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# How do small forest owners articulate climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation in rural areas?

Mallory Gauvreau\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dynamiques et écologie des paysages agriforestiers – École nationale supérieure agronomique de Toulouse, Institut National Polytechnique (Toulouse), Institut National de Recherche pour l’Agriculture, l’Alimentation et l’Environnement, Ecole Nationale Supérieure Agronomique de Toulouse – France

## Résumé

Forests and trees are at the heart of climate change and biodiversity conservation debates. The articulation of these issues in discourses and public policies is ambiguous. For example, the forest renewal component of the "Plan France Relance" urged large forest owners to "invest to adapt their forests or to improve their contribution to climate change mitigation" without considering the relevance of the actions eligible for funding to biodiversity conservation, in comparison to less intrusive forest management approaches. In the face of these tensions and contradictions, articulating climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation has become a critical issue for small forest owners.

This PhD research focuses on small scale forest management in rural areas in the face of these challenges. Despite the relative neglect of small private forests in public policies, they nevertheless play an important role in rural areas. Beyond the significant forest cover that they overall represent across territories, they contribute to multiple ecosystem services locally, such as wood energy or landscape multifunctionality.

The aim of this research is to understand small forest owners' management decisions in the face of sometimes contradictory discourses about climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation. In this endeavour, we explore two processes that may contribute to shape small forest owners' environmental subjectivities: on the one hand, we analyse the influence of discourses and public policies related to forest adaptation, plantation and conservation; on the other hand, we consider the social relations that develop around small forests in rural areas.

We present an original analytical framework that we developed for our analysis that articulates the concept of commoning with a feminist political ecology approach. The framework stems from a literature review and will be illustrated with some insights from preliminary fieldwork conducted in south western France. Stemming from a critical examination of the work of Elinor Ostrom and her colleagues on commons, we draw on the concept of commoning to consider the creative, relational and productive nature of the commons. Social relations emerge from management or care "in common". A feminist political ecology perspective allows paying attention to daily practices, emotions and social relations through an intersectional analysis (gender, race, ethnicity, class, disability, etc.). It gives a critical eye to the concept of commoning by its attention to power relations at multiple scales. The articulation of these concepts, which have been barely used to study forest transitions in the Global

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\*Intervenant

North, into a conceptual framework, appears relevant to approach small European forests, which are more related to domestic and personal life than to productive considerations.

**Mots-Clés:** climate change adaptation, biodiversity, forest, commoning, feminist political ecology