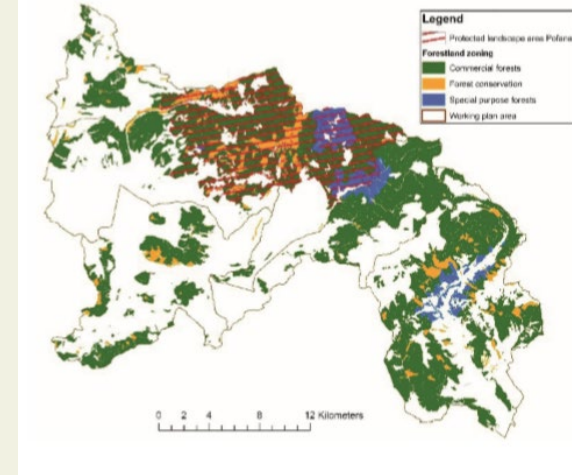
- Two-sided forestry: intensively managed plantations of Eucalypt vs. large abandoned areas
- Fragmented ownership
- Massive problem with forest fires

Desirable changes:

- Pending need to implement landscape perspective, i.e. through joint management by associated forest owners
- Reduced fire risk and provision of other ecosystem services through active but more diversified forest management (with species like maritime pine, pedunculated oak and cork oak)



Example 2: Slovakia



Today:

- „Classical German“ forest management with focus on volume of large trees
- Highly regulated forestry with many „dos“ and „don‘ts“
- Spruce is vulnerable to climate change but also the most economic option

Desirable changes:

- Softened regulation, less rigid planning
- More flexibility in silvicultural options, especially shortening of rotations

Example 3: the Netherlands

Today:

- Rich and highly urbanised society with strong preference for environmental and recreational forest values
- „Multiple use forestry“ and „integrated forest management“ are fashionable labels without clear contents, anything goes
- Large owner freedom



Desirable changes:

- Need for clearer policy priorities, what does the Dutch society want to achieve with their forestry?
- Clearer management guidelines and more refined set of silvicultural options:
(i) to raise forest production and profitability in part of forests; and (ii) to reduce climate-related risks and enhance recreational values in other forests.

**Amenity-oriented societies
but strong property rights:**

Need to sort out policy &
management priorities;
managing for amenities but
still with economy in plus?

Amenity production

Italy

Germany

Netherlands

Centralised decision-making

Turkey

Slovakia

Lithuania

State-dominated forestry:

Need for deregulation, to
raise owners' freedom &
increase adaptive capacity of
forestry

Commodity production

Ireland

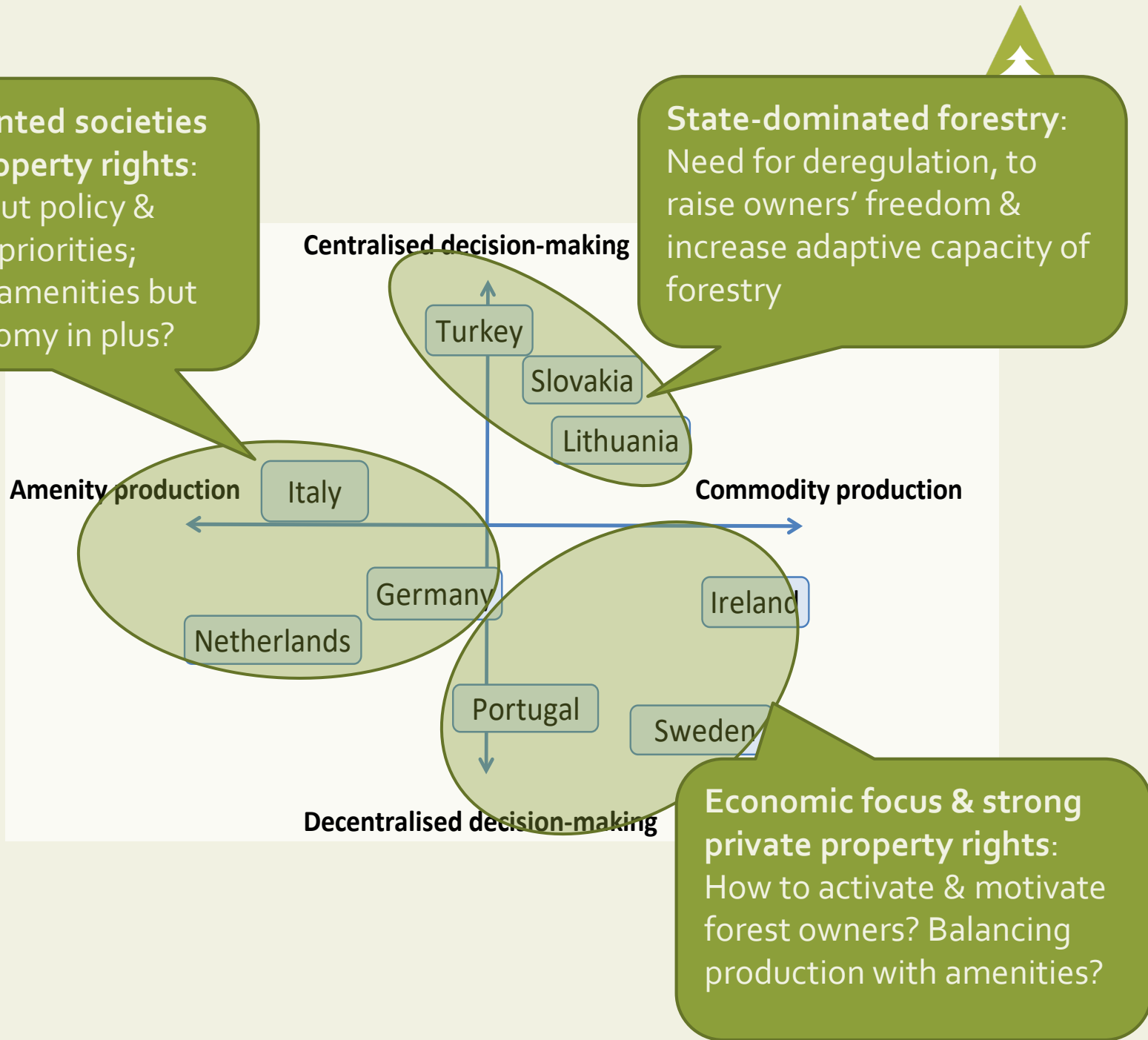
Portugal

Sweden

Decentralised decision-making

**Economic focus & strong
private property rights:**

How to activate & motivate
forest owners? Balancing
production with amenities?



Back to the key issue: can we change forests & forestry?



- ALTERFOR highlighted multiple silvicultural alternatives for its different case countries – but their implementation primarily is **political (and not silvicultural) challenge**
- High European diversity in silvicultural practices but even more so in forest governance – there is **no "one size fits all" solution**
- Projects like ALTERFOR provide a suiting platform to learn from other nations and **to think outside the box!**
- We still need to experiment and learn how to effectively insert practical knowledge into forest science and to **insert science into practice of forestry and policy making**
- **The learning process in itself is important! Our approaches:**
 - "Practical partners" in the project consortium (e.g. affecting the research agenda & having immediate access to research findings)
 - Multiple stakeholder workshops (e.g. to discuss desirable silvicultural options)
 - TRAVELLAB (seeing the landscapes, meeting stakeholders and learning the "big picture" instead of traditional Powerpoint marathon sessions)
 - Trying to link the research to the actual political processes

Changes are inevitable, the question is to which degree scientists are willing and able to be active agents of change

For more details, check out the ALTERFOR Policy Brief
***"Reconsidering silviculture to meet challenges to
European forests"*** and other materials on:

<https://www.alterfor-project.eu>