

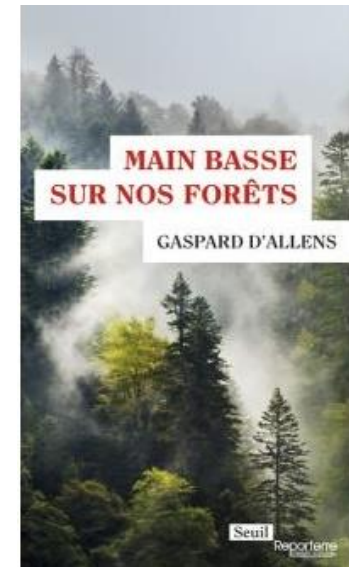
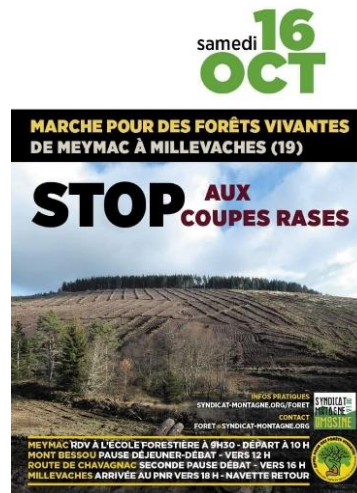
# ➤ Conflicts and Social Mobilization against Clearcutting. An Opportunity to Question the Forest Social Order?

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INRAE

Titre de la présentation

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## ➤ Context

- More troubles in French forests since 2015 ?
  - ≈ 10 books and web documentaries arguing about “*bad forestry*”
  - 63 online petitions against clearcutting
  - Adjournment of harvesting operations
- Denial of forest authorities – “*just an artefact, a few ecologists or ignorant urban dwellers whining in a very few localised areas*”



Stop clearcuts



Cutting down trees keeps the forest alive



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## ➤ The “CRREF” scientific expertise (2021-2023)

- Commissioned by 2 ministries and conducted by a consortium of 102 experts (GIP Ecofor/INRAE/IGN/ONF)
- Is clearcutting a social problem?
  - How to assess the level of protest?
  - How does clearcutting has been made visible and put on the agendas?
  - What are the arguments of the protagonists (clearcutting framing)?
  - Is this just a difficult period to get through, or a transformative moment that is here to stay?

**Social problem (SP) as a process** that goes through a *natural history* consisting of several stages (Spector & Kitsuse, 2001), built by claim-makers who call attention to a condition or behaviour that they perceive to be undesirable and that requires government action

Not a pathology nor a source of social disorder (Durkheim) but an opportunity for social change (Simmel)



# A socio-constructivist theoretical framework

Sources : Spector & Kitsuse (1977) Hilgartner, 1988, Gusfield, 2009; Cobb & Ross 1997, Bulle et al. 2021)

Sociology of public problem  
& social movements



Sociology of denial &  
doubt

« Claim-makers » (NGOs)

« Interest groups » (forest stakeholders)

1. Perception of troubles

Ignorance/Denial

2. Objectification & framing

Doubt/counter-expertise &  
counter-framing

3. Media campaign  
Recruitment of allies

Insiders mobilization

4. Agenda setting

Control of agenda setting

5. Change of norms  
regulations/practices

Defence of existing  
norms

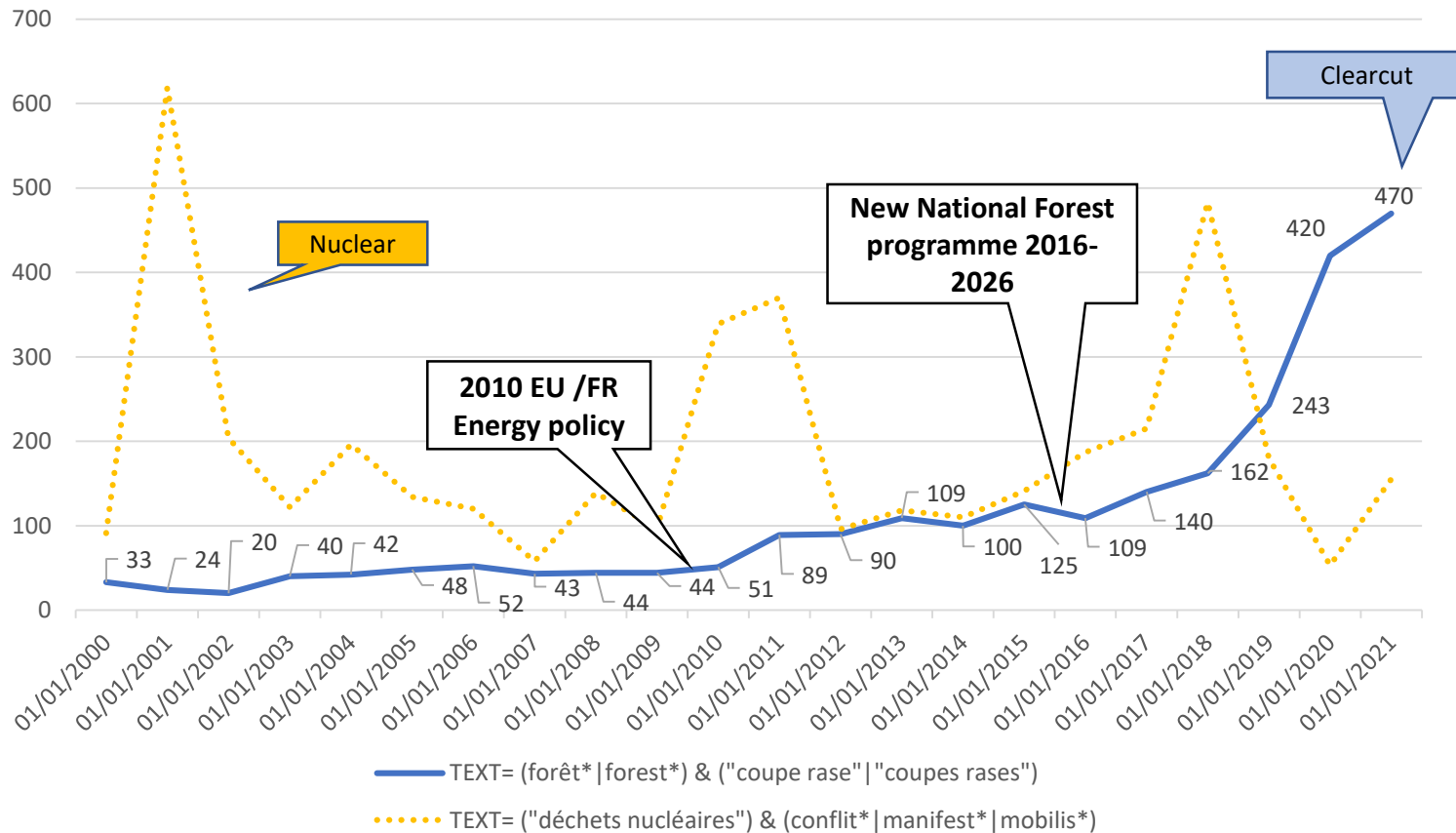
6. Closure  
Or Renewal

Weak concessions  
Postponement

## ➤ Protests : Not « *an artefact* » but a significant trend

Articles in local & national newspapers (2000-2021)

44 in 2010 / 470 in 2021



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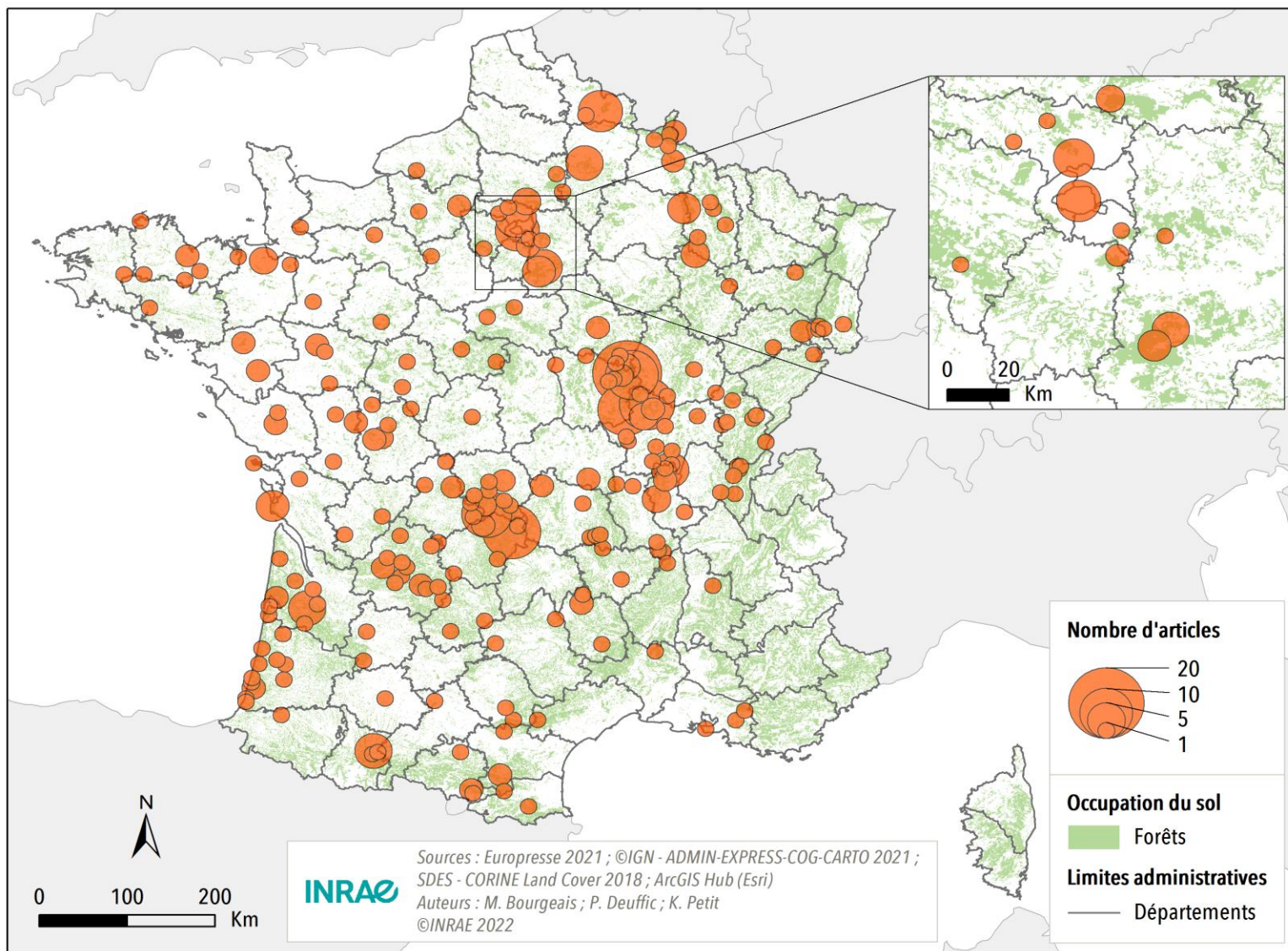
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Equation de recherche : TEXT= (forêt\* | forest\*)& TEXT= ("coupe rase" | "coupes rases") + Provenance : France n= 3308 articles  
PQR+PGN sur la période 2000-2021  
Source : Sources : Europresse, presse nationale et régionale, 2000-2021

# LOCALISATION OF PROTEST AGAINST CLEARCUTS IN 2021

Not in a few places but everywhere



# > ARGUMENTS FOR/AGAINST CLEARCUTS

## « claimsmakers »

## « Interets groups »

### Landscape impacts

- Disappearance of mature trees and forest atmosphere
- Surface of the clearcuts (no limit)
- Spatial concentration of clearcuts in the living environment

- Narrow definition of clearcuts
- Minimisation of surface (1% / year)
- Clearcuts are integrated into the landscape (« forest design »)

### Ecological impacts

- Biodiversity
- Microclimate
- Soil erosion and compaction /water pollution
- Carbone storage in the forest

- Patchwork of open landscapes and forest landscapes
- Adaptation of harvesting periods to weather conditions
- Carbone storage in buildings

### Economic impact

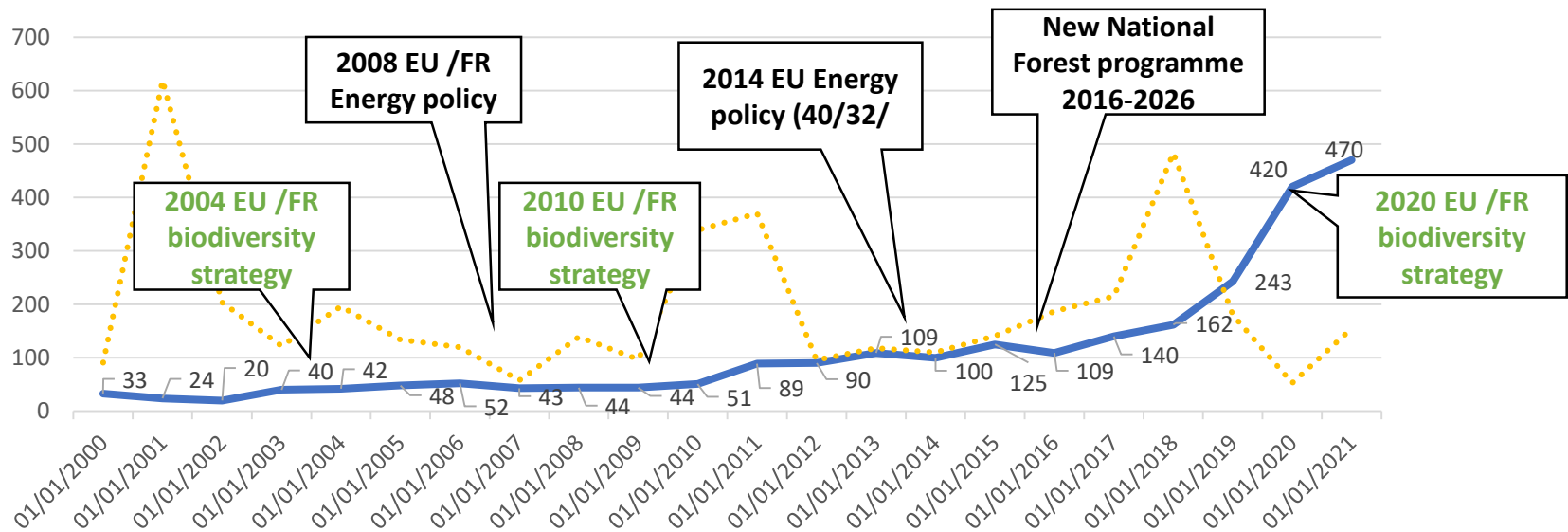
- Mechanization: From chainsaw to harvester,
- the burden of debt

- Mechanization : more secure, logistics cost optimisation

# ➤ Why a renewal of forest conflicts now ?

- Policy layering with incoherent goals

- EU/FR Energy & climate & forest policies (2008-2014-2016): => to increase wood mobilization/harvesting to supply wood energy to mitigate climate change
- Not compliant with EU/FR (2004/2010/2020) biodiversity strategies,
- In contradiction of the greening of everyday social practices and the new threats affecting the forest (climate change)





## ➤ Why a renewal of forest conflicts now ?

- A professionalisation of socio-environmental movements (Not just « a few ecologists or ignorant urban dwellers”)
  - Strong territorial anchoring of socio-environmental movements
    - not only an elite or« hobos » but also inhabitants
    - Maturity of social movements (30 years of protests)
    - Networking of protests at a multiscale level (local & national)
  - A strategic positioning : From NIMBY to NIABY (NIABY (Not In Anyone's Back Yard)
- Emergence of new « close-to-nature » forest professionals
- Amplification of media coverage thanks to NICTs
  - **Renewal** and convergence of struggles (XR, Youth for climate, and new forest ENGOS) ;
  - Key actors in debate arenas on forest with new allies (including foresters)



## ➤ From protests to transformative actions? Mixed results

- From depolitization to repolitization of forestry issues
- 3 parliamentary committees of inquiry about clear-cut ; political legitimation of the problem
- 2 law projects: a 2 ha threshold (rejected)
- A scientific expertise (Gip Ecofor)
- An inter-ministerial Conference on forest (“Assises de la forêt”) in 2021



# ➤ Limited evolution of regulations & norms

- The debate arenas are not the decision-making arenas
- Unachieved governance
  - Privileged access of forest professional organisations to the ministerial cabinet and regional political power institutions
  - Forest professionals' counterarguments promoting clearcuts are in line with forest policies, wood market key players & forest owners

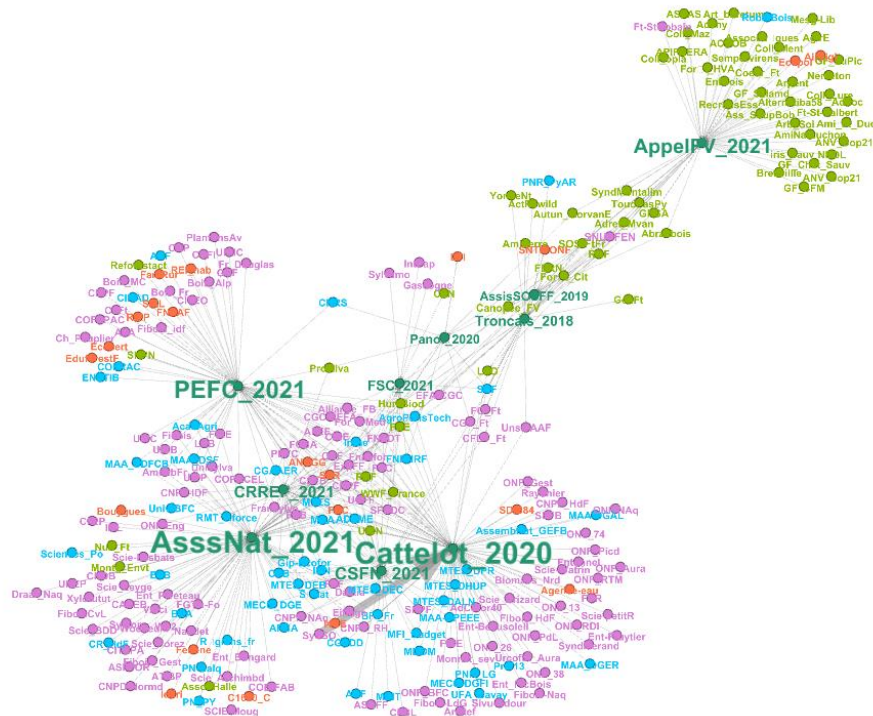


Fig – Participation of forest stakeholders to arenas of debate about forest strategy

Professional forestier	(46,32 %)
ONGE	(23,16 %)
Institution	(19,12 %)
Autres	(7,72 %)
Instance	(3,68 %)

## > CHANGE AND CLOSURE OR RENEWAL OF CONFLICTS ?

### • Minor changes in regulations since 2020

- No change in the Forest Code (national level)
- Some Forest Regional Schemes and French PEFC introduced a 10 ha threshold with some exemption for conifers planted forest (25 ha)
- A 5-ha threshold has been enacted in FSC France guideline
- A 2-ha threshold has been experimented in the Morvan Natural Regional Park for two years only
- No clearcuts in the public forests managed by ONF (Close-to-nature forestry) since 2017 but only in the Paris region



## ➤ STEP 5-6 : CHANGE AND CLOSURE OR RENEWAL OF CONFLICTS

### Change of everyday practices by some forest owners

- Self-limitation of clearcuts in space and time to avoid social stigmatisation
- Social capacity to understand and integrate new social demands because “Times have changed, and responses need to be innovative”
- Close-to-nature forest owners at the forefront of a “forestry in transition”
- Creation of Citizen’s Forest Ecological joint properties (GFCE)



## ➤ Conclusion & Research perspectives

- ENGOs' efficiency to put forestry issues on the media political agenda (step1-4)
- Forest stakeholders more efficient to steer policies (4-5)
- Collective action more transformative than public action
  
- Are forest conflicts also renewed in Europe?

