

Title of the symposium:

The importance of coppice forests for landscape diversity and the factors influencing the proportion and distribution of young growth stages.

Detail of organizer(s):

Responsible

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Co-organizer

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Symposium abstract

COST Action FP1301 'EuroCoppice' Innovative management and multifunctional utilization of traditional coppice forests - an answer to future ecological, economic and social challenges in the European forestry sector has established the extent, status, continuing importance and potential for development of coppice as a management system for broadleaved woodlands across Europe. The outcome was a policy paper highlighting the unique characteristics of coppice woodlands and the contribution these make to rural livelihoods, the bio-economy, environment and cultural heritage. It suggested that coppice forests have become a neglected resource in recent times and highlighted the enormous untapped potential. Structural diversity in woodlands is important for both sustainable production forestry, ensuring that after crop harvesting there are replacement trees to provide for the future, as well as for many forms of wildlife some of which are highly protected. While these aspects have been well studied individually the distribution of woodlands managed rotationally as coppice, providing a continual resource of young growth in the landscape, how this has altered over time, and the impact of changing patterns has only recently begun to receive attention. There have been significant changes in woodland owner profile, management aims and market for products throughout Europe and beyond. These are generally considered to have contributed to the perceived decline in management and consequently reduced the availability of those with appropriate skills to carry out this work. However, this trend could equally be a change in management aim, perhaps away from timber production and towards provision of other ecosystem services such as protection (e.g. preventing soil erosion and increasing stability) wildlife conservation or recreation. Where there is coppice, with ownership willing to manage it on rotation, and demand for the product, this will only be realised if there are workers available to carry out the necessary tasks. Whatever the underlying reason the decline in coppice management is affecting the relative proportions of young stage growth in forests and so affecting the landscape in a number of ways. But how much does this matter? And if it is important how can it be addressed? This symposium will explore these questions, reflecting on the human factor in determining the relationship between woodland structure, ecology, and socio-economics.

How your symposia will improve landscape ecology science?

Landscape conservation is a current theme in many countries, with the phrase 'landscape scale' frequently used in relation to conservation and restoration projects as well as in landscape planning. However, what this means in practice is less clear with a recent paper

suggesting that our aim should be to make the conservation sector and its employees redundant (Kirby 2018). As ecologists it is rare that we engage directly and constructively with the commercial land-based sector. Could coppice management be an example of a mechanism to achieve the aims of landscape ecology and conservation, using humans as the 'tool' to deliver wider benefits as well as supporting livelihoods? This adds a new dimension to landscape ecology science by incorporating socio-economic factors and taking into account how these affect the landscape and is particularly pertinent in the current policy arena where ecosystem services and natural capital assessment are rising to the fore in decision making.

Broad thematic areas

Broad thematic areas 1st choice: Specific landscapes (i.e. Mediterranean landscapes, rice landscapes, ...)

Broad thematic areas 2st choice: Socio-economic-ecological systems

Free Keywords

coppice;forests;structure;diversity;multi-functionality;workforce;skills;adaptation

Outcomes of symposium

Special issue in a scientific journal (to be negotiated)

Notes

This symposium will build on the COST Action EuroCoppice which involved participants from over 30 countries.