

Considering social aspects of forest landscape restoration in Victoria

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Forest landscape restoration as social-ecological process

Forest landscape restoration internationally (de Jong et al. 2021)

- Large in scale, e.g. the Bonn Challenge
- Attempt to incorporate the social with the ecological

Social ecological systems theory (Ostrom 2009)

- Outcomes such as sustainability or forest health are a product of a complex array of social and ecological factors
- These can't be entirely controlled, knowledge is incomplete and uncertain, change is constant

Ecosystem restoration as social-ecological (Tedesco et al. 2023)

- Inclusive social ecological process
- Integrates diverse values, goals, practices, knowledges
- Attention to spatial and temporal scales

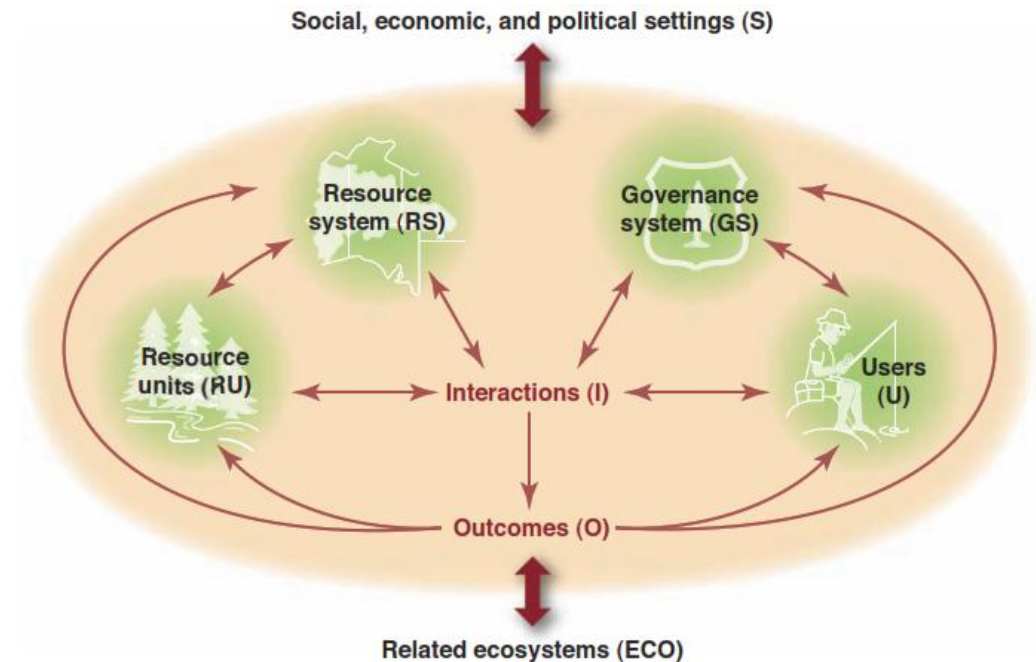
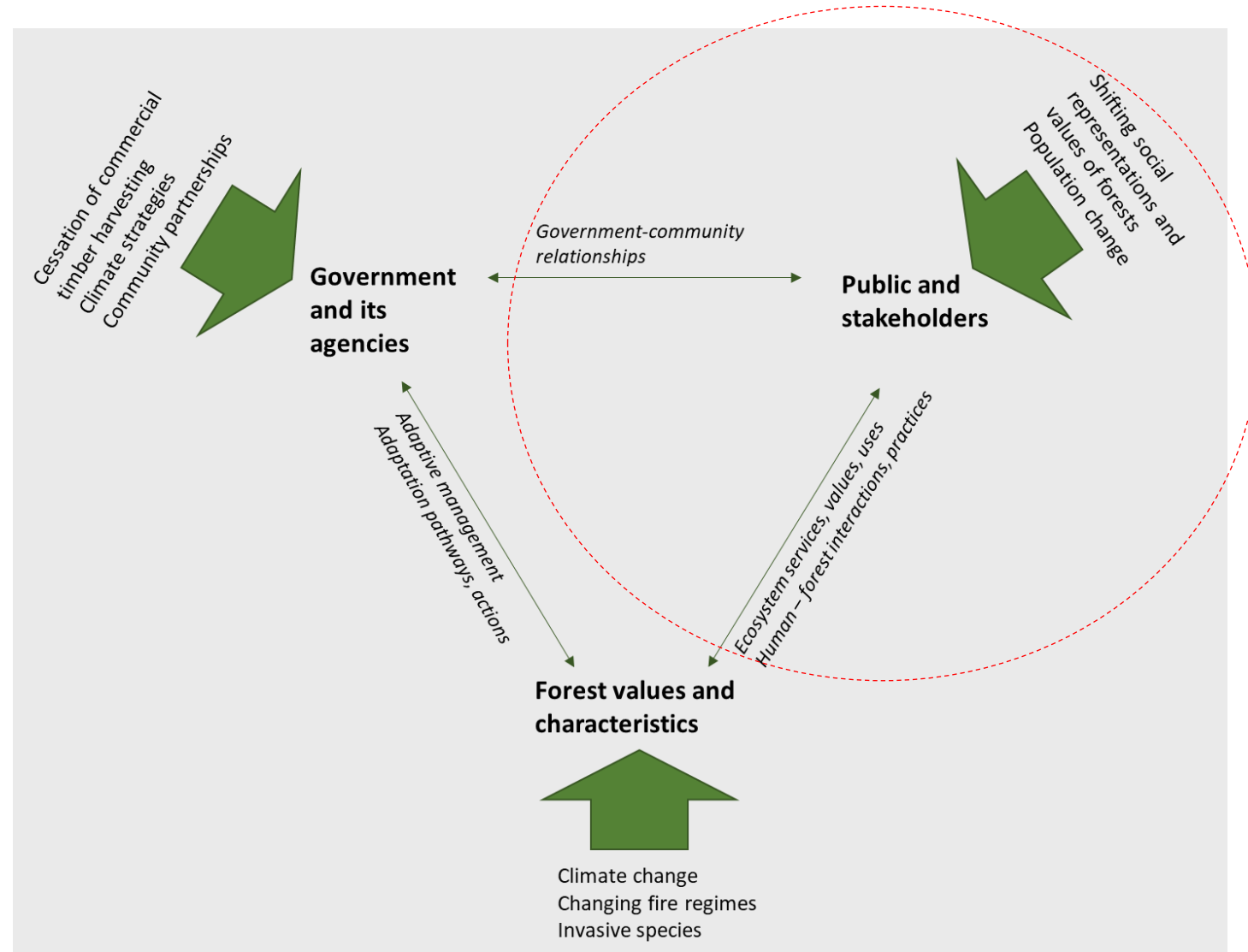


Fig. 1. The core subsystems in a framework for analyzing social-ecological systems.

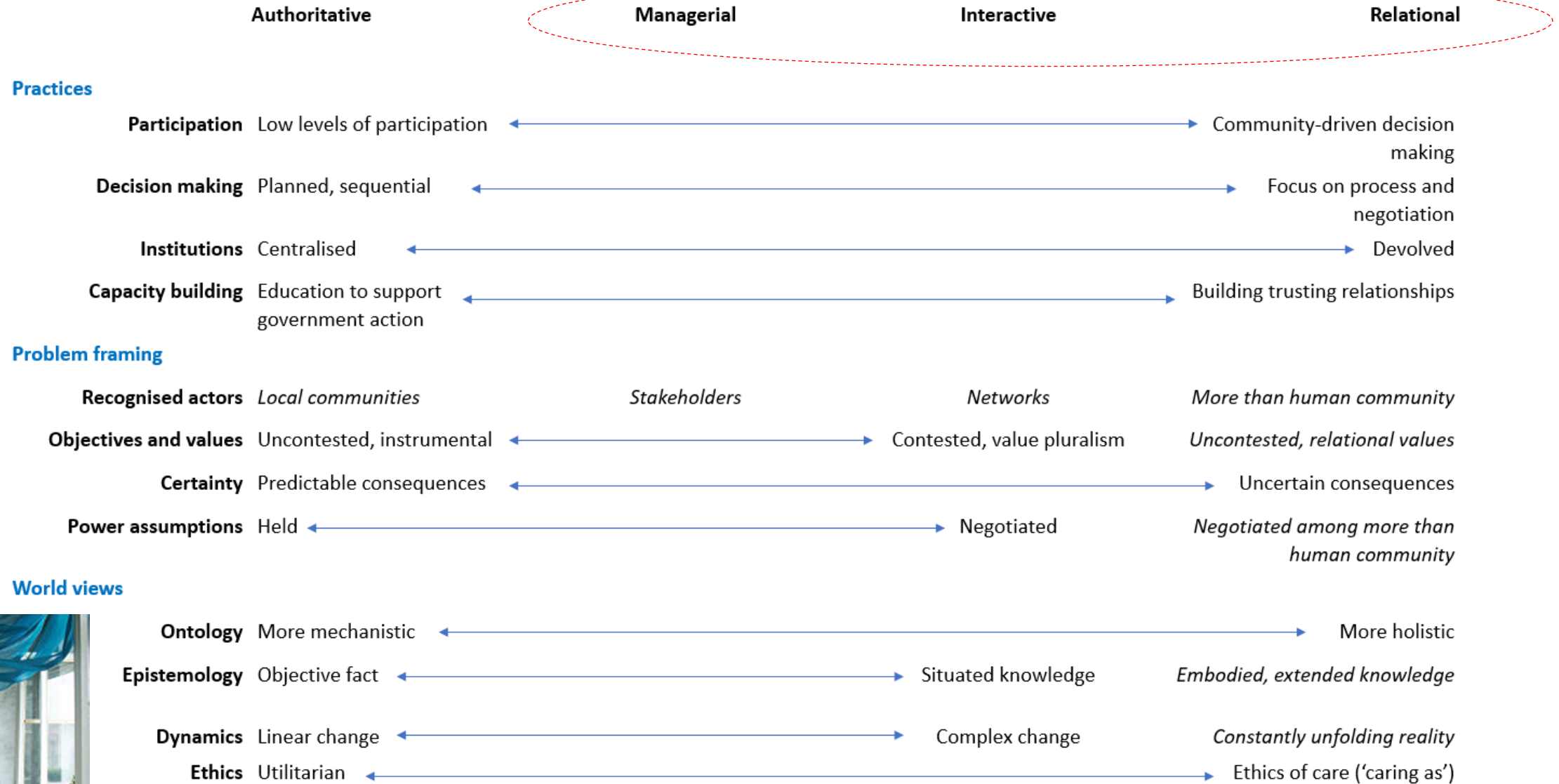
(Ostrom 2009)

The social ecological forest system in Victoria

- Changing forests
- Changing policy
- Changing government-community relationships
- Changing human forest relationships
- Changing social representations of forests



Typology of government-community relationships (Sapkota et al. 2024)

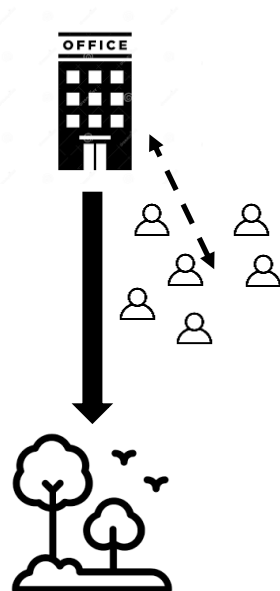


Three main types of government - community relationships

Managerial

Government staff draw on their professional knowledge of forests (e.g. of ecology, bushfires) to identify any problems with them. They plan works in the forest that they are confident will address the problems. Staff then consult with stakeholders about the plans before putting them in place. Government provides information to local residents (e.g. to teach them about bushfire risks).

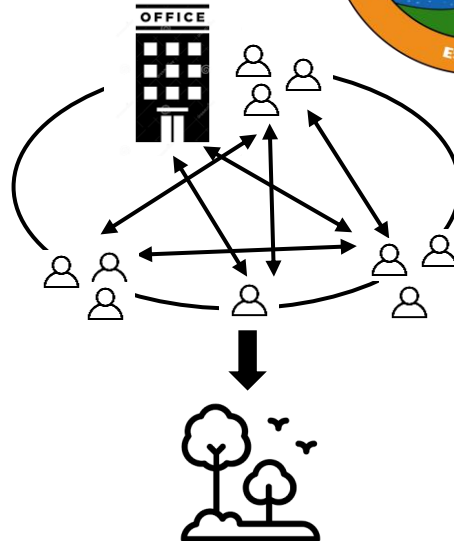
e.g.



Interactive

Government staff and others, use facilitation skills to connect people with different values and knowledge (e.g. landowners, various NGOs). As a group or network, they share experiences over time, and together respond to any emerging problems. Everyone learns (including government staff) through cycles of planning, implementing, monitoring and reflecting (social learning).

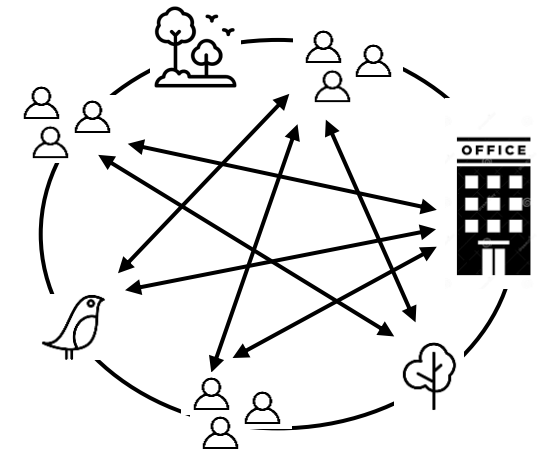
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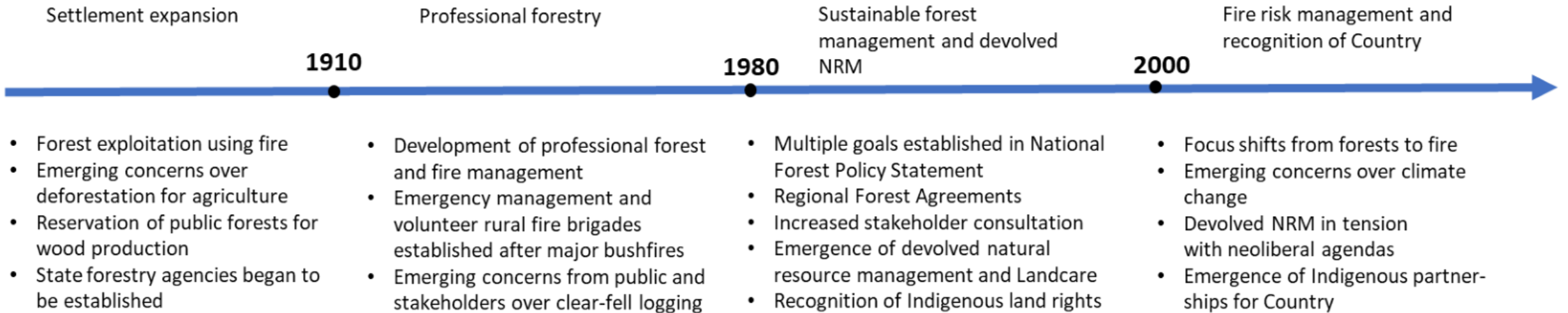
Relational

Government staff and others, draw on culture and wisdom to build relationships across species and worldviews. Through these relationships, plans for action emerge that are based in longstanding practices that may be adapted for new conditions. Such actions are holistic (e.g. linking ecology, family, and education) and in turn strengthen relationships.

e.g.



Forest and fire management in Australia



The emerging concept of human-forest relationships (Halla et al. 2023)

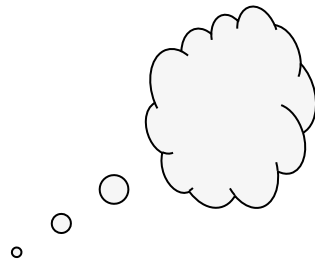
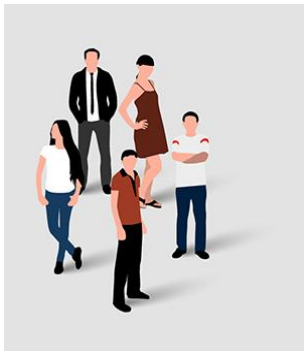
- Individual (experiences and meanings)
- Social (relationships ‘socialized’ by policies and other ideas)
- Cultural (forest related meanings are formed through culture)
- Institutions (shape and define forests)

Table 1. HNR dimensions (Flint et al., 2013: 210)	
Dimensions	Characteristics
Positionality dimensions	Anthropocentric/ecocentric Humans/nature above Humans part of/separate from nature
Character of bond dimensions	Intention of action Biophilia/biophobia Responsibility/rights Role of technology Spirituality Instrumental/intrinsic Connectedness/apathy
Understanding of nature dimensions	Mode of learning Fragility/resilience Predictability of nature

Social representations of forests and their management (Ford et al. forthcoming)

Social representations:

- Systems of values, norms, beliefs, practices (Fischer et al. 2012)



Shaping forests for benefits

- **HFR belief:** user (people manage forests)
- **HFR practices:** fuel management, production, thinning, restoration
- **Values:** security, hedonism (production attributes)
- **Trust knowledge of:** locals, forest workers
- **Expected forest:** managed

controlled burning ... very very beneficial



Defending forests from use



I would just really like to see a lot of money and effort ... put into stopping climate change

- **HFR belief:** defender (people threaten forests)
- **HFR practices:** 'leave it alone', advocacy
- **Values:** biospherism (intrinsic value)
- **Trust knowledge of:** environmental activists, volunteers
- **Expected forest:** old growth

Stewardship of forests

- **HFR belief:** steward (people are responsible for forests)
- **HFR practices:** care
- **Values:** biospherism, (intrinsic value, experiential attributes)
- **Trust knowledge of:** scientists among others
- **Expected forest:** healthy, old, good habitat



my kids ... one day they'll be custodians of their little part of the world

Participating in forests

for my country, and from my religion, some of the trees have religious value, like we worship the tree

we have to go back to caring for our land and being part of it

- **HFR belief:** participant (people are part of forests)
- **HFR practices:** collective care
- **Values:** altruism, benevolence
- **Trust knowledge of:** Indigenous people, professionals
- **Expected forest:** healthy relationships

Social representations – Shaping, Defending

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Social representations and support for various practices (Ford et al. forthcoming)

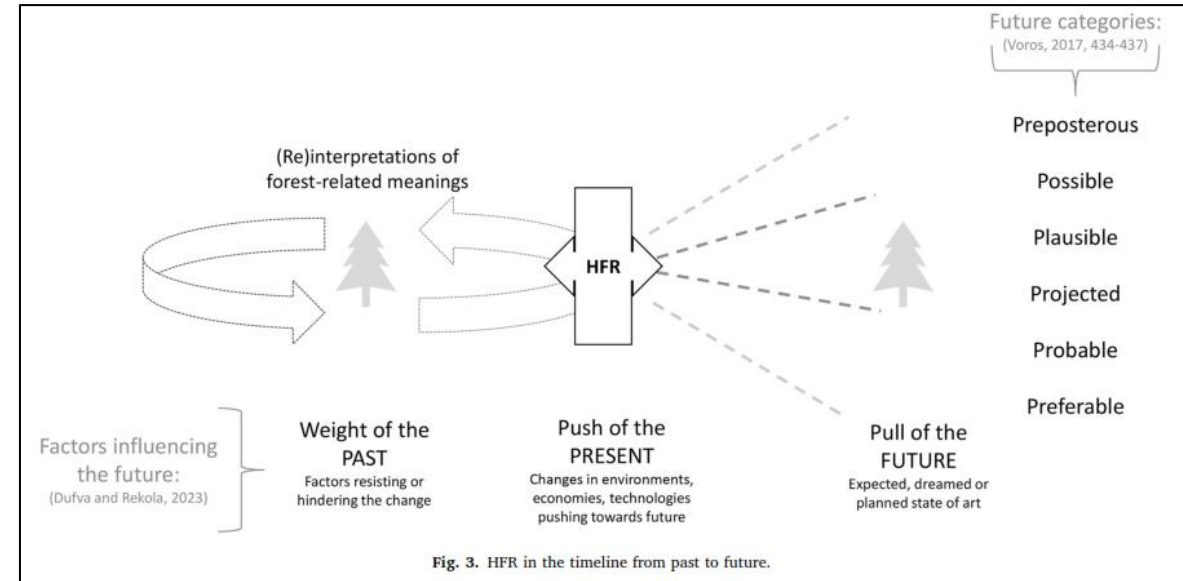
- Public support for low intensity interventions in forests, e.g. re-seeding after bushfires
- Support for higher intensity interventions (e.g. thinning) only in the Shaping forests social representation
- Public support for incorporating different knowledges
- Strong support for interactive and relational relationships in the Participating in forests social representation
- Support for managerial relationships only in the Shaping forests social representation

“We cannot just discount the different knowledges. And whether it’s indigenous, whether it's scientific ... that has to be taken into consideration... I'm looking for a ... very tailored and very intentional approach to this.”

“One is the science ... and the other is, you know, the wisdom that comes from practitioners and people who are knowledgeable in that area, which would include, obviously, the Aboriginal people”

The path forward for forest landscape restoration

- Consider opportunities for stewardship and participation
- There are likely to be multiple goals for forest restoration
- Emerging cultures of human-forest relationship
 - Care and experiences
- Government-community relationships
 - More interactive and relational
 - Changing roles for professionals
 - Businesses, NGOs, philanthropy



(Halla et al. 2023)