



EUROPEAN FOREST
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From history with tradition into a successful future

Osterwald Eglofs - a cooperative forest enterp-rise

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Forests in 2080: Biodiversity and adaptation to climate change in future forest management

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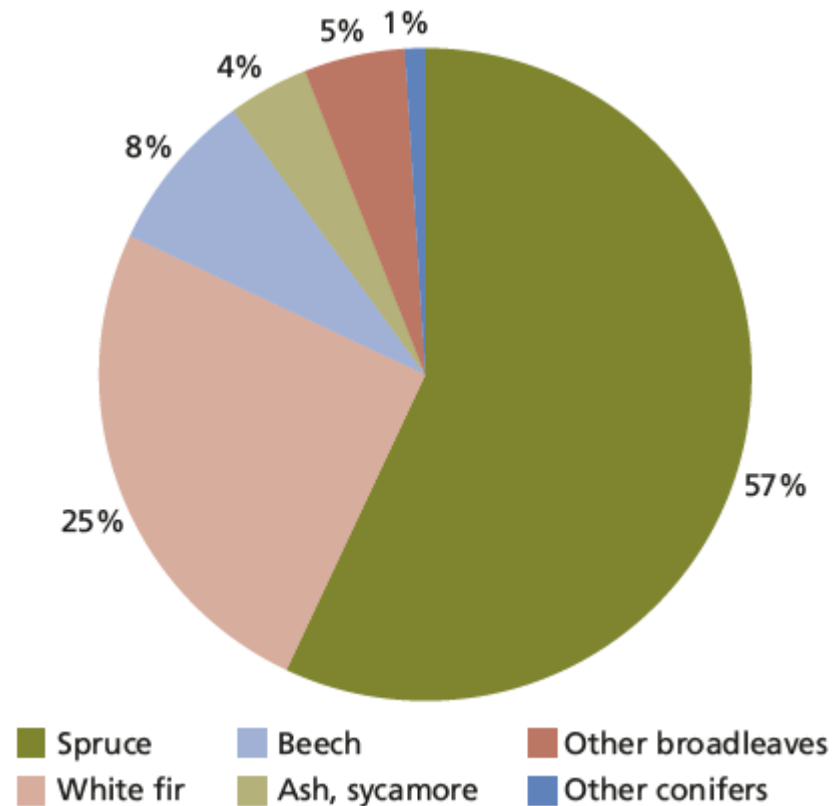
Eglofs Osterwald Cooperative – at the foothills of the Alps

- Located around Eglofs in the Argenbühl municipality, district of Ravensburg, Baden Württemberg, Germany
- Embedded in a rural setting (Eglofs is a small town of ~ 2000 inhabitants)
- Highly valued touristic area
- Osterwald
 - 261 ha
 - owned by 89 cooperative owners



Photo: Denis Rauch

The Osterwald Cooperative



Tree species distribution in Osterwald (% of total forest area); (Herkle, 2020)

- Submontane mixed mountain forest composed of Norway spruce, white fir and beech (75%)
- Ravine forest communities (10%), peatland and riparian forests (15%)
- More than 80% are Norway spruce and white fir
- Annual increment: 13 m³/ha (Norway spruce ~15 m³/ha, white fir >15 m³/ha)
- Growing stock: 515m³/ha
- Annual harvest: 13.5 m³/ha
- Regeneration on 60% of total forest area
- Natura 2000 area (100%)
- Important recreational forest

History and cultural heritage (City of Eglofs)

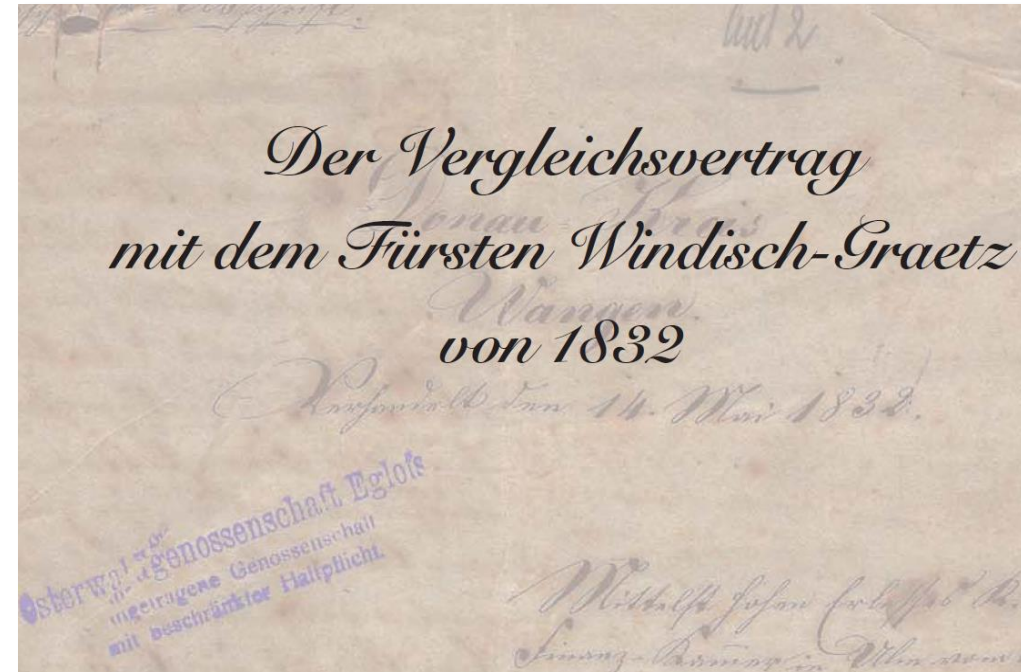


Photo: Wikipedia

- 13th century: Emperor Frederick II purchased large areas of land in this area (including Eglofs)
 - Weaken influence of princes and sovereigns
 - Give more independence to towns
 - Unique opportunity for Eglofs people to free themselves from the feudal lord (raised 1000 marks to support financing the purchase)
 - Eglofs received besides status of 'free imperial city', also that of 'free citizens' and even 'imperial immediacy'
 - Urge for freedom, fighting spirit, and energy were passed from one generation to the next

Founding of the Osterwald Cooperative

- In 1800s dispute with ruling royal patriarchs over traditional timber use rights
- “Stubborn” people of Eglöfs approached the Royal Württemberg Court
- Surprising agreement on 14th of May 1832, they obtained full ownership of a woodland area east of Eglöfs including all of its meadows
- Instead of dividing the property amongst the citizens, they far-sightedly founded the ‘Osterwaldgenossenschaft’ (Osterwald Cooperative) - the first of its kind



Osterwald Cooperative Board (taken from Jubiläumsschrift, 2007).

Statutes of the Osterwald Cooperative

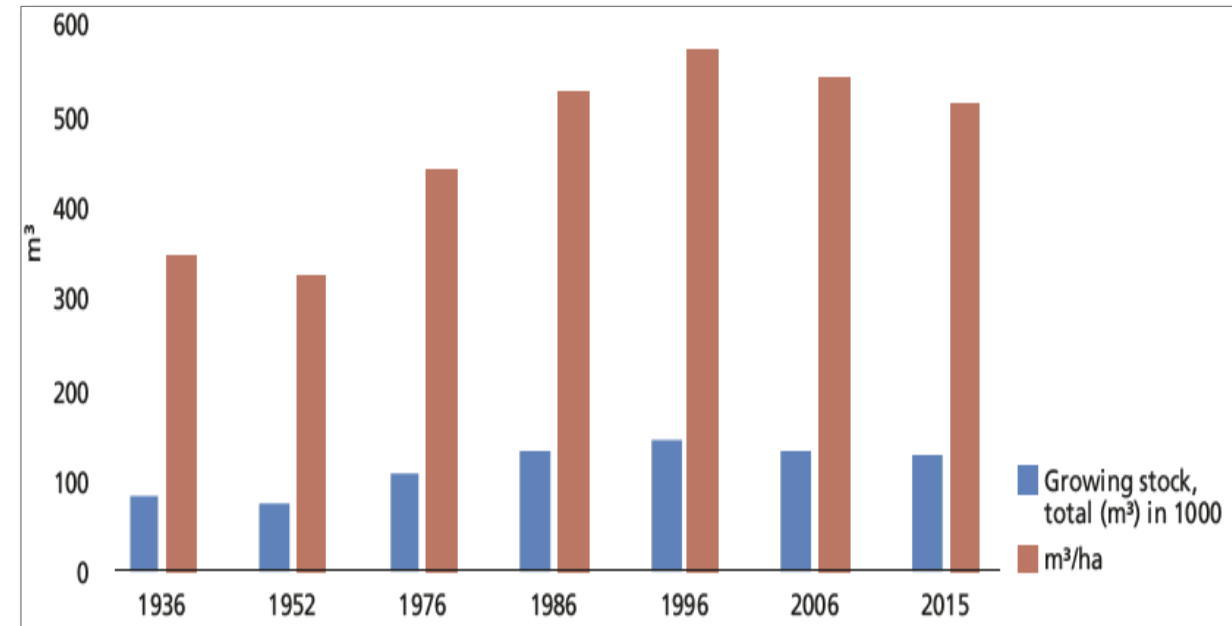
- Membership at the core of its statutes
 - limited to natural/legal persons who are owners of a building listed in the statutes and are Eglof residents
 - Membership not tied to persons/origin, but to residence!
- Property divided into corresponding number of non-material shares
 - Trade of the shares carefully regulated, only possible amongst the currently 89 cooperative members
 - Maximum 250 shares per member (~3 % of the total ownership)
- Annual assembly; Board recruited from its members (3 year rotation)
- External/internal attempts to break up the cooperative fended off
- Cooperative values long-term preservation of their forest, with aim of sustainable value added
- Economic, social, and ecological sustainability and the responsibility towards future generations is at the heart of the cooperative's philosophy



Osterwald Cooperative Board (taken from Jubiläumsfestschrift, 2007).

Forest management with foresight

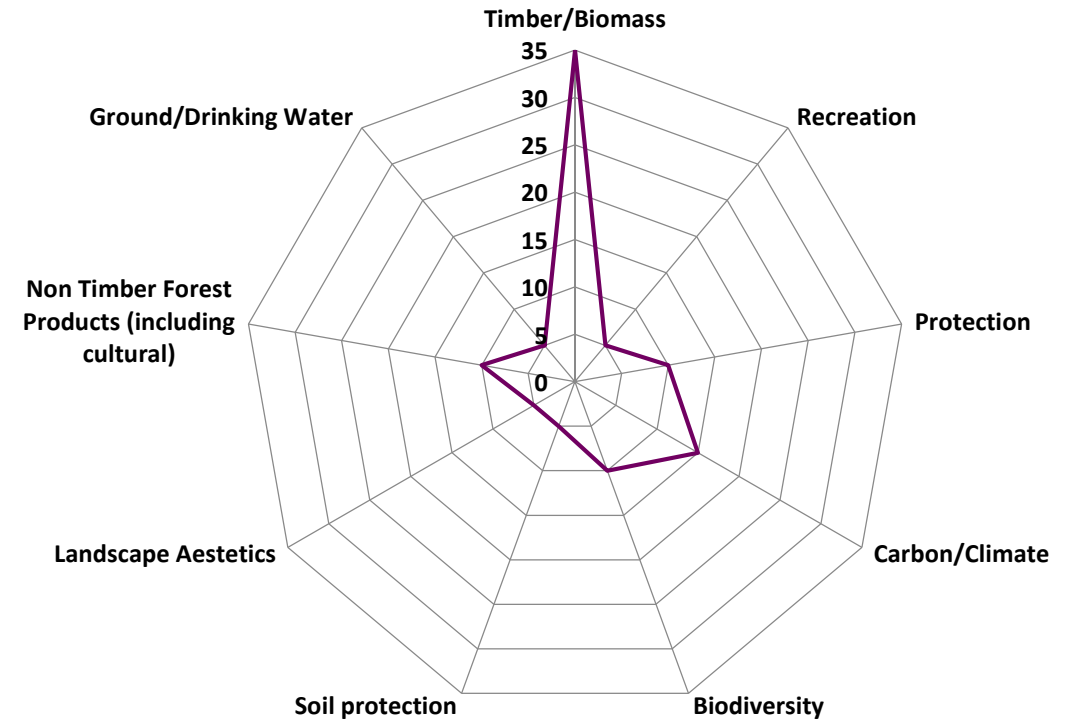
- Before the Osterwald Cooperative
 - often irregular, non planned timber use, lower wood quality
- Osterwald Cooperative forests
 - Goal: long-term, continuous, and sustainable use
 - Continuous cover forestry, plenter structures
 - Increasing growing stock
 - Favouring natural regeneration
 - Self regulated hunting
 - Explosion of diminished white fir regeneration
 - Increase of broadleaves
- World War reparation harvest and disturbance events e.g windstorm Wiebcke(1990) affected management regimes
- Return to forest principles; adapting growing stock



Development of growing stock in Osterwald (1936–2015). Blue bars: total growing stock (1000 m³); orange bars: (m³/ha); (Herkle, 2020)

Economic insights

- Annual dividend payment not disclosed to public – no secret that forest yields are substantial
- Professional support via service contract with responsible local forest enterprise
- Well-established network of local companies carrying out timber harvesting and wood sales
- Pride and satisfaction of all actors (cooperative members, forest enterprise, contractors) contributing to the success story



Osterwald Cooperative: Relative investment in workpower & finances (Herke, 2020: in Krumm et al., 2020).

Biodiversity in Osterwald

- Ecological significance of Osterwald to a large extent consequence of foresight in forest management
- Greater mouse-eared bat (*Myotis myotis*), Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*), green shield-moss (*Buxbaumia viridis*), black stork (*Ciconia nigra*), sundew (*Drosera*)...
- 100% of Osterwald are designated as Natura 2000
 - Done without consulting information on origin and history of Osterwald
 - Owners saw themselves having little to no influence on consequences of such a designation
 - Not helpful when it comes to accepting nature conservation and its aims



Photo: Wikipedia

Forest resilience

- Forests show us how we can best cope with challenges of climate change and disturbances
- Differentiated forest stands are more resilient
- To some extent, disturbances can support development towards desired forest stand structures and self-stabilising systems
- Osterwald Cooperative strives to continue its path of continuous cover forestry for mitigating impacts of climate change and disturbance events



Photo: Andreas Schuck

Continuity and change

- Organisational structure of the Osterwald has allowed for continuity
- Societal changes/demands affect Eglofs as do varying forest trends
 - However changes must be seen as meaningful
 - Well-manageable size of the cooperative, common sense, and democratically supported decision-making allow actions to be taken quickly and pragmatically



Photo: Josef Jehle

Future perspectives for Osterwald

- Natural conditions are favourable
- Forest structures and current silvicultural prescriptions offer numerous options also in view of climate change
- Organisational structures are in place and can easily be adapted
- Forest spirit and solidarity amongst cooperative members, their courage, level-headedness, wisdom and foresight in its thinking is key



Photo: Andreas Schuck

Personal note Uli Herkle (former forest manager Osterwald)



Photo: Andreas Schuck

“Continuous cover forestry is an attractive forest management approach, especially for such small scale cooperatives as it is for private forest owners.

Conversely, if such a forest could choose its owner, I am sure it would not hesitate to select the members of the Osterwald Cooperative.

Seen in this light, it is a perfect match, and that hopefully for many years to come.”



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Thank you!

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