



Université du Québec
à Rimouski

**COMPRENDRE LES EFFETS DES TRAITES, DE LA
STRUCTURE DE LA CANOPÉE, DU CLIMAT ET DU VENT
SUR LA PRODUCTIVITÉ FORESTIÈRE DANS L'EST DU
CANADA**

Thèse présentée

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PAR

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RÉSUMÉ

Il est maintenant reconnu que, sous certaines conditions, les forêts où l'on retrouve une plus grande diversité peuvent être plus productives que les forêts monospécifiques. C'est pourquoi les propriétés des forêts diversifiées suscitent un engouement croissant parmi les gestionnaires et écologistes forestiers. Une inquiétude majeure est la perspective de voir la biodiversité s'étioler, entraînant une diminution du fonctionnement et des services écosystémiques dont la productivité est un élément clé. Toutefois, certains éléments qui influencent les relations diversité-productivité font toujours l'objet de débats, notamment la meilleure approche pour inclure la diversité dans l'évaluation de la productivité forestière, ainsi que l'effet de la structure de la canopée, du climat et du vent. L'exploration des relations diversité-productivité en lien avec ces éléments présente donc un intérêt considérable pour comprendre comment ils interagissent et influencent la dynamique forestière. Ces nouvelles connaissances pourraient permettre d'améliorer la gestion des forêts en permettant de maximiser la productivité tout en préservant la biodiversité. Ceci revêt une importance particulière dans le contexte des changements climatiques, où l'accent est de plus en plus mis sur les stratégies de gestion adaptative des forêts qui permettraient à l'écosystème de se rétablir sur le plan fonctionnel, soit par la résistance, la résilience ou la réaction. Ainsi, l'objectif général de cette thèse était de mieux comprendre l'effet de la diversité des arbres, à travers l'étude des traits, de la structure de la canopée, des variations climatiques et du vent sur la productivité forestière dans les forêts de l'est du Canada. Pour ce faire, ce projet décompose la problématique en trois questions principales : *(I)* Comment la structure des traits des communautés d'arbres influence-t-elle la productivité forestière et chacune de ses composantes, soit la croissance des arbres survivants, le recrutement de nouveaux arbres et la mortalité des arbres ? Et quelle influence a le climat dans ces relations ? *(II)* Quel rôle joue la structure des traits des communautés d'arbres dans la détermination de la structure de leur canopée ? *(III)* Quel est l'impact du vent sur la productivité forestière en lien avec la structure des traits et de la canopée des communautés d'arbres ? À l'aide de techniques de modélisation avancées à partir de données provenant du Gouvernement du Québec et de celui de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador, plusieurs aspects clés ont été étudiés. En se concentrant sur la diversité fonctionnelle des arbres, il a été montré que les traits des arbres influencent différemment la productivité forestière. Certains traits étaient étroitement liés à la productivité forestière nette, tandis que d'autres étaient associés à la croissance des arbres survivants, au recrutement de nouveaux arbres ou à la mortalité. Des interactions entre le climat et la structure des traits ont également été observées. Certaines communautés d'arbres réagissaient positivement à l'augmentation des températures et des précipitations, tandis que d'autres montraient des réponses contrastées, suggérant que la diversité fonctionnelle ne garantit pas toujours une meilleure adaptation face aux changements climatiques. Puis, en explorant la relation entre les traits et la structure de la canopée, il a été montré que les métriques de la végétation

dérivées du lidar, utilisées comme indicateurs de la structure de la canopée, peuvent être prédites à partir de données traditionnelles d'inventaire forestier. De plus, les forêts à dominance feuillue, avec des arbres ayant une faible masse foliaire par unité de surface, présentaient des différences dans la configuration de leur canopée par rapport aux forêts avec une forte composante de conifères. Cela indique que les traits des arbres peuvent influencer la façon dont la canopée se forme et se structure. Enfin, l'impact du vent sur la productivité a été analysé. Les résultats ont montré qu'une charge de vent accrue diminuait la croissance et le recrutement et augmentait la mortalité, laissant supposer des changements dans l'allocation des ressources et une réduction de la productivité forestière nette. Il a aussi été observé que les interactions entre le vent et les traits des arbres exerçaient une influence variée sur les composantes de la productivité. Finalement, bien que les liens entre la structure de la canopée et le vent aient été restreints, des différences notables dans les modèles d'accumulation de biomasse entre les communautés avec une canopée homogène et hétérogène ont été relevées. Ainsi, l'apport des traits, de la structure de la canopée, des stress environnementaux et ceux des contraintes biomécaniques par le vent sur le développement des forêts de l'est du Canada ont été départagés. Les résultats obtenus offrent plusieurs opportunités pour des recherches futures visant à approfondir la compréhension des relations diversité-productivité, en plus d'ouvrir la voie à des stratégies de gestion forestière plus adaptatives et durables afin d'atténuer les effets des CC sur les écosystèmes forestiers.

Mots clés : Approche des traits et indices de diversité fonctionnelle ; Changements climatiques ; Charge et vitesse moyenne du vent ; Communautés forestières d'arbres ; Métriques de végétation dérivées du lidar ; Modélisation par forêts aléatoires ; Patrons d'accumulation de biomasse ; Productivité forestière nette, croissance, recrutement et mortalité ; Relevé lidar aéroporté ; Structure de la canopée.

ABSTRACT

It's widely recognized that under specific circumstances, forests with greater diversity can be more productive than monospecific forests. For this reason, species diversity has seen an increase in interest by forest managers and ecologists alike. A major concern is the prospect of biodiversity loss, leading to a decline in ecosystem functioning and services, of which productivity is a key element. However, several elements impacting diversity-productivity relationships remain contentious, including how to include diversity in forest productivity evaluation, as well as the effect of canopy structure, climate, and wind. Therefore, exploring diversity-productivity relationships in relation to these elements hold significant interest, offering insights into their interplay and their influence on forest dynamics. This newfound knowledge could enhance forest management practices, aiming to optimize productivity while preserving biodiversity. This becomes especially critical in the context of climate change, where there's a growing emphasis on adaptive forest management strategies that facilitate ecosystem recovery, either through resistance, resilience, or response. Thus, the overall objective of this thesis was to deepen the understanding of the effect of tree diversity, through the analysis of traits, canopy structure, climatic variations, and wind on forest productivity within the forests of Eastern Canada. For this purpose, the thesis tries to answer three main questions: *(I)* How does the trait structure of tree communities influence forest productivity and each of its components—survivor growth, recruitment of new trees and mortality—while considering the influence of climate on these relationships? *(II)* What role does the trait structure of tree communities play in determining their canopy structure? *(III)* What is the impact of wind on forest productivity in relation to the traits and canopy structure of tree communities? Using advanced modelling techniques and data analysis from the Government of Quebec and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, several key aspects were investigated. An examination of the functional diversity among trees has revealed that the traits have varying impacts on forest productivity. Some traits were closely tied to net forest productivity, while others influenced survivor growth, recruitment, or mortality. Interactions between climate and trait structure were also observed. While certain tree communities positively responded to higher temperatures and increased precipitation, others showed contrasting responses, suggesting that functional diversity might not consistently ensure enhanced better adaptation to climate change. The relationship between traits and canopy structure then showed that lidar-derived vegetation metrics, used as proxy for canopy structure, can be predicted from traditional forest inventory data. Furthermore, forests dominated by broadleaf species, with low leaf mass per area, showed distinct differences in canopy structure when compared to conifers dominated forests, suggesting that tree traits can influence the way the canopy is configured. Ultimately, the study delved into the wind's influence on productivity. The results showed that higher wind loads decreased survivor growth and tree recruitment, and increased tree mortality, hinting at shifts in

resource allocation patterns and an overall decline in net forest productivity. Additionally, interactions between wind and tree traits were identified, impacting each forest productivity components in different ways. Finally, while the correlation between canopy structure and wind was limited, substantial differences in biomass accumulation patterns were found between communities with homogeneous and heterogeneous canopies. Thus, the contribution of traits, canopy structure, environmental and wind-induced biomechanical stresses to forest development in eastern Canada was assessed. The results offer several opportunities for future research aimed at further understanding diversity-productivity relationships, as well as paving the way for more adaptive and sustainable forest management strategies to mitigate the effects of CC on forest ecosystems.

Keywords: Airborne laser scanning ; Biomass accumulation patterns ; Canopy structure ; Climate change ; Forest tree communities ; Functional diversity traits and indices ; Lidar-derived vegetation metrics ; Net forest productivity, survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality ; Random-forest modeling ; Wind load and wind speed.

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LISTE DES ABRÉVIATIONS ET DES ACRONYMES

Utilisées dans le texte en français :

ALS	Lidar aéroporté (pour <i>Airborne Laser Scanning</i> en anglais)
CB	Croissance brute
CC	Changement climatique
CN	Croissance nette
CWM	Moyenne pondérée des communautés (pour <i>community-weighted mean</i> en anglais)
DHP	Diamètre à hauteur de poitrine
FD	Indices de diversité fonctionnelle (pour <i>functional diversity</i> en anglais)
FDis	Indice de dispersion fonctionnelle (pour <i>functional dispersion</i> en anglais)
FDis.Leaf	Indice de dispersion fonctionnelle calculé avec des traits foliaires (c.-à-d., la taille des feuilles, la longévité des feuilles, la masse foliaire par unité de surface et la teneur en azote par unité de masse foliaire)
FDis.Nmass	Indice de dispersion fonctionnelle calculé avec le trait de la teneur en azote par unité de masse foliaire
GIEC	Groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat
LMA	Masse foliaire par unité de surface (<i>leaf mass per area</i> en anglais)

MRNF	Ministère des Ressources naturelles et Forêts du Québec
PFN	Productivité forestière nette
PP	Production primaire
PPB	Productivité primaire brute
PPN	Productivité primaire nette
QC	Québec
SLA	La surface foliaire spécifique (rapport de la surface foliaire au poids sec de la feuille)
ST	Surface terrière
TNL	Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador
TOPIC	Base de données sur les traits au Canada (pour <i>Traits of Plants in Canada</i> en anglais)

Utilisées dans le texte en anglais :

3D	Three-dimensional
AIC	Akaike information criterion
ALS	Airborne laser scanning surveys
BA	Basal area
CC	Climate change
CClos	Canopy closure

CD	Canopy density
CHH	Canopy height heterogeneity
CHM	Canopy height models
CPor	Canopy porosity
CR	Crown ratio
CWM	Community-level weighted means of trait values
CWM.LMA	Community-weighted mean of leaf mass per area
CWM.SeFreq	Community-weighted mean of seed frequency
CWM.ToID	Community-weighted mean of drought tolerance
D	Gini–Simpson index
DBH	Diameter at breast height
DEM	Digital elevation model
FC	Feature contributions
FD	Functional diversity
FDis	Functional dispersion index
FDis.3	Functional dispersion index using three (i.e., ectomycorrhiza, wood decay resistance, and vegetative reproduction)
FDis.5	Functional dispersion index using five traits (i.e., average maximum height, frequency of a good crop year, drought tolerance, root depth, and leaf longevity)

FDis.Leaf	Functional dispersion index based on leaf traits (i.e., leaf size, leaf longevity, leaf mass per area and nitrogen content per leaf mass unit)
FDis.Nmass	Functional dispersion index based only on the leaf nitrogen content trait
FGR	Functional group richness
FR	Functional redundancy index
GAP	Gap area
GCD	Gini coefficient of diameters
GOV	Goodness-of-visualization
H	Hopkins statistic
H'	Shannon–Wiener diversity index
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LCW	Largest crown width
LMA	Leaf mass per area
Lidar	Light detection and ranging
M	Tree mortality
MSE	Mean square error
N	Species richness
NFP	Net forest productivity
NL	Newfoundland

Nmass	Nitrogen content per leaf mass unit
PSP	Permanent sample plots
Q	Rao's quadratic entropy index
QC	Quebec
QMD	Quadratic mean diameter
R	Tree recruitment
R²	Variance
RCP	Representative concentration pathway emission scenario
RF	Random-forest
rfe	Recursive feature elimination algorithm
RMSE	Root mean square error
RI	Rumple index
SeFreq	Seed frequency
SG	Survivor growth
ToID	Drought tolerance
TOPEX	Topographical exposure
TPI	Topographic position index
TWI	Topographic wetness index
VD	Variance of diameters
WEI	Wind exposition index

WSI

Wind shelter index

zq

Percentile of height distribution

INTRODUCTION GÉNÉRALE

1. ÉTAT DES CONNAISSANCES

1.1 Mise en contexte

Au cours des dernières années, l'intérêt des gestionnaires et écologistes forestiers pour les propriétés des forêts diversifiées s'est accru pour diverses raisons. Parmi les préoccupations grandissantes, figure celle de voir la perte de biodiversité engendrer une dégradation du fonctionnement et des services des écosystèmes, dont la productivité est un élément clé (Ammer, 2019; Hooper et al., 2012). En effet, il a été montré que la productivité forestière diminuerait si la richesse spécifique était réduite (Liang et al., 2016). Par ailleurs, la diversité spécifique contribue à l'accroissement de la production de biomasse, à l'amélioration de la rentabilité économique et à l'intensification de la séquestration du carbone (Ammer, 2019; Kelty, 2006). La promotion de la diversité des arbres est également considérée comme une stratégie prometteuse pour augmenter la résistance, la résilience et la capacité de réponse des forêts aux changements climatiques (CC) et aux perturbations naturelles (Pretzsch, Forrester, et al., 2015; Jactel et al., 2017, 2018; Ammer, 2019; Looney et al., 2021). À la suite d'un grand nombre d'études dédiées à la question, l'hypothèse selon laquelle il existe, dans certains cas, une relation positive entre la diversité des espèces d'arbres et la productivité est à présent reconnue (Paquette & Messier, 2011; Zhang et al., 2012; Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015; Liang et al., 2016; Tatsumi, 2020). Plusieurs éléments permettent d'expliquer l'augmentation de la productivité des peuplements forestiers les plus diversifiés, soit les interactions interspécifiques, la disponibilité des différentes ressources du milieu, la meilleure utilisation de ces ressources par la partition des niches écologiques, ou encore, l'augmentation de la densité des arbres (Richards et al., 2010; Forrester, 2014, 2015;

Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015). Cependant, les relations diversité–fonctionnement de l'écosystème ont été l'objet de peu d'études en forêt naturelle. La plupart des études faites sur le sujet portent sur des mélanges d'espèces précis sous des conditions particulières (Condés et al., 2013; Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015) et les espèces boréales ne sont que très rarement incluses (Lei et al., 2009; Paquette & Messier, 2011). Il est alors difficile de généraliser les résultats à tous les peuplements, car la composition et les conditions des sites varient d'une étude à l'autre (Paquette & Messier, 2011).

L'identification des éléments de la diversité qui sont essentiels pour le fonctionnement des écosystèmes ainsi que la manière appropriée de les quantifier sont encore aujourd'hui l'objet de débats, témoignant de la complexité de ce sujet d'étude. Les traits et indices de diversité fonctionnelle, plutôt que la richesse spécifique, ont été introduits dans le but de mieux comprendre comment les différents assemblages d'espèces exploitent les ressources du milieu et influence la productivité (Lavorel et al., 2008; Laliberté & Legendre, 2010; Ricotta & Moretti, 2011; Bello et al., 2021; Dias et al., 2021). Cependant, il reste beaucoup d'incertitude concernant les traits ou les indicateurs de diversité les plus pertinents pour évaluer la productivité des forêts. Il apparaît également que d'autres éléments s'avèrent cruciaux pour comprendre les interactions entre la diversité et le fonctionnement des écosystèmes. Entre autres, il est de plus en plus évident que la complémentarité spatiale des houppiers dans une communauté d'arbres (c.-à-d., l'ensemble des populations qui vivent sur un même territoire et qui interagissent (Morin, 2009)) jouent un rôle important dans les effets bénéfiques de la diversité sur la productivité des forêts (Pretzsch, 2014; Sapjanskas et al., 2014; Jucker et al., 2015; Forrester, 2017; Williams et al., 2017; Cattaneo et al., 2020). Finalement, très peu d'études en lien avec les relations diversité–fonctionnement de l'écosystème prennent en considération les conditions environnementales (c.-à-d., les facteurs abiotiques et le climat), qui sont d'importants déterminants de la productivité forestière et de la composition des forêts (Paquette & Messier, 2011). Parmi ces éléments, le vent est important à considérer puisqu'il exerce sur la croissance des arbres plusieurs contraintes d'ordre mécanique et physiologique. Néanmoins, l'incorporation du facteur vent

dans les recherches concernant la productivité forestière demeure peu courante puisqu'elle peut s'avérer complexe.

De multiples aspects demeurent ainsi méconnus concernant l'influence que peuvent avoir les traits, la structure de la canopée et les conditions climatiques telles que la température, les précipitations et le vent, sur la productivité forestière. L'exploration des relations diversité-productivité en lien avec ces éléments présente donc un intérêt considérable pour comprendre comment ils interagissent et influencent la dynamique forestière. Ces nouvelles connaissances pourraient permettre d'améliorer la gestion des forêts en permettant de maximiser la productivité tout en préservant la biodiversité. Ceci est d'autant plus pertinent dans le contexte des changements climatiques, où l'accent est de plus en plus mis sur l'aménagement forestier qui permettrait à l'écosystème de se rétablir sur le plan fonctionnel, soit par la résistance (c.-à-d., l'absence de changement), la résilience (c.-à-d., le retour à l'état initial après une perturbation) ou la réaction (c.-à-d., la stratégie d'adaptation) (Thompson et al., 2009; Hörl et al., 2020). Puisque la biodiversité se révèle être un sujet d'une grande importance pour l'avenir de nos forêts, il est impératif de continuer à approfondir ces sujets.

1.2 La diversité

L'analyse de la diversité des écosystèmes ainsi que des interactions entre les différentes espèces et leur milieu permet de comprendre l'importance, à la fois globale et locale, de la composition, de la structure et de la fonction des écosystèmes, sans oublier la présence de points chauds de biodiversité. La diversité biologique des espèces ou biodiversité s'intéresse notamment au nombre, à l'abondance/rareté et à l'endémicité des espèces et peut être calculée à de nombreuses échelles, que ce soit pour une unité de gestion forestière, pour l'ensemble d'une zone forestière, au niveau régional, national ou même global. En mesurant la diversité des espèces, il est possible d'identifier les forêts présentant une diversité d'espèces plus ou moins grande, comparer la diversité selon différentes approches de gestion ainsi que d'observer son évolution au fil du temps. Ainsi, la question de la diversité suscite

un vif intérêt non seulement chez les écologistes, mais également chez les gestionnaires et aménagistes forestiers.

L'influence de la diversité sur le fonctionnement des écosystèmes et les services qu'ils rendent est au centre des préoccupations en écologie forestière depuis de nombreuses années. Le fonctionnement des écosystèmes se rapporte aux propriétés et aux processus biologiques et physiques inhérents à ces systèmes, comme la génération de biomasse. Les services, quant à eux, englobent tous les bénéfices que la biosphère retire des écosystèmes, comme la production de nourriture, la gestion des eaux de ruissellement, la pollinisation et bien d'autres (Mouquet et al., 2010). C'est pourquoi l'aménagement écosystémique des forêts est désormais encouragé comme moyen de garantir le maintien de la biodiversité et la viabilité des écosystèmes. Ainsi, la diversification d'espèces d'arbres dans les aménagements forestiers est de plus en plus mise de l'avant pour améliorer la résistance, la résilience et la capacité de réponse des forêts face aux CC et aux perturbations (Pretzsch, Forrester, et al., 2015; Jactel et al., 2017, 2018; Ammer, 2019; Looney et al., 2021), d'augmenter la capacité de stockage du carbone (Ameray et al., 2021; Díaz et al., 2009; Liu et al., 2018; Naeem et al., 1994; Poorter et al., 2015; Tilman et al., 1997) et de favoriser la biodiversité forestière (c.-à-d., végétale, animale et fongique) (Eisenhauer et al., 2019; Isbell et al., 2011; Schuldt et al., 2018; Tomao et al., 2020; Viljur et al., 2022).

1.3 La productivité forestière

Dans la littérature, les termes production, productivité, croissance et rendement sont souvent utilisés indifféremment. Puisqu'à travers ce projet de thèse nous souhaitons comprendre les effets de la diversité sur la productivité forestière, il est important de différencier ces termes. Le terme production primaire (PP) est utilisé pour traiter le processus de production en général et est défini comme étant la conversion de l'énergie solaire en matière organique par la photosynthèse des plantes ou des microorganismes (Hopkins, 2003; Pretzsch, 2009). La productivité primaire signifie la quantité de photoproduction sur une période donnée pour une zone donnée. Ainsi, la productivité primaire brute réfère à la

biomasse totale produite par la photosynthèse sur une période de temps donnée pour une zone donnée (PPB, $t\ ha^{-1}\ an^{-1}$) et la productivité primaire nette est définie comme la biomasse restante après soustraction des pertes par la respiration autotrophe (PPN, $t\ ha^{-1}\ an^{-1}$) (Hopkins, 2003; Pretzsch, 2009). La PPN équivaut donc à la croissance brute (CB, $t\ ha^{-1}\ an^{-1}$). La croissance nette (CN, $t\ ha^{-1}\ an^{-1}$) quant à elle est obtenue en soustrayant la perte continue de biomasse (c.-à-d., perte de feuilles, de branches et de racines au cours de la croissance d'une plante) et la perte d'individus entiers, qui meurent ou sont éliminés au cours de la croissance du peuplement (Pretzsch, 2009). Finalement, le rendement est défini comme l'ensemble de la biomasse produite et accumulée à partir de l'établissement du peuplement (Pretzsch, 2009). Le rendement brut inclut l'ensemble de la biomasse éphémère aérienne et souterraine (c.-à-d., litière de feuilles, le renouvellement des racines fines et la mortalité des arbres), alors que le rendement net ne concerne que la partie actuelle et restante de la production de biomasse (Pretzsch, 2009). Les définitions de la productivité, de la croissance et du rendement dans le domaine des sciences forestières concernent essentiellement le bois des tiges quantifié à l'aide de la hauteur des arbres et de leur diamètre à 1,3 m (Pretzsch, 2009). La productivité se rapporte alors à l'accroissement en surface terrière (ST, c.-à-d., superficie à 1,3 m, de la section transversale du tronc d'un arbre ou somme de la superficie de la section transversale des troncs d'arbres d'un peuplement forestier (OQLF, 2023)), en volume ou en biomasse d'un organisme ou d'une population pendant une période définie (Hopkins, 2003). Enfin, la diversité peut avoir un impact positif sur la productivité primaire, ce qui peut conduire à un rendement supérieur (*overyielding* en anglais). En règle générale, on parle de rendement supérieur lorsque la production de biomasse dans un peuplement mélangé dépasse la productivité attendue sur la base des rendements des espèces contributrices lorsqu'elles sont cultivées en monoculture (Pretzsch, 2009; Forrester & Pretzsch, 2015; Pretzsch et al., 2017).

La croissance, le recrutement et la mortalité sont trois composantes importantes de la productivité forestière. Ces différents processus sont inclus différemment selon l'échelle à laquelle on travaille. Lorsque l'on s'intéresse à l'échelle de l'arbre, ces processus peuvent être étudiés de façon distincte, alors qu'à l'échelle du peuplement, la croissance, la mortalité

et le recrutement des arbres individuels sont agglomérés dans la variable étudiée (p. ex., la surface terrière, le volume ou la biomasse). Ainsi, la différence en surface terrière, volume ou biomasse entre deux inventaires correspond à un gain dû à la croissance et au recrutement, moins une perte due à la mortalité, mais ne sont pas établis de façon spécifique lorsque l'on s'intéresse aux caractéristiques à l'échelle du peuplement. En effet, il y a très peu d'études qui se sont intéressées à l'influence de la diversité sur, à la fois, la croissance, le recrutement de nouveaux arbres et la mortalité qui sont pourtant les principaux moteurs de la dynamique des communautés forestières.

1.3.1 Processus naturels d'évolution des peuplements forestiers

L'étude de la productivité des forêts se concentre très souvent sur la croissance en diamètre et en hauteur des arbres. Cependant, la productivité est également influencée par le recrutement et la mortalité au sein des écosystèmes forestiers, ces derniers étant parmi les facteurs les plus prédictifs de la richesse spécifique (Stephenson et al., 2011). Les modèles de productivité et croissance contiennent des composantes qui sont des représentations simplifiées de la dynamique des écosystèmes forestiers. Les composantes à inclure dans les modèles dépendent de leurs objectifs. Ainsi, pour étudier les effets de la diversité sur la productivité forestière, il est intéressant d'inclure non seulement la croissance, mais également le recrutement et la mortalité, puisque ces processus ont un impact non négligeable au sein des peuplements (Pretzsch et al., 2023; Schneider et al., 2016). Par exemple, la mortalité d'un seul individu peut mener à une forte diminution en ST, tandis que le recrutement, principalement de petits arbres, ne contribuera à court terme que faiblement à la ST (Schneider et al., 2016). Il est toutefois important de considérer le recrutement, car celui-ci pourrait être déterminant dans la succession écologique des peuplements. Il est ainsi essentiel d'examiner attentivement la croissance, le recrutement et la mortalité dans les communautés d'arbres pour appréhender de manière approfondie l'impact de la diversité sur la productivité.

Plus précisément, la croissance est d'abord définie comme l'augmentation des dimensions d'un ou de plusieurs individus dans un peuplement sur une période de temps donnée (p. ex., en $\text{m}^3 \text{ha}^{-1} \text{an}^{-1}$) (Vanclay, 1994). Elle est déterminée par l'équilibre entre l'assimilation du carbone suite à la photosynthèse dans les feuilles et la respiration qui se produit dans les tiges, le feuillage et les racines (Schneider et al., 2016). Cependant, puisque la croissance d'une tige dépend de l'allocation de ressources vers la tige, elle n'est qu'une fraction de la productivité nette de l'écosystème (Franklin et al., 2012). La croissance des arbres dépend donc du compromis dans l'allocation des ressources à leurs différentes composantes. En règle générale, les arbres vont allouer leurs ressources aux composantes responsables de l'absorption du facteur le plus limitant dans le milieu (Bloom et al., 1985; Mccarthy & Enquist, 2007; Thornley, 1972). Les individus qui se retrouvent en milieu pauvre pourraient ainsi favoriser la croissance de leur système racinaire et ceux en milieu ombragé pourraient accroître leur production de feuilles (Mccarthy & Enquist, 2007; Schneider et al., 2016). Cependant, ce compromis dépend aussi des facteurs abiotiques et des conditions climatiques, de l'âge des individus et de la densité du peuplement.

La régénération et le recrutement jouent également un rôle crucial dans les écosystèmes forestiers et plusieurs éléments du milieu sont importants pour ces processus, entre autres, pour la germination et le développement des jeunes tiges (p. ex., luminosité, eau, température et substrat) (Khurana & Singh, 2001; Lambers et al., 2008; Schneider et al., 2016). Par définition, la régénération est le renouvellement naturel ou artificiel d'un peuplement forestier, alors que le recrutement fait référence à un individu qui atteint une taille spécifique. Ces deux concepts sont reliés et leurs différences se retrouvent dans les étapes de développement d'un individu donné, de la semence au stade de jeune tige (Vanclay, 1994). Puisque les données nécessaires à la modélisation de la régénération peuvent être difficiles à obtenir, les modèles de recrutement sont souvent favorisés pour mesurer le renouvellement des peuplements forestiers. Ces modèles sont utilisés, dans un premier temps, pour prédire la probabilité d'observer de nouveaux arbres d'une espèce ou d'un groupe d'espèces donné, et dans un deuxième temps, de prévoir le nombre de tiges, dans une placette donnée, qui atteint la taille minimale à considérer (p. ex., 1,3 m de hauteur, 5 cm de diamètre à hauteur de

poitrine, etc.) (Fortin & Langevin, 2012). Les variables les plus utilisées pour prédire le recrutement sont la productivité du site, la densité du peuplement (p. ex., surface terrière, nombre de tiges et indices de compétition), la composition ainsi que le temps écoulé depuis la récolte (Vanclay, 1994).

Finalement, la mortalité est importante pour les prévisions de productivité (Pretzsch et al., 2023). Au fur et à mesure que les arbres grandissent, leurs besoins en ressources et en espace augmentent. Si les ressources ne sont plus suffisantes pour tous les individus, l'autoéclaircie se produit et le nombre d'arbres par unité de surface diminue (Reineke, 1933; Yoda, 1963; Pretzsch, 2009). Ce phénomène est bien connu et décrit la mortalité naturelle dans un peuplement à la suite d'une augmentation de la densité et de la compétition entre les arbres. La mortalité d'un arbre dans un peuplement influence alors la pression de compétition et la disponibilité des ressources, ce qui modifie la dynamique des processus écosystémiques et ainsi la productivité du peuplement résiduel (Pretzsch et al., 2008). Lorsqu'un arbre meurt, la densité du peuplement diminue laissant ainsi plus d'espace et de ressources aux individus restants. Il a été démontré que la mortalité dans les peuplements les plus denses était plus élevée (feuillus purs et mélangés), mais restait plus légère dans les peuplements purs de conifères ce qui se reflète par une plus grande productivité (Binkley, 1984). Ces résultats ont cependant été attribués à la grande densité de ces peuplements et non à l'effet du mélange d'espèces. En plus de la densité et la compétition, la mortalité peut être due à plusieurs autres facteurs, soit au vieillissement, à des ravageurs, à une maladie, au climat ou aux interventions humaines. La taille de l'arbre peut également être un bon prédicteur de la probabilité de mourir d'un individu (Fortin et al., 2008). Cependant, une grande partie de la variabilité dans les modèles de prédiction de volume a été liée à l'incertitude dans l'estimation de la mortalité (Stage & Renner, 1988). Il est ainsi difficile de prévoir la mortalité, et ce, même en peuplement régulier et/ou monospécifique. Lorsque la disponibilité des ressources diminue au point d'être en dessous des exigences minimales des organismes, cela entraînera éventuellement leur mort (Vanclay, 1994). Les patrons de mortalité varient en fonction de l'échelle, de la fréquence et de la sévérité des événements affectant la population, ce qui doit être considéré lors de la modélisation.

1.4 Étude des traits

Au cours des dernières décennies, les études sur la diversité en lien avec le fonctionnement de l'écosystème ont de plus en plus laissé de côté l'approche de la richesse spécifique pour l'approche des traits (Reiss et al., 2009). En effet, en donnant le même poids à chaque espèce présente, la richesse spécifique ne prend pas en compte les liens entre les espèces, ce qui donne à cette approche une valeur plus limitée (Potter & Woodall, 2014). Les études basées sur les traits ont considérablement transformé la modélisation de la distribution des espèces et de la dynamique des populations (Dawson et al., 2021). Les traits, qui varient entre les individus et les espèces, reflètent et déterminent l'utilisation des ressources et aide ainsi le fonctionnement de l'écosystème (Hooper et al., 2005; Reiss et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2017).

L'étude des traits provient du domaine de l'écologie des communautés végétales (Kunstler et al., 2016; Shipley et al., 2016), mais est de plus en plus répandue dans l'étude d'autres types d'organismes (Dawson et al., 2019, 2021). Il est ainsi important de définir ce qu'est un trait puisqu'il semble y avoir un désaccord généralisé au sein des écologistes. Un trait peut être défini comme : « *une caractéristique mesurable (morphologique, phénologique, physiologique, comportementale ou culturelle) d'un organisme individuel qui est mesurée soit au niveau individuel ou à un autre niveau d'organisation pertinent* » (Dawson et al., 2021). De plus, en suivant Violle et al. (2007), il est conseillé d'utiliser « valeur du trait » lorsqu'il s'agit de mesures (p. ex., 20 cm) et « trait » lorsqu'il s'agit du concept (p. ex., la taille) (Dawson et al., 2021). Finalement, l'utilisation du terme « fonctionnel » est redondante, puisqu'il est difficile de démontrer qu'un trait donné n'a pas de fonction à un certain niveau. Cela signifie que tous les traits peuvent être fonctionnels à un certain degré, de sorte que le concept de « trait fonctionnel » est superflu (Dawson et al., 2021).

Mais quels sont les avantages à utiliser cette approche en écologie ? L'un des principes fondamentaux de la théorie des traits est qu'ils peuvent être utilisables de manière générale

grâce à leur utilisation au-delà des espèces ainsi qu'entre plusieurs taxons (Kraft et al., 2015; Shipley et al., 2016; Dawson et al., 2021). On obtient alors une lecture plus universelle de la diversité, puisqu'on ne parle pas d'espèces, mais bien de caractéristiques communes entre les organismes étudiés. Cela est particulièrement intéressant pour les études couvrant de vastes territoires. Il devient alors possible d'estimer une fonction à partir de caractéristiques mesurables au niveau d'un organisme. Par exemple, si l'on s'intéresse à la fécondité, il est possible d'utiliser la masse des graines des espèces végétales étudiées. Il est ainsi intéressant de comprendre le rôle de chacun des organismes dans l'écosystème pour assurer sa pérennité (Reiss et al., 2009). Cela implique une étude approfondie du rôle des traits chez les différentes espèces pour saisir comment les changements de richesse spécifique et de composition influencent les propriétés des écosystèmes (Hooper et al., 2005). Les traits vont effectivement déterminer les réponses des espèces aux changements environnementaux et révéler les différentes stratégies propres à chaque espèce en termes de survie, d'acquisition et d'allocation de ressources à leurs différents compartiments, ainsi que les mécanismes à l'origine des modifications du fonctionnement des écosystèmes (Westoby et al., 2002; Cornelissen et al., 2003; Díaz et al., 2004; Wright et al., 2004; Díaz et al., 2013; Boukili & Chazdon, 2017).

1.4.1 Structure des traits d'une communauté

Il est possible d'étudier la structure des traits d'une communauté en la décrivant avec différents indicateurs, principalement la moyenne pondérée des communautés (CWM, pour *community-weighted mean* en anglais) ainsi qu'avec divers indices de diversité fonctionnelle (FD, pour *functional diversity* en anglais) (Lavorel et al., 2008; Laliberté & Legendre, 2010; Ricotta & Moretti, 2011; Bello et al., 2021; Dias et al., 2021). En utilisant des traits individuellement, la CWM décrit la mesure centrale d'une communauté, faisant de cette mesure un indice puissant et simple qui représente les traits des espèces les plus dominantes dans une communauté (Bello et al., 2021; Dias et al., 2021). Les valeurs de CWM reflètent en quelque sorte la stratégie optimale locale d'une communauté, en tenant compte des espèces présentes et des conditions environnementales (Shipley, 2010; Enquist et al., 2015;

Warton et al., 2015; Muscarella & Uriarte, 2016). En effet, la CWM peut être utilisée pour quantifier les changements dans les valeurs moyennes des traits dus à la sélection environnementale pour certains traits (Ricotta & Moretti, 2011). Ainsi, les espèces dont les valeurs de traits sont les plus proches des valeurs de CWM devraient avoir une valeur sélective (pour *fitness* en anglais) plus élevée, en étant les plus abondantes et contribuant ainsi fortement à sa valeur (Shipley et al., 2011; Muscarella & Uriarte, 2016). Il a également été démontré que la CWM pouvait avoir un pouvoir explicatif plus élevé pour expliquer les variations de productivité d'une communauté par rapport aux indices FD (Díaz et al., 2007; Ruiz-Jaen & Potvin, 2011; Finegan et al., 2015; Chiang et al., 2016; Bongers et al., 2021; Ma et al., 2022). Par définition, cet indice peut être affecté par la variation de très peu d'espèces, il doit donc être interprété avec précaution (Bello et al., 2021; Dias et al., 2021). Cependant, même si plusieurs auteurs considèrent la CWM comme étant une mesure de la diversité fonctionnelle, d'autres ne le font pas, car le terme diversité est lié au concept de variété ou de variabilité, alors que la CWM est plutôt une mesure de tendance centrale, comme la moyenne ou la médiane (Lavorel et al., 2008; Ricotta & Moretti, 2011).

Puisqu'ils prennent en compte la redondance fonctionnelle et le chevauchement des niches écologiques, les indices de diversité fonctionnelle (FD) sont plus efficaces que l'utilisation de la richesse spécifique pour étudier les relations diversité–productivité (Loreau et al., 2001; Paquette & Messier, 2011; Ruiz-Jaen & Potvin, 2011). Plusieurs indices pour mesurer la FD ont été développés, comme l'indice de dispersion fonctionnelle (FD_{is} , pour *functional dispersion* en anglais) (Laliberté & Legendre, 2010). Cet indice calcule la distance moyenne des traits des espèces individuelles au centroïde de toutes les espèces présentes dans une placette. Il peut également prendre en compte l'abondance des espèces en déplaçant le centroïde vers les espèces les plus abondantes et en pondérant la distance des espèces individuelles par leur abondance relative (Laliberté & Legendre, 2010). L'étude menée par Paquette et Messier (2011) a proposé d'utiliser l'indice FD_{is} plutôt que la richesse spécifique pour expliquer les mécanismes responsables derrière l'hypothèse de la complémentarité des niches écologiques. L'utilisation de cet indice permet d'étudier les mécanismes de complémentarité dans une communauté en montrant que certains assemblages d'espèces

peuvent être plus divers que d'autres, puisque les espèces qui s'y retrouvent sont moins en compétition et utilisent de manière plus complète les ressources du milieu (Paquette & Messier, 2011).

Il reste toutefois beaucoup d'incertitude par rapport à la meilleure façon de considérer la diversité, par rapport au choix des indices FD et des traits que l'on utilise pour les calculer. Un grand nombre d'indices FD ont été introduits dans les dernières décennies (Rao, 1982; Botta-Dukát, 2005; Mason et al., 2005; Ricotta & Szeidl, 2006; Villéger et al., 2008; Laliberté & Legendre, 2010; Schleuter et al., 2010; Ricotta & Moretti, 2011) et les bases de données sur les traits des plantes sont de plus en plus fournies (Aubin et al., 2020; Kattge et al., 2011; Bönisch & Kattge, 2019; Kattge et al., 2020). Par conséquent, la méthode adéquate pour intégrer la diversité dans l'analyse de la productivité forestière, la sélection des indices FD et des traits utilisés, n'est pas aussi évidente qu'on pourrait le penser. Paquette et Messier (2011) ont trouvé que le meilleur prédicteur de la productivité des arbres avec leurs données était l'indice FD_{is} basée sur trois traits associés à la reproduction, la croissance et la succession (c.-à-d., la masse des semences, la densité du bois et la hauteur maximum). Ces résultats supportent le schéma à trois axes stratégiques proposé par Westoby (1998). Effectivement, grâce à ce schéma, la stratégie d'une espèce peut être décrite par sa position dans un volume formé par les trois axes, soit la surface foliaire spécifique (SLA, c.-à-d., rapport de la surface foliaire au poids sec de la feuille), la hauteur à maturité et la masse des semences (Westoby, 1998). Ces traits couvrent toutes les stratégies d'histoire de vie qui contribuent à la valeur sélective global des plantes, soit l'acquisition des ressources, la compétition/survie et la reproduction. Ainsi, en suivant le schéma proposé, il est possible de classer les traits disponibles selon différents axes stratégiques. En effet, si plusieurs traits sont liés aux mêmes stratégies écologiques ou font partie d'un groupe qui caractérise des fonctions similaires, on peut dire qu'ils font partie du même axe de stratégie végétale ou de groupe fonctionnel (Wright et al., 2007). Il est ensuite possible de calculer des indices FD avec des combinaisons différentes de traits.

1.4.2 Choix des traits et difficultés

Cependant, une question persiste : comment choisir les traits lorsque l'on étudie les relations diversité-productivité ? Même si plusieurs études démontrent un lien entre la diversité et la productivité des forêts, on en connaît peu sur l'importance des traits que l'on choisit. Un aspect notable est que plusieurs éléments semblent être limitants pour l'obtention de données sur les traits des arbres.

Premièrement, les données sur les traits doivent être rassemblées à partir de sources publiées pour chacune des espèces présentes dans les régions étudiées. Pour étudier les relations diversité-productivité, les traits choisis doivent être reliés à la productivité des forêts. Entre autres, la densité du bois (g cm^{-3}), la masse des semences (mg), la hauteur maximum (m) et le rapport masse/surface foliaire (g m^{-2}) en font partie (Paquette & Messier, 2011; Paquette et al., 2015, 2017). Plus précisément, la densité du bois et la masse des semences sont liées aux stratégies d'histoire de vie (c.-à-d., de croissance, survie et reproduction), qui regroupent des informations qualitatives et quantitatives sur la biologie des organismes étudiés, ainsi qu'à leurs relations à l'environnement (Chave et al., 2009; Paquette et al., 2017), le trait de la hauteur maximum des arbres est aussi associé aux stratégies d'histoires de vie, en plus d'être associé à la stratification verticale et à l'utilisation de la lumière (Paquette et al., 2017) et finalement, le rapport masse/surface foliaire est quant à lui relié à l'acquisition de ressources ainsi qu'au fonctionnement global de la plante (Wright et al. 2004 ; Aubin et al. 2007 ; Garcià de la Riva et al. 2016).

Travailler à petite échelle géographique (c.-à-d., sur un grand territoire) avec plusieurs espèces s'avère également être un défi en matière de disponibilité des données déjà publiées sur les traits. Des données sont disponibles pour les traits les plus communs (c.-à-d., feuillage, reproduction, morphologie), mais selon les espèces étudiées, très peu de données plus spécifiques sont disponibles (Paquette & Messier, 2011). Ainsi, il est habituel de travailler avec des moyennes de traits par espèce, ce qui ne permet toutefois pas de tenir compte de la variabilité intraspécifique et d'évaluer les changements dans les valeurs de ces traits le long de gradients environnementaux. Les tendances spécifiques à l'espèce peuvent ainsi être cachées derrière ces moyennes. Il est donc impératif d'aborder les résultats acquis avec une

certaine réserve, puisque ces derniers reflètent une moyenne et les valeurs des traits pourraient être faussées en faveur des régions densément peuplées et facilement accessibles. De plus, certaines classes de traits sont sous-représentées, notamment les traits liés au gel ou les traits souterrains qui sont particulièrement laborieux à quantifier. En conséquence, la sélection des traits étudiés dépend considérablement des informations accessibles dans les bases de données, par exemple, la base de données TOPIC (pour *Traits of Plants in Canada* en anglais) au Canada (Aubin et al., 2020). Il devient alors intéressant d'utiliser le schéma proposé par Westoby (1998) avec les données de traits disponibles pour tester l'effet de plusieurs combinaisons de traits sur la productivité forestière. Ces nouvelles connaissances aideraient grandement à faire un choix plus éclairé lorsque l'on choisit les traits pour étudier les relations diversité–productivité.

1.5 Productivité accrue des forêts diversifiées

Il est désormais admis que, sous certaines conditions, les forêts les plus diversifiées peuvent contribuer à optimiser le fonctionnement des écosystèmes et les services qu'ils rendent (Paquette & Messier, 2011; Hooper et al., 2012; Liang et al., 2016; Paquette et al., 2017; Ammer, 2019). Il s'avère toutefois complexe d'extrapoler les conclusions tirées à l'ensemble des communautés d'arbres, étant donné que la composition spécifique et les caractéristiques propres à chaque site fluctuent considérablement entre les études (Paquette & Messier, 2011). Afin d'approfondir la compréhension de l'impact des variations de diversité sur le fonctionnement des écosystèmes, les études scientifiques se sont initialement penchées sur l'analyse comparative de la croissance et de la productivité des forêts mélangées et monospécifiques (Pretzsch et al., 2010, 2013). Désormais, l'intérêt scientifique se porte avec une intensité croissante vers l'exploration des mécanismes par lesquels la diversité est susceptible d'affecter la productivité des écosystèmes.

1.5.1 Mécanismes importants derrière la relation diversité–fonctionnement des écosystèmes

Plusieurs mécanismes ont été proposés pour expliquer la relation entre la diversité et le fonctionnement de l'écosystème. Selon les espèces présentes et les propriétés du site, les effets de la diversité sur la productivité peuvent être plus ou moins importants (Paquette & Messier, 2011; Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015). Dans les forêts aux conditions de croissance les plus favorables (c.-à-d., sols riches, climat clément), il a été montré que l'exclusion compétitive était souvent le résultat le plus important des interactions entre les espèces, alors que dans les environnements moins favorables (c.-à-d., ressources limitées, climat rude, perturbations), c'étaient les interactions de complémentarité entre les espèces présentes qui étaient les plus importantes (Paquette & Messier, 2011; Potter & Woodall, 2014). De plus, les espèces et les individus dominants peuvent exercer une influence importante sur le fonctionnement de l'écosystème en utilisant une part disproportionnée des ressources (Binkley, 1984; Paquette et al., 2017). Des études récentes ont également montré que les effets de la diversité sur la biomasse forestière peuvent s'accumuler sur plusieurs décennies (Tatsumi, 2020; Uργοiti et al., 2022). Il s'avère donc essentiel de bien comprendre et distinguer ces mécanismes pour appréhender les conséquences favorables et défavorables que la diversité peut provoquer au sein des écosystèmes forestiers au fil du temps.

D'abord, l'effet de sélection et celui de complémentarité sont deux composantes de l'effet net de la biodiversité (Niklaus et al., 2017) et agissent en combinaison pour influencer la relation diversité–fonctionnement de l'écosystème (Loreau & Hector, 2001). L'effet de sélection est défini comme la dominance d'espèces présentant des traits particuliers et influents sur les processus écosystémiques (Loreau & Hector, 2001; Fox, 2005). Dans l'effet de sélection, l'espèce la plus productive domine dans le mélange et oppresse les espèces les moins productives (Lepš, 2005). En densité suffisante, la biomasse du mélange se rapproche de la biomasse de l'espèce la plus productive, mais ne la surpasse pas. Cependant, l'effet de sélection peut diminuer de manière exponentielle avec le temps, conséquences de la suppression de la croissance des espèces de fin de succession dans la couche inférieure de la canopée (Tatsumi, 2020).

Par ailleurs, étant donné que chaque espèce exploite les ressources de façon singulière, l'effet de complémentarité conduit à une intensification de l'exploitation globale des ressources. Ceci se réalise à travers la partition des niches écologiques ou via des interactions positives entre les différentes espèces (Loreau & Hector, 2001; Fox, 2005). De plus en plus de travaux soutiennent que l'effet positif que peut avoir la diversité sur la productivité est lié à une réduction de la compétition et à la facilitation, formant ensemble le mécanisme de complémentarité (Callaway & Walker, 1997; Hector, 1998; Man & Lieffers, 1999; del Río & Sterba, 2009; Paquette et al., 2017). La réduction de la compétition se produit lorsque deux espèces ou plus sont présentes dans un peuplement et se différencient dans les caractéristiques de leur niche écologique (Man & Lieffers, 1999; del Río & Sterba, 2009). Alors que la facilitation correspond au cas où une espèce en influence une autre de manière positive en augmentant sa croissance ou sa survie à travers l'amélioration des conditions environnementales (c.-à-d., température, ombre, disponibilité des ressources) de façon directe ou indirecte (Callaway, 1995; Callaway & Walker, 1997; Man & Lieffers, 1999; Justes et al., 2014). La complémentarité a ainsi comme effet de modifier les processus de l'écosystème à travers les changements dans les interactions interspécifiques, ce qui mène à une meilleure utilisation d'une même ressource de façon différée dans le temps ou l'espace (Callaway & Walker, 1997; del Río & Sterba, 2009; Morin et al., 2011; Justes et al., 2014). De plus, il a été montré que l'effet de complémentarité peut augmenter de manière exponentielle avec le temps (Tatsumi, 2020; Urgoiti et al., 2022). À court terme, l'impact positif de la complémentarité est dû à la croissance accrue des espèces de début et de milieu de succession. Tandis qu'à plus long terme, c'est l'augmentation des taux de survie par l'atténuation de l'auto-éclaircissement grâce à la stratification de la canopée qui en est responsable (Tatsumi, 2020).

Concrètement, les conséquences de la réduction de la compétition se répercutent en une faible compétition interspécifique, puisque ces espèces n'utilisent pas de la même manière le milieu. Le partitionnement des ressources aériennes (c.-à-d., surtout la lumière) et souterraines (c.-à-d., nutriments, eau) est grandement responsable de la réduction de la compétition (Man & Lieffers, 1999). Pour les ressources aériennes, la réduction de la

compétition au niveau du houppier passe par plusieurs processus. Entre autres, la différence interspécifique de tolérance à l'ombre, la stratification des branches et du feuillage dans la canopée, la différence dans la phénologie de développement des feuilles et la succession écologique (Man & Lieffers, 1999; del Río & Sterba, 2009). Mélanger des espèces qui ont différents besoins en lumière permet d'augmenter le pourcentage de lumière intercepté dû aux besoins spécifiques et à l'efficacité d'utilisation des différentes espèces (Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015). Par exemple, une espèce peut être adaptée à l'utilisation de la lumière retrouvée en sous-étage, en dessous d'une autre espèce spécialisée dans l'utilisation de la lumière plus haute dans la canopée (Man & Lieffers, 1999; Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015). Cette logique s'applique aussi à la capture et à l'utilisation des ressources souterraines (Man & Lieffers, 1999; del Río & Sterba, 2009; Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015). Par exemple, l'eau peut être utilisée de manière différente selon les espèces présentes : une espèce peut exploiter l'eau très tôt au printemps, alors qu'une autre pourrait commencer à le faire un peu plus tard dans la saison (Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015). Cela peut signifier une utilisation plus complète des ressources (c.-à-d., eau, nutriments, lumière) quand deux espèces qui se complètent sont associées dans un peuplement (Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015).

Le processus de facilitation, quant à lui, est souvent associé à l'azote rendue disponible par l'augmentation des taux de décomposition de la litière ou par la présence d'espèces fixatrices d'azote (Man & Lieffers, 1999; del Río & Sterba, 2009). D'autres formes possibles de facilitation sont la protection et la réduction des dommages biotiques et abiotiques (Man & Lieffers, 1999). La réduction de l'intensité lumineuse au sol pour les jeunes tiges tolérantes à l'ombre, la réduction de la fréquence des gels et l'augmentation de l'humidité relative au sol sont des exemples de protection par des arbres matures (Man & Lieffers, 1999). Une espèce d'arbre peut également modifier les conditions environnementales et repousser ou inhiber des ravageurs par l'intermédiaire de composés secondaires ou simplement en séparant les arbres ou espèces sensibles afin de limiter les risques d'épidémies (Man & Lieffers, 1999). Finalement, les peuplements où l'on retrouve plus d'une espèce peuvent être moins susceptibles aux chablis, puisqu'une espèce peut aider à la stabilité du peuplement et

ainsi en protéger une autre en agissant comme déflecteur (Man & Lieffers, 1999; Stachowicz, 2001).

Finalement, l'hypothèse Janzen-Connell, selon laquelle l'incidence d'un pathogène ou maladie est plus faible dans les peuplements diversifiés puisque la densité des hôtes est plus diffuse, est également pertinente compte tenu de l'accent mis sur la mortalité. Effectivement, cette hypothèse associe la diversité des espèces d'arbres à la présence d'herbivores et de pathogènes spécialisés, de sorte que les descendants d'une espèce d'arbre ne peuvent s'établir qu'à une distance importante des parents (Connell, 1978; Janzen, 1970; Pretzsch, 2005). La sensibilité d'une espèce à une maladie ou un pathogène peut ainsi conduire à une plus grande diversité (Pretzsch, 2005). Effectivement, il a été démontré que l'impact des interactions antagonistes, y compris les maladies, réduit la capacité des espèces dominantes à monopoliser les ressources et peut donc permettre à d'autres espèces de subsister (Pretzsch, 2005). Ainsi, la sensibilité d'une forêt à un stress décroît avec l'augmentation de la diversité des hôtes (Pretzsch, 2005). En ce sens, une étude a montré qu'une plus grande diversité d'espèces réduit la gravité de la défoliation induite par la sécheresse à long terme (Sousa-Silva et al., 2018). Par ailleurs, cette relation n'est pas immuable et peut même évoluer, passant de forêts monospécifiques productives à des forêts diversifiées tout aussi productives lorsque les contraintes environnementales s'intensifient (Sousa-Silva et al., 2018). Jucker et al. (2016) ont également montré que la forme et la force de la relation diversité-productivité dépend fortement du contexte environnemental. La relation était fortement positive sur les sites où le climat imposait une forte limitation de la production de bois, à faiblement négative sur les sites où les conditions climatiques étaient les plus propices à la croissance (Jucker et al., 2016). Ainsi, la différence de susceptibilité entre les espèces vis-à-vis différents agents de perturbation est un autre facteur clé permettant d'expliquer relations diversité-productivité au fil du temps. Cela vient renforcer l'ensemble de preuves quant à la capacité supérieure des forêts diversifiées à faire face à de multiples perturbations.

1.5.2 Arrangement spatial des houppiers et augmentation de la densité

La complémentarité spatiale des houppiers d'arbres, un exemple d'effet de complémentarité, semble jouer un rôle essentiel pour expliquer les effets de la diversité d'espèces en milieu forestier (Pretzsch, 2014; Sapijanskas et al., 2014; Jucker et al., 2015; Niklaus et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2017; Cattaneo et al., 2020). En effet, les forêts plus diversifiées sont maintenant perçues comme étant plus efficaces que les forêts monospécifiques pour exploiter l'espace de la canopée, puisqu'en mélangeant des espèces qui se complètent en termes d'architecture et de physiologie, cela favorise un remplissage plus complet et plus dense de l'espace par les arbres voisins ainsi qu'une utilisation plus complète des ressources (Ishii & Asano, 2010; Jucker et al., 2015; Longuetaud et al., 2013). Puisque l'architecture aérienne et souterraine des arbres varie selon les espèces présentes et l'environnement où ils se développent, le mélange d'espèces et leurs différentes tailles sont susceptibles de produire une canopée stratifiée et donc une structure horizontale et verticale plus dense et complexe (Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015; Pretzsch & Forrester, 2017). Lorsque l'on combine cette densité plus élevée avec les autres processus discutés plus tôt, l'augmentation de la densité des arbres devient un mécanisme à travers lequel la diversité peut augmenter la productivité dans les peuplements les plus diversifiés et ainsi mieux utiliser toute l'espace disponible (Hector, 1998). De plus, il a été montré que l'augmentation du niveau de fermeture de la canopée pouvait favoriser l'émergence d'effets de complémentarité bénéfiques, et ainsi, pouvait définir le succès à long terme des communautés les plus diversifiées (Urigoiti et al., 2022). Cette relation entre la diversité et le remplissage de la canopée en peuplement mélangé s'est révélée être constante malgré les différences de composition et de climat entre les sites (Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015) et ce, même si les densités relatives des espèces présentes dans le peuplement peuvent modifier la performance de chaque espèce (Binkley, 1984).

Deux mécanismes principaux peuvent expliquer la meilleure efficacité des forêts mélangées pour l'utilisation de l'espace, soit la stratification verticale et la plasticité des houppiers (Pretzsch, 2014; Sapijanskas et al., 2014; Jucker et al., 2015). Premièrement, on obtient une stratification verticale lorsque les arbres distribuent leur feuillage de manière complémentaire dans les différentes strates de la canopée. Ainsi, certaines espèces peuvent

être favorisées en se retrouvant avec une autre espèce qui a des caractéristiques architecturales différentes des siennes (p. ex., hauteur, largeur et forme du houppier), ainsi que des adaptations physiologiques à l'ombre (Ishii & Asano, 2010; Jucker et al., 2015; Pretzsch, 2014). Par exemple, lors du développement d'une canopée stratifiée, les recrues tolérantes à l'ombre s'installent en sous-étage sous les espèces pionnières qui sont intolérantes à l'ombre (Canham et al., 1994; Niinemets, 2010; Morin et al., 2011). C'est de cette manière que les forêts mélangées maximisent l'interception de la lumière (Morin et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2012). Des travaux en forêt méditerranéenne ont montré qu'en mélangeant des pins intolérants à l'ombre (*Pinus sylvestris* L. et *Pinus nigra* R. Leguay) avec des chênes naturellement plus petits et tolérants à l'ombre (*Quercus ilex* L. et *Quercus faginea* Lam.), on augmentait la stratification verticale de la canopée et conséquemment, la productivité de ces peuplements (Jucker et al., 2014). Cependant, une autre étude a montré que l'augmentation de la diversité des arbres pouvait avoir un double impact sur l'interception de la lumière. D'abord, une augmentation de la complexité structurelle de la canopée réduisait l'interception de la lumière (Rissanen et al., 2019). Puis, dans un deuxième temps, l'interception la lumière était augmentée grâce à l'optimisation de l'espace de la canopée et à la complémentarité des houppiers (Rissanen et al., 2019).

Ensuite, le deuxième mécanisme qui contribue à une meilleure utilisation de l'espace en forêt mélangée est la plasticité du houppier des arbres. En effet, l'architecture aérienne d'un arbre est un trait très plastique et il est bien reconnu que les arbres ajustent la forme et la taille de leur houppier en réponse à la compétition environnante (Purves et al., 2007; Thorpe et al., 2010; Seidel et al., 2011; Pretzsch & Dieler, 2012; Dieler & Pretzsch, 2013; Pretzsch, 2014). Par exemple, lorsqu'il y a beaucoup d'arbres, les individus peuvent investir plus d'énergie dans leur croissance en hauteur, minimisant du même coup le développement de leur houppier (Lines et al., 2012; Jucker et al., 2015). Il a été montré que pour un diamètre donné, les arbres en forêt mélangée avaient généralement de plus gros houppiers qu'en forêt monospécifique (Jucker et al., 2015). Cette augmentation du volume du houppier était le résultat d'une expansion latérale et verticale du houppier des arbres. De plus, la capacité de compétition varie selon le mélange d'espèces et le comportement de certaines espèces

présentes dans les forêts mélangées peut être plus plastique que d'autres (Hajek et al., 2015; Jucker et al., 2015). C'est par exemple le cas du hêtre commun dont la réponse à la présence de différentes espèces autour de lui (c.-à-d., le frêne commun-*Fraxinus excelsior* L., le charme commun-*Carpinus betulus* L. et le tilleul à petites feuilles-*Tilia cordata* Mill.) se traduit par une grande plasticité de son houppier (Hajek et al., 2015).

Il est donc important de prendre en compte la variation inter- et intraspécifique lorsque l'on aménage des forêts mélangées en s'assurant que les mélanges d'espèces soient composés d'arbres fonctionnellement différents (Sapijanskas et al., 2014; Jucker et al., 2015). Le mélange d'espèces ayant des stratégies d'acquisition de ressource contrastées ainsi que la dominance d'espèces feuillues à croissance rapide favorisent les effets positifs de la diversité sur la productivité, et ce, surtout lors des phases initiales du développement des peuplement (Urigoiti et al., 2022). Ainsi, en raison des différences morphologiques et physiologiques intra- et interspécifiques, la complémentarité spatiale des houppiers permet d'expliquer les tendances dans l'augmentation de la productivité dans diverses communautés d'arbres (Hector, 1998; Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015). Toutefois, la majorité des connaissances de l'influence de la diversité sur le remplissage de la canopée n'est basée que sur quelques exemples de mélange très bien documentés en forêt européenne (p. ex., hêtre commun et épinette de Norvège) (Pretzsch & Schütze, 2005; Bayer et al., 2013; Dieler & Pretzsch, 2013; Pretzsch, 2014, 2019). Il est donc important de déterminer si l'effet positif d'un meilleur remplissage de la canopée parfois observé lorsque l'on mélange certaines espèces peut être généralisé à plusieurs types de forêts.

1.6 Conditions environnementales

Peu d'études qui portent sur les effets de la diversité fonctionnelle sur la productivité forestière prennent en compte l'effet des conditions environnementales. Il y a cependant de plus en plus de preuves que le climat interagit avec la diversité fonctionnelle et joue ainsi un rôle important pour le fonctionnement des écosystèmes (Jucker et al., 2016; Paquette et al., 2017; Hisano et al., 2018; Ammer, 2019). Il a effectivement été montré qu'une plus grande

diversité fonctionnelle pouvait renforcer la résilience des forêts (Hisano et al., 2018; Morin et al., 2018; Ammer, 2019). Cependant, d'autres études montrent des tendances contrastées concernant l'effet de la diversité des arbres sur la capacité de certains peuplements à maintenir leur productivité lorsque soumis à des changements de climat (Jucker et al., 2016; Paquette et al., 2017; Ammer, 2019; Grossiord, 2020).

Outre les conditions climatiques, l'importance du vent est également à prendre en compte. En effet, il représente l'une des contraintes mécaniques majeures pour les arbres. Son influence est significative pour leur croissance, leur morphologie, leur physiologie et leur écologie (Gardiner et al., 2016). Toutefois, l'acquisition d'informations sur le vent et la distinction de son influence par rapport à d'autres variables confondantes se révèlent être des tâches ardues. De ce fait, son incorporation dans les études écologiques n'est pas très répandue. Il devient alors intéressant de considérer les effets du climat ainsi que ceux du vent sur la productivité selon la diversité des peuplements pour comprendre leurs impacts à court et à long terme dans les écosystèmes forestiers.

1.6.1 Lien entre climat et productivité

Il est bien connu que la disponibilité de l'eau, la température et la disponibilité des nutriments dans le sol sont des éléments importants pour la productivité forestière (Bohn et al., 2018; Boisvenue & Running, 2006; Hopkins, 2003; Schulze et al., 2005). En effet, les réponses physiologiques des arbres aux conditions climatiques dépendent des facteurs qui sont limitants dans le milieu. Entre autres, la température contrôle le taux de métabolisme des plantes et ainsi détermine la quantité de photosynthèse qui peut avoir lieu. Il a été déterminé que la productivité est optimale lorsque les températures se situent entre 15–25°C, intervalle correspondant également au seuil idéal pour l'activité photosynthétique (Hopkins, 2003). De ce fait, les fluctuations de température ont un impact direct sur la photosynthèse, la respiration, les taux de croissance des arbres et donc sur la productivité (Bohn et al., 2018; Heskell et al., 2016). L'augmentation de la température peut avoir un impact positif sur la productivité, surtout lorsque combinés à un approvisionnement en eau suffisant (Grimm et

al., 2013; Paquette et al., 2017). L'eau constitue la principale composante chimique de la plupart des cellules végétales et est un élément essentiel à la photosynthèse (Hopkins, 2003). Dans les régions les plus sèches, la productivité augmentait de manière linéaire avec la disponibilité de l'eau (Loik et al., 2004). Il a également été montré que la croissance des arbres au Québec est liée à la température et à la disponibilité de l'eau et qu'une augmentation de la température peut être bénéfique pour la croissance globale des arbres (D'Orangeville et al. 2016 ; 2018). Toutefois, une baisse des précipitations associée à une augmentation des températures peut provoquer un stress hydrique, une diminution de la croissance et, potentiellement, une hausse des taux de mortalité (Vayreda et al., 2012). Le rapport entre la température moyenne du mois le plus chaud et les précipitations annuelles est alors souvent utilisé pour prédire la vigueur, la croissance et la mortalité de plusieurs espèces d'arbres (Hlásny et al., 2017). Il est donc judicieux de se demander de quelle manière la productivité des forêts sera influencée à l'avenir, étant donné la corrélation entre les variations des conditions climatiques et la productivité des forêts. L'incidence des CC sur ces écosystèmes mérite une attention particulière, surtout dans le contexte où l'on s'intéresse à l'aménagement forestier pour augmenter la résistance, la résilience et la capacité de réponse des forêts.

1.6.2 Changements climatiques (CC)

Les conditions environnementales actuelles et la composition des peuplements sont parmi les principaux déterminants de la productivité des forêts et sont toutes les deux affectées par les CC (Ammer, 2019). Les CC modifieront les conditions environnementales auxquelles les espèces d'arbres sont exposées et chaque espèce réagira différemment à l'évolution de ces conditions (Lindner et al., 2014; Ammer, 2019). Des études ont démontré que les fluctuations climatiques modifient les interactions entre les espèces, ce qui a des conséquences importantes sur l'intensité du lien existant entre la diversité et la productivité (Ammer, 2019; Jucker et al., 2016; Keenan, 2015; Paquette et al., 2017).

Comme le rapporte le groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat (GIEC), si le réchauffement climatique se poursuit au rythme actuel, les températures

devraient augmenter de 1,5 °C entre 2030 et 2052 (IPCC, 2019). On s'attend à des différences de température et de précipitations, ainsi qu'une augmentation de la concentration de CO₂ dans l'atmosphère (Kirilenko & Sedjo, 2007; Ammer, 2019). De plus, l'augmentation des extrêmes de chaleur, des fortes précipitations, des sécheresses et des déficits de précipitations s'ajouteront aux changements dans plusieurs régions (IPCC 2014 ; 2019). La télédétection a également pu montrer les impacts des CC au niveau mondial dans les écosystèmes forestiers avec les indices de verdissement et de brunissement de la végétation. Dans l'hémisphère nord, l'augmentation des concentrations de CO₂ et des températures au cours des dernières décennies du 20^e siècle a stimulé les activités de la végétation, mais a été contrebalancée par les sécheresses de l'hémisphère sud qui ont induit une baisse de la productivité, ce qui a entraîné une réduction nette de la productivité au niveau mondial (Zhou et al., 2001; Slayback et al., 2003; Zhao & Running, 2010; de Jong et al., 2012). Dans le centre du Canada, le réchauffement climatique a été associé à une augmentation du verdissement de la végétation dans les années 1980, mais la persistance du réchauffement ainsi que la sécheresse croissante ont par la suite entraîné un brunissement de la végétation en raison de taux d'évapotranspiration plus élevés (Myneni et al., 2001; Slayback et al., 2003; Alcaraz-Segura et al., 2010).

Inévitablement, ces changements au niveau du climat continueront d'avoir d'importants impacts sur les écosystèmes forestiers. De plus, les changements de température et de précipitation extrêmes, en tant qu'importants facteurs de perturbation, pourraient avoir un impact bien plus important sur la productivité des forêts que les changements des valeurs moyennes (Ammer, 2019). En effet, les extrêmes climatiques peuvent modifier la fréquence, l'intensité, la durée et le moment des perturbations (p. ex., sécheresse ou épidémie d'insectes) (Dale et al., 2001). Néanmoins, des perturbations plus fréquentes pourraient entraîner une augmentation de la diversité des arbres et donc modifier les interactions entre les espèces (c.-à-d., réduction de la compétition, facilitation, meilleure utilisation des ressources), ce qui en fin de compte pourrait avoir un impact positif sur la croissance des arbres et, par conséquent, sur la productivité et les fonctions des écosystèmes (Silva Pedro et al., 2016; Ammer, 2019). Une augmentation de la productivité en raison d'une augmentation des températures semble

cependant illusoire, à moins que cette hausse reste limitée ou qu'elle soit compensée par un accroissement des précipitations, permettant de contourner les contraintes de sécheresse (Gustafson et al., 2017).

1.6.3 Stratégies d'aménagements

Actuellement, l'adaptation des écosystèmes forestiers aux CC est le plus grand défi auquel sont confrontés les gestionnaires forestiers. Les peuplements composés d'espèces complémentaires peuvent avoir plusieurs avantages dans le contexte d'aménagement forestier écosystémique (Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015). Effectivement, la présence de différentes espèces dans un peuplement pourrait réduire les risques de dommages face aux CC en le rendant plus résilient face aux stress (Gessler et al., 2007; Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015). Comme les espèces retrouvées en peuplements plus diversifiés sont vulnérables à différentes perturbations, ils sont associés à des événements de perturbations à plus petite échelle comparativement aux peuplements monospécifiques (Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015). La diversification des espèces est l'une des principales stratégies d'adaptation aux CC dans les pratiques forestières actuelles (Kolström et al., 2011; Pretzsch, Forrester, et al., 2015; Ammer, 2019; Looney et al., 2021). Cependant, des études récentes ont montré des tendances contrastées concernant l'effet de la diversité des arbres sur la capacité de certains peuplements à maintenir leur productivité lorsque soumis à des changements de climat (Jucker et al., 2016; Paquette et al., 2017; Ammer, 2019; Grossiord, 2020). Puisque les CC ont d'importants impacts sur les relations diversité-productivité, cela entraîne de sérieuses conséquences sur la capacité d'adaptation des forêts (Ammer, 2019; Jucker et al., 2016).

Des stratégies de gestion adaptative des forêts pourraient aider à faire face aux risques associés aux CC, en surveillant et en anticipant les changements, en prenant des mesures pour éviter les conséquences négatives et en réalisant les avantages potentiels de ces changements (IPCC, 2014; Spathelf et al., 2018; Hörl et al., 2020). Il est important de bien différencier ces stratégies : efficace à court terme—augmentation de la résistance des forêts aux CC ; à court-moyen terme—augmentation de la résilience des forêts aux CC ; et à long terme—

renforcement de la capacité de réponse des forêts aux CC (Millar et al., 2008 ; Hörl et al., 2020). Plus précisément, la résistance est définie comme la capacité de l'écosystème à rester essentiellement inchangé lorsqu'il est confronté à des perturbations (Grimm & Wissel, 1997; Newton & Cantarello, 2015) et peut être approprié pour protéger des ressources de grande valeur contre le changement ou dans des situations d'urgence (p. ex., risque extrême d'incendie, perte d'une espèce menacée, sauvegarde d'une plantation forestière de grande valeur et épidémie imminente d'espèces envahissantes) (Millar et al., 2008 ; Hörl et al., 2020). La résilience implique qu'un système peut absorber une certaine quantité de changements avant de revenir à son stade initial (Brand & Jax, 2007; Newton & Cantarello, 2015) et peut être encouragée en adoptant des forêts naturelles et saines comme modèle pour réduire le stress et minimiser les risques (p. ex., gestion inéquienne, éclaircies, feux dirigés et banques de semences) (Millar et al., 2008 ; Hörl et al., 2020). Les stratégies à long terme impliquent de renforcer la capacité de réaction des forêts aux CC et d'utiliser des projections climatiques pour aider les écosystèmes et adopter de nouvelles méthodes pour accroître la capacité d'adaptation des forêts aux conditions climatiques futures (p. ex., la migration assistée et la sélection d'espèces et de génétique adaptées) (Millar et al., 2008; Hörl et al., 2020). Il est possible d'utiliser une combinaison de différentes mesures pour aider un écosystème à se rétablir sur le plan fonctionnel après des changements (Thompson et al., 2009), soit par la résistance, la résilience ou la réaction (Hörl et al., 2020). Étant donné que l'avenir de nos forêts est fortement influencé par les CC, il est essentiel de continuer à approfondir notre compréhension des relations diversité-productivité-climat. Cela est incontournable pour adopter les stratégies les plus adéquates en matière de gestion de nos forêts.

1.6.4 Effets du vent en forêt

Outre le climat, les effets du vent sur le fonctionnement des écosystèmes n'ont reçu qu'une attention limitée dans la littérature. Le vent est actuellement négligé dans le contexte de la gestion forestière qui, au cours des dernières décennies, s'est principalement concentrée sur les effets positifs que peut avoir la biodiversité sur la productivité des forêts. Cependant,

il est de plus en plus évident que le vent a une grande importance écologique, notamment due à son influence sur les patrons de perturbations ainsi qu'à son rôle dans l'augmentation de la biodiversité qui découle des changements de structure et composition des forêts (Canham, 1985; King, 1986; Quine & Gardiner, 2007). Effectivement, les chablis de faible dimension, causés par le vent, peuvent favoriser la régénération de plusieurs espèces en créant des petites trouées dans la canopée (Canham, 1985; King, 1986). De plus, le vent a un large éventail d'effets sur les communautés d'arbres, allant de la petite échelle, c'est-à-dire des dégâts causés aux feuilles et aux aiguilles, jusqu'à l'échelle régionale, c'est-à-dire lors de tempêtes d'une envergure majeure (Gardiner et al., 2016). Par conséquent, dans le cadre de la gestion des écosystèmes forestiers en Europe, le vent représente un facteur d'inquiétude majeur, puisqu'il est à l'origine d'une quantité significative de dommages forestiers et ainsi, d'impacts économiques défavorables (Seidl & Blennow, 2012; Seidl et al., 2014; Reyer et al., 2017; Gopalakrishnan et al., 2020). Les dommages sévères (c.-à-d., remplacement complet du peuplement) causés par le vent sont moins fréquents dans l'est du Canada, mais les dommages partiels (c.-à-d., remplacement par îlots, par trouées ou par arbre) peuvent être assez importants sur certains sites, bien que l'on manque d'informations dans de nombreuses régions (Bouchard et al., 2009; Waldron et al., 2013; Ruel, 2020). En effet, l'acquisition de données de terrain sur le vent et la distinction entre ses effets et ceux des variables confondantes (p. ex., la température et l'approvisionnement en eau) sont complexes (Ennos, 1997; Gardiner et al., 2016), de sorte que l'intégration du vent dans les études écologiques n'est pas très répandue.

1.6.5 Impacts du vent sur la croissance

La croissance des arbres est influencée par le vent à travers une série de contraintes mécaniques et physiologiques. Ces contraintes dépendent d'interactions complexes entre l'écoulement du vent, qui varie selon la topographie, la structure des peuplements et du paysage, ainsi que selon la dimension, la forme et les propriétés du houppier, du tronc et du système racinaire (King, 1986; Fournier et al., 2015; Gardiner et al., 2013, 2016). La force du vent est transmise dans le tronc et dans le système racinaire et varie selon la hauteur et le

diamètre de l'arbre (Fournier et al., 2015). Ainsi, en réponse à cette force, les arbres font un compromis dans leurs schémas d'allocation de ressources à leurs différents compartiments. Par exemple, les arbres les plus exposés au vent vont limiter leur croissance en hauteur et stimuler la croissance racinaire et cambiale des zones les plus sollicitées (Meng et al., 2006; Moore et al., 2014; Fournier et al., 2015; Gardiner et al., 2016). Ils ont ainsi une forme plus robuste ce qui augmente leur résistance face aux vents (King, 1986). En plus de son influence sur l'allocation de ressources, le vent influence les échanges gazeux foliaires et donc la photosynthèse et la croissance (Fournier et al., 2015). En effet, par différents mécanismes au niveau des échanges gazeux, le vent peut affecter de manière significative les patrons de croissance. Le vent dans la canopée permet une meilleure distribution de la lumière sur l'ensemble du feuillage en plus de réguler la température, ce qui stimule la transpiration (Fournier et al., 2015). Le vent peut aussi avoir des effets négatifs, soit en augmentant le stress hydrique, en limitant la photosynthèse par la fermeture des stomates ainsi qu'en abimant le feuillage ou brisant des branches par l'abrasion des houppiers (Ennos, 1997; Fournier et al., 2015; Gardiner et al., 2016). De plus, dans le contexte des CC, ces effets seront encore plus déterminants, car bien que nous ne connaissions pas exactement la manière dont les régimes de vent changeront, il existe déjà des preuves que des vents extrêmes sont à prévoir dans certaines régions (Della-Marta et al., 2009; Gardiner et al., 2016). Les arbres pourraient donc être plus vulnérables aux dommages causés par le vent en raison de l'augmentation de la fréquence des épisodes de vents anormalement puissants par rapport aux vents chroniques (Gardiner et al., 2016).

1.6.6 Impacts du vent selon la structure et la composition

Le vent, en fonction de la structure, de la composition et des interactions intra- et interspécifiques, peut influencer de diverses manières le fonctionnement de l'écosystème. Par conséquent, l'importance du vent est indéniable lorsqu'il s'agit d'examiner l'impact de la diversité sur la productivité des forêts. En effet, la réaction au vent d'une forêt dépend de sa composition spécifique. Le vent agit au sommet de la canopée sur la surface de prise au vent (Fournier et al., 2015) et cette surface varie non seulement entre les espèces, mais aussi

entre les individus d'une même espèce. Par exemple, dans les forêts plus diversifiées, les houppiers des arbres peuvent être plus larges et profonds, ce qui peut exposer les arbres à une charge de vent plus importante, en particulier dans la partie supérieure de la canopée (Mason, 2002). Également, une partie de leur houppier est libre de voisins, ce qui les expose davantage aux vents et leur confère un rapport hauteur/diamètre inférieur en comparaison à celui des arbres présents dans les peuplements monospécifiques où le contact entre les houppiers réduit la charge du vent sur les arbres individuels (Mason, 2002). Cette forme plus robuste des arbres caractéristique des peuplements diversifiés semble ainsi favoriser la stabilité de ces peuplements (Mason, 2002). De plus, la plus grande stratification verticale de la canopée en forêt diversifiée peut avoir comme résultat une réduction de la compétition (Man & Lieffers, 1999). Dans les forêts monospécifiques/régulières, le vent peut provoquer l'abrasion des houppiers, entraînant la perte de branches et de feuillage, en particulier dans les forêts régulières où les arbres sont de taille similaire et qu'il y a une forte concurrence pour les ressources (Putz et al., 1984; Grier, 1988; Man & Lieffers, 1999). Ces forêts peuvent être plus sensibles au chablis, en particulier après une coupe (Gardiner et al., 2013; Kerr et al., 1992; Man & Lieffers, 1999). Il est estimé que la vulnérabilité de ces forêts est plus élevée entre deux à dix ans après une éclaircie, soit avant que les tiges et les systèmes racinaires des arbres ne se soient adaptés au nouveau régime de vents et avant que la croissance de la couronne n'entraîne la fermeture complète de la canopée (Albrecht et al., 2012; Hanewinkel et al., 2014; Pukkala et al., 2016). Cependant, l'utilisation d'éclaircies dans de jeunes peuplements pourraient réduire le risque de chablis à long terme en stimulant le développement des racines pivots et latérales ainsi qu'en favorisant l'acclimatation des plus petits arbres à des charges de vent élevées (Moreau et al., 2022). Par ailleurs, avec une plus grande stratification verticale de la canopée, des interactions de complémentarité dans des peuplements plus diversifiés sur le plan fonctionnel peuvent réduire la concurrence pour les ressources et accroître la protection d'une espèce par une autre, par exemple en réduisant le stress dû au vent en faisant office de déflecteurs (Man & Lieffers, 1999; Stachowicz, 2001). Ainsi, une canopée stratifiée peut réduire l'abrasion des houppiers et augmenter la stabilité d'une forêt face aux vents. Il est cependant difficile de généraliser puisque des variables

confondantes (p. ex., la topographie) peuvent également être en partie responsables de ces résultats (Mason, 2002).

2. OBJECTIFS DE LA THESE

Dans le contexte forestier où l'on s'intéresse de plus en plus à augmenter la résistance, la résilience et la capacité de réponse des peuplements face aux CC, les effets de la diversité sur la productivité des forêts doivent être étudiés. Ce travail de recherche doctorale s'articule précisément autour de l'ambition d'approfondir notre connaissance des répercussions de la diversité sur les écosystèmes forestiers pour, d'une part, accroître la productivité des peuplements, et d'autre part, réduire leur vulnérabilité face aux aléas environnementaux et aux CC. Cela implique d'acquérir de nouvelles connaissances en écologie forestière à travers divers éléments qui influencent les relations diversité-productivité. Dans cette thèse, la productivité sera définie en termes de biomasse aérienne totale en tonne/ha/année et l'apport de chacune des composantes sera départagé. Elle sera étudiée en tant que valeur nette (PFN, productivité forestière nette), définie comme la biomasse restante après avoir soustrait les pertes dues à la mortalité des arbres au gain résultant de la croissance des survivants et du recrutement des arbres. Ainsi, l'objectif général de cette thèse est de mieux comprendre comment la structure des traits, la structure de la canopée, le climat et le vent modulent la productivité des écosystèmes forestiers dans l'est du Canada à travers un vaste gradient longitudinal et des données provenant des placettes échantillons d'à la fois du gouvernement du Québec et de celui de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador. Pour ce faire, ce projet décompose la problématique en trois questions principales :

- I. Comment la structure des traits des communautés d'arbres en interaction avec le climat influence-t-elle la productivité forestière et chacune de ses composantes, soit la croissance des arbres survivants, le recrutement de nouveaux arbres et la mortalité des arbres ?
- II. Quel rôle joue la structure des traits des communautés d'arbres dans la structure de leur canopée ?

III. Quel est l'impact du vent sur la productivité forestière en lien avec la structure des traits et de la structure de la canopée des communautés d'arbres ?

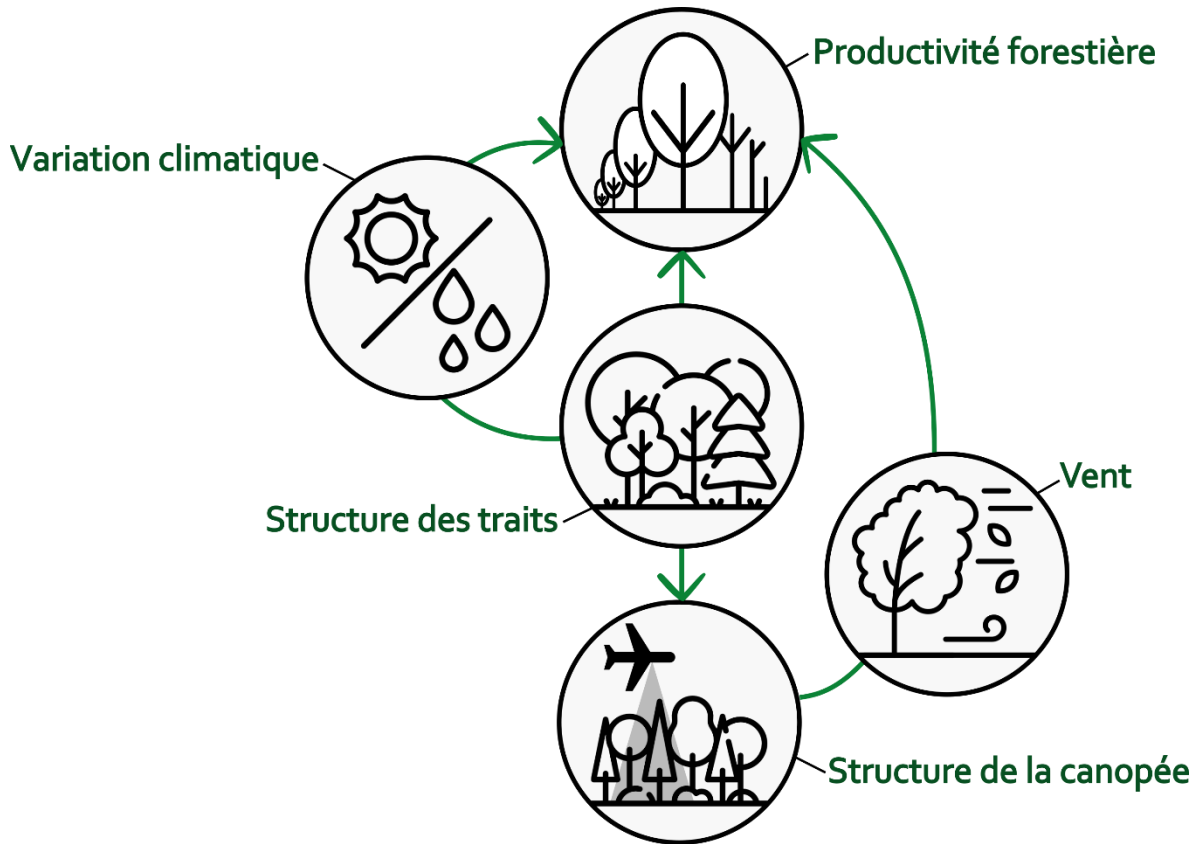


Figure 1. Schéma des thématiques de la thèse.

Le premier chapitre avait deux objectifs. Le premier était de comprendre comment la diversité dans les communautés d'arbres influence les différentes composantes de la productivité forestière (croissance des survivants, recrutement et mortalité) (Figure 1). Pour atteindre le premier objectif, nous nous sommes intéressés à l'approche des traits. L'étude de Paquette et Messier (2011) a utilisé des indices de diversité fonctionnelle plutôt que la richesse spécifique pour expliquer les mécanismes présents derrière l'hypothèse de la complémentarité des niches écologiques. Il est essentiel d'analyser minutieusement ces indicateurs pour identifier quel trait ou quel groupe de traits sont les plus influents pour la productivité à l'échelle du peuplement. Ainsi, la structure des traits des communautés

d'arbres (Figure 1) a été analysée sur un vaste réseau de placettes avec des mesures répétées des mêmes arbres au fil du temps, pour tester les hypothèses suivantes : (i) les traits foliaires seront les plus importants pour la croissance des survivants ; (ii) les traits liés à l'acquisition des ressources auront le plus grand impact sur le recrutement de nouveaux arbres ; et (iii) les traits liés à la compétition et aux stratégies de survie seront les plus importants pour la mortalité des arbres. Le deuxième objectif était lié aux relations entre le climat, les traits et la productivité forestière (Figure 1) et motivé par la question suivante : de quelle manière la structure des traits d'une communauté d'arbre influence-t-elle la relation productivité-climat ? Pour y répondre, les températures et les précipitations annuelles ont été utilisées pour étudier la façon dont les communautés d'arbres réagissent à une gamme de conditions climatiques. Nous avons émis l'hypothèse que (iv) les forêts avec une plus grande diversité fonctionnelle auront une meilleure capacité d'adaptation à un climat altéré que celles avec une diversité moins élevée. Ainsi, l'étude des relations traits-productivité-climat a permis d'évaluer dans quelles circonstances la diversité fonctionnelle des arbres pouvait améliorer la productivité des forêts sous les CC.

À travers le deuxième chapitre, nous voulions déterminer si la structure de la canopée pouvait être prédite à partir des caractéristiques de la forêt, et dans quelle mesure la structure des traits des communautés d'arbres y contribuait (Figure 1). Pour répondre à ces questions, nous avons proposé d'utiliser des métriques de végétation dérivées du lidar comme indicateurs de la structure de la canopée. Nous avons profité d'un réseau de placettes d'échantillonnage ayant à la fois un inventaire forestier traditionnel et un relevé lidar aéroporté synchrone. La relation structure traits-structure canopée a donc été testée afin de prédire les métriques lidar à l'aide de variables explicatives qui décrivent les attributs du peuplement, les conditions environnementales et la structure des traits des communautés. L'objectif principal a été atteint par le biais d'une question principale : comment la structure de la canopée peut-elle être décrite par les caractéristiques de la forêt ? Et plus précisément, quel rôle la structure des traits des communautés d'arbres joue-t-elle dans la structure de la canopée ? En raison des interactions interspécifiques et des mécanismes de complémentarité, notre hypothèse (v) est que la structure des traits des communautés devrait influencer la

structure de la canopée par le biais de la densité de peuplement de la canopée, qui résulte de la répartition spatiale des niches écologiques. Grâce aux modèles obtenus, il devient possible de prédire la structure de la canopée d'une forêt à partir d'un inventaire forestier seul, donc sans données lidar.

Finalement, le troisième chapitre s'intéresse à l'effet du vent, à l'échelle du peuplement, sur la productivité forestière selon la diversité du couvert. Plus précisément, l'objectif était de déterminer si la structure des traits et la structure de la canopée des communautés d'arbres interagissent avec le vent pour influencer les différentes composantes de la productivité forestière (croissance des survivants, recrutement et mortalité) (Figure 1). Pour y répondre, nous avons proposé d'utiliser la charge et la vitesse moyenne du vent comme indicateur de la force moyenne du vent exercée sur les arbres, des indices calculés avec des traits individuels ou des groupes de traits comme indicateurs de la structure des traits des communautés, ainsi que des métriques de la végétation dérivées du lidar comme indicateurs de la structure de la canopée. Les relations vent–traits–canopée ont été étudiées afin d'expliquer l'accroissement de biomasse due à la croissance des survivants, au recrutement de nouveaux arbres et la mortalité entre deux inventaires forestiers. Des modèles ont été utilisés pour tester deux hypothèses. Tout d'abord, on s'attend à ce que (vi), lorsqu'elles sont exposées à plus de vent, les communautés fonctionnellement diversifiées montrent plus de croissance, plus de recrutement et moins de mortalité que les communautés fonctionnellement moins diversifiées. Ensuite, étant donné qu'un compromis est attendu entre la croissance primaire et secondaire en fonction du vent auquel un arbre est soumis, nous anticipons que (vii) lorsqu'elles sont exposées à plus de vent, les communautés caractérisées par des canopées homogènes montreront une croissance et un recrutement plus élevés, tout en subissant une mortalité des arbres plus faible par rapport à celles qui ont des structures de canopée plus hétérogènes.

3. METHODES

3.1 Aire d'étude

L'aire d'étude du projet de thèse s'étend de la frontière de la province de Québec (QC) à l'ouest, jusqu'à la côte atlantique de la province de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador (TNL) à l'est. La température annuelle moyenne varie entre -4,5 et 7,7 °C au QC et entre 1,1 et 5,8 °C à TNL, avec des précipitations annuelles totales moyennes d'environ 1000 mm au QC et 1300 mm à TNL. Les forêts sont principalement composées de peuplements de conifères (45,7 %) avec une proportion plus faible de peuplements mixtes (31,1 %) et de peuplements de feuillus (23,2 %). L'aire d'étude traverse cinq écozones terrestres, soit les maritimes de l'Atlantique et les Plaines à forêts mixtes au sud, en passant par le Bouclier boréal et les Plaines hudsoniennes, jusqu'à la taïga du Bouclier au nord (Gouvernement du Canada, 2017) (Figure 2). Au sud, les espèces d'arbres dominantes sont l'érable à sucre (*Acer saccharum* Marsh.) et un mélange d'espèces boréales, notamment le sapin baumier (*Abies*

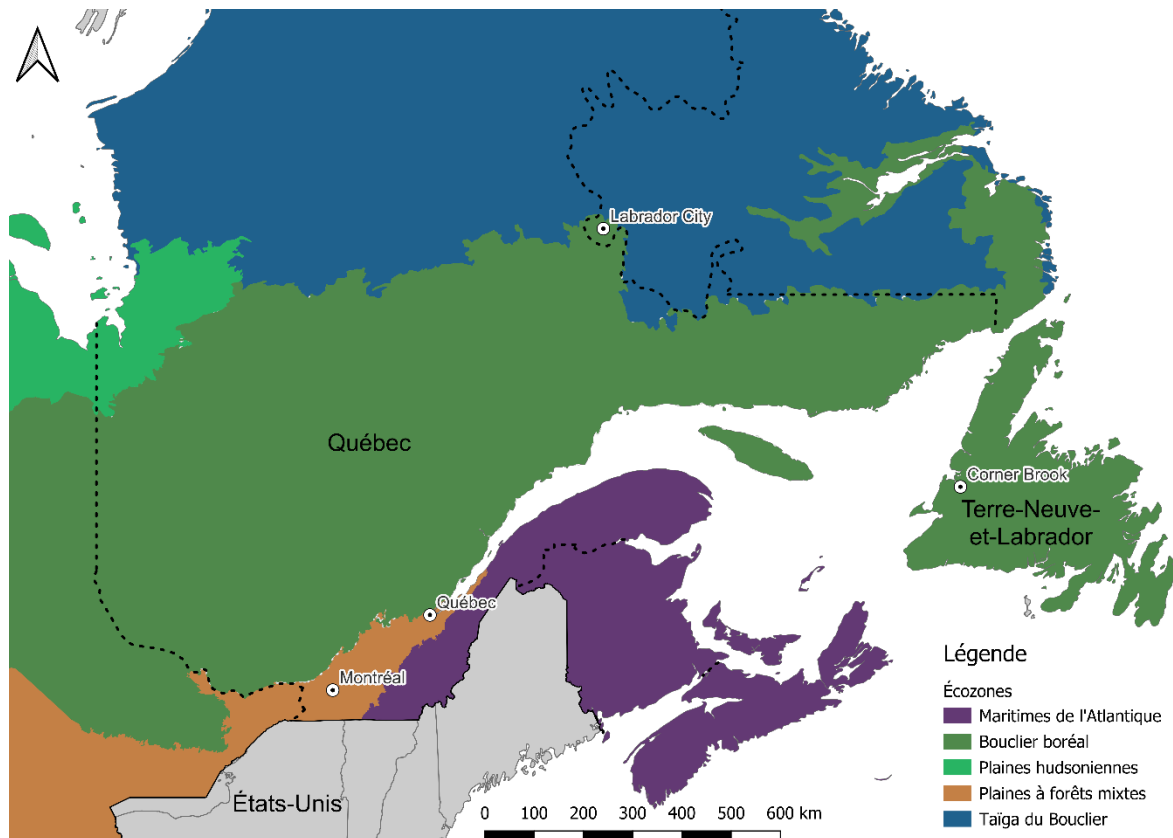


Figure 2. Aire d'étude de la thèse au Québec et à Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador.

balsamea [L.] Mill.) et l'épinette noire (*Picea mariana* [Mill.] Britton, Sterns & Poggenb.), ainsi que d'autres espèces méridionales, telles que le bouleau jaune (*Betula alleghaniensis* Britt.). Les écozones du Bouclier boréal et des Plaines hudsoniennes sont dominées par l'épinette noire et l'épinette blanche (*Picea glauca* [Moench] Voss), le sapin baumier et le mélèze laricin (*Larix laricina* [Du Roi] K. Koch). Le bouleau à papier (*Betula papyrifera* Marsh.), le peuplier baumier (*Populus balsamifera* L.) et le peuplier faux-tremble (*Populus tremuloides* Michx.) sont également présents en plus petites proportions dans cette écozone. Finalement, les forêts clairsemées de la taïga du Bouclier sont dominées par l'épinette noire et le pin gris (*Pinus banksiana* Lamb.).

3.2 Inventaires forestiers, données et analyses

Aucune collecte de données locales n'a été effectuée dans le cadre de cette thèse, c'est-à-dire qu'elle repose sur une analyse de données provenant du Gouvernement du Québec et de celui de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador.

3.2.1 Chapitre 1

Pour le premier chapitre, l'entièreté de l'aire d'étude a été utilisée et couvre ainsi un gradient latitudinal et longitudinal (45,0°–52,5° N et 55,0°–80,0° O), s'étendant de la frontière occidentale du QC à la côte atlantique de TNL. Après avoir trié les deux jeux de données (QC et TNL) pour sélectionner les placettes avec des espèces d'arbres marchandes (c.-à-d., arbres ayant une valeur commerciale) avec un DHP supérieur à 9 cm et au moins deux mesures consécutives, 11 835 placettes différentes ont été retenues, pour un total de 30 799 paires de mesurages de placettes (30 037 QC, 762 TNL) représentant des périodes de croissance (c.-à-d., consiste en deux mesures consécutives d'une même placette) afin d'estimer les changements de biomasse au niveau des placettes. La biomasse aérienne totale des arbres individuels a été prédite à l'aide de modèles de biomasse publiés (Lambert et al., 2005), en utilisant le DHP et la hauteur comme variables explicatives. Ensuite, la productivité forestière nette (PFN) a pu être calculée en la divisant en croissance des arbres survivants—

arbres ayant survécu entre deux mesures ; recrutement—arbres atteignant 9,1 cm de DHP entre deux mesures ; et mortalité—arbres morts entre deux mesures. Pour prédire la PFN, la croissance des survivants, le recrutement de nouveaux arbres et la mortalité, des modèles de forêts aléatoires (*random forest*) ont été utilisés avec un ensemble de 37 variables explicatives qui décrivaient les attributs des peuplements, les conditions environnementales et la structure des traits. Les précipitations annuelles totales moyennes et minimales (mm) et les températures annuelles moyennes et maximales (°C) de chaque intervalle ont été utilisées comme variables climatiques et ont été obtenues à l'aide du logiciel BioSIM v.10.2.4.20 (Régnière et al., 2014). Pour la structure des traits des communautés, une matrice de 25 traits a été assemblée pour 38 espèces d'arbres à partir de la base de données TOPIC (Aubin et al., 2020). Les indices de diversité fonctionnelle retenus ont ainsi pu être calculés soit avec tous les traits, avec les traits individuellement ou avec des groupes de traits en utilisant un schéma à trois ou cinq axes stratégiques inspirés des travaux de Westoby (Westoby, 1998; Westoby et al., 2002).

3.2.2 Chapitre 2

Comme les données de lidar aéroporté, ou ALS (pour *Airborne Laser Scanning* en anglais), sont de plus en plus accessibles, il est possible d'explorer de nouvelles façons d'exploiter ces données lorsque l'on est confronté à de nouvelles questions écologiques. Ainsi, pour le deuxième chapitre, l'aire d'étude a été réduite à l'écozone du Bouclier Boréal (46,5°–51,1° N et 57,5°–77,1° O), de la frontière occidentale du QC jusqu'à la côte atlantique de TNL, pour profiter d'un réseau de placettes-échantillons avec à la fois un inventaire forestier traditionnel et un relevé ALS synchrone (c.-à-d., maximum deux ans d'intervalle). Les placettes sélectionnées dans le réseau de placettes du QC ont été inventoriées entre 2010 et 2020 et elles ont été associées aux données ALS acquises dans la zone correspondante entre 2012 et 2018 (MRNF, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c). Les placettes sélectionnées à TNL ont été établies en 2016 par le Service canadien des forêts de Ressources naturelles Canada pour correspondre à une acquisition de données ALS en 2016 (Gouvernement de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador 2022 ; van Lier et al. 2022). Un total de 1 339 placettes a été utilisé, soit 1 208 au

QC et 131 à TNL. À partir des nuages de points obtenus à la suite des relevés ALS, six métriques lidar pour quantifier la structure de la canopée ont été calculées pour chaque placette de 400 m² à l'étude. Ces métriques ont été utilisées comme variables réponses dans des modèles de forêts aléatoires avec un ensemble de 23 variables explicatives qui décrivaient les attributs des peuplements, les conditions environnementales et la structure des traits.

3.2.3 Chapitre 3

Pour le troisième chapitre, l'aire d'étude était encore située seulement dans l'écozone du Bouclier Boréal, mais cette fois en ne gardant que les placettes qui avaient fait l'objet d'au moins deux mesures consécutives (45,4°–52,5° N et 55,9°–79,5° O). Ceci représente un total de 9 716 placettes provenant des bases de données des deux gouvernements, pour un total de 25 533 paires de mesures de placettes indiquant des périodes de croissance (24 771 QC et 762 TNL). Les changements dans la biomasse au niveau de la placette ont été estimés avec la même procédure qu'au premier chapitre. Afin d'estimer les changements de biomasse attribués à la croissance des survivants, au recrutement de nouveaux arbres et à la mortalité avec des modèles de forêts aléatoires, 26 variables explicatives ont été calculées pour tenir en compte des différences entre les peuplements. Ces dernières décrivaient les attributs des peuplements, les conditions environnementales, la structure des traits et la structure de la canopée. Afin de considérer le vent dans les analyses, la vitesse moyenne du vent (m s⁻¹) à une résolution de 5 km a premièrement été extraite de l'Atlas canadien d'énergie éolienne d'Environnement et Changement climatique Canada pour chaque placette à l'étude (Gouvernement du Canada, 2003). Puis, pour tenir compte de la force du vent transmise aux arbres, la charge du vent a été calculée au niveau du peuplement sur la base des données d'inventaire et les équations du modèle ForestGALES (Locatelli et al., 2022).

4. CONTRIBUTION ORIGINALE

Cette thèse examine divers aspects inédits qui contribueront à enrichir notre compréhension dans le domaine de l'écologie forestière.

Premièrement, les études sur l'effet de la diversité sur la productivité forestière mettent souvent l'accent sur la croissance des arbres survivants. Cependant, la croissance des arbres survivants n'est qu'une seule des composantes de la productivité forestière. De manière surprenante, un nombre très restreint d'études se sont penchées sur l'effet de la diversité sur, à la fois, la croissance des survivants, le recrutement de nouveaux arbres et la mortalité. Ces facteurs sont pourtant au cœur de la dynamique des communautés forestières et sont tous des contributeurs à la productivité forestière. Effectivement, ces éléments sont généralement le sujet d'analyses distinctes. Examiner l'influence de la diversité sur chaque composante de la productivité forestière dans un seul et même travail de recherche n'est pas une pratique commune. Les conclusions du premier chapitre proposent ainsi une perspective beaucoup plus large, en permettant d'identifier quels traits sont les plus déterminants pour non seulement la PFN et la croissance des survivants, mais également le recrutement de nouveaux arbres et la mortalité.

En plus de la diversité, le climat est un élément déterminant de la productivité forestière et les deux sont affectés par les CC. Des analyses récentes sur les cernes de croissance ont montré que l'augmentation des températures peut s'avérer profitable pour le développement des arbres. Néanmoins, ce bienfait n'est présent que jusqu'à un certain seuil, car en le franchissant, cela engendrerait des conséquences néfastes dues à un stress hydrique trop prononcé. En conséquence, en incorporant la dimension climatique aux analyses, une représentation bien plus exhaustive des impacts des variations de température et précipitation sur la productivité forestière peut être obtenue. Notre approche ne se limite pas à l'étude de la croissance des arbres, mais englobe également le recrutement et la mortalité pour justifier les modifications observées dans la PFN. Cela nous a permis d'identifier les conditions dans lesquelles des éléments spécifiques de la structure des traits devraient être promus pour assurer la résistance, la résilience et la capacité de réponse des forêts face aux défis climatiques futurs. Dans le contexte où l'accent est mis sur l'importance de la diversité pour

assurer le maintien et la viabilité des écosystèmes dans les aménagements forestiers, ces connaissances pourraient s'avérer être utiles pour les gestionnaires forestiers.

Un aspect novateur supplémentaire est l'exploration d'une approche alternative pour étudier la relation entre la diversité et la productivité forestière grâce à l'exploitation de données issues du lidar aéroporté. L'application la plus courante des données lidar en écologie forestière consiste à améliorer les inventaires forestiers ou à modéliser les attributs forestiers en vue d'une analyse globale de la forêt. Les données lidar sont généralement utilisées dans les modèles statistiques comme variables explicatives pour prédire une variable réponse donnée (p. ex., biomasse aérienne, volume du bois et de la tige, paramètres de combustibles). Nous n'avons connaissance d'aucune autre étude ayant utilisé les attributs forestiers (c.-à-d., données d'inventaire forestier) comme variables explicatives pour prédire la structure de la canopée forestière typiquement mesurée par le lidar. Cette approche est d'autant plus intéressante que les inventaires forestiers passés ne permettent pas de comprendre précisément la structure des forêts, l'acquisition de données lidar à l'échelle nationale n'ayant commencé qu'au cours des dernières décennies. Nos modèles, grâce à leur singularité, introduisent de nouvelles voies de recherche. En ayant la capacité de prédire la structure de la canopée forestière sans recourir à des données lidar, cette approche pourrait permettre de quantifier la structure passée de la canopée à partir d'inventaires historiques. Connaître l'évolution de la structure des forêts dans le temps, en utilisant des valeurs prédites de la canopée à partir de données d'inventaires forestiers, constitue un avantage inestimable pour approfondir notre connaissance de l'exploitation de l'espace de la canopée par les arbres. En plus d'offrir cette nouvelle perspective, cette approche nous a permis de connaître l'apport de la diversité des arbres et de la structure des traits d'une communauté dans l'arrangement spatial des houppiers, ainsi que de pouvoir étudier cet apport à travers le temps.

L'étude des impacts du vent sur la productivité forestière est l'élément le plus original de ce doctorat. En effet, un nombre limité d'études scientifiques incorporent les conditions environnementales lorsqu'elles explorent les relations diversité-productivité. Parmi ces dernières, le vent est encore moins souvent considéré en raison de la complexité de son

intégration. Cependant, de plus en plus d'études démontrent que le vent est un élément crucial pour la croissance des arbres. À travers le dernier chapitre, nos travaux visaient à débroussailler l'effet du vent et montrer que le vent a une influence importante sur la productivité. Le troisième chapitre reprend également l'aspect novateur de départager l'effet du vent sur la croissance des survivants, le recrutement de nouveaux arbres et la mortalité. Cette analyse plus fine a permis de non seulement saisir avec plus de précision les effets du vent au niveau des communautés d'arbres, mais aussi d'examiner comment ces effets fluctuaient en fonction de la structure des traits et de la canopée. C'était la première initiative de recherche à examiner ces thématiques dans l'est du Canada. Nos résultats offrent un fondement robuste pour approfondir l'étude de l'influence du vent sur la productivité des forêts.

Finalement, l'ensemble des résultats de cette thèse propose des pistes intéressantes pour améliorer les modèles de productivité, de croissance, de recrutement et de mortalité des arbres, afin de les adapter aux connaissances acquises à travers la compréhension des effets de la structure des traits, de la structure de la canopée, du climat et du vent sur la productivité forestière des communautés d'arbres dans l'est du Canada.

CHAPITRE 1
LE CLIMAT INTERAGIT AVEC LA STRUCTURE DES TRAITS DES
COMMUNAUTÉS D'ARBRES POUR INFLUENCER LA PRODUCTIVITÉ DES
FORÊTS

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1.1 RÉSUMÉ

Le premier article de ma thèse, intitulé « *Climate interacts with the trait structure of tree communities to influence forest productivity* », fut rédigé par moi-même ainsi que par professeur Robert Schneider, Dr Hugues Power et Dr Mathieu Fortin. Il fut publié à la revue « *Journal of Ecology (J. Ecol.)* » en juin 2024. Avec le professeur Robert Schneider et le Dr Hugues Power, j'ai conceptualisé le travail de recherche. En tant que première auteure, ma contribution à ce travail fut la recherche sur l'état des connaissances, l'analyse des données, la modélisation et la rédaction de l'article avec la contribution de tous les auteurs. Tous les auteurs ont discuté des résultats, lu, contribué et approuvé le manuscrit final.

La diversité fonctionnelle—décrite comme étant la distribution des valeurs des traits dans une communauté— peut accroître la productivité des forêts en améliorant les interactions entre les espèces, en plus d'assurer une plus grande stabilité au niveau de la croissance. Cependant, très peu d'études ont examiné l'influence de la diversité fonctionnelle sur, à la fois, la croissance des arbres survivants, le recrutement et la mortalité des arbres, qui sont pourtant les principaux moteurs de la dynamique forestière. Cette étude explore les relations diversité—productivité—climat afin d'étudier le rôle des traits pour la productivité forestière et de déterminer dans quelles circonstances leur diversité doit être promue pour favoriser la capacité d'adaptation des forêts dans le contexte du climat futur. En utilisant la modélisation par forêts aléatoires et un réseau de placettes échantillons permanentes couvrant un large gradient de conditions climatiques, les effets de la diversité fonctionnelle et des variables climatiques sur la productivité forestière nette (PFN), la croissance des survivants, le recrutement de nouveaux arbres et la mortalité ont été isolés. D'après nos résultats, la structure des traits affecte la productivité des forêts de différentes manières. La PFN est influencée par trois traits appartenant à différentes stratégies végétales. La croissance des survivants et le recrutement sont fortement corrélés avec les traits foliaires et ceux liés à l'acquisition des ressources, et la mortalité des arbres avec un mélange de traits reflétant diverses stratégies végétales. Des interactions entre le climat et la structure des traits sont également observées. Les communautés d'arbres réagissent généralement de manière positive à l'augmentation des températures annuelles et des précipitations totales. Par exemple, une interaction entre la tolérance à la sécheresse et la température est observée : à basse température, l'accumulation de biomasse liée à la PFN augmente avec la valeur du trait de tolérance à la sécheresse, alors qu'à des températures plus élevées, le schéma inverse est observé. La PFN élevée des communautés tolérantes à la sécheresse s'explique notamment par la faible mortalité des arbres. Cependant, selon leur structure de traits, les communautés d'arbres montrent des réponses contrastées aux variations climatiques. Il n'est ainsi pas systématiquement garanti qu'une plus grande diversité fonctionnelle conduise à une augmentation de biomasse dans un contexte de variations climatiques. Cette étude fournit un cadre utile pour identifier quels traits ou groupe de traits doivent être privilégiés en fonction des différents scénarios climatiques afin d'anticiper le changement et de contribuer à renforcer la capacité d'adaptation des forêts.

Mots-clés : Changements climatiques ; Croissance des survivants, recrutement et mortalité des arbres ; Modélisation par forêts aléatoires ; Productivité forestière nette ; Structure des traits des communautés.

CLIMATE INTERACTS WITH THE TRAIT STRUCTURE OF TREE COMMUNITIES TO INFLUENCE FOREST PRODUCTIVITY

1.2 ABSTRACT

1. Tree functional diversity can increase forest productivity by enhancing species interactions and providing greater growth stability. However, very few studies have examined the influence of tree community trait structure on survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality simultaneously, which are the main drivers of forest population dynamics.
2. Here we explore the interactions among functional diversity, productivity, and climate to investigate the role of the trait structure of communities on forest productivity and to determine under what circumstances functional diversity should be promoted to ensure forest adaptive capacity under future climate.
3. Using random-forest modeling and a network of permanent sample plots covering a broad gradient of climatic conditions, we isolated the effects of functional diversity—described as the distribution of trait values in a community—and climate variables on net forest productivity (NFP), survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality.
4. Based on our findings, trait structure affects forest productivity in different ways. NFP was influenced by three traits from three different plant strategy dimensions, whereas survivor growth and recruitment were strongly correlated with leaf and resource acquisition traits, and tree mortality with a mix of traits reflecting various plant strategies.
5. Tree communities also generally experienced a positive response to higher temperature and precipitation. For instance, we observed an interaction between drought tolerance and mean annual temperature: at low temperatures, NFP aboveground biomass accumulation increased with the value of the drought tolerance trait; however, at higher temperatures, the opposite pattern was observed. However, we found contrasting patterns of population response to climate variability, depending on their functional diversity. Greater functional diversity does not necessarily increase aboveground biomass accumulation under different climatic conditions.
6. *Synthesis.* As all components of forest productivity contribute to NFP, studies on forest productivity should not only consider survivor growth, but also recruitment and mortality. Each component responds differently in terms of aboveground biomass changes to climatic variation, according to the trait structure of tree communities. This study provides a framework to identify the trait structure that should be targeted under different climate scenarios to anticipate change and help strengthen forest response capacity to climate change.

Keywords: Climate change scenarios; Net forest productivity; Random-forest models; Survivor growth, tree recruitment and mortality; Trait structure of communities.

1.3 INTRODUCTION

Diverse forests can be more productive than species-poor ones (Liang et al., 2007; Paquette & Messier, 2011; Zhang et al., 2012; Pretzsch, Forrester, et al., 2015; Liang et al., 2016; Forrester, 2017; Zheng et al., 2021). The positive mixing effects may reflect complementarity interactions, such as niche differentiation (i.e., where two or more species occupy distinct spatial niches enhancing collective performance) and facilitation (i.e., where one species positively influences another, directly or indirectly, by increasing its growth or survival) (Callaway, 1995; Loreau, 2000; Loreau & Hector, 2001). Competition between two species can be reduced if they differ in their use of a resource, for example, one being adapted to the use of light found in the understory, while another is specialized in the use of light higher up in the canopy (Man & Lieffers, 1999; Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015) or one species can increase the amount of nitrogen available for another by increasing litter decomposition rates (Man & Lieffers, 1999; del Río & Sterba, 2009). The differential sensitivity of species to specific disturbance agents (e.g., diseases, pathogens, defoliation and climate) could also contribute to the positive mixing effect (Pretzsch, 2005; Jucker et al., 2016; Sousa-Silva et al., 2018). By studying the trait structure of communities, more attention is paid to the role of each organism in the ecosystem and to the attributes needed to maintain ecosystem functioning (Reiss et al., 2009). A trait can be defined as *'a measurable characteristic (morphological, phenological, physiological, behavioural, or cultural) of an individual organism that is measured at either the individual or other relevant level of organizational'* (Dawson et al., 2021). One of the fundamental advantages of their use is that they can provide generalizations across species and taxa, revealing the different ecological strategies involved in species assemblages (Kraft et al., 2015; Shipley et al., 2016; Dawson et al., 2021) and as such inferences are more generalizable beyond the immediate study system. Thus, this approach enables the study of the mechanisms underlying the diversity-ecosystem function relationships and recognizes that some mixtures can be more complementary than others (Lavorel et al., 2008). Forest productivity can be studied as a net value (i.e., net forest productivity, NFP), defined as the biomass remaining after subtracting the losses through tree

mortality (i.e., trees that have died between two measurements) from the gain of survivor growth (i.e., growth of trees that survived between two consecutive plot measurements) and tree recruitment (i.e., trees that reach 9.1 cm DBH between two measurements) (Pretzsch, 2009). However, relatively few studies have examined the effect of the trait structure of tree communities on forest productivity in relation to demographic processes, namely, survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality, which all contribute to forest population dynamics (Condés & Del Río, 2015; Liang et al., 2007; Looney et al., 2021).

Along with the trait structure, climate also represents a major determinant of forest productivity (Ammer, 2019). As reported by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global temperatures in the northern midlatitudes are projected to increase by 1.5–2 °C and temperature extremes by 3–4 °C, depending on the scenario (Kirilenko & Sedjo, 2007; Allen et al., 2019; Ammer, 2019), increases that will undoubtedly affect many forest ecosystems. As disturbances become more frequent or more intense (Dale et al., 2001), interactions among species will be altered. These changes will affect population dynamics and, therefore, ecosystem functions and services, of which productivity is a key feature (Silva Pedro et al., 2016; Ammer, 2019). Currently, promoting tree diversity is seen as a promising avenue to adapt to climate change in current forestry practices (Kolström et al., 2011; Pretzsch, Forrester, et al., 2015; Ammer, 2019; Looney et al., 2021). A combination of different approaches can be used to help an ecosystem to functionally recover after changes (Thompson et al., 2009), either through resistance (i.e., the absence of change), resilience (i.e., the return to the initial state after a disturbance) or response (i.e., strengthening the capacity of forests respond to change) (Millar et al., 2007; Malmshheimer et al., 2008; Hörl et al., 2020). However, recent studies have shown contrasting patterns concerning the effect of tree diversity on the ability of some stands to maintain their productivity when subjected to climate change (CC) (Jucker et al., 2016; Paquette et al., 2017). Mitigating the effects of CC on forests requires identifying and understanding the circumstances under which tree species diversity has the utmost potential to positively influence forest productivity and its components, information that has important implications for forest management and forest conservation.

Our study had two goals. The first one was to understand how the structure of traits within tree communities influences the different components of forest productivity (survivor growth, recruitment of new trees, mortality) over a wide latitudinal and longitudinal gradient in northeastern North America. We proposed to address this question by using trait values from the literature to analyze the trait structure of tree communities within a large network of periodically measured permanent sample plots (PSP). It can be assumed that the trait structure of communities affects each component of forest productivity differently. Indeed, it is expected that (i) leaf traits are associated with survivor growth because they are important for overall plant functioning, whereas (ii) traits related to resource acquisition have the largest impact on tree recruitment, and (iii) those related to competition and survival strategies play a more notable role in tree mortality. Our second goal was related to the effects of CC on forest productivity and motivated by this question: Does the trait structure of a community influence its ability to respond to climatic variations? We hypothesized that (iv) forests with the highest functional diversity have better adaptive capacity to an altered climate than those with the lowest diversity. To do this, we used annual temperature and precipitation to investigate how tree communities responded to a range of climatic conditions. The relationships between trait structure, productivity, and climate may provide insights to evaluate under which circumstances tree species diversity can enhance forest productivity under CC.

1.4 MATERIALS AND METHODS

1.4.1 Study Area

The PSPs used in the study cover a latitudinal and longitudinal gradient (45°–52.5°N and 55°W–80°W), stretching from the western border of the province of Quebec (QC) to the Atlantic coast of the province of Newfoundland (NL) (Fig. 3). The ecozone covered by the PSP network extends from the Mixedwood Plains in the south to the Taiga Shield in the north, passing through the Atlantic Maritime, Hudson Plains, and Boreal Shield ecozones (Government of Canada, 2018). The dominant tree species in the

Mixedwood Plains and Atlantic Maritime ecozones are sugar maple (*Acer saccharum* Marsh.), and a mixture of boreal species, including balsam fir (*Abies balsamea* [L.] Mill.) and black spruce (*Picea mariana* [Mill.] Britton, Sterns & Poggenb.), and southern species, including yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis* Britt.). The Boreal Shield and the Hudson Plains ecozones are dominated by black spruce and white spruce (*Picea glauca* [Moench] Voss), balsam fir, and eastern larch (*Larix laricina* [Du Roi] K. Koch). White birch (*Betula papyrifera* Marsh.), balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera* L.), and trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides* Michx.) are also present in smaller proportions in this ecozone.

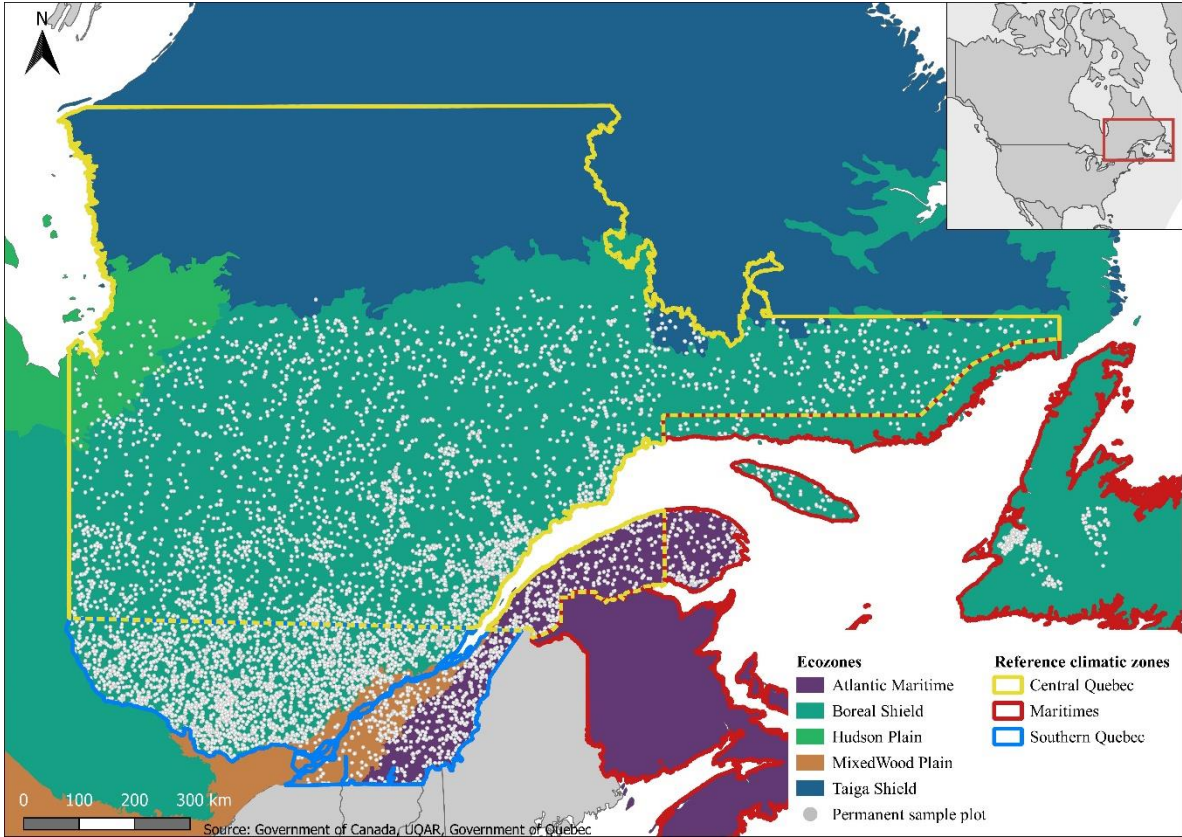


Figure 3. Map of permanent sample plots and their distribution across eastern Canadian terrestrial ecozones, with the three reference climatic zones for the regionalized climate simulations in Quebec and the Maritimes (see Ouranos (2015) for details). Map lines delineate study areas and do not necessarily depict accepted national boundaries.

1.4.2 Forest Inventory

The QC permanent sample plot network, established in 1970 and still monitored today (Duchesne & Ouimet, 2008; Gouvernement du Québec, 2019), has more than 12,500 randomly distributed circular sample plots (400 m²). In each plot, trees with diameter at breast height (DBH; measured at 1.3 m above ground) larger than 9.0 cm are numbered, and their DBH and status (alive, dead, or harvested) are recorded at each survey. Recruits, living trees that reach the threshold of 9.1 cm DBH between two measurements, are numbered and their DBH recorded. Tree height is measured on a subsample of nine trees per plots (MRNF, 2022). For trees with missing height, it was predicted using species-specific models of height-diameter relationships (Auger, 2016). The PSPs are remeasured approximately every ten years, with some plots having up to six measurements in total.

Data from NL were also collected from 400 m² circular sample plots established by the Canadian Forest Service of Natural Resources Canada from 1987, and plots have been remeasured every three to five years (up to eight measurements in total) (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2022). The inventory protocol is similar to that of QC PSPs. Tree species, DBH at 1.3 m, tree height, and status of all trees with DBH larger than 9.0 cm are recorded. The height of tree was measured using a vertex and models of height-diameter relationships were used to impute missing heights (Mehtätalo et al., 2015).

After screening the two datasets for plots containing trees of merchantable species (i.e., trees with a commercial value) with a DBH over 9 cm and at least two consecutive measurements, we retained 11,835 different plots (Table 1), for a total of 30,799 pairs (30,037 QC, 762 NL) of plot measurements representing growth periods (i.e., a growth period consists of two consecutive measurements of a plot) to estimate changes in aboveground biomass at the plot level. We proceeded as follows. The total aboveground biomass of individual trees was predicted using previously published models of biomass (Lambert et al., 2005) using DBH and height as predictors. Then, the net forest productivity was divided into survivor growth *SG* (growth of trees that survived between two

consecutive plot measurements), recruitment R (trees that reach 9.1 cm DBH between two measurements), and mortality M (trees that have died between two measurements). The trees that were harvested or thinned were recorder with a distinct code in the database and consequently were not included in the calculation of mortality. More precisely, these different components were calculated as follows for each pair of measurements:

$$SG_{ik} = \frac{\sum_{j \in sg} b_{ijk+1} - b_{ijk}}{t_{ik+1} - t_{ik}}, \quad \text{eq.1}$$

$$R_{ik} = \frac{\sum_{j \in r} b_{ijk+1}}{t_{ik+1} - t_{ik}}, \quad \text{eq.2}$$

$$M_{ik} = \frac{\sum_{j \in m} b_{ijk}}{t_{ik+1} - t_{ik}}, \quad \text{eq.3}$$

$$Y_{ik} = SG_{ik} + R_{ik} - M_{ik}, \quad \text{eq.4}$$

where sg , r and m are the sets of trees that survived, were recruited, and died, respectively, SG_{ik} is the survivor growth in biomass b for all the survivor trees in plot i , over the interval that goes from measurement $k-1$ to measurement k , tree recruitment R_{ik} is defined as the aboveground biomass b of the trees that were recruited between measurements, and tree mortality M_{ik} is defined as the aboveground biomass b of a tree that died between measurements $k-1$ and k . Net forest productivity Y is expressed as total living aboveground biomass increments ($\text{Mg ha}^{-1} \text{ yr}^{-1}$ of dry biomass) in plot i between measurements $k-1$ and k . Mortality does not consider the growth of dead trees (growth between the last plot measurement when the tree is alive and the moment of its death) since dead trees are not measured. Finally, recruitment was only tracked once the tree achieved merchantable tree size (i.e., $\text{DBH} > 9\text{cm}$).

1.4.3 Explanatory variables

We used a series of 37 explanatory variables to account for between-plot differences (Table 1). Among these, five described the forest structure, six described the environment, and 26 described the trait structure of tree communities.

Table 1. Description of the study dataset per eastern Canadian terrestrial ecozone. Mean–standard deviation is provided for continuous variables, followed by the range (10th–90th percentiles). Values were scaled to 1 ha from the original 400 m² plot size.

	Atlantic Maritime	Boreal Shield	Hudson Plains	Mixedwood Plains	Taiga Shield
Number of plots	1,556	9,721	103	386	69
Number of pairs of measurements	3,869	25,544	228	986	172
Mean net forest productivity increment (Mg ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹)	2.6–2.0 (0.3–4.9)	1.7–1.7 (0.0–3.8)	0.2–1.1 (–0.4–1.2)	3.3–1.7 (1.1–5.3)	0.4–0.7 (0.0–1.0)
Mean survivor growth increment (Mg ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹)	2.2–1.5 (0.2–4.2)	1.6–1.3 (0.1–3.4)	0.3–0.5 (0.0–0.9)	2.8–1.6 (0.6–4.9)	0.4–0.3 (0.1–0.8)
Mean tree recruitment increment (Mg ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹)	0.7–0.9 (0.0–1.8)	0.5–0.7 (0.0–1.4)	0.2–0.3 (0.0–0.5)	0.8–0.8 (0.0–1.8)	0.3–0.2 (0.0–0.6)
Mean tree mortality loss (Mg ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹)	0.4–0.9 (0.0–1.0)	0.4–0.9 (0.0–1.3)	0.4–0.9 (0.0–0.7)	0.3–0.7 (0.0–0.9)	0.3–0.6 (0.0–0.7)
Mean net biomass (Mg ha⁻¹)	86.7–62.0 (12.6–163.9)	80.9–58.3 (12.8–157.3)	40.2–41.4 (2.5–95.5)	110.1–68.4 (27.2–199.8)	40.5–26.5 (8.4–71.8)
Basal area (m² ha⁻¹)	22.1–12.9 (4.7–38.2)	20.3–12.2 (4.3–36.1)	11.2–9.6 (1.4–23.5)	25.4–12.7 (8.7–41.8)	13.4–7.7 (3.5–22.9)
Dominant height (m)	17.1–4.2 (11.4–22.4)	16.9–4.5 (10.9–22.7)	12.6–3.1 (9.0–16.5)	19.9–4.3 (14.2–25.2)	12.5–2.3 (9.4–15.3)
Three most-dominant species	<i>Abies balsamea</i> <i>Acer saccharum</i> <i>Acer rubrum</i>	<i>Picea mariana</i> <i>Abies balsamea</i> <i>Betula papyrifera</i>	<i>Picea mariana</i> <i>Pinus banksiana</i> <i>Larix laricina</i>	<i>Acer rubrum</i> <i>Acer saccharum</i> <i>Abies balsamea</i>	<i>Picea mariana</i> <i>Pinus banksiana</i> <i>Abies balsamea</i>
Dominant species basal area (m² ha⁻¹)	13.0–9.0 (2.8–25.6)	12.4–8.4 (2.9–23.4)	9.9–8.3 (1.2–21.4)	13.5–7.9 (4.6–23.8)	10.9–5.6 (3.3–17.7)
Mean topographic position index (TPI)	3 (1–5)	3 (1–5)	2 (2–5)	3 (1–5)	3 (1–5)
Mean topographic wetness index (TWI)	7.1–1.6 (5.4–9.4)	6.9–1.6 (5.3–9.0)	9.2–1.8 (6.9–11.8)	7.3–1.4 (5.9–9.6)	7.8–1.3 (6.3–9.1)
Mean annual temperature (°C)	3.2–1.1 (1.7–4.6)	1.6–1.9 (–1.1–4.0)	–0.3–0.7 (–1.3–0.6)	5.1–0.9 (4.0–6.3)	–2.3–1.0 (–3.5 to 1.1)
Mean annual total precipitations (mm)	1139.5–105.3 (1002.7–1271.2)	1007.0–141.8 (870.4–1187.0)	785.6–36.5 (742.3–848.7)	1090.3–84.9 (978.7–1200.4)	822.7–68.2 (739.6–913.5)
Species richness (SR)	4.0–1.7 (1–14)	3.5–1.8 (1–14)	1.5–0.7 (1–5)	4.8–1.9 (1–10)	1.9–0.6 (1–3)
Proportion of plots with low SR (nb species <4)	40.6%	56.7%	97.3%	27.9%	100.0%
Functional dispersion (FDis index, with all traits)	0.1049–0.0514 (0.0224–0.1637)	0.0891–0.0546 (0.0000–0.1569)	0.0262–0.0422 (0.0000–0.1066)	0.1198–0.0492 (0.0451–0.1723)	0.0369–0.0319 (0.0000–0.0759)

1.4.3.1 Forest structure

Forest structure was characterized by five variables that were computed at the initial measurement of each interval. Competition was quantified using merchantable basal area ($\text{m}^2 \cdot \text{ha}^{-1}$, i.e., calculated with trees with a DBH over 9 cm and a commercial value). Plot ontogeny was estimated using dominant height (average height of the four thickest trees in the plot) as proxy. Stand composition was assessed with the dominant species and with the basal area of the dominant species ($\text{m}^2 \cdot \text{ha}^{-1}$). The plot's total biomass (Mg ha^{-1} of dry biomass) was also included.

1.4.3.2 Environment

Six environmental descriptors of local biophysical conditions and climate were included. Topographic position index (TPI) and topographic wetness index (TWI) (20 m resolution) were used as proxies for biophysical conditions (De Reu et al., 2013; Kopecký et al., 2021) and calculated once for each plot. The mean and minimum total annual precipitation (mm) and the mean and maximum annual temperatures ($^{\circ}\text{C}$) of each interval were used as the climatic variables and were obtained using the BioSIM software v.10.2.4.20 (Régnière et al., 2014).

1.4.3.3 Trait structure of communities

The last set of variables was to evaluate the trait structure of the plots at the initial measurement of each interval. As has been done in other studies (Díaz et al., 2007; Mokany et al., 2008; Paquette & Messier, 2011), we characterized the trait structure of communities to assess which trait or group of traits drives each component of forest productivity. It is possible to characterize the trait structure of communities using a variety of indices (Dias et al., 2021). We assembled a table of traits from published sources for the 38 merchantable tree species observed in our dataset (Aubin et al., 2020; Paquette & Messier, 2011) (see *SI Appendix* Table S1 for more details regarding the dataset) as well as a table of species abundance (i.e., total species basal area $\text{m}^2 \text{ha}^{-1}$) by plot. Several community functional

structure indices were then computed using the *FD* (Laliberté et al., 2014) and *SYNCSA* (Debastiani & Pillar, 2012) R packages (see *SI Appendix* Table S2): functional dispersion (FD_{is}) (Laliberté & Legendre, 2010), community-level weighted means of trait values (CWM) (Lavorel et al., 2008; Laliberté & Legendre, 2010), functional redundancy index (FR) (de Bello et al., 2007; Pillar et al., 2013), a posteriori functional group richness (FGR) (Laliberté & Legendre, 2010), Rao's quadratic entropy (Q) (Rao, 1982; Laliberté & Legendre, 2010), and Gini–Simpson index (D) (Simpson, 1949). Two more traditional diversity indices based on species abundance only (i.e., without traits) were computed for comparison: Shannon–Wiener diversity index (H' , $e^{H'}$) (Shannon, 1948; Shannon & Weaver, 1949; Burks, 1951), and species richness (N) (Spellerberg & Fedor, 2003).

To obtain the best possible community trait structure indices, several combinations of traits were used to calculate the indices. First, indices based on all available traits and individual traits were calculated. Secondly, based on Westoby (1998) proposed scheme to classify species strategies, we categorized those traits grouped along different dimensions. If multiple traits are related to the same ecological strategies or are part of a group that characterizes similar functions, they can be said to be part of the same plant strategy dimension or the same functional group dimension (Wright et al., 2007). We separated the available traits into three plant strategy dimensions: (1) resource acquisition; (2) competition/survival; and (3) reproduction; and in a second manner, into five functional group dimensions: (1) tree stature; (2) dispersal, germination, and seedling development; (3) stress tolerance/environment (4) underground, and (5) leaf (see *SI Appendix* Table S1). Diversity indices were then built with all the traits categorized in these various dimensions and with all possible combinations of either three or five traits for plant strategy dimensions and functional group dimensions, respectively. The details of these indices are presented in *SI Appendix* Table S3.

Finally, to reduce the dimensionality of the trait structure index matrix, we applied a clustering approach to group the indices into homogeneous clusters such that each cluster was composed of indices yielding similar information (Chavent et al., 2011). To evaluate the

feasibility of the clustering analysis (i.e., non-random structures), we computed the Hopkins statistic (H) with R's *factoextra* package (Kassambara & Mundt, 2017). A value of H greater than 0.75 indicates a tendency to cluster at the 90% confidence level (*SI Appendix* Table S4). To then assess the optimal number of clusters k (*SI Appendix* Table S4), we used the variance explained, silhouette, and AIC criterion with R's *ClusterR* package (Mouselimis, 2022). Clustering analyses were performed on (1) indices built with all traits; (2) indices built with individual traits; (3) indices built with traits grouped into dimensions; (4) indices built with a combination of three traits; and (5) indices built with a combination of five traits. The index retained for each cluster was that closest to the central synthetic variable, the medoid (*SI Appendix* Table S4). We thus reached a final set of 26 indices to account for differences in trait structure of the plots: two indices calculated with species abundance only (e^H and N added for comparison), three indices calculated with all the traits (D, FD_{is} , FGR), three community weighted mean indices (CWM.SeFreq, CWM.ToID, CWM.LMA), eight functional dispersion indices (FD_{is} .Pb, FD_{is} .Nmass, FD_{is} .WDR, FD_{is} .Leaf, FD_{is} .Eco296, FD_{is} .3, FD_{is} .5, FD_{is} .Logi2106), three Gini-Simpson indices (D.Tree, D.Eco1, D.Logi1), four Rao's quadratic entropy index (Q.Eco242, Q.Eco277, Q.Eco506, Q.Logi354), and three functional redundancy indices (FR.Eco5, FR.Logi394, FR.Logi1252) (see *SI Appendix* Table S5 for details).

1.4.4 Analysis

The set of 37 field-measured attributes related to forest structure, environment and trait structure of communities was then included in a random-forest analysis. Random-forest (RF) regression is an effective prediction method when the number of predictors is high and when interactions and correlations among them are numerous and complex (Breiman, 2001; Svetnik et al., 2003; Strobl et al., 2008). The RF algorithm finds the optimal combination of explanatory variables (Kuhn & Johnson, 2013) to reduce the number of predictors and maximize model performance. RF modeling was performed using the recursive feature elimination (rfe) algorithm from the *caret* package (Kuhn, 2020) in R. The RF was calculated to find the best subset of predictors—from a model having a single explanatory variable to a

model using all explanatory variables—that generates the lowest root mean square error (RMSE) with a tolerance of 3% (3% more error than the model with the lowest RMSE) and with 50 repetitions of 10-fold cross-validation. We used the abovementioned 37 explanatory variables describing forest structure, environment, and trait structure to predict NFP and the aboveground biomass increment attributed to survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality. The optimal model was recalibrated using the *randomForest* package (Liaw & Wiener, 2002) in R, with the number of features sampled at each split set to the default value for regression (i.e., $p/3$ where p is number of variables) and the number of random trees set to 20,000. To understand how each feature contributes to the model’s predictive performance, we used the percent increase in mean square error (MSE) to determine variable importance (Kuhn & Johnson, 2013). This method is the most robust and informative measure and is based on the average decrease in the precision of the predictions of the out-of-bag samples—data used by the algorithm to incorporate a validation step within the fitting procedure—when a given variable is excluded from the model (Liaw & Wiener, 2002; Attanasi et al., 2020). As the percent in MSE for a given variable becomes greater, so does the importance of this variable. In addition to looking at the RF model’s performance as RMSE, the percentage of the explained variance (R^2) was also calculated. Serial and spatial correlations among the residuals were checked and found to be small or negligible, indicating very limited impact on the statistical inference (Aarts et al., 2014).

1.5 RESULTS

1.5.1 Important Variables Linked to Forest Productivity

Survivor growth explained an average 63% of total forest productivity (see *SI Appendix* text and Fig. S1 for details), whereas tree recruitment and tree mortality were responsible for 26% and 10% of total forest productivity, respectively (*SI Appendix* Fig. S1). In our models, all the explanatory variables, including those describing the trait structure of tree communities, explained 53% of the variance in plot NFP, 78% of the survivor growth

contribution to NFP, 55% of tree recruitment contribution to NFP, and 13% of the tree mortality of contribution to NFP (Fig. 4).

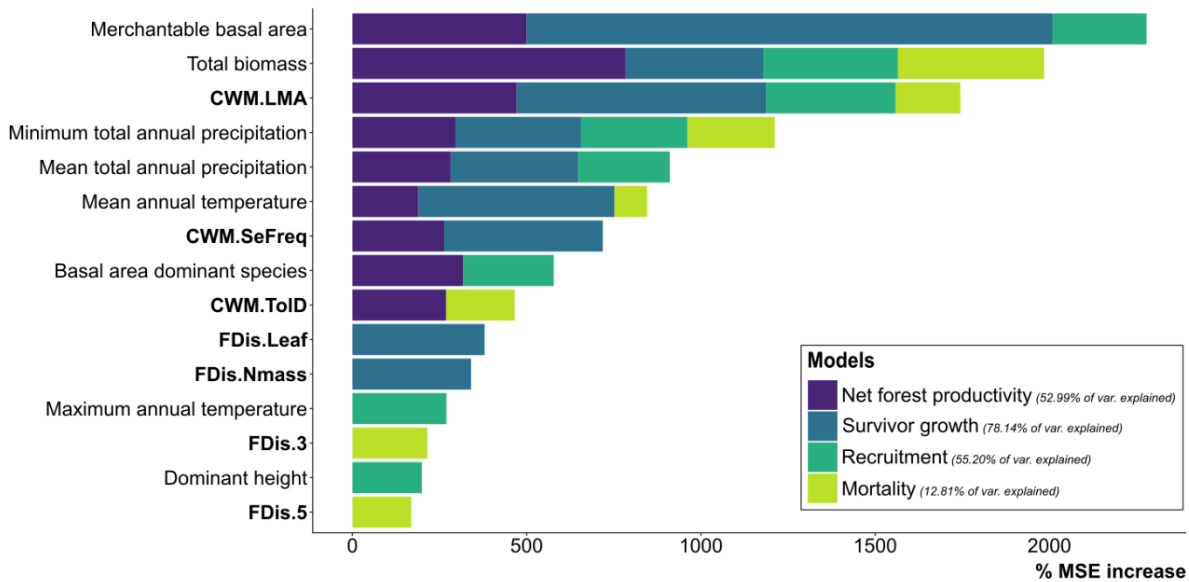


Figure 4. Important variables for net forest productivity (52.99% of variance explained), survivor growth (78.14% of variance explained), recruitment (55.20% of variance explained), and mortality (12.81% of variance explained) models. Important diversity features are in bold: the community-weighted means of leaf mass per area (**CWM.LMA**), seed frequency (**CWM.SeFreq**), and drought tolerance (**CWM.ToID**), the functional dispersion index based on leaf traits (**FDis.Leaf**; i.e., leaf size, leaf longevity, leaf mass per area, and nitrogen content per leaf mass unit), the functional dispersion index based only on the leaf nitrogen content trait (**FDis.Nmass**), the functional dispersion index based on three traits (**FDis.3**, i.e., ectomycorrhiza, wood decay resistance, and vegetative reproduction), and the functional dispersion index based on five traits (**FDis.5**, i.e., average maximum height, frequency of a good crop year, drought tolerance, root depth, and leaf longevity).

In terms of the important explanatory variables related to forest structure, merchantable basal area, total biomass, basal area of the dominant species and dominant height were retained in at least one model. Total biomass at the beginning of the growing period was among the most important variables for the four models, increasing the mean square error (MSE) 784%, 397%, 385%, and 419% if removed from the NFP, survivor growth, tree recruitment, and tree mortality models, respectively. When total biomass was excluded, the merchantable basal area was important in the NFP (500% MSE increase if removed),

survivor growth (1510% MSE increase if removed) and recruitment (270% MSE increase if removed). The basal area of the dominant species was important for both NFP and tree recruitment, increasing the MSE 318% and 260%, respectively, if removed. Finally, dominant height was only important in the tree recruitment model by increasing the MSE 199% when dropped from this model.

Among all the environment-related explanatory variables, climate variability emerged as an important variable in all four models (Figs. 4 and 5). At least two of the following climatic variables explained the observed variation (calculated based on observed data range) in the four models: mean and/or minimum annual total precipitation and mean and/or maximum annual temperature. The mean square error (MSE) increased by 189%, 563%, and 94% when mean annual temperature was excluded from the NFP, survivor growth, and tree mortality models, respectively. MSE increased by 270% when maximum annual temperature was excluded from the tree recruitment model. The variable importance plot (Fig. 4) also illustrates that the MSE increased by 296% if minimum annual precipitation was dropped from the NFP model, by 360% in the survivor growth model, by 305% in the tree recruitment model, and by 251% in the tree mortality model.

Finally, regarding the explanatory variables linked to the trait structure of communities, Random Forests models showed several of these variables to be relevant for explaining the variability of NFP and each of its components (Fig. 4). The community-weighted mean of leaf mass per area (CWM.LMA) was common to all four models and was always among the five most important variables. When CWM.LMA was excluded, the MSE increased by 472% for the NFP model, 716% for the survivor growth model, 371% for the tree recruitment model, and 186% for the tree mortality model. For both NFP and tree mortality, the community-weighted mean of drought tolerance (TolD) was also an important trait, and the MSE increased by 269% when CWM.TolD was excluded from the NFP model and 196% from the tree mortality model. Moreover, the community-weighted mean of seed frequency (SeFreq) was an important trait for both the NFP and survivor growth models. The variable importance plot shows that the MSE would increase by 263% if CWM.SeFreq were to be

dropped from the NFP model and 455% in the survivor growth model. The functional dispersion (FD_{is}) index based on leaf traits ($FD_{is}.Leaf$, i.e., leaf size, leaf longevity, leaf mass per area and nitrogen content per leaf mass unit) and the FD_{is} based only on the leaf nitrogen content trait ($FD_{is}.Nmass$) were both important functional diversity features in the survivor growth model. Moreover, both the functional dispersion index using three ($FD_{is}.3$, i.e., ectomycorrhiza, wood decay resistance, and vegetative reproduction) and five traits ($FD_{is}.5$, i.e., average maximum height, frequency of a good crop year, drought tolerance, root depth, and leaf longevity) entered the tree mortality model. The MSE would respectively increase by 379% and 340% if $FD_{is}.Leaf$ and $FD_{is}.Nmass$ were to be excluded from the survivor growth model. MSE would increase by 215% and 169%, respectively, if $FD_{is}.3$ and $FD_{is}.5$ were dropped from the tree mortality model.

1.5.2 Trait Structure–Productivity–Climate Interactions

When examining biomass accumulation against community's trait structure under climate variation (25th-75th percentiles), the predicted biomass increments in both the NFP, and survivor growth models were always greater at higher mean annual temperatures and higher minimum annual precipitation (Fig. 5 A–N). Predicted tree recruitment was greater at higher maximum annual temperatures (Fig. 5 O) and remained similar despite variation in minimum annual precipitation (Fig. 5 P). For tree mortality, the predicted biomass increment was similar between the 25th, 50th and 75th percentile of mean annual temperatures (Fig. 5 Q, S) but appeared slightly lower when temperatures were low (Fig. 5 U, W). However, when the minimum annual precipitation was low (25th percentile), mortality was higher than at high levels of minimum annual precipitation (75th percentile) (Fig. 5 R, T, V, X).

Furthermore, the interaction of explanatory variables showed interesting variation patterns. First, we observed an interaction between drought tolerance CWM and mean annual temperature. With temperatures near the 25th and 50th percentiles, NFP biomass accumulation increased with the value of the CWM.Told; however, at higher temperatures (near the 75th

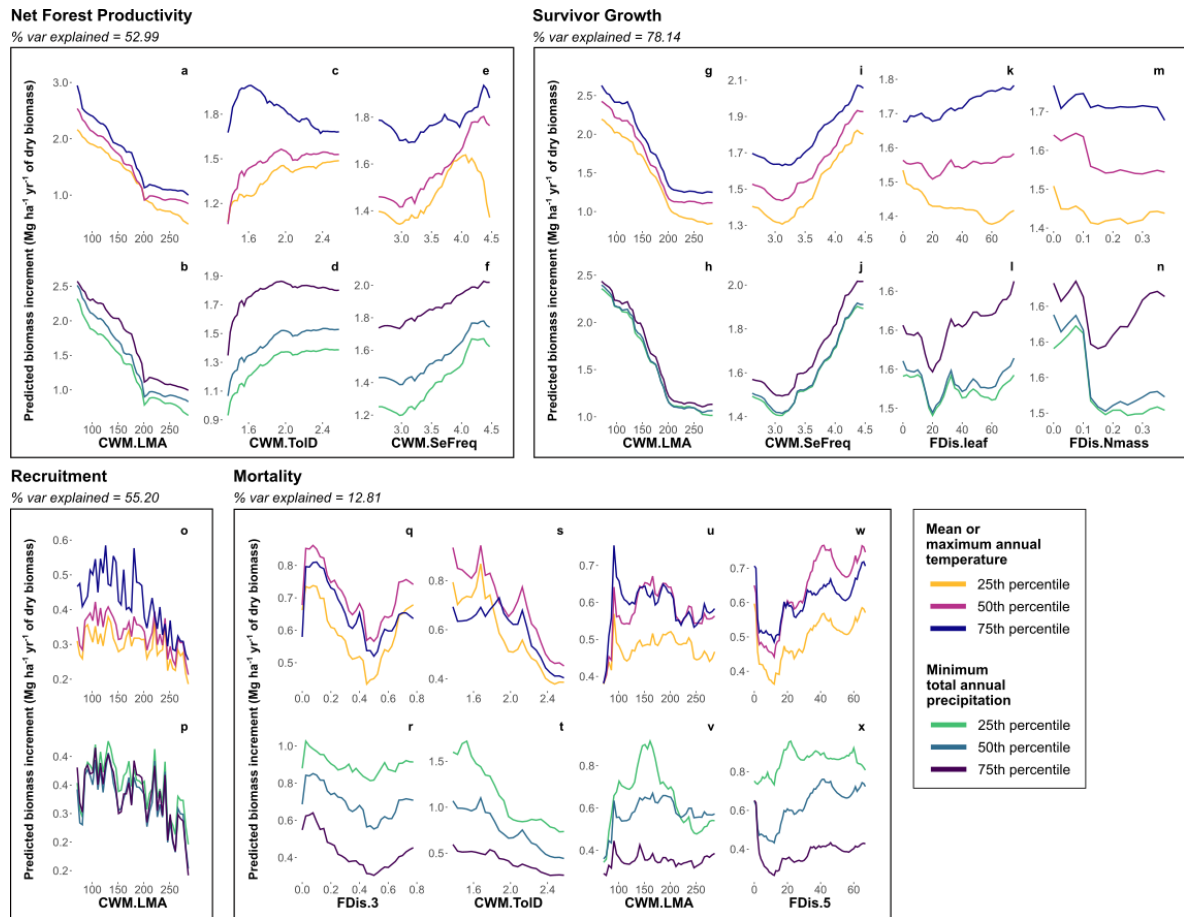


Figure 5. Predicted biomass increment ($\text{Mg ha}^{-1} \text{yr}^{-1}$ of dry biomass) as a function of important diversity features for net forest productivity, survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality, with variations in mean or maximum annual temperature ($^{\circ}\text{C}$) and minimum total annual precipitation (mm) calculated based on observed data range. Important diversity features are: the community-weighted means of leaf mass per area (CWM.LMA), seed frequency (CWM.SeFreq), and drought tolerance (CWM.ToID), the functional dispersion index based on leaf traits (FDis.Leaf; i.e., leaf size, leaf longevity, leaf mass per area, and nitrogen content per leaf mass unit), the functional dispersion index based only on the leaf nitrogen content trait (FDis.Nmass), the functional dispersion index based on three traits (FDis.3, i.e., ectomycorrhiza, wood decay resistance, and vegetative reproduction), and the functional dispersion index based on five traits (FDis.5, i.e., average maximum height, frequency of a good crop year, drought tolerance, root depth, and leaf longevity). Diversity features are limited to between the 10th and 90th percentiles.

percentile), we observed the opposite pattern (Fig. 5 C). Then, as seed frequency CWM values increased, biomass accumulation for NFP also increased as the climate warmed (50th and 75th percentiles). But, for communities that experienced a longer period between good

most years (4+ years) at low temperatures (25th percentile), NFP biomass accumulation dropped drastically (Fig. 5 E). As the temperature increased to the 50th percentile, these communities (high CWM.SeFreq) accumulated biomass at a similar amount as when the temperature approached the 75th percentile. Regarding survivor growth, FD_{is}.Leaf showed an interaction with temperature and precipitation. Indeed, the greater the increase for FD_{is}.Leaf, the more the precipitation and temperature curves diverged (Fig. 5 K). FD_{is}.Nmass demonstrated the same pattern of divergence between precipitation curves for high-FD_{is}.Nmass communities (Fig. 5 N), with survivors' growth increasing at 75th percentile and decreasing at 25th percentile of the climate variable. For tree recruitment, when CWM.LMA values were low, temperature curves diverged, and tree recruitment was higher at the 75th percentile of temperature. Then, tree recruitment decreased and was similar at all temperatures as CWM.LMA values increased (Fig. 5 O). The CWM.ToID index showed a similar interaction with precipitation in regard to tree mortality. In communities having a low CWM.ToID, mortality diverged between the three precipitation curves and was higher at 25th percentile of precipitation, then converged as CWM.ToID increased (Fig. 5 T). Finally, we also observed some interactions between tree mortality and precipitation for the CWM.LMA index (Fig. 5 V). We noted that the lowest tree mortality occurred for communities with lower CWM.LMA values at high precipitation (75th percentile). However, at low precipitation, predicted biomass loss associated with tree mortality was at its highest for mid-CWM.LMA communities then dropped considerably for communities with a high CWM.LMA.

1.6 DISCUSSION

Tree species diversity can enhance forest productivity by improving positive interactions between species and providing greater growth stability (Paquette & Messier, 2011; Ammer, 2019; Looney et al., 2021). Very few studies have, however, explored the influence of the trait structure of tree communities on survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality, which are the main drivers of species population dynamics in natural forests (Liang et al., 2007; Looney et al., 2021). Using random-forest models and PSP data covering a wide gradient of climatic conditions, we isolated the effects of the trait structure and climate

variables on NFP, survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality. Our analysis of the interactions between trait structure, productivity, and climate made it possible to evaluate the contribution of the trait structure of tree communities to forest productivity and to determine the trait, group of traits or functional diversity indices that can improve the capacity of communities to respond to future climate conditions.

1.6.1 Communities' Trait Structure Influences Each Component Of Forest Productivity

Although it is well known that tree species diversity has an effect on productivity, our results lead to a better understanding of the functional diversity features that influence the underlying components of overall productivity. Examining forest productivity purely from the perspective of survivor growth cannot reveal the full extent to which tree functional diversity affects forest dynamics. By examining patterns of biomass increment in relation to the trait or indices that are common among our models, we managed to assess the contribution of each component to NFP. The relationships between NFP and the trait structure of the communities were similar to those observed for the survivor growth component. This pattern is corroborated by our results for the contribution proportion of each component to total forest productivity (see *SI Appendix* text and Fig. S1 for details for details), that showed that survivor growth was the component that most contributed to NFP. The second-most important contributor to total forest productivity was recruitment, supported by tree recruitment being driven by LMA (quantified by the community-weighted mean of leaf mass per area, CWM.LMA) in the same manner as NFP. Finally, mortality influenced NFP through the drought-tolerance trait but contributed the least to total forest productivity. The results of our study demonstrate that all three components contribute to forest productivity, but above all that some components have a stronger impact than others. Future forest productivity studies should therefore consider all components.

To address our first research question, our results first highlight how each of NFP components are influenced by the trait structure of communities. Three traits were important in predicting NFP and are each from a different plant strategy dimension (Westoby et al.,

2002; Wright et al., 2007). Those traits cover all life-history strategies that contribute to overall plant fitness: resource acquisition (LMA), competition/survival (ToID), and reproduction (SeFreq). High NFP was indeed linked to low-LMA communities (i.e., species that acquire resources rapidly and have high growth rates (Poorter et al., 2009)). It was also associated with both drought-tolerant communities (quantified by the community-weighted mean of drought tolerance, CWM.ToID) and communities with long period between two good mast years (quantified by the community-weighted mean of seed frequency, CWM.SeFreq). Our results confirm that to fully capture the effects of functional diversity on forest productivity, a single dimension is not sufficient. Moreover, our results confirm that Westoby's three-way scheme can more accurately capture all aspects of plant strategies (Westoby, 1998; Westoby et al., 2002).

Then, considering each component separately, survivor growth was first strongly linked to leaf traits, as expected and thus, to resource acquisition. Of the four important explanatory variables related to the structure of traits of communities, three were calculated from leaf traits (i.e., CWM.LMA, $FD_{is.Nmass}$ —the functional dispersion index based on the leaf nitrogen content trait, and $FD_{is.leaf}$ —the functional dispersion index based on leaf traits: leaf size, leaf longevity, leaf mass per area and nitrogen content per leaf mass unit), thus corroborating our first hypothesis. High survivor growth was, as with NFP, linked to low-LMA communities. Higher growth was also associated with more diversity among leaf traits, but with less diversity among Nmass traits. Survivor growth was also positively correlated to the seed frequency trait (CWM.SeFreq), which is an indicator of resource allocation for the plant. The longer the period between two good mast years, the lower the cost associated with reproduction, leaving more resources available for growth during that time, as observed for evergreen trees (Tumajer & Lehejček, 2019; Vergotti et al., 2019).

Tree recruitment only had one trait associated with resource acquisition (leaf mass per area, CWM.LMA) as its main feature, supporting our second hypothesis. As with NFP and survivor growth, tree recruitment was higher for low-LMA communities. Recent results also showed that LMA was negatively correlated with recruitment and was explained by the fact

that plant carbon gain and allocation are strongly influenced by leaf economic traits (Wright et al., 2004; He et al., 2022). Low-LMA pioneer species are prompt to colonize disturbed stands. Because of an increase in resource availability, rapid growth and tree turnover rates are indeed observed in recently disturbed areas (Poorter et al., 2009; Blundo et al., 2015; Sui et al., 2017), where species compete for light and nutrients for increased colonization probability (Qi et al., 2021; He et al., 2022).

Finally, although a trait related to competition and survival (drought tolerance, CWM.TolD) drove tree mortality as expected by our third hypothesis, tree mortality was also influenced by a mixture of traits reflecting various plant strategies and functional groups. This suggests that a three- or five-way scheme would be better to understand the effect of functional diversity on tree mortality. Mortality, however, was highly stochastic and the least well explained component by our models. High mortality has nonetheless been linked to communities with low drought-tolerance, explaining low NFP of these communities. The trend of the relationships with the two functional dispersion indices (FD_{is,3}—the functional dispersion index based on three traits: ectomycorrhiza, wood decay resistance, vegetative reproduction; and FD_{is,5}—the functional dispersion index based on five traits: average maximum height, frequency of a good crop year, drought tolerance, root depth, leaf longevity) are, however, unexpectedly contrasting, showing respectively a negative and a positive correlation. Predicting tree mortality is challenging and like many studies, our models could not fully explain the variability in tree mortality (Allen et al., 2010; Das et al., 2016; Xie et al., 2022). Environmental features (i.e., topography, soil characteristics, drainage, and herbaceous cover) can have greater explanatory power than functional diversity in predicting tree mortality. In their experiment in plantation, Healy et al. (2008) found that environment alone (i.e., mainly edaphic variables) explained nearly twice as much variability as diversity and was more important for tree mortality than for net productivity. Their findings imply that the effects of diversity on ecosystem functioning can be hidden by differences in resource availability and can influence species complementarity (Hooper et al., 2005; Healy et al., 2008).

A few things should be considered when studying the effects of functional community structure on forest productivity. First, regarding how to quantify the trait structure of communities, many traits and indices of functional diversity have been introduced in the last decades. A lot of studies are using the FD_{is} (Morin et al., 2011; Paquette & Messier, 2011; Hao et al., 2018; Bell et al., 2023; Looney et al., 2023). However, our results showed that other indices such as the CWM or single traits (e.g., LMA, TolD and SeFreq) seemed to better capture the variability of forest productivity and each of its components. Also, to properly test our traits matrix according to Westoby's three traits scheme, an enormous number of indexes would need to be tested to determine which mix of traits is the best among all possible iterations of three traits. Moreover, working at large scale is very limiting in terms of data availability, especially on traits which are difficult to find (large-scale databases are just beginning to be compiled) and very laborious to quantify when working on several species. Some trait classes are underrepresented, for example, frost-related or underground traits that are difficult to collect. As a result of this lack of data, we worked with trait averages across Canada, which fail to account for intraspecific variability and to assess changes in trait values along gradients. Consequently, species-specific trends may be hidden behind these averaged traits. Our results should therefore be interpreted with caution, as they are representative of the mean and trait value measurements could be biased in favour of populated and accessible areas. Furthermore, as species traits vary between sites, they will change in divergent ways in the face of climate change. It is also worth mentioning that we were also limited by the forest inventory data for the choice of explanatory variables (i.e., forest attributes and environment). Among other things, we did not have enough information on past disturbances, which could have had an impact on forest productivity in these forests. Our study also relies solely on the examination of merchantable trees, leaving a portion of the total biomass unexplored. The biomass of saplings should however be low, as a study conducted in softwood forests found that saplings accounted for a mere 5% of the total biomass in locations with a stand volume of 100 m³/ha (Boudewyn et al., 2007). This condition was observed in around 61% of the forests that were part of the research. Finally,

the findings hold relevance for the studied forests, it should be borne in mind that they may not hold the same weight if applied to more diverse forest ecosystems.

1.6.2 Climate Variability Influences Biomass Accumulation Of Communities Through Their Trait Structure

To answer our second research question, we investigated the interactions between biomass accumulation, trait structure of tree communities and climate. We found that forest communities generally experienced a positive response to higher annual temperatures and total precipitation. Our results showed that communities subject to higher temperatures and precipitation can absorb these disturbances and maintain similar or even enhanced functioning. This is in line with recent global forests analysis that found a positive relationship between species richness and mean annual temperature and total annual precipitation increases (Liang et al., 2022).

In the survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality models, LMA (CWM.LMA) contributed to the overall NFP, even though the climate interaction was weak. Low-LMA species tend to be present when resources are abundant and are generally associated with productive ecosystems (Poorter et al., 2009). As presented above, LMA showed clear interactions with temperature for recruitment. Tree recruitment is highly dependent on environmental conditions (Blundo et al., 2015), and because low-LMA communities are characterized by greater resource availability, recruitment is greater (Poorter et al., 2009). In addition, increased temperatures and the often-resulting water deficit can alter population dynamics. Following droughts, tree mortality is higher, creating gaps in the canopy and increasing resource availability and light availability and, in turn, increasing tree recruitment (Anderegg et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2019). This sequence can explain our observed higher tree recruitment under warmer temperatures. Moreover, during drier years, trees experience increased stress and mortality (Anderegg et al., 2019; Trugman et al., 2019), as we observed for average-LMA communities at the lowest precipitation in the mortality model. To optimize their functioning under an altered climate, trees can demonstrate high

plasticity in their leaf characteristics to reduce water loss and buffer the impact of tree mortality (Huang et al., 2019; Cui et al., 2020).

In addition to the above, our findings on drought tolerance (CWM.TolD) hint that low drought tolerance relates to low net plot productivity and can be explained by high tree mortality when precipitation is less abundant. In response to climate variability, trees may change their strategies to survive. During a drought, trees face a trade-off between carbon gain and water loss, as canopy evaporation demand increases beyond the sapwood supply capacity (Lopez-Iglesias et al., 2014; Trugman et al., 2019). Decreased transpiration through stomatal closure can prevent hydraulic failure in the xylem but can induce metabolic stress, hydraulic damage, and reduced survivor growth that contribute to lower NFP and even tree mortality (Chauvin et al., 2019; Trugman et al., 2019). Tree mortality related to drought or low-total-precipitation years is well documented (Aleixo et al., 2019; Anderegg et al., 2019), although the underlying mechanisms are only beginning to be understood (Liu et al., 2021). Drought-intolerant communities experiencing the lowest precipitation produced the highest predicted biomass of tree mortality. Moreover, as tree growth rate is strongly related to water supply and xylem-specific hydraulic conductivity (Poorter et al., 2010; Qi et al., 2021; He et al., 2022), the high NFP of drought-tolerant communities can be explained when minimum annual precipitation is near the 75th percentile. Thus, tree response to drought variability is important for understanding forest vulnerability to climate- and drought-induced mortality events (Anderegg et al., 2019).

We also observed that when community seed frequency was low, survivor growth, and therefore NFP, increased, especially at high values of annual mean temperature and precipitation. Seed frequency (quantified by the community-weighted mean of seed frequency, CWM.SeFreq) relates to both reproduction and growth (Greene & Johnson, 2004; Lambers et al., 2008), as the time between good mast years is a great indicator of resource allocation for the plant. Most species do not produce frequent mast years for reasons such as climatic conditions, photosynthate production, pollination success, and/or predation (Greene & Johnson, 2004; Lambers et al., 2008).; previous studies on stone pine (*Pinus pinea* L.)

showed that climatic factors were the main determinants of the observed masting behavior (Calama et al., 2011). The lack of water, light, or sufficient temperatures at key stages (i.e., floral bud induction, bud differentiation, cone setting, and final cone growth and ripening) was found to influence seed production and have more influence in less productive environments (Calama et al., 2011). This observation is consistent with our results, as we noted an obvious effect of this trait in the NFP model. Communities with longer period between good mast years had higher predicted growth than communities with more frequent good mast years, which was transferred to the NFP model.

Lastly, there are contrasting patterns of climate response shown by the four functional dispersion indices. In warmer and wetter conditions, higher $FD_{is,Leaf}$ and $FD_{is,3}$ promoted, respectively, higher survivor growth and lower mortality biomass loss. However, $FD_{is,Nmass}$ and $FD_{is,5}$ displayed the exact opposite patterns. Therefore, we cannot corroborate our fourth hypothesis that communities with higher functional diversity should have a better ability to respond to climatic variations. This is counterintuitive, as several studies have reported that greater functional diversity should enhance forest resilience (Hisano et al., 2018; Morin et al., 2018; Ammer, 2019), and, contrary to our expectations, we found that high FD_{is} of some traits could increase mortality and reduce growth. This latter finding is, however, consistent with those of previous studies that found commonly mixed support for forest diversity positively modulating climate impacts (Paquette et al., 2017; Ammer, 2019; Grossiord, 2020).

1.6.3 Perspectives

Regarding future climate, Eastern Canadian forests will be impacted by global change, according to regionalized climate simulations for Quebec (QC) and the Maritimes (produced with four representative concentration pathway emission scenarios, RCPs (Ouranos, 2015; Allen et al., 2019)): annual temperatures and precipitation are increasing, and this trend will continue (Ouranos, 2015). By combining these climate scenarios with our results on climate and functional diversity interactions, promoting particular functional diversity attributes

could help strengthen forest response capacity to CC and reinforce forest resistance and resilience (Millar et al., 2007; Hörl et al., 2020). Management strategies to maintain existing species while facilitating the transition to future climate-adapted communities (e.g., assisted migration and the selection of adapted species and genetics) could help mitigate CC effects in the long-term (Millar et al., 2007; Hörl et al., 2020; Looney et al., 2021). Given our findings, a few avenues could be considered by forest managers. For instance, with the projected temperature increase, promoting fast resource-acquisition and fast-growing species (low-LMA) might be a good strategy to increase tree recruitment in southern and central QC and the Maritimes, especially in more stressful environments, i.e., harsh climate and/or nutrient-poor, or in recently disturbed forests (Westoby, 1998; Poorter et al., 2009; Blundo et al., 2015). Also, promoting drought semi-tolerant to drought-tolerant species could help alleviate drought-induced mortality, even under the future drier conditions expected in southern QC. High species diversity—a wider range of traits linked to drought tolerance—might help trees survive extreme or repeated drought episodes, which could increase the capacity of forest communities to tolerate new environmental conditions (Anderegg et al., 2019; Trugman et al., 2019). For example, in eastern North America, most studied deciduous trees have experienced reduced growth during droughts, except for a significant proportion of species with drought-tolerant traits that have shown increased growth (McGregor et al., 2021). Yet, a recent meta-analysis indicated that compensating mechanisms, i.e., interspecific variation in the studied drought response traits, were insufficient to protect drought-prone populations from higher death rates (Anderegg et al., 2019). Furthermore, under warmer climates having sufficient precipitation, i.e., normal precipitation range, a good drought tolerance does not appear to induce a higher NFP; therefore, water can be more limiting than temperature. A similar pattern has been observed in southern boreal forests, where increased water availability rather than temperature produced a positive effect on growth (D’Orangeville et al., 2016). Regarding good mast years, promoting moderate to high SeFreq communities might boost NFP and survivor growth under higher temperatures and precipitation. Even in the drier continental climate, biomass accumulation of communities

with greater SeFreq values has the potential to be higher. However, it is highly possible that climate change will impact the masting frequency.

1.7 CONCLUSIONS

Currently, forest ecosystem adaptation to CC is the greatest challenge to forest managers. The reorganization of species assemblages in natural forests will take centuries, and some species are unlikely to successfully migrate to new habitats at a sufficient pace without proper management (Wang et al., 2017; Ammer, 2019). Consequently, understanding trait structure–productivity–climate relationships for ecosystem services and functions are of primary interest to know whether diverse forests can truly be more resilient than species-poor ones. Our findings first suggest that forest productivity and its components are affected by different traits and indices. Three traits from three different plant strategy dimensions that contribute to overall plant fitness were the most important for NFP. Survivor growth, on the other hand, was strongly linked to leaf traits, whereas tree recruitment only had a trait associated with resource acquisition as its main feature. Although traits related to competition and survival drove tree mortality as expected, tree mortality was also influenced by a mixture of traits reflecting various plant strategies and functional groups. Then, our results demonstrate strong climate interactions with the trait structure of tree communities. However, and contrary to our expectations, we found contrasting patterns of plot response to changes in climate related to the functional diversity of the studied communities. Depending on the studied group of traits, greater functional diversity did not necessarily positively affect biomass accumulation in response to shifts in climate. This observation may be considered a further validation of already published work showing contrasting patterns concerning the effect of tree species diversity on the ability of certain stands to maintain their productivity when subjected to CC. The results of our study provide avenues to assess under which circumstances tree species diversity has the utmost potential to positively influence forest productivity under CC to help anticipate changes and to sustainably promote forest health in the context of a changing climate.

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1.10 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION APPENDIX

1.10.1 Supplementary Information Text

In addition to studying forest productivity in its net form, it is also possible to study forest productivity in its total form (i.e., total forest productivity, TFP, Mg ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ of dry biomass), defined as the total biomass produced over a given time period within a given area, without considering any losses because of tree mortality (i.e., adding the value of tree mortality to the one of survivor growth and tree recruitment, as if no biomass had been lost).

1.10.2 Analysis – Dirichlet Regression

Total forest productivity was calculated (TFP = survivor growth + tree recruitment + mortality, Mg ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ of dry biomass) to assess the contribution of each component to forest productivity. Dirichlet regression can be used to model compositional data when the dependent Y variable consists essentially of contributions from multiple components. To determine the proportion of each component's (i.e., survivor growth, recruitment, mortality) contribution to total forest productivity (TFP), we performed Dirichlet regressions with the DirichletReg package (Maier, 2014) for R for each of the important diversity features obtained from the RF modeling. Akaike's information criterion (AIC) was used for model selection (Burnham & Anderson, 2002).

1.10.3 Results

The proportion of each component to TFP varied with most of the diversity features found as important in the previous analyses (see Fig. S1). The proportion of TFP due to survivor growth increased with the increase in all diversity index values, except for CWM.LMA, for which the proportion due to growth decreased with an increase in this index. We observed the inverse trends for tree recruitment and tree mortality, where their contribution to TFP decreased with the increase in the index values, except for CWM.LMA (both tree recruitment and mortality) and CWM.ToID (tree mortality), where the opposite

pattern was observed. The best Dirichlet regression model was with FDis.Nmass (AIC = -263543.84) and the worst with CWM.ToID (AIC = -261397.14) (see Fig. S1).

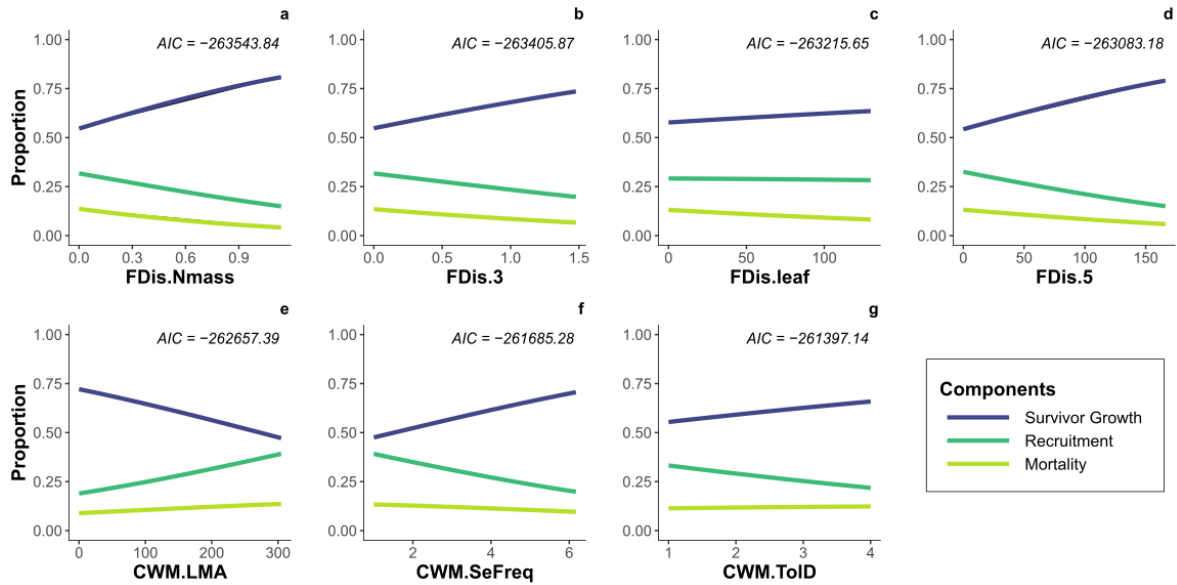


Figure S1. Proportion of each component to total forest productivity according to the various diversity indices.

Table S1. Tree functional traits compiled from published sources. Means are given for all traits except for categorical and binary traits.

Plant strategy/ Functional group dimensions*	Trait	Code	Unit	Mean (Range)	Weight	Variable type	References
R/DGS	Abiotic pollination	Pa	0: not possible; 1: possible	binary (0–1)	0.5	binary symmetric	(Aubin et al., 2020; Farrar, 1996)
R/DGS	Age of optimum seed production	SeOptP	Years	40 (0–100)	1	numerical	(Aubin et al., 2020)
R/DGS	Age of sexual maturity	AsexM	Years	16.0 (0–40)	1	numerical	(Aubin et al., 2020)
RA/U	Arbuscular mycorrhiza (Endomycorrhiza)	AM	0: not possible; 1: possible	binary (0–1)	0.5	binary asymmetric	(Burns & Honkala, 1990)
CS/TS	Average maximum height	maxH	m	25 (12–40)	1	continuous	(Aubin et al., 2020; Burns & Honkala, 1990; Farrar, 1996)
R/DGS	Biotic pollination	Pb	0: not possible; 1: possible	binary (0–1)	0.5	binary symmetric	(Aubin et al., 2020; Burns & Honkala, 1990)
CS/STE	Drought tolerance	ToID	1 (intolerant) to 5 (tolerant)	3 (1–4)	1	continuous	(Aubin et al., 2020; Niinemets & Valladares, 2006; USDA, 2017)
RA/U	Ectomycorrhiza	EM	0: not possible; 1: possible	binary (0–1)	0.5	binary asymmetric	(Burns & Honkala, 1990)
RA/TS	Growth rate	GR	1: slow; 2: moderate; 3: rapid	categorical (1–3)	1	categorical	(Aubin et al., 2020)
RA/L	Leaf longevity	LL	Months	2.226 (1.281–4.700)	1	continuous	(Wright et al., 2004; Max Planck Institute for Biogeochemistry, s. d.; Reich et al., 1998; Niinemets & Lukjanova, 2003)
RA/L	Leaf mass per area	LMA	$\text{g} \cdot \text{m}^{-2}$	112 (0–305)	1	continuous	(Aubin et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2004; Max Planck Institute for Biogeochemistry, s. d.)

RA/L	Leaf size	LS	1: needle/scale; 2: small <10 cm; 3: large; 4: compound	categorical (1–4)	1	categorical	(Farrar, 1996)
RA/U	Maximum root depth	RootD	cm	144.2 (0–377.5)	1	numerical	(Aubin et al., 2020)
CS/STE	Minimum frost-free days	FrostFMin	Days	92 (50–145)	1	numerical	(Aubin et al., 2020)
CS/STE	Minimum tolerable rainfall	RainMin	cm	52.49 (12.60–91.43)	1	numerical	(Aubin et al., 2020)
CS/STE	Minimum tolerable temperature	TempMin	°C	–45.62 (–70.83 to –33.33)	1	numerical	(Aubin et al., 2020)
RA/L	Nitrogen content per leaf mass unit	Nmass	%	1.9 (0–2.9)	1	continuous	(Aubin et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2004; Max Planck Institute for Biogeochemistry, s. d.)
R/DGS	Seed frequency	SeFreq	Years	3.25 (0–6.17)	1	numerical	(Aubin et al., 2020)
R/DGS	Seed mass	SeM	mg	3.22134 (0.10436–9.62384)	1	continuous	(Aubin et al., 2020; Burns & Honkala, 1990; USDA, 2017)
R/DGS	Seed viability	SeV	%	62.9 (0–95.5)	1	numerical	(Aubin et al., 2020)
CS/STE	Shade tolerance	ToIS	1 (intolerant) to 5 (tolerant)	3 (1–5)	1	continuous	(USDA, 2017; Niinemets & Valladares, 2006)
R/DGS	Vegetative reproduction	Veg	0: never; 1: possible; 2: common	categorical (0–2)	1	categorical	(Aubin et al., 2020; Farrar, 1996)
CS/STE	Waterlogging tolerance	ToIW	1 (intolerant) to 5 (tolerant)	2 (1–4)	1	continuous	(USDA, 2017; Niinemets & Valladares, 2006)
CS/TS	Wood decay resistance	WDR	1: not; 2: moderate; 3: resistant; 4: very resistant	categorical (1–3)	1	categorical	(Forest Products Laboratory, 1999)
RA/TS	Wood density	WD	Specific gravity: g·cm ^{–3}	0.5 (0.3–0.6)	1	continuous	(Forest Products Laboratory, 1999; Jenkins et al., 2004; Chave et al., 2009)

* Plant strategy dimensions: RA, resource acquisition; CS, competition and survival; R, reproduction (Westoby, 1998; Westoby et al., 2002; Garnier et al., 2004; Violle et al., 2007; Wright et al., 2007).
 Functional group dimensions: TS, tree stature; DGS, dispersal, germination, seedling development; STE, stress tolerance and environment; U, underground; L, leaf (Chave et al., 2009; Wright et al., 2007; Martínez-Vilalta et al., 2010; Leuschner & Meier, 2018).

Table S2. Community functional trait structure indices calculation.

Index	Calculation	References
<i>Based on functional trait:</i>		
Functional dispersion (FDis)	$FD_{is} = \frac{\sum a_j z_j}{\sum a_j}$ <p>where a_j is the abundance of species j, and z_j is the distance of species j to the weighted centroid $c = [c_i] = \frac{\sum a_j x_{ij}}{\sum a_j}$, where c is the weighted centroid in the i-dimensional space, and x_{ij} is the attribute of species j for trait i. Calculated with R's <i>FD</i> package (Laliberté et al., 2014).</p>	(Laliberté & Legendre, 2010)
Community-level weighted means of trait values (CWM)	$CWM = \sum_{i=1}^n p_i \times trait_i$ <p>where p_i is the relative contribution of species i to the community, and $trait_i$ is the trait value of species i. Calculated with R's <i>FD</i> package (Laliberté et al., 2014).</p>	(Lavorel et al., 2008)
Functional redundancy index (FR)	$FR = D - Q$ <p>where D is the Gini–Simpson index and Q is Rao's quadratic entropy. Calculated with R's <i>FD</i> package (Laliberté et al., 2014).</p>	(de Bello et al., 2007; Pillar et al., 2013)
Functional group richness (FGR)	<p>Computed from an a posteriori classification (ward clustering) of species on the basis of their functional traits. Calculated with R's <i>FD</i> package (Laliberté et al., 2014).</p>	(Laliberté & Legendre, 2010)
Rao's quadratic entropy (Q)	$Q = \sum_{i=1}^{S-1} \sum_{j=i+1}^S d_{ij} p_i p_j$ <p>where an S-species community is characterized by the relative abundance of vector $p = (p_1, p_2, \dots, p_s)$, and d_{ij} is the difference between the i-th and j-th species ($d_{ij} = d_{ji}$ and $d_{ii} = 0$). Calculated with R's <i>SYNCSA</i> package (Debastiani & Pillar, 2012).</p>	(Botta-Dukát, 2005; Rao, 1982)
Gini–Simpson index (D)	$D = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^S p_i^2$ <p>where p_i is the proportion (n/N) of individuals of the species i (n) divided by the total number of individuals found (N) in an S-species community. Calculated with R's <i>SYNCSA</i> package (Debastiani & Pillar, 2012).</p>	(Simpson, 1949; Guiasu & Guiasu, 2012)
<i>Based only on species abundance:</i>		
Shannon–Wiener diversity index (H' , $e^{H'}$)	$H' = -\sum_{i=1}^S p_i \ln p_i$ <p>where p_i is the proportion (n/N) of individuals of the species i (n) divided by the total number of individuals found (N) in an S-species community.</p>	(Shannon, 1948; Shannon & Weaver, 1949; Burks, 1951; Spellerberg & Fedor, 2003)
Species richness (N)	N is the number of species in a community.	(Spellerberg & Fedor, 2003)

Table S3. Description of functional traits used to calculate the community functional trait structure indices.

Index based on:	Description	Total number of indices
All available traits	FDis, Q, FR, D, and FGR calculated with all 25 traits	5
Individual traits	FDis and CWM calculated for all 25 traits individually	50
All traits categorized in three strategies dimensions	FDis, Q, FR, and D calculated with 25 traits categorized in three strategies dimensions	12
All traits categorized in five functional group dimensions	FDis, Q, FR, and D calculated with 25 traits categorized in five functional group dimensions	20
All possible combinations of three traits categorized in the three strategies dimensions	FDis, Q, FR, and D calculated with all possible combinations (576) of three traits categorized in the three strategies dimensions	2,304
All possible combinations of five traits categorized in the five functional group dimensions	FDis, Q, FR, and D calculated with all possible combinations (2 304) of five traits categorized in the five functional group dimensions	9,216
		11,607

Table S4. Results of the different clustering analysis.

Cluster	Analysis with:	Hopkins statistic	Optimal number of clusters k	Medoids
1	All available traits	0.6634581	4	i. eH ii. D iii. FDis iv. FGR
2	Individual traits	0.7218939	6	i. FDis.Pb ii. FDis.Nmass iii. FDis.WDR iv. CWM.SeFreq v. CWM.ToID vi. CWM.LMA
3	All traits in three strategies and five functional group dimensions	0.8687960	2	i. D.Tree ii. FDis.Leaf
4	Mix of traits in three strategies dimensions	0.8706559	7	i. FDis.3 ii. FDis.Eco296 iii. D.Eco1 iv. Q.Eco242 v. Q.Eco277 vi. Q.Eco506 vii. FR.Eco5
5	Mix of traits in five functional group dimensions	0.9259287	6	i. FDis.5 ii. FDis.Logi2106 iii. D.Logi1 iv. Q.Logi354 v. FR.Logi394 vi. FR.Logi1252

Table S5. Description of the functional trait structure of communities and diversity indices selected as explicative variables.

#	Index	Description
1	N	Species richness
2	e^H	True Shannon-Wiener diversity index
3	D	Gini–Simpson index calculated with all functional traits
4	FD _{is}	Functional dispersion index calculated with all functional traits
5	FGR	Functional group richness calculated with all functional traits
Community weighted mean of:		
6	CWM.SeFreq	- SeFreq trait
7	CWM.TolD	- TolD trait
8	CWM.LMA	- LMA trait
Functional dispersion index of:		
9	FD _{is} .Pb	- Pb trait
10	FD _{is} .Nmass	- Nmass trait
11	FD _{is} .WDR	- WDR trait
12	FD _{is} .Leaf	- four traits from the leaf group (LL, LMA, Nmass, LS)
13	FD _{is} .Eco296	- three traits from the plant strategy dimensions (GR, TolW, AsexM)
14	FD _{is} .3	- three traits from the plant strategy dimensions (EM, WDR, Veg)
15	FD _{is} .5	- five traits from the functional group dimensions (maxH, SeFreq, TolD, RootD, LL)
16	FD _{is} .Logi2106	- five traits from the functional group dimensions (WDR, SeOptP, TolD, EM, LL)
Gini–Simpson index based on the mix of:		
17	D.Tree	- four traits from the tree stature group (maxH, GR, WD, WDR)
18	D.Eco1	- three traits from the plant strategy dimensions (LS, maxH, Veg)
19	D.Logi1	- five traits from the functional group dimensions (maxH, Veg, TolS, AM, LS)
Rao’s quadratic entropy index based on the mix of:		
20	Q.Eco242	- three traits from the plant strategy dimensions (Nmass, RainMin, SeM)
21	Q.Eco277	- three traits from the plant strategy dimensions (GR, TolS, SeFreq)
22	Q.Eco506	- three traits from the plant strategy dimensions (EM, FrostFMin, SeM)
23	Q.Logi354	- five traits from the functional group dimensions (maxH, SeFreq, FrostFMin, EM, LL)
Functional redundancy index based on the mix of:		
24	FR.Eco5	- three traits from the plant strategy dimensions (LS, maxH, SeFreq)
25	FR.Logi394	- five traits from the functional group dimensions (maxH, SeOptP, TolW, RootD, LL)
26	FR.Logi1252	- five traits from the functional group dimensions (WD, SeM, TolW, AM, Nmass)

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CHAPITRE 2
DÉTERMINER LA STRUCTURE DE LA CANOPÉE DES FORÊTS DU
BOUCLIER BORÉAL DANS L’EST DU CANADA À PARTIR DES ATTRIBUTS
FORESTIERS ET DES TRAITES DES COMMUNAUTÉS D’ARBRES

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2.1 RÉSUMÉ

Le second article de ma thèse, intitulé « *Determining the canopy structure of Boreal Shield forests in eastern Canada from forest attributes and tree communities traits structure* », fut rédigé par moi-même avec l'aide des professeurs Robert Schneider et Richard A. Fournier, en plus des Dr Hugues Power, Dr Mathieu Fortin et d'Olivier R. van Lier. Il sera soumis prochainement dans sa forme actuelle à la revue *Canadian Journal of Forest Research*. Avec les professeurs Robert Schneider et Richard A. Fournier et le Dr Hugues Power, j'ai conceptualisé l'essentiel du travail de recherche. En tant que première auteure, ma contribution à ce travail fut la recherche sur l'état des connaissances, l'analyse des données, la modélisation et la rédaction de l'article avec la contribution de tous les auteurs. Tous les auteurs ont discuté des résultats, lu, contribué et approuvé le manuscrit final.

Il existe un consensus sur le fait que la biodiversité a un effet positif sur la productivité des forêts. Cependant, son impact sur la structure des peuplements reste mal compris. Il est toutefois de plus en plus évident que la complémentarité spatiale des houppiers joue un rôle important dans les effets bénéfiques qu'à la diversité des espèces d'arbres sur la productivité des forêts. Ainsi, cette étude examine les interactions entre la structure des traits et la structure de la canopée des communautés d'arbres, en plus d'évaluer si la structure de la canopée peut être prédite à partir de variables caractérisant les peuplements forestiers. Il est également possible de déterminer dans quelle mesure la structure des traits des communautés d'arbres contribue à l'utilisation de l'espace de la canopée dans les forêts du Bouclier boréal. Notre approche repose sur la modélisation par forêts aléatoires avec un réseau de placettes échantillons préalablement évaluées par des inventaires forestiers traditionnels et des relevés par balayage laser aéroporté (ALS). Pour quantifier la structure de la canopée, des métriques obtenus à partir de l'ALS sont calculées, puis utilisées comme variable réponse afin de pouvoir prédire les caractéristiques de la canopée uniquement à partir des mesures traditionnelles provenant d'inventaires forestiers. La structure de la canopée est ainsi reliée à des variables décrivant les attributs du peuplement, les conditions environnementales et la structure des traits des communautés d'arbres, obtenues par le biais d'inventaires forestiers traditionnels. La capacité prédictive des traits et indicateurs de diversité fonctionnelle est faible par rapport aux autres attributs du peuplement. Cependant, les communautés de feuillus avec une faible masse foliaire par unité de surface ont une canopée fermée caractérisée par des houppiers poreux et une faible variabilité horizontale. Leurs houppiers occupent plus d'espace que ceux des conifères, produisant une canopée homogène bien remplie et fournissant ainsi la preuve que la structure des traits des communautés d'arbres peut contribuer à expliquer la structure de la canopée. Les modèles qui en résultent offrent de nouvelles pistes de recherche puisque la structure de la canopée forestière peut être prédite même en l'absence de données lidar.

Mots-clés : Balayage laser aéroporté ; Forêts du Bouclier boréal ; Métriques Lidar ; Modélisation par forêts aléatoires ; Structure de la canopée ; Structure des traits des communautés.

DETERMINING THE CANOPY STRUCTURE OF BOREAL SHIELD FORESTS IN EASTERN CANADA FROM FOREST ATTRIBUTES AND TREE COMMUNITY TRAIT STRUCTURE

2.2 ABSTRACT

There is a consensus that biodiversity has a positive effect on forest productivity. However, its impact on stand structure remains poorly understood. There is growing evidence that spatial complementarity in tree crowns plays a significant role in the beneficial effects of tree species diversity on forest productivity. Here we investigate the diversity–canopy structure relationships to assess whether the canopy structure can be predicted from variables describing stand attributes, environmental conditions, and trait structure acquired through forest inventories. We also assess to what extent the trait structure of tree communities contributes to the use of aboveground space in Boreal Shield forests. Our approach relies on random-forest modeling and the analysis of a network of sample plots previously evaluated by both traditional forest inventory measurements and airborne laser scanning surveys (ALS). We apply light detection and ranging (lidar) metrics to quantify canopy structure and then use this as a response variable to predict canopy characteristics solely from the traditional forest inventory measurements. Community trait structure predictive ability is low relative to other stand attributes. However, broadleaf communities with low leaf mass per area (LMA) have a closed canopy cover characterized by porous crowns with low horizontal variability. Their crowns occupy more space than conifer trees, producing a homogeneous overpacked canopy and providing evidence that tree community trait structure can contribute to explaining the structure of the canopy. The resulting models offer new avenues of research because forest canopy structure can be predicted even without lidar data.

Keywords: Airborne laser scanning; Boreal Shield forests; Lidar metrics; Random-forest models; Tree community trait structure.

2.3 INTRODUCTION

Biodiversity has a positive impact on primary productivity (leading tooveryielding) for a wide range of forests (Liang et al., 2007; Pretzsch et al., 2010; Morin et al., 2011; Paquette & Messier, 2011; Zhang et al., 2012; Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015; Liang et al., 2016; Pretzsch & Schütze, 2016; Tobner et al., 2016; Forrester, 2017; Pretzsch et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2021). Typically, overyielding occurs when the biomass produced by a mixed species stand is higher than that of a monoculture achieved by the highest yielding of the component species (Harper, 1977; Hector et al., 1999). Initial understanding of biodiversity–productivity interactions was investigated by comparing the growth and yield of mixed forests and monocultures (Pretzsch et al., 2010, 2013). Research then progressively focused on mechanisms through which diversity increases productivity in the most diverse forests (Paquette & Messier, 2011; Tobner et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2012; Zheng et al., 2021). Diverse stands are generally more productive because of complementary interactions, such as reduced competition through niche differentiation (i.e., where two or more species occupy distinct spatial niches enhancing the collective performance) and facilitation (i.e., where one species positively influences another, directly or indirectly, by increasing its growth or survival) (Callaway, 1995; Callaway & Walker, 1997; Loreau, 2000; Loreau & Hector, 2001; del Río & Sterba, 2009). These mechanisms can coexist within the same community and thus improve resource availability, capture, and use through the spatial partition of above- and belowground niches (Forrester, 2014, 2015; Pretzsch, Forrester, et al., 2015). Some authors have suggested that the trait structure of communities could help identify the mechanisms behind the ecological niche complementary hypothesis (Lavorel et al., 2008; Reiss et al., 2009). The focus has shifted towards understanding the role of each organism in the ecosystem and to the attributes needed to maintain ecosystem functioning (Reiss et al., 2009). A trait can be defined as “*a measurable characteristic (morphological, phenological, physiological, behavioural, or cultural) of an individual organism that is measured at either the individual or other relevant level of organizational*” (Dawson et al., 2021). Yet, the relationship between traits and canopy

structure remains poorly understood, and it remains unclear how overyielding at the stand level can be explained by the tree, canopy, and size structure (Pretzsch & Schütze, 2016).

There is growing evidence that spatial complementarity in tree crowns is a key biological mechanism in the positive mixing effects in forests (Pretzsch, 2014; Sapijanskas et al., 2014; Jucker et al., 2015; Niklaus et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2017; Cattaneo et al., 2020). Differences in crown architecture and plasticity may explain mixed forests' superior yield (Purves et al., 2007). The increased efficiency of more diverse forests in using space can be explained by two main mechanisms: vertical stratification and crown plasticity (Ishii & Asano, 2010; Bayer et al., 2013; Dieler & Pretzsch, 2013; Pretzsch, 2014; Sapijanskas et al., 2014; Jucker et al., 2015). They both contribute, either when species with contrasting crown architectures and physiological adaptations to shade coexist (Ishii & Asano, 2010; Jucker et al., 2015; Pretzsch, 2014), or when two or more species adjust their crown shape and size in response to surrounding competition (Purves et al., 2007; Dieler & Pretzsch, 2013; Thorpe et al., 2010; Seidel et al., 2011). Thus, because tree architecture varies according to intra- and interspecific interactions and environmental factors, species differing in shape and maximum size are likely to create a more stratified canopy with greater horizontal and vertical structural complexity (Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015; Pretzsch & Forrester, 2017). Moreover, tree diversity can alter inner crown properties (i.e., branch length, angle, number, and straightness), producing canopy structures that differ greatly from those observed or predicted by theory in pure stands (Pretzsch, 2014). Combined, these mechanisms can lead to a greater canopy packing density, reduced canopy gaps, higher stand density, and increased productivity with a greater tree diversity (Morin et al., 2011; Pretzsch, 2014; Jucker et al., 2015).

Most knowledge about the influence of tree diversity on canopy space filling is based on a few very well-documented examples in European temperate forests (e.g., European beech (*Fagus sylvatica* L.) and Norway spruce (*Picea abies* [L.] H. Karst.)) (Pretzsch & Schütze, 2005; Bayer et al., 2013; Dieler & Pretzsch, 2013; Pretzsch, 2014, 2019) and a small number of studies of sugar maple (*Acer saccharum* Marsh.) and balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*

[L.] Mill.) in the temperate forests in eastern Canada (Martin-Ducup et al., 2016, 2018). This raises the question of whether these processes could have the same impact on boreal forests. Complementarity has been observed to be less important in temperate forests than in the more stressful, less productive, and less diversified boreal forests (Paquette & Messier, 2011). Thus, interspecific interactions within the Boreal Shield ecozone will likely be even more critical for canopy space filling. Despite the results of these few studies in northern forest ecosystems (Paquette & Messier, 2011; Martin-Ducup et al., 2016, 2018), further evidence is needed to fully understand how tree species diversity and complementarity interactions affect the spatial arrangement of tree crowns in the boreal forest canopy.

Remote sensing is an effective means of measuring vegetation structures over large spatial extents and can provide new insight into the aboveground complementarity between species. More specifically, light detection and ranging (lidar) technology provides a point cloud from which detailed information about an ecosystem's three-dimensional (3D) structure can be extracted (Simonson et al., 2014; Bakx et al., 2019). Because airborne laser scanning (ALS) data can deliver exhaustive descriptions of the 3D forest structure across broad areas, it is used operationally to measure and map forest attributes in the context of forest inventories (White et al., 2013, 2016; Maltamo et al., 2020). Aboveground biomass, height, volume, crown cover, and canopy complexity count among the forest attributes that can be calculated from the point clouds (Bouvier et al., 2015; Bour et al., 2021; Vandendaele et al., 2021).

As ALS data is becoming increasingly accessible, it is now possible to explore creative ways to exploit this data when faced with new ecological questions. From the point clouds, lidar metrics can be calculated by selecting points to summarize a particular vegetation structure (Zhao et al., 2011; Bouvier et al., 2015). Numerous lidar metrics have been developed to describe and quantify the 3D distribution of different aspects of the vegetative biomass (Bakx et al., 2019). Lidar metrics can be divided into categories that refer to various descriptors of the 3D distribution of vegetation (e.g., height means and variance, vegetation density per vertical strata, distribution heterogeneity/homogeneity, and gap fraction) (Bakx

et al., 2019). Therefore, combining these descriptors makes it possible to focus on a specific vegetation part (e.g., canopy) and all its structures (e.g., cover, height, horizontal and vertical variability). Canopy lidar metrics may provide a novel perspective on how tree species diversity affects the filling of the forest canopy space.

Typically, lidar metrics are used in statistical models as explanatory variables to predict a given response variable (e.g., aboveground biomass, wood and stem volume, fuel parameters) (Bouvier et al., 2015; Luther et al., 2019). We are unaware of any studies that have used forest attributes (forest inventory data) as explanatory variables to predict forest structure as described by lidar metrics. This reverse perspective of ALS data proposes a new way of predicting canopy structure attributes derived from lidar metrics solely on the basis of traditional forest inventory data. It is all the more interesting because past forest inventories lack a precise understanding of their structure, given that extended lidar data acquisition has only begun in the last decade. This approach could also be helpful for evaluating canopy structure between successive lidar measurements. Knowing how a forest's structure has evolved over time, using lidar metrics as surrogate variables, would be an extremely valuable asset for a better understanding of how species use aboveground space.

The main goals of this study were to determine whether canopy structure could be predicted from forest characteristics and to what extent tree species influence this structure. To investigate these questions, we used lidar-derived vegetation metrics as proxies for canopy structure collected over a wide longitudinal gradient across the Boreal Shield ecozone of North America (Fig. 6). We took advantage of a network of sample plots having both traditional forest inventory and synchronous airborne laser scanning surveys. The tree species–canopy structure relationship was therefore analyzed using lidar metrics (response variables) to relate them to several variables characterizing forest stands (explanatory variables) that describe stand attributes, environmental conditions, and trait structure. The objective was addressed through one question: How can the canopy structure be described by variables characterizing forest stands? More precisely, what role does the trait structure of tree communities play in canopy structure variability? Because of interspecific interactions

and complementarity mechanisms, tree community trait structure is expected to influence canopy structure through canopy packing density, resulting from the spatial partition of aboveground niches. We thus hypothesize that functionally diverse communities will exhibit lower levels of canopy openness compared to communities with less functional diversity. The resulting predictive models make it possible to predict canopy structure solely from forest inventory data.

2.4 MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.4.1 Study Area

The plots used in the study cover an east–west gradient across the Boreal Shield ecozone (S. C. Government of Canada, 2018) (46.5° – 51.1° N and 57.5° – 77.1° W) from the western border of the province of Quebec (QC) to the Atlantic coast of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) (Fig. 6). The Boreal Shield is the largest ecozone in Canada and is over 80% covered by forests, with the remaining area covered by many small- to medium-sized lakes, streams, wetlands, and exposed bedrock (Ecological Stratification Working Group, 1996). The vegetation in areas of exposed bedrock is composed mainly of lichens, shrubs, and herbaceous plants (Ecological Stratification Working Group, 1996). Regional topography is characterized by a broadly rolling mosaic of uplands and associated wetlands (Ecological Stratification Working Group, 1996). The surface materials are dominated by Precambrian granitic bedrock outcrops interspersed with hummocky ridges, glacial moraine deposits, fluvio-glacial material (including numerous eskers), and colluvium (Ecological Stratification Working Group, 1996). The regional climate is continental, characterized by long winters and short summers. The ecozone’s coastal margins are, however, influenced by maritime conditions (Ecological Stratification Working Group, 1996). The primary stand-replacing disturbances are fire and harvest (Bergeron, 2000; Bergeron et al., 2004), with occasional insect epidemics, wind, storm-related damage, and disease (Frazier et al., 2015).

Within our study area, mean annual temperatures range between -1.1 and 2.2 °C in QC and between 3.4 and 4.4 °C in NL, with mean total annual precipitation of approximately

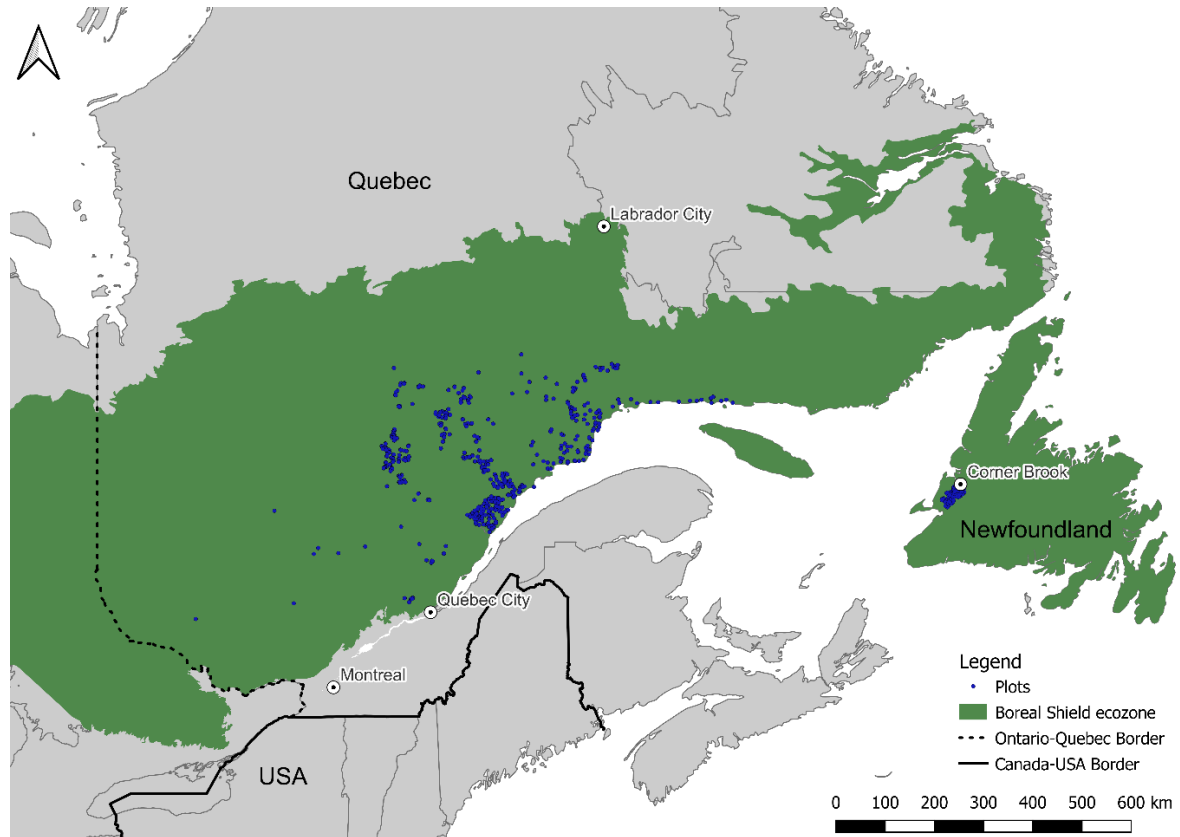


Figure 6. Studied sample plots and their distribution across the Boreal Shield Canadian terrestrial ecozone.

1000 mm in QC and 1300 mm in NL (1981–2010, Table 2). The forests mainly comprise conifer stands (81.2%), with a small proportion of mixed (10.2%) and broadleaf stands (8.6%). The three most-dominant species are black spruce (*Picea mariana* [Mill.] Britton, Sterns & Poggenb.) (42.8%), balsam fir (*Abies balsamea* [L.] Mill.) (39.1%), and white birch (*Betula papyrifera* Marsh.) (8.7%). Other important tree species are white spruce (*Picea glauca* [Moench] Voss) and eastern larch (*Larix laricina* [Du Roi] K. Koch). The southern edge of the study region is characterized by a wider diversity of species, including the presence of trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides* Michx.), jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*

Lamb.), yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis* Britt.), red maple (*Acer rubrum* L.), red spruce (*Picea rubens* Sarg.), and red pine (*Pinus resinosa* Sol. ex Aiton).

2.4.2 ALS Data

For QC plots, we extracted lidar metrics from the ALS dataset acquired by the Ministère des Ressources naturelles et Forêts du Québec (MRNF) for southern Quebec (MRNF, 2022d). Data was acquired through several service providers between May and December 2012 to 2018, all using different lidar sensors (i.e., Optech ALTM 3100EA and ALTM Gemini, Leica ALS70-HP, Riegl LMS-Q680i, LMS-Q780, and VQ-780i), yielding footprints ranging between 0.15 and 0.23 m (MRNF, 2022d, 2022e). The flight altitude ranged from 650 to 1250 m above ground level with an approximate speed varying from 120 to 150 knots (MRNF, 2022d, 2022e). Data acquisition was made with a pulse frequency between 70 and 140 kHz and a scan angle that ranged between $\pm 12^\circ$ and 23° (MRNF, 2022d, 2022e). The overlap between flight lines ranged between 25% and 55% (MRNF, 2022d, 2022e). Four discretized returns were produced by each pulse, with a resulting average point density of $2.4 \text{ returns}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}$ and a standard deviation of $0.8 \text{ returns}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}$ (MRNF, 2022d, 2022e). The data provider delivered ALS returns in LAS 1.2 format.

For NL plots, ALS data were collected using a Riegl LMS-Q680i during peak growth between August 15 and September 24, 2016 (van Lier et al., 2022), generating a footprint of approximately 0.5 m. Flight altitude was approximately 1000 m above ground level at approximately 100 knots (van Lier et al., 2022). Data acquisition was done with a pulse frequency of 330 kHz (Crespo-Peremarch et al., 2020) and a field of view of $\pm 30^\circ$ (van Lier et al., 2022). The overlap between flight lines was at least 50%. Each pulse generated up to four discretized returns, and the resulting average point density was of $7.3 \text{ returns}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}$ with a standard deviation of $2.4 \text{ returns}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}$ (van Lier et al., 2022). ALS returns were also delivered in LAS 1.2 format.

Table 2. Description of the ALS metrics derived at each plot location and used as response variables as descriptors of canopy structure. Mean and standard deviation followed by the range (10th and 90th percentiles) are provided for the Quebec and Newfoundland plots.

Metric class	Metric name	Symbol	Unit	Mean value		Description and calculation
				Quebec	Newfoundland	
Canopy cover	<i>Canopy porosity</i>	<i>CPor</i>	Ratio	3.8 ± 1.6 (1.9–6.1)	2.6 ± 0.8 (1.6–3.6)	<p>Ratio of x,y bins with lidar returns (no vegetation density) to total bins (Atkins et al., 2018). Describes the penetration depth of lidar signals within the forest canopy and provides normalized information about canopy biomass distribution (Véga et al., 2016).</p> $CPor = \frac{n_{veg}}{n_{bin}}, \quad eq.1$ <p>where n_{veg} is the number of x bins with no vegetation returns and n_{bin} is the total number of bins.</p>
	<i>Canopy closure</i>	<i>CClos</i>	Ratio	0.6 ± 0.2 (0.4–0.8)	0.6 ± 0.2 (0.3–0.8)	<p>Percentage of returns above a canopy height threshold of 2 m (Hill & Hinsley, 2015). Describes the proportion of sky hemisphere obscured by vegetation when viewed from a single point (Jennings et al., 1999).</p> $CClos = \frac{returns\ above\ 2m}{total\ number\ of\ returns} \quad eq.2$
	<i>Canopy density</i>	<i>CD</i>	Ratio	0.7 ± 0.1 (0.6–0.8)	0.7 ± 0.1 (0.7–0.8)	<p>Proportion of the first returns to the total number of returns (van Ewijk et al., 2011).</p> $CD = \frac{1st\ returns}{all\ returns} \quad eq.3$

Canopy horizontal variability	Gap area	<i>GAP</i>	m ²	162.5 ± 79.9 (56.4–273.8)	120.5 ± 93.6 (11.2–257.0)	Total plot gap area in m ² (Atkins et al., 2018). Describes canopy openness (Atkins et al., 2018). Calculated from the CHM using the <i>ForestGapR</i> package (Silva et al., 2019) in R. The height threshold was set at 2/3 of zmax and minimum area at 50 m ² .
						$GAP = \text{total gap area}$ eq.4
	Canopy height heterogeneity	<i>CHH</i>	m	199.8 ± 72.4 (111.4–306.4)	176.3 ± 61.2 (89.6–250.6)	Corresponds to the total border length (m) between the vegetation CHM class patches (McGarigal, 2015; Zellweger et al., 2013, 2014). Describes heterogeneity in canopy height classes using the 95 th percentile of height distribution (zq95 th): dominant (>2/3 zq95 th), co-dominant (1/2–2/3 zq95 th), oppressed (<1/2 zq95 th), matrix (non-forest) (Alain et al., 2016). Calculated from the classified CHM running the <i>landscapemetrics</i> package (Hesselbarth et al., 2019) in R.
						$CHH = \sum_{k=1}^m e_{ik}$, eq.5 where e _{ik} is edge length in meters.

Canopy vertical variability	Rumple index	<i>RI</i>	Index	7.3 ± 2.5 (4.7–10.2)	6.0 ± 1.6 (3.6–8.0)	Indicator of vertical variation in canopy structure (Kane et al., 2010). Estimates the plot canopy structural heterogeneity, which increases with surface roughness (Kane et al., 2015; Karna et al., 2020; Roussel et al., 2020). Using all first returns per lidar plot, RI is calculated as the ratio of three-dimensional canopy surface area to its projected ground area (Karna et al., 2020; Kane et al., 2008; Ackers et al., 2015; Hastings et al., 2020) using the <i>lidR</i> package (Roussel et al., 2020) in R.
						$RI = \frac{\text{canopy surface area}}{\text{underlying ground surface}}$ eq.6

Lidar data were first extracted as 400 m² circular areas whose center matched the location of our plots. Filters were applied to remove belowground and duplicated points. A cloth simulation filter⁹⁴ was used for plots without ground classification, and the LAS files were normalized. The canopy height models (CHMs) were calculated using the pit-free algorithm (Roussel et al., 2020). The CHMs were produced at 1 m cell size using the height matrix and the 95th percentile of height distribution (zq95th). The raster cells of the CHM were then reclassified into four height classes (Alain et al., 2016): dominant ($>2/3$ zq95th), co-dominant ($1/2-2/3$ zq95th), oppressed ($<1/2$ zq95th), and understory-ground (non-forest).

2.4.3 Lidar Metrics Representing Canopy Structure

The analysis of forest structure usually involves the use of a wide range of lidar metrics. We used the suggestions of a few review papers on lidar metrics to establish an initial pool of relevant metrics (van Ewijk et al., 2011; Zellweger et al., 2013; Ackers et al., 2015; Bakx et al., 2019; Hesselbarth et al., 2019). We targeted metric classes focused on canopy structure, namely canopy cover, horizontal variability, and vertical variability (Bakx et al., 2019). We then sorted potential lidar metrics for each class, eliminating duplicates that described the same properties under different names (Bakx et al., 2019). Only metrics showing a low/moderate correlation (<0.6) were retained to ensure they provided complementary information. Consequently, six metrics were selected to quantify canopy structure (Table 2) and served as response variables. They were calculated for all 400 m² plots using the *landscapemetrics* (McGarigal, 2015; Hesselbarth et al., 2019), *lidR* (Roussel et al., 2020), and *ForestGapR* (Silva et al., 2019) packages in R (R Core Team, 2019).

The canopy cover class includes three lidar metrics describing canopy density (Bakx et al., 2019). First, the canopy porosity metric (CPor) is determined by leaf area density and clumping and can be viewed as the amount of empty canopy space (Fotis & Curtis, 2017). As the CPor value increases, the penetration depth increases because canopy porosity is high. Second, canopy closure (CClos) is applied to a wide range of applications in ecology (i.e., forest ecosystems, wildlife habitat assessment, and monitoring), mainly being linked to

canopy architecture, light interception, and LAI estimates (Paletto & Tosi, 2009). Roughly, high values of this metric indicate that a high percentage of the sky is obscured by vegetation (Jennings et al., 1999; Paletto & Tosi, 2009). Finally, canopy density (CD) is the proportion of the forest floor covered by the vertical projection of the tree crowns (proportion 1st returns/all returns) (van Ewijk et al., 2011). Dense canopies lead to high CD values.

We selected two lidar metrics describing the variation in the horizontal distribution of vegetation (Bakx et al., 2019). Gap area (GAP) was defined using two criteria: minimum gap size and height threshold. According to Brokaw (1982), a minimum gap must be “readily distinguishable amid the complexity of forest structure” (Brokaw, 1982). The opening had to be caused by the death of at least one tree. Typically, in coniferous stands, most gaps are smaller than 100 m² (McCarthy, 2001; Bartemucci et al., 2002; Pham et al., 2004; McCarthy & Weetman, 2006), and in boreal forests, the gap size for a single treefall ranges from 50 to 200 m² (McCarthy, 2001). Thus, the minimum gap area was set at 50 m². As for the height threshold, the regeneration after gap formation was required to be less than two-thirds the height of the surrounding dominant trees to be considered a gap (Pham et al., 2004). As another metric, canopy height heterogeneity (CHH) characterizes the horizontal variability of a single stratum (i.e., the canopy) by describing heterogeneity in canopy height classes (i.e., dominant, co-dominant, oppressed, and non-forest) (Alain et al., 2016). It is a relevant biodiversity structural indicator (Zellweger et al., 2013; Simonson et al., 2014; Zellweger et al., 2014; Carrasco et al., 2019; Heidrich et al., 2020), as high CHH values indicate a more fragmented canopy.

Vertical variability encompasses metrics describing the vertical distribution of vegetation structure (Bakx et al., 2019). It was described by one lidar metric, the rumple index (RI), which estimates plot canopy complexity by describing canopy roughness. Higher values represent stands with a high vertical complexity (e.g., more complex canopies) (Kane et al., 2008; Ackers et al., 2015; Hastings et al., 2020).

2.4.4 Variables Characterizing Forest Stands

Plots were selected from QC (provincial government) and NL (federal government) sample plot networks (MRNF, 2022c; Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Fisheries, Farming and Natural Resources, 2022). This selection was based on synchronous (± 2 years) ALS data acquisition and forest inventory measurements to minimize height variation and the possibility of disturbances. Plots selected from the QC plot network were surveyed between 2010 and 2020. They were matched with lidar data acquired from the corresponding area between 2012 and 2018. Plots selected from NL were established in 2016 by the Canadian Forest Service of Natural Resources Canada to match an ALS data acquisition survey in 2016. A total of 1339 plots were used: 1208 in QC and 131 in NL.

We used 23 explanatory variables to account for between-plot differences in stand attributes, environmental conditions, and trait structure (Table 3). A set of 11 variables described stand attributes. Tree diameter at breast height (DBH in cm; measured at 1.3 m above ground) was available for all trees with a DBH larger than 9.0 cm in all of the studied plots. Merchantable basal area (BA, $\text{m}^2 \cdot \text{ha}^{-1}$) and stand density (number of stems $\cdot \text{ha}^{-1}$) were used to quantify tree competition. The quadratic mean diameter (QMD), the variance (VD), and the Gini coefficient of diameters (GCD) were then calculated to quantify structure diversity. Stand composition was assessed with the dominant species, the proportion of the most important species, and the type of stand (broadleaf, i.e., $>75\%$ broadleaf species; conifer, i.e., $>75\%$ conifer species; or mixed, i.e., contains both broadleaf and conifer species, but both $<75\%$). The status of partial (thinning, insect outbreak, none) and stand-replacing disturbances (burned area, cutting, forest plantation, insect outbreak, none) was listed in the government database and was only available for the plots in QC. Finally, stand ontogeny was also included using dominant height (average height of the four largest trees/400 m^2). We estimated plot dominant height using the measured height of either four (temporary sample plots) or nine (permanent sample plots) trees in the QC plots (MRNF, 2022a, 2022b). Tree heights not measured in the field were estimated through species-specific published height–

diameter equations (Auger, 2016). For NL, tree height was measured on all merchantable trees using a vertex (van Lier et al., 2022).

A set of five explanatory variables were descriptors of environmental conditions (i.e., local biophysical conditions and climate). The topographic position index (TPI) (De Reu et al., 2013) and topographic wetness index (TWI) (Kopecký et al., 2021) were calculated with a 20 m digital elevation model (DEM) (Gouvernement du Québec, 2019; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2022). The mean total annual precipitation (mm) (hereafter ‘precipitation’) and the mean annual temperatures (°C) (hereafter ‘temperature’) of the Canadian climate normals (1981–2010) were obtained using the BioSIM software v.10.2.4.20 (Régnière et al., 2014). We used mean wind speed ($\text{m}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$) at a 5 km resolution from the Canadian Wind Energy Atlas (E. and C. C. C. Government of Canada, 2003) to investigate its impact on canopy structure.

Finally, a set of seven variables related to net forest productivity, survivor growth, tree recruitment, and mortality were used to account for differences in trait structure of the plots (Dupont-Leduc et al., 2024). Community trait structure can be studied using various diversity indicators, mainly the community-weighted mean (CWM) and functional diversity indices (Lavorel et al., 2008; Laliberté & Legendre, 2010; Dias et al., 2021; Ricotta & Moretti, 2011; Bello et al., 2021). First, the CWM—defined as the average of the species-specific trait values weighted by the relative abundances of each species (Garnier et al., 2004; Lepš et al., 2006; Ricotta & Moretti, 2011)—was calculated for three traits: leaf mass per area (CWM.LMA), drought tolerance (CWM.TolD), and seed frequency (CWM.SeFreq). Then, four functional dispersion indices (FD_{is})—defined as the individual species-weighted mean distance to the weighted centroid of all species in the multidimensional trait space, where weights are the relative abundance of the species (Laliberté & Legendre, 2010)—were calculated on the basis of different traits or group of traits: leaf traits ($\text{FD}_{\text{is.leaf}}$, i.e., leaf size, leaf longevity, leaf mass per area, and nitrogen content per leaf mass unit), leaf nitrogen content trait ($\text{FD}_{\text{is.Nmass}}$), and a mix of three and five traits ($\text{FD}_{\text{is.3}}$, i.e., ectomycorrhiza,

Table 3. Description of the stand attributes, environmental conditions, and trait structure used as explanatory variables to characterize forest stands in this study. Mean and standard deviation are provided for continuous variables, followed by the range (10th and 90th percentiles).

Variables	Quebec (<i>n</i> = 1208)	Newfoundland (<i>n</i> = 131)
Stand attributes		
- Merchantable basal area ($m^2 \cdot ha^{-1}$)	21.4 ± 10.0 (9.0–34.1)	34.2 ± 17.2 (10.0–56.4)
- Stand density (number of stems ha^{-1})	1177.0 ± 570.4 (492.5–1925.0)	1729.6 ± 845.7 (625.0–2925.0)
- Quadratic mean diameter	15.4 ± 3.0 (12.1–19.2)	15.8 ± 3.5 (12.0–19.9)
- Variance of diameters	22.2 ± 19.1 (5.0–45.0)	21.9 ± 27.5 (4.6–42.3)
- Gini coefficient of diameters	0.1 ± 0.0 (0.1–0.2)	0.1 ± 0.0 (0.1–0.2)
- Three most-dominant species (mean proportion when dominant in the stand)	<i>Picea mariana</i> (77.7%) <i>Abies balsamea</i> (67.5%) <i>Betula papyrifera</i> (54.8%)	<i>Abies balsamea</i> (80.2%) <i>Picea mariana</i> (74.7%) <i>Betula papyrifera</i> (64.7%)
- Mean proportion of type of stand		
• conifer	75.4%	82.5%
• broadleaf	5.0%	3.8%
• mixed	19.6%	13.7%
- Mean proportion of partial disturbances		
• thinning	5.3%	N/A
• insect outbreak	14.2%	N/A
• none	80.5%	N/A
- Mean proportion of stand-replacing disturbances		
• burned area	14.6%	N/A
• cutting	13.6%	N/A
• forest plantation	1.2%	N/A
• insect outbreak	1.0%	N/A
• none	69.7%	N/A
- Dominant height (m)	16.1 ± 3.3 (12.0–20.2)	14.4 ± 4.0 (8.8–19.5)
Environmental conditions		
- Mean topographic position index (TPI)	3 ± (1–5)	3 ± (1–5)
- Mean topographic wetness index (TWI)	6.8 ± 1.6 (5.2–8.8)	6.4 ± 1.5 (4.8–8.4)
- Mean annual temperature (°C)	0.6 ± 1.2 (–1.1–2.2)	4.0 ± 0.4 (3.4–4.4)
- Mean total annual precipitations (mm)	996.6 ± 80.2 (903.6–1081.1)	1325.8 ± 100.4 (1188.4–1452.2)
- Mean wind speed ($m \cdot s^{-1}$)	4.5 ± 1.0 (3.5–6.1)	7.0 ± 0.8 (5.9–8.0)
Trait structure		
- Community-weighted mean of leaf mass per area (CWM.LMA)	208.7 ± 61.1 (125.6–288.2)	168.1 ± 47.9 (108.1–243.3)
- Community-weighted mean of seed frequency (CWM.SeFreq)	3.5 ± 0.5 (2.9–4.0)	3.3 ± 0.4 (2.9–4.0)
- Community-weighted mean of drought tolerance (CWM.ToID)	1.8 ± 0.5 (1.3–2.1)	1.5 ± 0.4 (1.1–2.0)
- Functional dispersion of leaf nitrogen content trait (FDis.Nmass)	0.2 ± 0.1 (0.0–0.4)	0.1 ± 0.1 (0.0–0.3)
- Functional dispersion of leaf traits (FDis.Leaf)	44.8 ± 27.5 (4.9–79.4)	35.5 ± 24.5 (6.8–71.4)
- Functional dispersion of a mix of three functional traits (FDis.3)	0.3 ± 0.2 (0.0–0.6)	0.2 ± 0.2 (0.0–0.5)
- Functional dispersion of a mix of five functional traits (FDis.5)	29.2 ± 20.2 (2.9–55.8)	15.2 ± 14.9 (0.8–41.8)

wood decay resistance, vegetative reproduction; and $FD_{is.5}$, i.e., average maximum height, frequency of a good crop year, drought tolerance, root depth, and leaf longevity). These indices were calculated for each plot (see (Dupont-Leduc et al., 2024) for details).

2.4.5 Statistical Analysis

Random-forest regression is an effective nonparametric prediction method when the number of explanatory variables is high and when interactions and correlations among the variables are numerous and complex (Breiman, 2001; Svetnik et al., 2003; Strobl et al., 2008). Random-forest modeling was applied to link the lidar metrics representing canopy structure (response variables) with the 23 variables characterizing stand structure (explanatory variables) via the recursive feature elimination (rfe) algorithm from the *caret* package (Kuhn, 2020) in R. The random-forest algorithm was applied to find the best subset of explanatory variables (from a model with a single explanatory variable to a model with all explanatory variables) that generated the lowest root-mean-square error (RMSE) with a tolerance of 3% (3% more error than the model with the lowest RMSE). The optimal model was recalibrated by running the *randomForest* package (Liaw & Wiener, 2002) in R to obtain the contribution of each explanatory variable to the model's predictive performance using the percent increase in the mean squared error (Kuhn & Johnson, 2013). This measure is based on the average decrease in the precision of the predictions of the out-of-bag samples (data used by the algorithm to incorporate a validation step within the fitting procedure) when a given explanatory variable is excluded from the model (Attanasi et al., 2020).

The *forestFloor* package was used to visualize and interpret the random-forest models with the advantage that interactions between the response and explanatory variables were not masked by averaging (Welling et al., 2016). This type of plot illustrates the main effects by plotting feature contributions (FC: change of predicted probability because of the variable value) of the response variable by each explanatory variable against their respective values. For each instance, FCs are computed separately and provide details about relationships between the explanatory and the predicted values: how much and what kind of influence

(positive/negative) does each explanatory variable have (Palczewska et al., 2013). The fitted line describes how well each explanatory variable contribution can be explained as a main effect, and the R^2 quantifies the goodness-of-visualization (GOV).

2.5 RESULTS

2.5.1 Canopy Cover

Canopy porosity (CPor) was predicted on the basis of nine explanatory variables (Fig. 7 A). The final random-forest model explained 58.3% of the variance. Ranked by importance, dominant height, merchantable basal area (BA), community-weighted mean of drought tolerance (CWM.ToLD), Gini coefficient of diameters (GCD), quadratic mean diameter (QMD), community-weighted mean leaf mass per area (CWM.LMA), mean annual temperatures (hereafter ‘temperature’), mean total annual precipitations (hereafter ‘precipitation’), and stand density were the most important variables, increasing the mean square error (MSE) respectively 244%, 195%, 176%, 153%, 146%, 127%, 124%, 122%, and 111% when excluded from the model (Fig. 7 A). CPor showed a positive asymptotic relationship with dominant height and BA ($R^2 > 0.9$) and to a lesser extent with CWM.ToLD ($R^2 > 0.7$) (Fig. 7 A). CPor also showed a positive asymptotic relationship with QMD and stand density ($R^2 = 0.9$) (Fig. 7 A). A high goodness-of-visualization (GOV) was also found for CWM.LMA ($R^2 \sim 0.8$), and CPor should be approximately inversely proportional with this variable (Fig. 7 A). GCD, precipitation, and temperature showed no clear trend and a lower GOV ($R^2 < 0.7$) (Fig. 7 A).

The canopy closure (CClos) metric was predicted using CWM.LMA, BA, stand density, temperature, and precipitation, where 68.6% of the variance was explained (Fig. 7 B). Excluding these variables from the model increased the respective MSE 424%, 284%, 234%, 199%, and 148% (Fig. 7 B). CClos showed a negative monotonic relationship with CWM.LMA (GOV $R^2 > 0.9$) (Fig. 7 B). CClos was approximately positively asymptotic to

BA and stand density ($R^2 > 0.9$) and, to a lesser extent, temperature ($R^2 \sim 0.8$) (Fig. 7 B). No clear trends and a lower R^2 were observed for precipitation (Fig. 7 B).

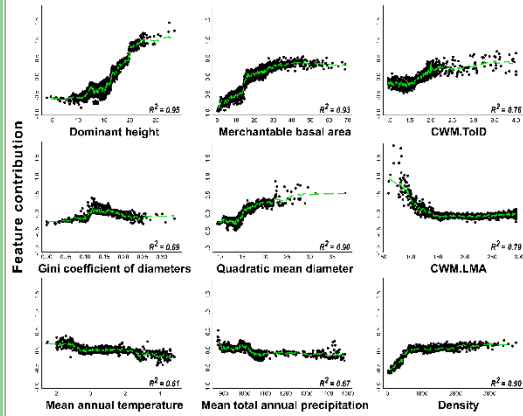
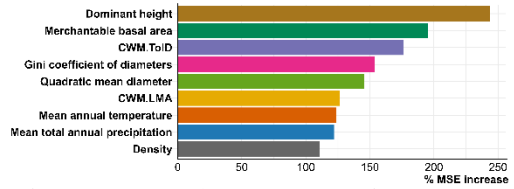
We used six explanatory variables to predict canopy density (CD): precipitation, temperature, mean wind speed, dominant height, BA, and stand density (Fig. 7 C), explaining 48.8% of variance. Without these variables, the respective MSE increased 475%, 327%, 276%, 272%, 209%, and 192% (Fig. 7 C). CD revealed an inversely proportional relationship with dominant height, BA, and stand density ($R^2 > 0.8$) (Fig. 7 C). CD showed a negative optimum value at total precipitations of about 1000 mm yr⁻¹ ($R^2 > 0.8$), but the relationship is rather difficult to explain (Fig. 7 C). Mean wind speed and temperature were the least well explained, with a low GOV ($R^2 < 0.6$) and no clear trend (Fig. 7 C).

2.5.2 Canopy Horizontal Variability

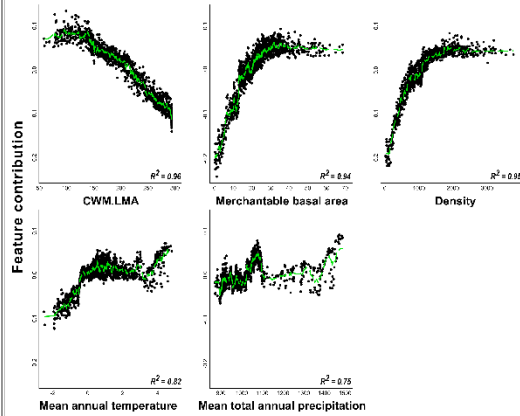
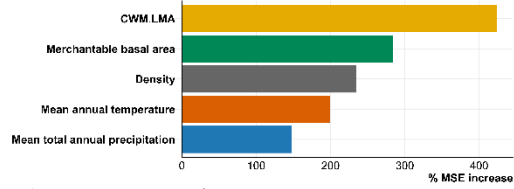
The gap area metric (GAP) was predicted using seven explanatory variables and explained 64.8% of the variance (Fig. 7 D). CWM.LMA, stand density, BA, variance of diameters (VD), GCD, CWM.ToID, and the functional dispersion index based on the leaf nitrogen content trait ($FD_{is.Nmass}$) were the most important variables, increasing the respective MSE 447%, 307%, 292%, 201%, 188%, 171%, and 168% when excluded from the model (Fig. 7 D). GAP showed a positive monotonic relationship with CWM.LMA ($R^2 > 0.9$) and an inversely proportional relationship with stand density and BA ($R^2 > 0.9$) (Fig. 7 D). GAP also had an approximately positive asymptotic relationship with VD and GCD ($R^2 \sim 0.8$) and an approximately negative asymptotic relationship with $FD_{is.Nmass}$, although with a lower GOV ($R^2 > 0.6$) (Fig. 7 D). Low GOV was found for CWM.ToID, with no clear trend (Fig. 7 D).

Nine explanatory variables were used to predict canopy height heterogeneity (CHH) (Fig. 7 E). Using the random-forest model, we found 62.8% of the variance was explained with CWM.LMA, BA, stand density, temperature, CWM.ToID, the functional dispersion index based on leaf traits ($FD_{is.leaf}$, i.e., leaf size, leaf longevity, leaf mass per area, and nitrogen content per leaf mass unit), $FD_{is.Nmass}$, VD, and GCD as the most important

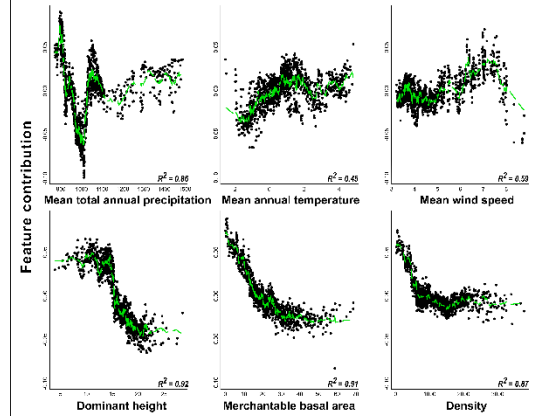
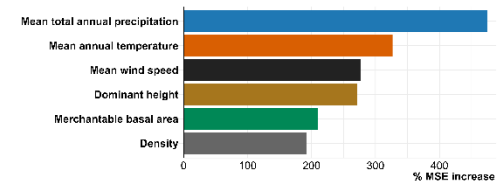
A) Canopy porosity (58.3% of var. exp.)



B) Canopy closure (68.6% of var. exp.)



C) Canopy density (48.8% of var. exp.)



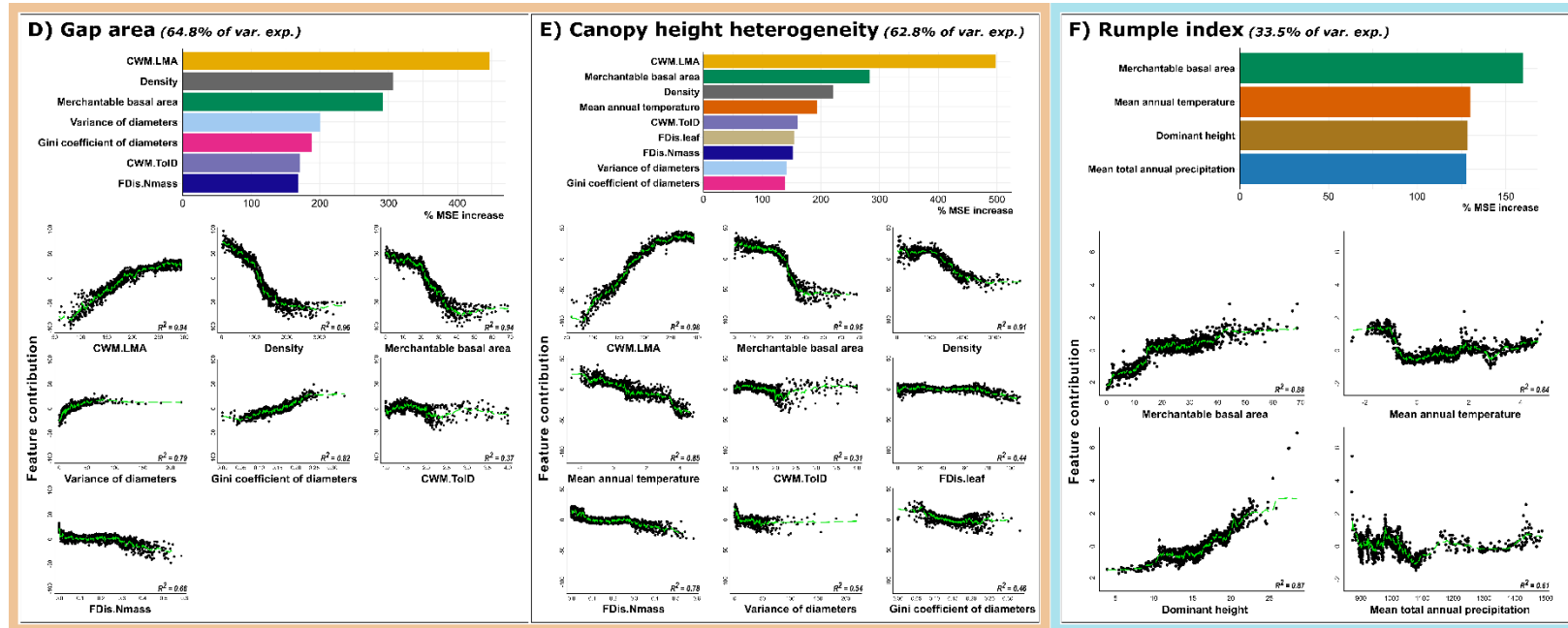


Figure 7. Random-forest models for the A) canopy porosity (58.3% of var. explained), B) canopy closure (68.6% of var. explained), C) canopy density (48.7% of var. explained), D) gap area (64.7% of var. explained), E) canopy height heterogeneity (62.8% of var. explained), and F) rumple index (33.5% of var. explained) metrics. Important variables for each model are represented in the corresponding histogram. The forest floor main effects are plotted to map the structure of the model predicting the canopy structure metric. The plots are arranged according to variable importance (reading direction). The X-axis represents the variable values, and the Y-axis represents the corresponding cross-validated feature contributions. Goodness-of-visualization is evaluated using a leave-one-out k-nearest neighbor estimation (green line, R^2 values). Different metric classes are represented by box colors (i.e., green box: canopy cover metrics, orange box: canopy horizontal variability metrics, and blue box: canopy vertical variability metrics).

variables. When removed from the model, the respective MSE increased by 498%, 284%, 221%, 194%, 160%,154%, 152%, 142%, and 139% (Fig. 7 E). A positive monotonic relationship was observed between CHH and CWM.LMA, with a high GOV ($R^2 > 0.9$) (Fig. 7 E). A high GOV was also found for BA and stand density ($R^2 > 0.9$), and CHH was approximately inversely proportional to these variables (Fig. 7 E). CHH revealed a negative monotonic relationship with temperature ($R^2 > 0.8$) and to a lesser extent with $FD_{is.Nmass}$, although with a lower GOV ($R^2 > 0.7$) (Fig. 7 E). VD, GCD, $FD_{is.leaf}$, and CWM.TolD were the least well explained ($R^2 < 0.6$) and had no clear trend (Fig. 7 C).

2.5.3 Canopy Vertical Variability

BA, temperature, dominant height, and precipitation were used to predict the rumple index metric (RI), and the random-forest model explained 33.5% of the variance (Fig. 7 F). Removing these variables from the model increased MSE 160%, 130%, 128%, and 128%, respectively (Fig. 7 F). RI showed a positive monotonic relationship with BA and dominant height with a high GOV ($R^2 > 0.8$) (Fig. 7 F). RI was also approximately inversely proportional to temperature with a drop of RI at ~ 0 °C (GOV $R^2 > 0.8$) (Fig. 7 F). No clear trends were observed for precipitation ($R^2 \sim 0.6$) (Fig. 7 F).

2.6 DISCUSSION

It is generally accepted that forest characteristics, such as tree species diversity, influence forest productivity. However, few studies have explored how these characteristics influence canopy structure (Ishii et al., 2004; Hardiman et al., 2011; Scheuermann et al., 2018). Almost all studies applying ALS data use the derived metrics as explanatory variables. Instead, this study determined whether a combination of variables characterizing forest stands describing stand attributes, environmental conditions, and trait structure could predict lidar-derived vegetation metrics, which are proxies for canopy structure. The outcome of this novel means of using lidar data to predict canopy structure opens up a range of new possibilities. Indeed, the first important contribution of this study is to highlight how canopy

structure metrics can be predicted from variables characterizing forest stands. This fulfills our first objective by demonstrating the variables related to stand attributes and environmental conditions that are relevant for predicting the six selected lidar metrics.

Our second goal aimed to understand how trait structure influences canopy structure within the investigated tree communities. The random-forest models highlighted considerable differences in canopy structure between communities on the basis of their LMAs. Trees in broadleaf-dominated communities (low LMA) occupied more space to produce a homogeneous, fully filled canopy, whereas conifer-dominated communities (high LMA) had more vertically and horizontally heterogeneous canopies. These findings support our hypothesis that traits influence canopy structure through the spatial partition of aboveground niches. Our results provide new insight into how trait-driven mechanisms affect the structure and distribution of the vegetative biomass in the canopy. Thus, our second important contribution involved quantifying, through canopy structure metrics, the differences between broadleaf and conifer forests. This fulfills the second objective by highlighting the role of four variables related to trait structure in canopy structure changes.

2.6.1 Predicting Canopy Structure Metrics Using Stand Attributes and Environmental Conditions

As a means of answering our main research question, we found that nine variables related to stand attributes and environmental conditions were key for predicting canopy structure. Some of these, namely BA, stand density, temperature, and precipitation, were important variables (i.e., variables selected by the random-forest models) in more than half of the models. The remaining variables (dominant height, Gini coefficient of diameters, variance of diameters, quadratic mean diameter, and mean wind speed) were important in at least one model.

Among all the models, BA was the most prevalent explanatory variable. Stand density, generally highly correlated with BA, was the second-most frequent variable in the models. The canopy porosity and closure increased with BA and stand density, whereas both canopy

density and horizontal variability decreased. Canopy vertical variability only increased with BA. In the upper canopy, the horizontal structure (i.e., open versus closed stands) is affected by the height and shape of the largest trees. Thus, horizontal structure is closely related to the stand BA (Fischer et al., 2019). Furthermore, with higher stand density and competition, trees can significantly alter their crown allometry to increase light interception, stand growth, and productivity (Pretzsch, 2014, 2017). Indeed, to increase their leaf area, trees increase their crown length or width rather than their leaf area density in dense stands (Pretzsch, 2014). Our results support this observation, showing that at higher BA and stand density, the canopy is more closed but still porous and can have greater vertical variability.

As additional support for this idea, we found that dominant height also significantly influenced the estimation of three lidar metrics (canopy porosity, canopy density, and the rumple index), and the relationships among these lidar metrics are very similar to those of the variables discussed previously. High dominant height, for example, was also associated with high canopy porosity, vertical variability, and low canopy density. Finally, we also note that two variables describing the diversity of the diameter structure and one related to stand development (i.e., Gini coefficient of diameters (GCD), variance of diameters (VD), and quadratic mean diameter (QMD)) were important for predicting canopy porosity and canopy horizontal variability metrics, although the trend was more difficult to discern for the latter. Gap area increased with both GCD and VD, whereas canopy porosity increased with QMD. In western Canadian forests, tree size positively affects individual tree diameter growth, which can result in a higher VD coefficient for trees (Jiang et al., 2018). This earlier observation is consistent with our results, as porous canopies (linked to a high BA), stand density, and dominant height are also associated with a higher QMD. Additionally, high tree size heterogeneity (elevated GCD and VD) was associated with a greater canopy horizontal variability, measured by gap area, which could reflect an advanced development stage. Our results showed that stand attributes were the strongest predictors of the six lidar metrics used to describe canopy structure. The explanatory variables controlling for initial stand conditions in terms of tree competition (BA, stand density, and dominant height) appear particularly relevant.

We also found that temperature and precipitation play a key role in predicting five of the six lidar metrics, although the patterns behind the relationships are not always straightforward. The plot location gradient reflects climatic conditions (i.e., a north–south gradient for temperature and an east–west gradient for precipitation). It was expected that the northernmost part of our study area would experience lower temperatures, whereas the easternmost part would experience generally wetter conditions (Fig. 6). On one hand, we found that higher temperature was related to closed canopies with a homogeneous horizontal structure and a low rumple index. It is, however, more difficult to determine the pattern underlying the relationship between temperature and dense and porous canopies. Lower mean annual temperatures (i.e., less favorable growing conditions) are observed in the northern part of our study area, where conifer forests dominate. This corroborates the higher rumple index values found when temperatures are lower. When mean annual temperature is relatively low (i.e., <0 °C, less favorable growing conditions), canopy horizontal heterogeneity increases and canopy closure decreases. These canopy metric characteristics can indeed be associated with northern communities having a high proportion of conifer species. The canopy vertical structure becomes less complex with warmer climatic conditions (i.e., >0 °C, more favorable growing conditions). Higher annual temperatures are expected in the southern part of our study area, an area more likely to have more broadleaf species. As annual temperature rises, the canopy becomes more closed and homogeneous, with a low rumple index. On the other hand, the relationships between precipitation and canopy porosity, canopy closure, canopy density, and rumple index are difficult to interpret. In our study area, the precipitation gradient indicates that the NL plots (eastern part) receive more annual precipitation than the QC plots (western part) (Table 2). Overall, most lidar metrics were influenced by biophysical conditions and climate. Not only can these explanatory variables serve as indicators of plot location, but they also reflect environmental gradients.

There are a few things to consider when using our approach to explore how forest attributes affect tree crown heterogeneity and spatial arrangement. First, given the wide range of existing lidar metrics, we must be mindful of our choice of response variables. More refined metrics could perhaps be selected to better capture the different structures of the

canopy. An additional exercise could target the best possible metrics to represent the canopy structure. Remote sensing is evolving rapidly, and new metrics could be developed and be more meaningful to describe forest attributes. For example, voxel-based lidar metrics have proven to be excellent descriptors of complex forests (Blackburn et al., 2021; Whelan et al., 2023). We are also limited by the available forest inventories when selecting explanatory variables. It is also worth mentioning that our findings apply to the Boreal Shield forests of eastern Canada. Canopy structures might be different if the study extended into more diverse forests. Finally, random forest is very effective in making predictions and highlighting important variables; however, a downside of this approach is that the relationships are not always obvious or easy to interpret. Nevertheless, the models did meet our first objective by demonstrating that six lidar metrics could be predicted on the basis of nine variables related to stand attributes and environmental conditions.

2.6.2 Broadleaf and Conifer Stands Differ in Their Canopy Structure

In our analyses to better understand the role of community traits on canopy structure, we noted obvious differences between broadleaf and conifer stands. However, the effect of trait structure on predictive ability was low relative to that using stand attributes. Four traits and functional diversity indices in tree communities were nevertheless identified as relevant for predicting lidar-derived vegetation metrics as proxies for canopy structure.

The most important trait was leaf mass per area (LMA), quantified by the community-weighted mean of leaf mass per area, CWM.LMA, and this trait contributed to all but two of the random-forest models. This trait represents the ratio of dry leaf mass to leaf area and is highly correlated with whole-plant activities and leaf and ecosystem processes (Lambers & Poorter, 1992; Reich et al., 1992; Cornelissen & Thompson, 1997; Wright et al., 2004; Poorter et al., 2009; Riva et al., 2016). Communities with low LMAs are typically composed of species that acquire resources rapidly and that have high growth rates (i.e., broadleaf stands, either pure or mixed but having a high proportion of broadleaf species) (Poorter et al., 2009). In high-LMA communities, species rely more on resource preservation and leaf

persistence (i.e., conifer stands, either pure or mixed with a high proportion of conifer species) (Poorter et al., 2009). Figure 8 summarizes how the canopy changes with a different LMA, yielding a better understanding of trait's impact on forest canopy structure. LMA appears to capture effectively the morphological differences between conifer and broadleaf stands. The canopy cover metrics (porosity and closure) and the canopy horizontal variability metrics (gap area and height heterogeneity) all demonstrated robust relationships with LMA (Fig. 8). Indeed, conifer stands (high LMA), with denser crowns and persistent leaves, had upper canopies that were spatially more open, coherent with their sharp crowns interspersed with deeper spaces (Parker et al., 2004; Bolton et al., 2015; Vége et al., 2016; Rissanen et al., 2019). In contrast, broadleaf species tended to fill more space in the canopy stratum when present (Reich et al., 2007; Poorter et al., 2009; Ruiz-Jaen & Potvin, 2011), consistent with our results for broadleaf stands (low LMA), showing a high canopy closure and a low gap area and canopy height heterogeneity. Furthermore, the higher leaf clumping of broadleaf species produces a more porous canopy, which allows more light to pass through the upper canopy and increases photosynthesis in the understory (Pretzsch & Schütze, 2016; Fotis & Curtis, 2017). Moreover, lateral and vertical branch extension resulting from intra- and interspecific interactions may lead to broader tree crowns and, over time, to increased canopy closure and low gap area (Pretzsch & Schütze, 2009; Pretzsch, 2014). In part, this stems from the strong influence of species plasticity, which allows trees to exhibit morphological traits that help them expand their crown horizontally in response to forest openings (Vepakomma et al., 2011; Jucker et al., 2015). Because broadleaf and conifer trees have different architectures and growth patterns, they respond differently to these openings (Millet, 2012; Bayer et al., 2013; Pretzsch, 2014; Martin-Ducup et al., 2018). Using LMA appears to be an interesting option to differentiate broadleaf and conifer stands from a functional and morphological perspective.

Furthermore, although the patterns underlying the relationships were not always obvious, the drought-tolerance trait (quantified by the community-weighted mean of drought tolerance, CWM.ToID) contributed to three of the random-forest models. This trait is more closely related to competing/surviving plant strategies. The most apparent relationship for that trait

is that porous canopies were associated with drought-tolerant communities (high CWM.TolD). As stated previously, high canopy porosity was also linked to high dominant height and low LMA communities (broadleaf stands). However, a previous study showed that broadleaf species having a less negative turgor-loss point and low leaf mass per area are more drought-sensitive than conifer species (Münchinger et al., 2023). It is important to note, however, that our sampling was conducted in the Boreal Shield ecozone. Thus, we have a markedly different species gradient with fewer broadleaf species; conifers are better represented than broadleaf trees. To assess whether drought tolerance can discriminate between different stand types, we suggest further research using a larger sample of broadleaf trees.

Finally, two functional diversity indices linked to resource acquisition plant strategies, i.e., the leaf nitrogen content trait (quantified by the functional dispersion of leaf nitrogen content, $FD_{is.Nmass}$) and the index based on leaf traits (quantified by the functional dispersion of leaf traits, $FD_{is.Leaf}$), contributed to, respectively, two and one of the random-forest models. They were effectively correlated with canopy horizontal variability metrics (gap area and height heterogeneity). Both indices showed higher functional dispersion of the leaf traits in a community correlated with lower gap area and canopy height heterogeneity, as seen previously with our results in low LMA communities (broadleaf stands). This suggests that enhanced functional diversity may lead to increased canopy packing efficiency, as broadleaf species generally fill more space when present in a stand (Reich et al., 2007; Poorter et al., 2009; Ruiz-Jaen & Potvin, 2011). This may also be caused by an increased complementarity in these traits between tree species found in the studied communities.

Studying how trait structure influences canopy structure requires considering several factors. Many functional diversity indices have been introduced in the last decades to study the trait structure of communities (Lavorel et al., 2008; Laliberté & Legendre, 2010; Dias et al., 2021). It is possible that better functional diversity indices exist than the ones we used here to properly capture differences in canopy structure. Moreover, working over large areas is limiting in terms of data availability, especially for traits that are difficult to find (few

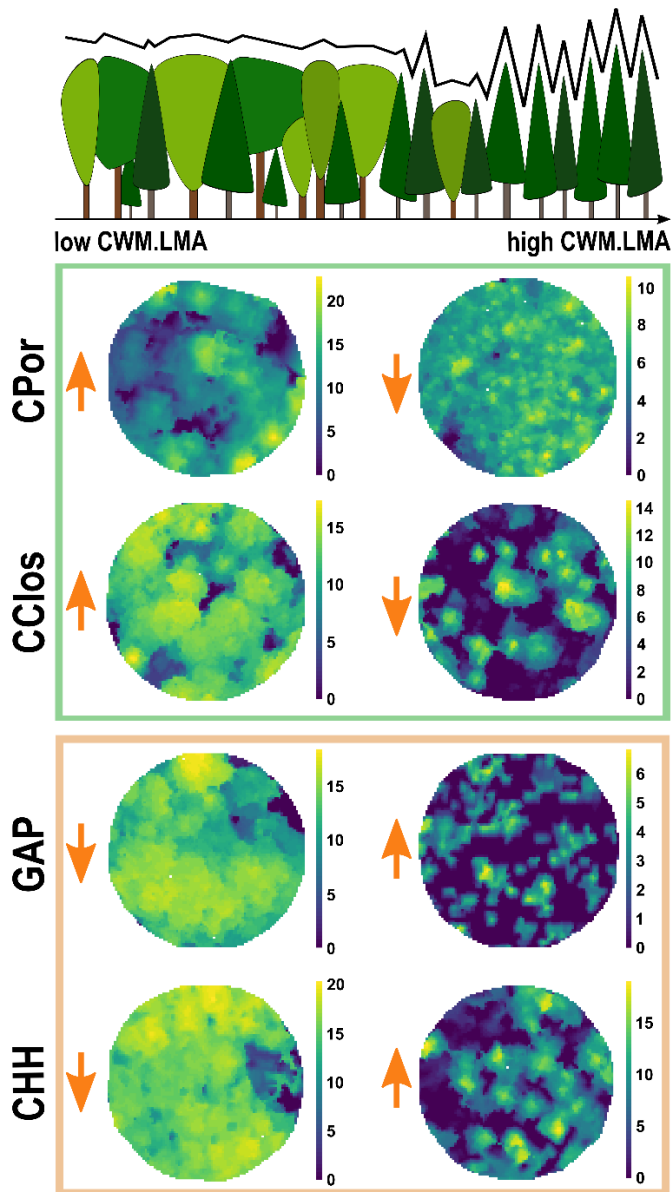


Figure 8. Display of how canopy structure metrics vary with trait structure through changes on a resource acquisition axis as measured by the community-weighted average of leaf mass per surface trait (CWM.LMA). As an example, ALS plots were selected to illustrate low values (10th percentile) of a metric (downward arrows) and high values (90th percentile) of a metric (upward arrows). ALS plots on the left represent low CWM.LMA communities (high proportion of broadleaf species) and on the right, represent high CWM.LMA communities (high proportion of conifer species). Different metric classes are represented by box colors (i.e., green box: canopy cover metrics, and orange box: canopy horizontal variability metrics).

databases over extended areas) and very laborious to quantify when working on several species. Because of this lack of data, we used trait averages across Canada, making it difficult to factor in intraspecific variability and possibly hiding species-specific trends. As a result, we should interpret our findings cautiously, as they are representative of the mean. Ultimately, even if the effect of the trait structure of communities was more subtle than stand attributes, our models still allowed us to attain our second objective by revealing a clear difference between the stands according to their trait structure. As mentioned before, the more subtle influence of these explanatory variables can simply be justified by the lower diversity of the Boreal Shield ecozone.

2.6.3 Perspectives

The most common application of ALS data in forest ecology is to enhance forest inventories or model forest attributes for a comprehensive forest analysis. Nevertheless, we are unaware of any studies that have used forest attributes (forest inventory data) to predict forest canopy structure (lidar metrics). Our innovative approach opens new avenues of research, as our models can predict the canopy structure of forests without ALS data and can quantify past canopy structures from historical inventories. Indeed, canopy structure has been related to several variables describing stand attributes, environmental conditions, and trait structure, all acquired through traditional forest inventories. This approach conceivably allows canopy structure to be used as an explanatory variable when examining forest evolution over time. Indeed, our models explain about 60% of the observed variation (except for the rumple index model). Therefore, the resulting predictive models could be used to explore the prediction of forest canopy structure from forest inventory alone.

As our study area covers only a portion of the Boreal Shield forests, it would be interesting to extend its application to cover the entire Boreal Shield ecozone. Important relationships between biodiversity and forest productivity across an extensive range of forests have been widely documented in recent decades (Liang et al., 2007; Pretzsch et al., 2010; Morin et al., 2011; Paquette & Messier, 2011; Zhang et al., 2012; Pretzsch, del Río, et

al., 2015; Liang et al., 2016; Pretzsch & Schütze, 2016; Tobner et al., 2016; Forrester, 2017; Pretzsch et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2021). Identifying similar relationships between community trait structure and canopy structure across ecoregions, landscapes, and countries would be of considerable interest. Wider east–west and north–south gradients would allow evaluating the models over a greater variety of ecosystems and species mixtures. However, such an exercise implies dealing with significant differences between provincial inventories. It may be necessary to reduce the number of plots but use a national system that has already been normalized among various jurisdictions (NRC, 2023). This selection would enable future research to explore how climate impacts canopy structure by means of broader precipitation and temperature gradients. Thus, we may also gain insight into how the canopy structure of forest communities varies along a wider gradient of community-weighted mean of LMA.

Because our analysis was based on a single layer, mainly the upper canopy stratum, the more complex structures were related to less diverse conifer plots. The chosen metrics may not properly characterize high inner heterogeneity or fully account for within-canopy-layer complexity when functional diversity is greater. As mentioned above, voxel-based metrics are good descriptors of more complex forests (Blackburn et al., 2021; Whelan et al., 2023). They improve wood volume predictions and appear more sensitive to complex variations in vertical forest structure (Blackburn et al., 2021; Whelan et al., 2023). Voxel-based lidar measurements could improve our ability to capture canopy structure complexity more accurately. Therefore, new advances in remote sensing could provide better insights regarding the internal complexity of a forest canopy, for example, by examining how individual tree characteristics lead to higher packing density. This research could rely on collecting data at a higher point density through unmanned aerial vehicles or mobile laser scanning and could provide the opportunity to consider multiple ecologically meaningful traits at finer scales (Hambrecht et al., 2022; Blanchard et al., 2023). This may lead to a better understanding of the questions surrounding the effects of trait structure on forest canopy structure and overyielding.

2.7 CONCLUSIONS

Although forest diversity has been widely studied for ecological, economic, and socioeconomic benefits, the effects of trait structure remain poorly understood in terms of forest structure and function. Yet, it has become increasingly clear that spatial complementarity in tree crowns plays a significant role in the beneficial effects of tree species diversity in forests. We have expanded upon earlier literature-based, conventional tree crown measurements and laser scanning studies to bring new insight into how stand attributes, environmental conditions, and trait structure shape forest canopy structure. Indeed, our models successfully predicted lidar-derived vegetation metrics as proxies for canopy structure, relying on variables acquired through traditional forest inventories. It is therefore possible to predict forest canopy structure without ALS data and quantify the canopy structure of past forests through historical inventories. This novel approach for looking at ALS data could allow the study of forest canopy structure evolution over time, opening up a wide range of future research possibilities. Furthermore, through analyzing the trait structure of communities, we have gained insights into how traits and functional diversity indices contribute to forest canopy structure. Although the predictive quality of the trait structure was less than that of other stand attributes, we found significant differences between the trait structure of broadleaf and conifer stands. Broadleaf-dominated communities (low LMA) had a closed canopy cover characterized by porous crowns with a low canopy horizontal variability. The trees in low LMA communities occupied more space, producing a homogeneous, fully filled canopy. This was also corroborated by the highest functional dispersion of leaf traits ($FD_{is.Nmass}$ and $FD_{is.Leaf}$) in communities having low horizontal variability. In contrast, conifer-dominated communities (high LMA) had more horizontally heterogeneous canopies caused, in part, by their crown morphology. These findings provide further evidence that tree community trait structure can significantly contribute to forest canopy structure. The models would benefit, nonetheless, from being tested over a broader range of ecosystems and species combinations to assess whether the more subtle influence of trait structure found in our study is really due to the lower diversity of the Boreal Shield

ecozone. This would enable further analysis of the influence of both climate and trait gradients on canopy structure changes.

2.8 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPITRE 3
**LE VENT INFLUENCE LES COMPOSANTES DE LA PRODUCTIVITÉ
FORESTIÈRE PAR LE BIAIS DES TRAITS ET DE LA STRUCTURE DE LA
CANOPÉE DES COMMUNAUTÉS D'ARBRES**

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3.1 RÉSUMÉ

Ce troisième article, intitulé « *Wind modulates forest productivity components through tree community trait and canopy structure* », fut rédigé par moi-même ainsi que par le professeur Robert Schneider et les Dr. Hugues Power, Dr Barry Gardiner et Dr Mathieu Fortin, le professeur Richard A. Fournier et Olivier R. van Lier. Cet article a été préparé pour une soumission dans la revue *Functional Ecology*. Avec le professeur Robert Schneider et le Dr Hugues Power, j'ai conceptualisé l'essentiel du travail de recherche. En tant que première auteure, ma contribution à ce travail fut la recherche sur l'état des connaissances, l'analyse des données, la modélisation et la rédaction de l'article. Le Dr Barry Gardiner a aidé au calcul de la charge du vent à l'échelle du peuplement. Pour l'instant, le professeur Robert Schneider, le Dr Hugues Power et moi-même avons discuté des résultats, lu, contribué et approuvé le manuscrit dans sa forme actuelle. Les Dr. Barry Gardiner et Dr Mathieu Fortin, le professeur Richard A. Fournier et Olivier R. van Lier ont reçu le manuscrit et se joindront sous peu aux discussions sur les résultats et contribueront au manuscrit final.

L'impact du vent sur la productivité est largement négligé dans les pratiques forestières actuelles qui, au cours des dernières décennies, se sont principalement efforcées de comprendre comment la biodiversité contribuait à la productivité des forêts. Les traits des communautés d'arbres et la structure de la canopée jouent un rôle significatif dans la compréhension des impacts de la diversité sur le fonctionnement des écosystèmes. Nous explorons ici les relations vent-trait-canopée afin de déterminer si la structure des traits et la structure de la canopée interagissent avec le vent pour influencer les processus démographiques, à savoir la croissance des survivants, le recrutement de nouveaux arbres et la mortalité. En utilisant une approche de modélisation par forêts aléatoires et un réseau de placettes échantillons permanentes, les effets du vent, des traits et de la structure de la canopée sur chacune de ces composantes de la productivité forestière ont été isolés. Nos résultats ont révélé que la force moyenne du vent exercée sur les arbres, estimée par la charge et la vitesse moyenne du vent, joue un rôle crucial dans la prédiction de l'accumulation de biomasse. Plus précisément, l'augmentation de la charge du vent a entraîné une diminution de la croissance des survivants et du recrutement des arbres, ainsi qu'une augmentation de la mortalité des arbres. Ainsi, sur la base des tendances combinées des trois modèles, les changements dans les schémas d'allocation des ressources sont susceptibles de réduire la productivité nette des forêts à mesure que la charge du vent augmente. L'étude a également montré des relations entre la structure des traits et le vent. Par exemple, nous avons observé une interaction entre la valeur moyenne de la communauté pour le trait de la teneur en azote par unité de masse foliaire (N_{mass}) et le recrutement des arbres, ce qui montre qu'une plus grande complémentarité des espèces pour ce trait contribue à améliorer le recrutement lorsque la vitesse moyenne du vent augmente. Enfin, bien que les interactions entre la structure de la canopée et le vent soient faibles, des différences significatives ont été observées dans les schémas d'accumulation de biomasse entre les communautés caractérisées par une canopée homogène et celles caractérisées par une canopée hétérogène. Ces résultats apportent une preuve supplémentaire que les communautés dont les canopées sont remplies

de manière optimale peuvent maximiser l'utilisation de l'espace aérien et ainsi augmenter la productivité de la forêt grâce à une croissance et un recrutement plus élevé. Dans l'ensemble, nos résultats indiquent que le vent dans les forêts de l'est du Canada a un impact sur les composantes de la productivité. Ces résultats justifient l'intégration du vent dans les futures recherches sur la productivité forestière, puisque le vent semble être un facteur clé pour expliquer les changements dans les schémas d'accumulation de biomasse des peuplements en fonction des traits et de la structure de la canopée.

Mots-clés : Charge et la vitesse moyenne du vent ; Croissance des arbres survivants, recrutement et mortalité ; Forêts du Bouclier boréal ; Modélisation par forêts aléatoires ; Structure de la canopée ; Structure des traits des communautés.

WIND MODULATES FOREST PRODUCTIVITY COMPONENTS THROUGH TREE COMMUNITY TRAIT AND CANOPY STRUCTURE

3.2 ABSTRACT

The impact of wind has been largely overlooked in forest productivity studies, which in recent decades have mainly focused on recognizing how biodiversity contributes to this phenomenon. An essential element is characterizing the trait and canopy structures of tree communities. Here we explore the wind–trait–canopy structure relationships to investigate whether these structures interact with the wind to influence demographic processes, namely, survivor growth, recruitment of new trees, and mortality. Using random-forest modeling and a network of permanent sample plots, we isolated the effects of wind, trait, and canopy structure on each of the three forest productivity components. Our findings revealed that the average wind force exerted on trees, as estimated by wind loading and mean wind speed, plays an important role in predicting each process. More specifically, increasing wind load led to a decrease in survivor growth and tree recruitment, as well as an increase in tree mortality. Thus, based on the combined trends of the three models, changes in resource allocation patterns is likely to reduce net forest productivity as wind load increases. The study also showed a relationship between tree community trait structure and wind. For instance, we observed an interaction between the nitrogen content per leaf mass unit (N_{mass}) trait and tree recruitment, demonstrating that greater species diversity for this trait helps improve recruitment as mean wind speed increase. Finally, although the interactions between canopy structure and wind was low, we found clear differences in biomass accumulation patterns between communities with homogeneous and heterogeneous canopies. These findings provide further evidence that communities with optimally filled canopies can maximize the use of aboveground space and thus increase forest productivity through higher survivor growth and recruitment. Overall, our results indicate that wind in eastern Canadian forests have a strong impact on forest productivity. Such findings advocate for the integration of wind considerations in future research on forest productivity as it appears to be a key factor in explaining changes in biomass accumulation patterns according to the trait and canopy structure.

Keywords: Boreal Shield forests; Canopy structure; Random-forest models; Survivor growth, tree recruitment and mortality; Trait structure of communities; Wind load and wind speed

3.3 INTRODUCTION

Wind effects on ecosystem functioning have received limited attention in the literature. Wind is currently neglected in the context of forest management, which in recent decades has mainly focused on the positive effects of biodiversity on forest productivity. However, there is growing evidence that climate and environmental conditions play an important role for ecosystem functioning (Jucker et al., 2016; Paquette et al., 2017; Hisano et al., 2018; Ammer, 2019; Dupont-Leduc et al., 2024). Among these elements, wind is a critical element within the atmospheric environment, as it exerts several mechanical and physiological constraints that affects the growth, the development, and the survival of trees (Schindler et al., 2012; Bonnesoeur et al., 2016; Gardiner, 2021; Jackson et al., 2021; Kolbe et al., 2022). The ecological importance of wind is linked, among other things, to increased biodiversity resulting from changes in forest structure, as it is an important driver of change in forest composition (Canham, 1985; King, 1986; Quine & Gardiner, 2007). Also, wind has a wide range of effects on tree communities, ranging from small (i.e., damage to leaves and needles) to regional scales (i.e., major storms) (Gardiner et al., 2016). Consequently, wind is one of the main concerns in the context of forest and ecosystem management in many European forests, as it is responsible for a significant amount of forest damage and economic losses (Seidl & Blennow, 2012; Seidl et al., 2014; Reyer et al., 2017; Gopalakrishnan et al., 2020). Stand replacing wind damage is less common in eastern Canada. Partial damage can, however, be quite significant on some sites, although information is lacking for many regions (Bouchard et al., 2009; Waldron et al., 2013; Ruel, 2020). Indeed, acquiring field data on wind and discriminating its effects from those of confounding variables (e.g., temperature and water supply) is complex (Ennos, 1997; Gardiner et al., 2016), and consequently, incorporating wind into ecology studies is not widespread.

The force generated by wind on trees depend on complex interactions between wind flow, which varies with topography, stand and landscape structure, species composition, and the size, shape and properties of the crown, trunk, and root system (King, 1986; Fournier et al., 2015; Gardiner et al., 2016). This force or pressure exerted by the wind on a tree is known

as wind loading (Gardiner et al., 2016), and is transmitted into the trunk and root system and varies with wind speed and tree height and diameter (Fournier et al., 2015). The analysis of wind-tree interactions can be complex. Previous work have used experimental (e.g., tree pulling and wind tunnel experiments (Gardiner et al., 1997; Peltola et al., 2000; Achim et al., 2005; Gardiner et al., 2005)) and mechanistic modeling (e.g., GALEs and HWIND (Gardiner et al., 2000; Peltola et al., 2000)) approaches to understand how trees respond to wind. The mechanism by which trees adjust to the stress of wind forces is termed thigmomorphogenesis (Jaffe, 1973). It explains the tendency for vegetation in wind-prone areas to exhibit a smaller and more compact stature, characterized by slowed vertical growth and enhanced root and cambial growth, with fewer, and smaller leaves attached to more flexible petioles compared to trees in protected environments (Biddington, 1986; King, 1986; Mitchell, 1996; Niklas, 1996; Telewski & Pruyn, 1998; Meng et al., 2006; Mitchell, 2013; Moore et al., 2014; Fournier et al., 2015; Gardiner et al., 2016). So, to withstand wind pressures, trees can adjust their resource allocation patterns. Trees subjected to intensified wind-induced mechanical stress may also experience a significant reduction in root stability (Nielsen & Knudsen, 2004; Seidl & Blennow, 2012). In reaction to this, they often reallocate resources, favoring the development of their root systems at the expense of other compartment (Nielsen & Knudsen, 2004; Coutand et al., 2008; Reubens et al., 2009; Seidl & Blennow, 2012). Alterations in the distribution of resources—whether favoring aboveground or belowground compartments—may result in either an increase or a decrease in overall productivity (Seidl & Blennow, 2012). Wind is also recognized to influence leaf gas exchange and thus photosynthesis and growth (Fournier et al., 2015). Indeed, through different mechanisms at the gas exchange level, wind can significantly affect growth patterns. The wind in the canopy improves light distribution throughout the foliage and regulates temperature, which in turn, stimulates transpiration (Fournier et al., 2015). Wind can also have negative effects, such as increasing water stress, limiting photosynthesis by stomatal closure, and damaging foliage and/or branches through the abrasion of the crowns (Ennos, 1997; Fournier et al., 2015; Gardiner et al., 2016).

Furthermore, based on their structure, composition and species interactions, forests are affected differently by the wind (King, 1986; Brüchert & Gardiner, 2006; Papaik & Canham, 2006; Rich et al., 2007; Crabtree & Ellis, 2010; Díaz-Yáñez et al., 2017). It has become increasingly clear that tree functional diversity have beneficial effects on forest productivity (Liang et al., 2016; Niklaus et al., 2017; Zheng et al., 2021) and that the positive mixing effects result from complementarity interactions, which include niche differentiation (i.e., when two or more species occupy distinct spatial niches that enhance collective performance) and facilitation (i.e., when one species increases the growth or survival of another, either directly or indirectly) (Callaway, 1995; Loreau, 2000; Loreau & Hector, 2001). Those diversity-ecosystem function relationships can be understood through the study of the trait structure of communities to see how each organism contributes to the ecosystem as well as the attributes required to maintain ecosystem functioning (Reiss et al., 2009). This approach recognizes that some mixtures can be more complementary than others and can reveal the different ecological strategies involved in species assemblages (Lavorel et al., 2008; Kraft et al., 2015; Shipley et al., 2016; Dawson et al., 2021). In addition to communities' trait structure, spatial complementarity in tree crowns also proved to be a key element behind the positive effects of species mixing in forests (Pretzsch, 2014; Sapijanskas et al., 2014; Jucker et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2017; Cattaneo et al., 2020). There are two main mechanisms responsible for the increased efficiency of more diverse forests in using space: vertical stratification and crown plasticity (Ishii & Asano, 2010; Bayer et al., 2013; Dieler & Pretzsch, 2013; Pretzsch, 2014; Sapijanskas et al., 2014; Jucker et al., 2015). They both contribute, either when species with contrasting crown architectures and physiological adaptations to shade coexist (Ishii & Asano, 2010; Pretzsch, 2014; Jucker et al., 2015), or when two or more species adjust their crown shape and size in response to surrounding competition (Purves et al., 2007; Thorpe et al., 2010; Seidel et al., 2011; Dieler & Pretzsch, 2013). As a result, trees with different shapes and sizes are likely to create a more stratified canopy with greater horizontal and vertical structural complexity (Pretzsch et al., 2015; Pretzsch & Forrester, 2017). It was observed that broadleaf species tend to fill more space in the canopy stratum when present (Reich et al., 2007; Poorter et al., 2009; Ruiz-Jaen & Potvin,

2011). Indeed, trees in broadleaf dominated communities occupied more space, producing a homogeneous, optimally filled canopy (Dupont-Leduc et al., 2024). On the other hand, conifer dominated communities had upper canopies that were spatially more open, as well as more horizontally heterogeneous canopies caused, in part, by their crown morphology (Parker et al., 2004; Bolton et al., 2015; Véga et al., 2016; Rissanen et al., 2019; Dupont-Leduc et al., 2024). Because of their potential interaction, understanding the impact of wind on ecosystem functioning requires a consideration of the community's traits and canopy structure.

A forest's response to wind will therefore vary based on its species assemblage. Indeed, the wind acts at the top of the forest canopy through the shape of its surface (Fournier et al., 2015) and this area varies not only between species, but also between individuals of the same species. For instance, in more diversified forests, tree crowns can be wider and deeper, exposing them to greater wind load, especially in the upper canopy (Mason, 2002). Indeed, a proportion of their crown is free of neighbors, which exposes them to more wind. In response, the dominant trees in more diversified forests are smaller for a given diameter and with more root anchorage than in monospecific forests where contact between crowns reduce the wind load on individual trees (Mason, 2002). Forests with a higher diversity of tree species generally exhibit a broader array of tree shapes, leading to a more complex canopy structure. This diversity inherently offers an enhanced spectrum of stability against wind penetration (Díaz-Yáñez et al., 2017). With greater vertical stratification of the canopy, complementarity interactions in more functionally diverse stands can also reduce competition for resources and increase protection of one species by another, for example by reducing wind stress via baffling (Man & Lieffers, 1999; Stachowicz, 2001). On the other hand, wind in monospecific forests can cause crown abrasion resulting in the loss of branches and foliage, especially when trees are of similar size and there is strong competition for resources (Putz et al., 1984; Grier, 1988; Man & Lieffers, 1999). These forests can be less stable and more susceptible to windthrow, especially after forest management (e.g., pre-commercial or commercial thinning) (Kerr et al., 1992; Man & Lieffers, 1999). Consequently, wind is expected to affect ecosystem functioning and demographic processes,

namely, survivor growth, recruitment of new trees, and mortality. It is therefore interesting to study the effect of wind on forest productivity from not only the perspective of survivor growth, but also recruitment and mortality, as forest productivity is defined as the biomass remaining after subtracting the losses through tree mortality from the gain of survivor growth and tree recruitment (Pretzsch, 2009).

The main goal of this study was to determine whether the trait structure and canopy structure of tree communities interact with the wind to influence the different components of forest productivity (survivor growth, recruitment, mortality). To investigate this question, we proposed using wind loading and mean wind speed as proxy for the average wind force exerted on trees along with indices calculated with trait or group of traits as proxies for the trait structure of communities, as well as lidar-derived vegetation metrics as proxies for canopy structure. The wind–trait–canopy structure relationship was therefore investigated to explain biomass increments representing survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality between two plot measurements. Random-forest models were used to test two hypotheses. First, it is expected that (i) when exposed to more wind, functionally diverse communities, will show more growth, more recruitment, and less mortality than less functionally diverse ones. Then, given that a trade-off is expected between primary and secondary growth as a function of the wind to which a tree is subjected (Gardiner et al., 2016), we anticipate that (ii) when exposed to more wind, communities characterized by homogeneous canopies will display higher growth and recruitment, while experiencing lower tree mortality compared to those with more heterogeneous canopy structures.

3.4 MATERIALS AND METHOD

3.4.1 Study Area

This study covers an east-west gradient in the Boreal Shield ecozone (Government of Canada, 2018) (45.4°–52.5°N and 55.9°–79.5°W), from the western border of the Province of Quebec (QC) to the Atlantic coast of the Province of Newfoundland (NL) (Fig. 9). The

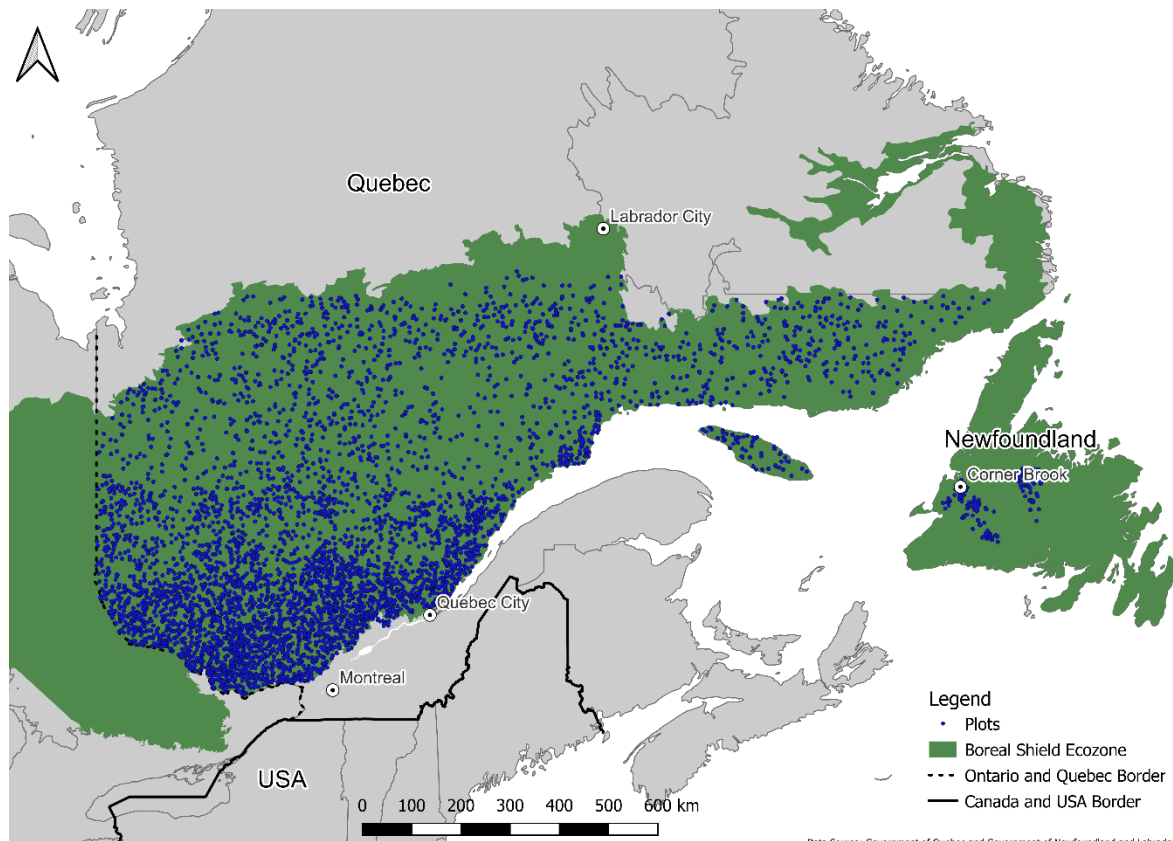


Figure 9. Studied permanent sample plots and their distribution across the Boreal Shield terrestrial ecozone.

Boreal Shield is the largest ecozone in Canada and is over 80% covered by forests (Ecological Stratification Working Group, 1996). The climate in this region is continental, with long winters and short summers, its coastal margins are, however, modified by maritime conditions (Ecological Stratification Working Group, 1996). The primary stand replacing disturbances are fire and harvest (Bergeron, 2000; Bergeron et al., 2004), with occasional insect epidemics, diseases, and wind and storm related damage (Frazier et al., 2015). Within our study area, mean annual temperature ranges between -1.1 and 4.0°C in QC and between 2.2 and 4.5°C in NL, with mean total annual precipitation of approximately 1000 mm in QC, and 1300 mm in NL (Table 4). The forests are mainly composed of conifer stands (49.6%) with a smaller proportion of mixed (25.4%) and deciduous stands (25.0%). The three most-dominant species are black spruce (*Picea mariana* [Mill.] Britton, Sterns &

Poggenb.), balsam fir (*Abies balsamea* [L.] Mill.), and white birch (*Betula papyrifera* Marsh.). Other important tree species are, sugar maple (*Acer saccharum* Marshall), yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis* Britt.), trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides* Michx.), jack pine (*Pinus banksiana* Lamb.), red maple (*Acer rubrum* L.), eastern larch (*Larix laricina* [Du Roi] K. Koch), white pine (*Pinus strobus* L.), and white spruce (*Picea glauca* [Moench] Voss).

Table 4. Description of the dataset. Mean–standard deviation is provided for continuous variables, followed by the range (10th–90th percentiles).

Variables	Québec	Newfoundland
Study area:		
- Number of plots	9,566	150
- Number of pairs of measurements	24,771	762
- Mean proportion of type of stand:		
• conifer	48.3%	92.9%
• broadleaf	25.7%	1.2%
• mixed	26.0%	5.9%
- Species richness (SR)	3.5–1.9 (1–6)	2.4–0.8 (1.0–3.0)
- Proportion of plots with low SR (nb species <4)	55.3%	90.1%
- Functional dispersion (FDis index, with all traits)	0.0906–0.0544 (0.0000–0.1575)	0.0438–0.0361 (0.0000–0.0941)
Forest productivity:		
- Survivor growth increment ($Mg\ ha^{-1}\ yr^{-1}$)	1.6–1.3 (0.1–3.4)	1.8–1.4 (0.2–3.4)
- Tree recruitment increment ($Mg\ ha^{-1}\ yr^{-1}$)	0.5–0.7 (0.0–1.4)	0.4–0.6 (0.0–1.2)
- Tree mortality loss ($Mg\ ha^{-1}\ yr^{-1}$)	0.4–0.9 (0.0–1.3)	0.0–0.3 (0.0–0.0)
Stand attributes:		
- Total biomass ($Mg\ ha^{-1}$)	81.0–58.3 (13.2–157.3)	79.2–57.2 (6.9–156.8)
- Dominant height (m)	17.0–4.5 (11.1–22.7)	12.6–3.1 (8.1–16.7)
- Quadratic mean diameter	17.8–5.4 (12.0–25.5)	15.2–3.6 (11.3–19.9)
- Variance of diameters	49.7–61.3 (4.3–127.2)	14.9–14.6 (2.6–30.7)
- Gini coefficient of diameters	0.2–0.1 (0.1–0.3)	0.1–0.0 (0.1–0.2)
- Three most-dominant species (mean proportion when dominant in the stand)	<i>Picea mariana</i> (61.8%) <i>Abies balsamea</i> (81.5%) <i>Betula papyrifera</i> (64.1%)	<i>Abies balsamea</i> (86.5%) <i>Picea mariana</i> (75.4%) <i>Betula papyrifera</i> (75.5%)
Environmental conditions:		
- Topographical exposure (TOPEX)	2.5–15.4 (-15.4–21.0)	4.6–16.9 (-14.3–24.4)
- Wind exposition index (WEI)	1.1–0.1 (0.9–1.2)	1.0–0.1 (0.9–1.2)
- Wind shelter index (WSI)	59.5–31.6 (14.0–90.0)	63.6–28.4 (18.1–90.0)
- Annual temperature (°C)	1.6–1.9 (-1.1–4.0)	3.5–0.9 (2.2–4.5)
- Total annual precipitations (mm)	998.7–133.9 (869.2–1147.1)	1275.7–127.9 (1126.3–1436.3)
- Wind speed ($m\ s^{-1}$)	4.3–1.0 (3.4–5.7)	7.2–0.7 (6.1–7.9)
- Wind load (N)	20.2–17.7 (6.2–38.7)	28.2–24.9 (7.9–54.9)

Trait structure:		
- Community weighted mean of leaf mass per area (CWM.LMA)	171.1–79.0 (71.9–288.6)	168.1–37.6 (140.8–222.1)
- Community weighted mean of seed frequency (CWM.SeFreq)	3.5–0.8 (2.7–4.4)	3.2–0.3 (3.0–3.7)
- Community weighted mean of drought tolerance (CWM.TolD)	2.0–0.5 (1.5–2.6)	1.3–0.3 (1.0–1.7)
- Functional dispersion of leaf nitrogen content trait (FDis.Nmass)	0.2–0.1 (0.0–0.4)	0.1–0.1 (0.0–0.3)
- Functional dispersion of leaf traits (FDis.Leaf)	37.0–29.3 (0.0–78.2)	25.8–23.5 (0.0–66.8)
- Functional dispersion of a mix of three traits (FDis.3)	0.4–0.3 (0.0–0.8)	0.2–0.2 (0.0–0.5)
- Functional dispersion of a mix of five traits (FDis.5)	34.0–26.3 (0.0–68.5)	11.8–13.7 (0.0–33.1)
Canopy structure:		
- Canopy closure (CClos) metric (ratio)	0.6–0.2 (0.4–0.8)	0.6–0.2 (0.3–0.8)
- Canopy density (CD) metric (ratio)	0.7–0.1 (0.6–0.8)	0.7–0.1 (0.7–0.8)
- Canopy height heterogeneity (CHH) metric (m)	199.8–72.4 (111.4–306.4)	176.3–61.2 (89.6–250.6)
- Canopy porosity (CPor) metric (ratio)	3.8–1.6 (1.9–6.1)	2.6–0.8 (1.6–3.6)
- Gap area (GAP) metric (m ²)	162.5–79.9 (56.4–273.8)	120.5–93.6 (11.2–257.0)
- Rumple index (RI) metric	7.3–2.5 (4.7–10.2)	6.0–1.6 (3.6–8.0)

3.4.2 Forest Inventory

Data from QC were selected among over than 12,500 randomly distributed circular sample plots (400 m²) from the PSP network of the Ministère des Ressources Naturelles et des Forêts of QC (MRNF) (Duchesne & Ouimet, 2008; Gouvernement du Québec, 2019). In each plot, trees with diameter at breast height (DBH; measured at 1.3 m above ground) larger than 9.0 cm are numbered, and their DBH and status (alive, dead, or harvested) are recorded at each survey. Recruits, living trees that reach the threshold of 9.1 cm DBH between two measurements, are numbered and their DBH recorded. Tree height is measured on a subsample of nine trees per plots (MRNF, 2022). For trees with missing height, it was predicted using species-specific models of height-diameter relationships (Auger, 2016). The PSPs are remeasured approximately every ten years, with some plots having up to six measurements in total.

Data from NL were also collected from 400 m² circular PSP established by the Canadian Forest Service of Natural Resources Canada from 1987, with plots remeasured every three to five years (up to eight measurements in total) (Government of Newfoundland

and Labrador, 2022). The inventory protocol is similar to that of QC PSPs. Tree species, DBH at 1.3 m, tree height, and status of all trees with DBH larger than 9.0 cm are recorded. The height of tree was measured using a vertex and models of height-diameter relationships were used to impute missing heights (Mehtätalo et al., 2015).

We retained 9,716 plots from both datasets after screening for trees of merchantable species (i.e., trees with a commercial value) with a DBH over 9 cm and having at least two consecutive measurements (Table 4). Representing a total of 25,533 pairs (24,771 QC, 762 NL) of plot measurements indicative of growth periods (i.e., a growth period consists of two consecutive measurements of a plot) to estimate changes in biomass at the plot level using the following procedure:

The total aboveground biomass of individual trees was predicted using previously published models of biomass (Lambert et al., 2005) using DBH and height as predictors.

Forest productivity was divided into survivor growth SG (growth of trees that survived between two consecutive plot measurements), recruitment R (trees that reach 9.1 cm DBH between two measurements), and mortality M (trees that have died between two measurements). Mortality does not consider the growth of dead trees (growth between the last plot measurement when the tree is alive and the moment of its death) as they are not measured. The trees that were harvested or thinned were recorded with a distinct code in the database and consequently were not included in the calculation of mortality. More precisely, these different components were calculated as follows for each pair of measurements:

$$SG_{ik} = \frac{\sum_{j \in sg} b_{ijk+1} - b_{ijk}}{t_{ik+1} - t_{ik}}, \quad \text{eq.1}$$

$$R_{ik} = \frac{\sum_{j \in r} b_{ijk+1}}{t_{ik+1} - t_{ik}}, \quad \text{eq.2}$$

$$M_{ik} = \frac{\sum_{j \in m} b_{ijk}}{t_{ik+1} - t_{ik}}, \quad \text{eq.3}$$

where sg , r and m are the sets of trees that survived, were recruited, and died, respectively, SG_{ik} is the survivor growth defined as the increase in biomass b for all the survivor trees in plot i , over the interval that goes from measurement $k-1$ to measurement k , tree recruitment R_{ik} is defined as the aboveground biomass b of the trees that were recruited between measurements, and tree mortality M_{ik} is defined as the aboveground biomass b of a tree that died between measurements $k-1$ and k . Recruitment was only tracked once the tree achieved merchantable tree size (i.e., $DBH > 9\text{cm}$).

3.4.3 Variables to Characterize Plot Structure

Our analysis of between-plot differences in stand attributes, trait structure, canopy structure, and environmental conditions relied on 26 field-measured features were used as explanatory variables (Table 4). The first set of six variables describe stand attributes computed at the initial measurement of each interval. Plot's total aboveground biomass (Mg ha^{-1} of dry biomass) was used to quantify tree competition. Plot ontogeny was estimated using dominant height (average height of the four thickest trees in the plot) and quadratic mean diameter (QMD). The variance (VD) and the Gini coefficient of diameters (GCD) were utilized as proxies for structure diversity. Stand composition was assessed with the dominant species.

The second set of seven explanatory variables were environmental descriptors of local biophysical conditions and climate. Topographical exposure (TOPEX) (Ruel, 2000; Ruel et al., 2002) was extracted from the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs (MRNF) of the Quebec government raster (MRNF, 2022). For plots outside this raster (plots in the North Shore region in QC and all plots in NL), the same elevation models (NASA Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (Farr et al., 2007)), and protocols employed by the MRNF (MRNF, 2019) to calculate the TOPEX were used. Wind exposition index (WEI) (Böhner & AntoniĆ, 2009; Pawlik & Harrison, 2022)—calculates an average wind effect, returns negative values for wind shadowed areas and positive values for areas exposed to wind; and wind shelter index (WSI) (Winstral et al., 2002; Plattner et al., 2004; Farokhzadeh et al., 2014)—an

indicator of snow accumulation/wind exposition on the lee side of topographic obstacles and returns negative values for surfaces that are completely exposed, were also calculated using SAGA (Conrad et al., 2015) tools for grid based digital terrain analysis in QGIS (QGIS Development Team, 2023). The mean total annual precipitations (mm) (hereafter ‘precipitation’) as well as the mean annual temperatures (°C) (hereafter ‘temperature’) of each interval were used as the climatic variables and were obtained using the BioSIM software v.10.2.4.20 (Régnière et al., 2014). The mean wind speed (m s^{-1}) at 30m aboveground level at a 5 km resolution was extracted from Environment and Climate Change Canada's Wind Atlas (E. and C. C. C. Government of Canada, 2003) for every plots. Then, to consider the force of the wind transmitted to the trees, the wind load was calculated at stand level based on inventory data. To do so, using the “*Roughness*” method (Quine et al., 2021), we calculated the wind speed (μ) over a forest canopy given by a logarithmic profile of the form:

$$\mu(z) = \frac{\mu_*}{k} \ln\left(\frac{z-d}{z_0}\right) \quad \text{eq.5}$$

where z is the height above the surface, μ_* is the friction velocity, k is von Karman’s constant (≈ 0.4), d is the zero-plane displacement, and z_0 is the aerodynamic roughness (Raupach, 1994). The shear stress on the surface (τ , drag/force per unit area, Nm^{-2}) can be calculated with ρ (air density, kgm^{-3}) and the friction velocity (Quine et al., 2021):

$$\tau = -\rho \cdot \mu_*^2 \quad \text{eq.6}$$

From those equations (Quine et al., 2021), the wind force (wind loading or force on an average tree in a plot/average wind loading in each plot) is calculated as:

$$Force = \rho \mu_*^2 D^2 \quad \text{eq.7}$$

$$\mu_* = \mu_{10+d} \cdot k / \ln(10/z_0) \quad \text{eq.8}$$

$$Force = \rho (\mu_{10+d} \cdot k \cdot D)^2 / (\ln(10/z_0))^2 \quad \text{eq.9}$$

If the average spacing between trees is D (m), then $\tau * D^2$ is the average force acting on each tree assuming trees are evenly spaced and all trees are the size of the mean tree (Quine et al., 2021). The aerodynamic roughness (z_0) (Raupach, 1994) was calculated using ForestGALES *fgr* R library (Hale et al., 2012, 2015; Locatelli et al., 2022). The ForestGALES model needs to be parameterized for species-specific crown width and length. Crown parameters were available from the same study region for four of the most abundant species (black spruce (Elie & Ruel, 2005), balsam fir (Meunier et al., 2002; Achim et al., 2005), jack pine (Elie & Ruel, 2005), and white spruce (Achim et al., 2005)), which together accounted for 55 % of all trees in our plots. For the species without field-measured crown parameters, crown width and length were estimated from published species-specific equations. First, crown width was estimated using the largest crown width (LCW, i.e., maximum crown size for trees that are not able to reach their biological maximum because of competition) equation available for 15 species from Russel and Weiskittel, 2011 (Russell & Weiskittel, 2011). For the remaining species with no available parameters (7-15 % of all trees), we assigned parameters from similar species (e.g., for *Populus balsamifera* L., we used *Populus tremuloides* L. parameters). For crown length, the crown ratio (CR) equation from Dixon et al. (2008, revised in 2022), available for all studied species, was used (Dixon et al., 2008).

The third set of seven variables were used to account for differences in the trait structure of tree communities at the initial measurement of each interval. A trait can be define as ‘*a measurable characteristic (morphological, phenological, physiological, behavioural, or cultural) of an individual organism that is measured at either the individual or other relevant level of organizational*’ (Dawson et al., 2021). There are several indices introduced to characterize the trait structure of communities, including the community-weighted mean (CWM)—defined as the average of the species-specific trait values weighted by the relative abundances of each species (Grime, 1998; Garnier et al., 2004; Ricotta & Moretti, 2011)—and various functional diversity (FD) indices (Bello et al., 2021; Dias et al., 2021). We selected traits and indices that were the best predictors for forest productivity models (Dupont-Leduc et al., 2024) and were calculated for each plot. First, the CWM was

calculated for three traits: leaf mass per area (CWM.LMA), drought tolerance (CWM.ToID), and seed frequency (CWM.SeFreq). Four functional dispersion indices (FD_{is})—defined as the weighted mean distance in multidimensional trait space of individual species to the weighted centroid of all species, where weights are the relative abundance of the species (Laliberté & Legendre, 2010)—were calculated based on different traits or group of traits: leaf traits (FD_{is}.Leaf, i.e. leaf size, leaf longevity, leaf mass per area and nitrogen content per leaf mass unit), nitrogen content per leaf mass unit trait (FD_{is}.Nmass), and a mix of three and five traits (FD_{is}.3, i.e. ectomycorrhiza, wood decay resistance, vegetative reproduction; and FD_{is}.5, i.e. average maximum height, seed frequency, drought tolerance, root depth, leaf longevity).

The final set of six explanatory variables were lidar metrics as proxies for canopy structure (Dupont-Leduc et al., 2024). The targeted metrics used as proxy for canopy structure describe different parts of the forest canopy, namely canopy cover (i.e., describe canopy density), canopy horizontal variability (i.e., describe variation in horizontal distribution of vegetation) and canopy vertical variability (i.e., describe vertical distribution of vegetation) (Bakx et al., 2019). Three metrics described the canopy cover: canopy porosity (CPor)—penetration depth of lidar signals within the forest canopy (Véga et al., 2016); canopy closure (CClos)—amount of empty canopy space (Fotis & Curtis, 2017); and canopy density (CD)—proportion of the forest floor covered by the vertical projection of the tree crowns (van Ewijk et al., 2011). Two metrics described the canopy horizontal variability: gap area (GAP)—canopy openness (Atkins et al., 2018); and canopy height heterogeneity (CHH)—fragmented canopy from heterogeneity in canopy height classes (i.e., dominant, co-dominant, oppressed and non-forest) (Alain et al., 2016). One final metric described the canopy vertical variability: the rumple index (RI)—canopy roughness (Kane et al., 2008; Ackers et al., 2015; Hastings et al., 2020). These metrics were predicted using models fitted from ALS data acquisition and synchronous (± 2 years) forest inventory measurements in the same study area as ours (Dupont-Leduc et al., 2024).

3.4.4 Statistical Analysis

The random forest regression is an effective nonparametric prediction method when the number of explanatory variables is high and when interactions and correlations among them are numerous and complex (Breiman, 2001; Svetnik et al., 2003; Strobl et al., 2008). Random-forest modelling was applied to link survivor growth, recruitment and mortality (response variables) with the 26 field-measured features (explanatory variables) using the recursive feature elimination (rfe) algorithm from the *caret* package (Kuhn, 2020). This method proved to be the most severe, retaining the fewest variables for a similar level of performance. The RF algorithm was applied to find the best subset of explanatory variables (from a model with a single explanatory variable to a model with all explanatory variables) that generates the lowest root-mean-square error (RMSE) with a tolerance of 3% (3% more error than the model with the lowest RMSE). The optimal model was recalibrated with the *randomForest* package (Liaw & Wiener, 2002) in order to obtain the contribution of each explanatory variable to the model's predictive performance using the percent increase in the mean squared error (Kuhn & Johnson, 2013). This method is the most robust and informative measure and is based on the average decrease in the precision of the predictions of the out-of-bag samples (data used by the algorithm to incorporate a validation step within the fitting procedure) when a given explanatory variable is excluded from the model (Attanasi et al., 2020).

3.5 RESULTS

3.5.1 Survivor Growth

Survivor growth (SG) was predicted on basis of 12 explanatory variables (Fig. 10). The final random forest model explained 78.39% of the variance. Ranked by importance, precipitation, dominant height, temperature, wind load, total biomass, community-weighted mean of the seed frequency trait (CWM.SeFreq), gap area, mean wind speed, canopy density, canopy height heterogeneity, canopy closure, and community-weighted mean of the drought

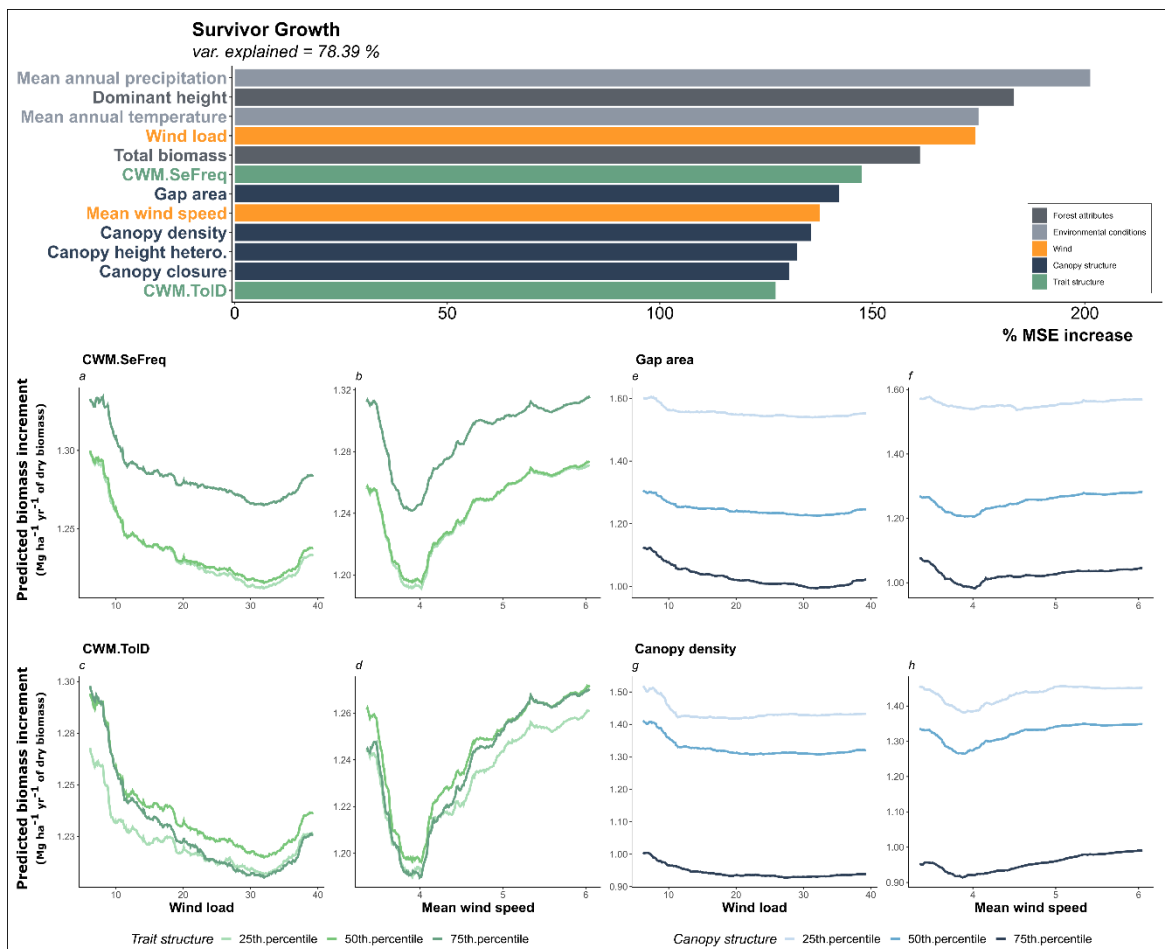


Figure 10. Random forest models for the survivor growth (SG) model (78.39% of var. explained). Important variables for the model are represented in the histogram. Then, SG predicted biomass increment (Mg ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ of dry biomass) is plotted as a function of wind load and mean wind speed, with variations (25th, 50th and 75th percentiles) in the two most important trait structure (a-d, i.e., the community-weighted mean of the frequency of good seed crops trait (CWM.SeFreq), and of the drought tolerance trait (CWM.ToID)) and canopy structure (e-h) variables, based on observed data range (limited to between the 10th and 90th percentiles). Predicted biomass increment of SG as a function of wind load and mean wind speed with variations in the third and fourth most important canopy structure variables can be found in the *SI Appendix* (see Fig. S2).

tolerance trait (CWM.ToID) were the most important variables, increasing respectively 201%, 183%, 175%, 174%, 161%, 148%, 142%, 138%, 136%, 132%, 130% and 127% of the mean square error (MSE) if excluded from the model (Fig. 10).

When the two most important trait structure variables varied (i.e., CWM.SeFreq and CWM.ToID), SG predicted biomass increments was always superior at low wind load and at both low and high mean wind speed (Fig. 10 A-D). Also, predicted SG had an approximately inversely proportional relationship with wind load, with a minimum value at wind load of about 30 N, as well as a U-shaped relationship with mean wind speed, with a minimum value at mean wind speed at about 4 m s⁻¹ (Fig. 10 A-D). More precisely, SG was the highest at low wind load and high mean wind speed and for the communities with medium to high values of CWM.ToID (50th-75th percentiles). SG was also higher for the communities with high values of CWM.SeFreq (75th percentile). Furthermore, even if the differences between percentiles are small, CWM.ToID and wind load appeared to interact, as communities with high CWM.ToID values showed the highest SG when wind load was low, but the lowest growth when wind load was high (Fig. 10 C). Then, regarding the two most important canopy structure variables (i.e., gap area and canopy density), SG had a monotonic relationship with wind load and mean wind speed and a minimum value at mean wind speed of about 4 m s⁻¹ for the latter (Fig. 10 E-H). SG was always greater for the communities with low values of gap area and canopy density (25th percentile).

3.5.2 Recruitment

Total biomass, Gini coefficient of diameters (GCD), wind load, quadratic mean diameter (QMD), precipitation, canopy closure, functional dispersion calculated based on the nitrogen content per leaf mass unit trait (FD_{is}.Nmass), functional dispersion calculated based on leaf traits (FD_{is}.Leaf, i.e. leaf size, leaf longevity, leaf mass per area and nitrogen content per leaf mass unit), CWM.ToID, functional dispersion calculated based on a mix of five traits (FD_{is}.5, i.e. average maximum height, seed frequency, drought tolerance, root depth, leaf longevity), gap area, mean wind speed and temperature, were used to predict recruitment (R) and the random forest model explained 57.33% of variance (Fig. 11). In the absence of these variables, the MSE would increase by respectively 164%, 158%, 130%, 126%, 112%, 111%, 100%, 95%, 92%, 89%, 86%, 81% and 80% (Fig. 11).

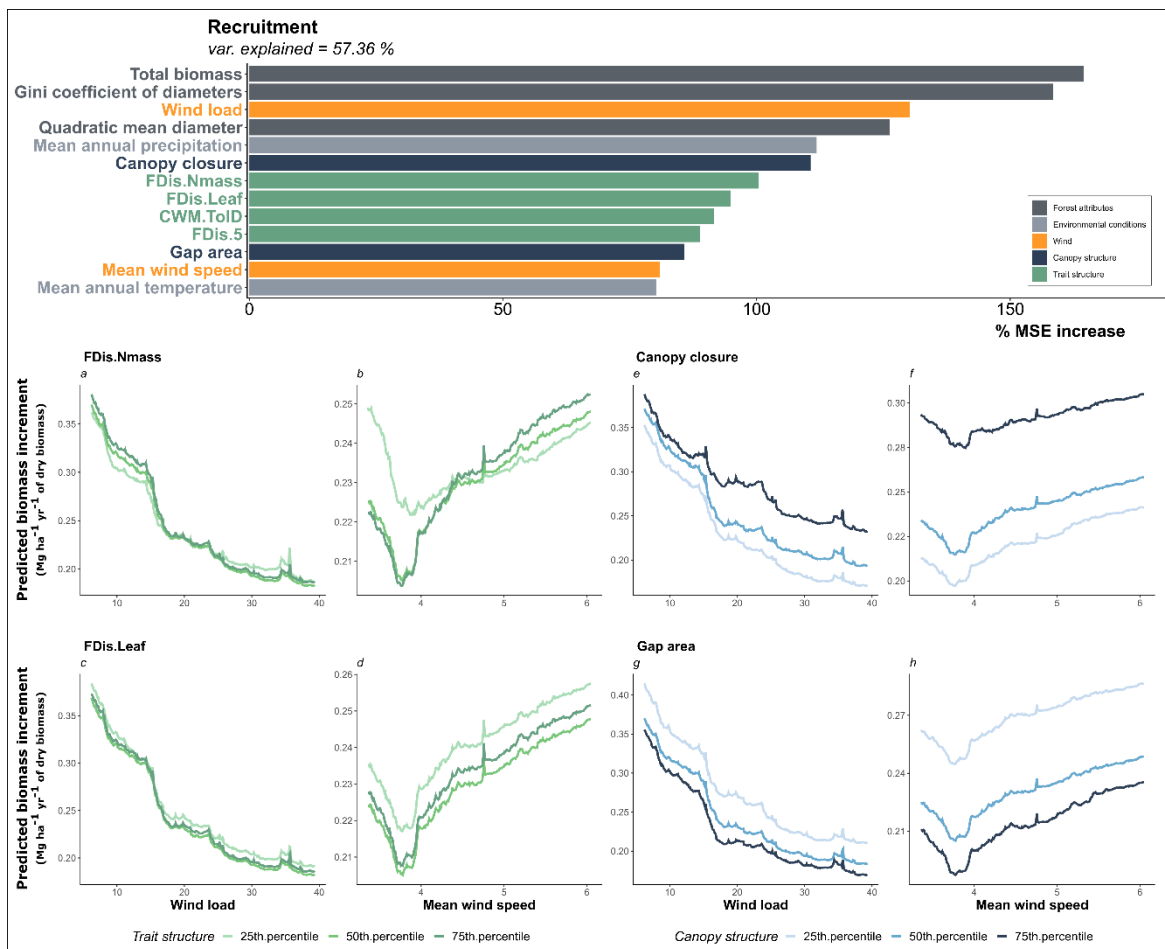


Figure 11. Random forest models for the recruitment (R) model (57.36% of var. explained). Important variables for the model are represented in the histogram. Then, R predicted biomass increment ($\text{Mg ha}^{-1} \text{yr}^{-1}$ of dry biomass) is plotted as a function of wind load and mean wind speed, with variations (25th, 50th and 75th percentiles) in the two most important trait structure (a-d, i.e., the functional dispersion index based only on the leaf nitrogen content trait (FDis.Nmass) and the functional dispersion index based on leaf traits (FDis.Leaf; i.e., leaf size, leaf longevity, leaf mass per area, and nitrogen content per leaf mass unit)) and canopy structure (e-h) variables, based on observed data range (limited to between the 10th and 90th percentiles). Predicted biomass increment of R as a function of wind load and mean wind speed with variations in the third and fourth most important trait structure variables can be found in the *SI Appendix* (see Fig. S3).

Recruitment predicted biomass increments was always superior at low wind load and high mean wind speed when the two most important trait structure and canopy structure variables varied (Fig. 11 A-H). For the trait structure variables, R had an approximately

inversely proportional relationship with wind load, as well as a U-shaped relationship with mean wind speed, with a negative optimum value at mean wind speed of about 4 m s^{-1} (Fig. 11 A-D). R predicted biomass increment according to wind load remained similar between the 25th, 50th and 75th percentile of the trait structure (Fig. 11 A, C), but differ when against mean wind speed (Fig. 11 B, D). Indeed, there was an interaction between $\text{FD}_{\text{is.Nmass}}$ and mean wind speed, as communities with low $\text{FD}_{\text{is.Nmass}}$ values showed higher biomass increments when mean wind speed was low, and the lowest biomass increments when mean wind speed was high, while communities with high $\text{FD}_{\text{is.Nmass}}$ exhibited the opposite pattern (Fig. 11 B). Also, R was always superior for the communities with low values of $\text{FD}_{\text{is.Leaf}}$ (Fig. 11 D). For the canopy structure variables, R had an approximately inversely proportional relationship with wind load, as well as a proportional relationship with mean wind speed, with a negative optimum value at mean wind speed of about 4 m s^{-1} (Fig. 11 E-H). R was the highest for the communities with higher values of canopy closure (75th percentile) and for the communities with lower values of gap area (25th percentile).

3.5.3 Mortality

Finally, nine explanatory variables were employed to predict mortality (M) (Fig. 12). Based on the random forest model, 15.14% of variance was explained with total biomass, precipitation, community-weighted mean of the leaf mass per area trait (CWM.LMA), $\text{FD}_{\text{is.5}}$, CWM.ToID, wind load, functional dispersion calculated based on a mix of three traits ($\text{FD}_{\text{is.3}}$, i.e. ectomycorrhiza, wood decay resistance, vegetative reproduction), canopy height heterogeneity and GCD as the most important variables. If removed from the model, the MSE would increase by 158%, 118%, 109%, 108%, 107%, 98%, 88%, 76% and 68%, respectively (Fig. 12).

The predicted changes in biomass linked to M was always superior at high wind loads (Fig. 12 A-C), with an exception for high canopy height heterogeneity communities (75th percentile, Fig. 12 C). More precisely, when CWM.LMA, $\text{FD}_{\text{is.5}}$ and canopy height

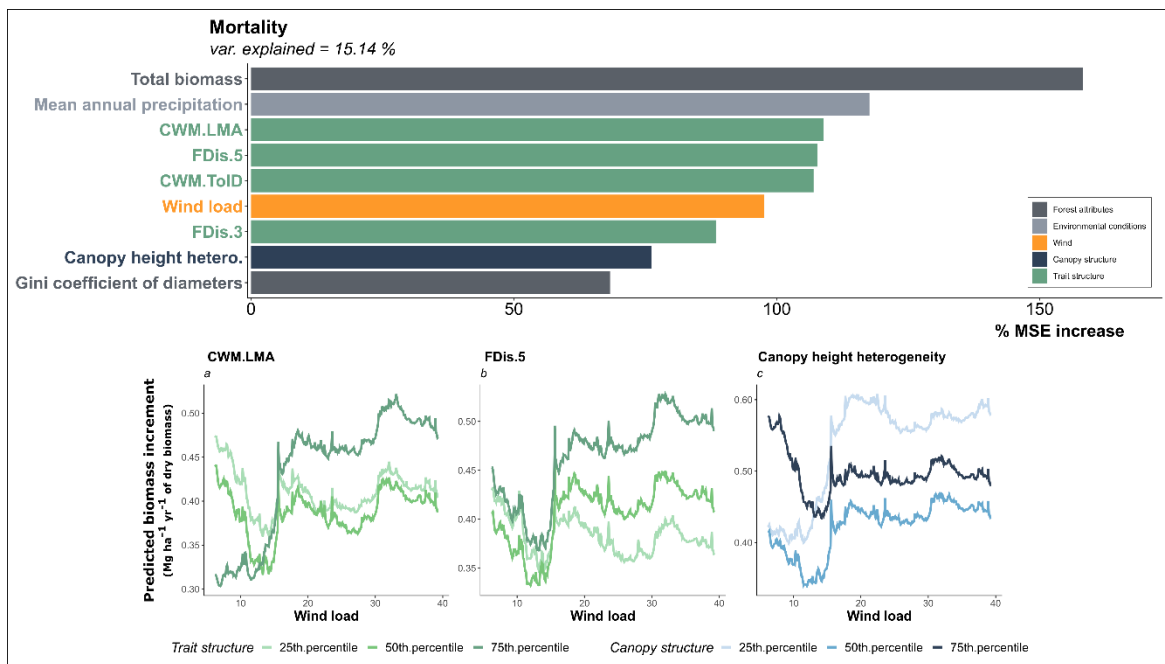


Figure 12. Random forest models for the mortality (M) model (15.14% of var. explained).

Important variables for the model are represented in the histogram. Then, M predicted biomass increment (Mg ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ of dry biomass) is plotted as a function of wind load, with variations (25th, 50th and 75th percentiles) in the two most important trait structure (a-b, i.e., the community-weighted mean of leaf mass per area trait (CWM.LMA) and the functional dispersion index based on five traits (FDis.5, i.e., average maximum height, frequency of a good crop year, drought tolerance, root depth, and leaf longevity)) and the only important canopy structure (c) variables, based on observed data range (limited to between the 10th and 90th percentiles). Predicted biomass increment of M as a function of wind load with variations in the third and fourth most important trait structure variables can be found in the *SI Appendix* (see Fig. S4).

heterogeneity varied, M had an approximately positive asymptotic relationship with wind load, with a minimum value at wind load of about 15 N (Fig. 12 A-C). When wind load values were low, M was the highest for the 25th percentile communities of CWM.LMA then, CWM.LMA curves converged at wind load of about 15 N. As wind load increased, M was greater for the communities with high values of CWM.LMA (75th percentile; Fig. 12 A). The opposite pattern occurred for the canopy structure variable. Indeed, at low wind load values M was the highest for the 75th percentile communities (Fig. 12 C) then, the curves converged at wind load of about 15 N and as wind load increased, M was greater for the communities

with low values of canopy height heterogeneity (25th percentile). Finally, M was the highest at high wind load for the communities with high values of $FD_{is.5}$ (75th percentile).

3.6 DISCUSSION

The influence of wind on ecosystem functioning is often overlooked in research pertaining to forest productivity. Consequently, the interactions between wind, community trait and canopy structure has not been thoroughly examined. The contribution of this study is to highlight the strong influence of wind on tree community's productivity when considering their trait and canopy structure. As we examined forest productivity from the perspective of not only survivor growth, but also recruitment and mortality, our results reveal the full extent to which wind, community's trait and canopy structures affects the forest dynamics. This meets our objective by differentiating between the effects of wind, trait, and canopy structure on survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality.

3.6.1 Wind—Forest Productivity

The most interesting aspect of our findings was the impact of wind on forest productivity. To achieve our main objective and address our hypotheses, we used wind loading and mean wind speed as proxies for the average wind force exerted on trees. These two explanatory variables were indeed key predictors of survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality. It is therefore possible to use these two variables as indicators of the short- and long-term effects of wind. Indeed, as wind influences leaf gas exchange and therefore photosynthesis (Fournier et al., 2015; Gardiner et al., 2016), mean wind speed can provide insights into the immediate effects of the wind. Wind load, on the other hand, can tell us more about the long-term effects of wind, as the effect of resource allocation to the different tree compartments can be observed over much longer periods of time (Gardiner et al., 2016).

Overall, survivor growth and tree recruitment were found to decrease as wind load increased. In the long term, tree resource allocation patterns can shift towards certain compartments when subjected to greater wind force. Our results clearly show a reduction in

biomass, which leads us to assume that trees are making trade-offs in their growth patterns such as enhancing root growth when exposed to more wind (King, 1986; Meng et al., 2006; Moore et al., 2014; Fournier et al., 2015). Wind has been found to have both positive and negative effects on the residual tree community when it comes to growth and productivity (Seidl & Blennow, 2012). Indeed, it has been reported that wind can increase growth and productivity through increased resource availability resulting from the release of a wind-killed neighbor (Merrens & Peart, 1992; Everham & Brokaw, 1996; Zielonka & Malcher, 2009), while wind-induced mechanical stimulation as well as mechanical damage to branches, roots and xylem tissues, altered significantly resources allocation in favor of belowground compartments, thus reducing aboveground growth and productivity (Ueda & Shibata, 2004; Coutand et al., 2008; Reubens et al., 2009; Hadley & Knapp, 2011). Our results are consistent with these findings, since as the wind load increased in the studied communities, significant decrease in survivor growth and in tree recruitment were observed. In addition, the results of Seidl and Blennow (2012) further support this, as they reported a pervasive and significant growth reduction in Norway spruce forests at the landscape scale after a windstorm. Furthermore, we observed an overall increase in predicted tree mortality because of increased wind loads. Consequently, the combined trends of the three models would translate into a net forest productivity (defined as the biomass remaining after subtracting the losses through tree mortality from the gain of survivor growth and tree recruitment (Pretzsch, 2009)) that decreases as wind load increases.

Influence exerted by mean wind speed on the components of forest productivity was weaker in comparison to that of wind load, particularly for tree recruitment and mortality models (mean wind speed is not an important variable in the latter). Nevertheless, a clear threshold was observed (around 4 m s^{-1}) below or above which wind effect seems beneficial for survivor growth and tree recruitment. Our findings may reflect the positive and negative effects of wind in the short term. Indeed, through different mechanisms at the gas exchange level, wind can significantly affect growth and productivity patterns. At low mean wind speeds, our results showed higher predicted biomass increment of both survivor growth and recruitment, displaying some positive impact (i.e., improved light distribution, temperature

regulation, increased transpiration (Fournier et al., 2015)). However, at 4 m s^{-1} , survivor growth and recruitment dropped to their lowest levels, revealing the negative impact (i.e., increased water stress, stomatal closure, damages (Fournier et al., 2015)) of wind at this speed. After this decline, an increase in growth and recruitment is observed as wind speed increases. It can be assumed that the trees subjected to the highest wind speeds have also been exposed to higher wind loads throughout their life, allowing them to adapt to these conditions (i.e., smaller, more compact, reduced number of smaller leaves, etc. (Biddington, 1986; Mitchell, 1996; Niklas, 1996; Telewski & Pruyn, 1998; Gardiner et al., 2016)) and to benefit from the positive effects at the level of gas exchange.

3.6.2 Wind—Trait Structure

By examining patterns of biomass increment in relation to the trait, group of traits or functional diversity indices, we found that seven variables related to the community's trait structure were significant to predict survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality. To meet our objective, we then investigated the interaction between biomass accumulation, wind, and the trait structure of tree communities.

Looking at the two most important trait structure variables by model, higher survivor growth was first linked to communities with higher values of the seed frequency trait (CWM.SeFreq), which is an indicator of resource allocation for the plant (Greene & Johnson, 2004; Lambers et al., 2008). The higher the value of this trait, the longer the period between two good mast years, the lower the cost associated with reproduction, leaving more resources available for survivor growth (and therefore forest productivity) during that time (Tumajer & Lehejček, 2019; Vergotti et al., 2019). Communities with longer period between two mast years were found to be less susceptible to wind, with higher survivor growth than communities with more frequent mast years. Woody plants decreased their seed production in response to increased wind loading (Gardiner et al., 2016). However, due to a lack of studies on the effect of wind on tree species masting behavior, it remains ambiguous whether wind influences seed frequency in a similar way as it does seed production. High survivor

growth was also linked to communities with higher values of the drought tolerance trait (CWM.TolD), which is related to survival strategies (Niinemets & Valladares, 2006; Zhu et al., 2018). Tree susceptibility to wind was however more subtle between drought-tolerant and -intolerant communities. Higher wind speeds were found to increase water loss from trees, and hence increase water uptake by the roots (Ashwood et al., 2015). Thus, this could lead to more resource allocation to belowground compartments. This seem to be the case of the drought-tolerant communities, as they had the highest survivor growth at low wind loads, but the lowest survivor growth at high wind loads. However, the opposite trend was observed with wind speed, possibly demonstrating the abovementioned short-term benefits at the gas exchange level for survivor growth. Also, drought can weaken trees and they can become more prone to damages under wind-loading (Csilléry et al., 2017). This was further supported by the results of the mortality model, as drought-intolerant communities experienced highest mortality under more wind loads (see *SI Appendix* Fig. S4).

Tree recruitment was linked to leaf traits, and thus, to resource acquisition. Indeed, of the four important explanatory variables related to the structure of traits of communities, two were calculated from leaf traits (i.e., $FD_{is.Nmass}$ and $FD_{is.leaf}$). However, the difference in tree recruitment between communities when the value of these two variables varied was very low. Tree recruitment was the highest for communities with low functional dispersion of the leaf traits (low $FD_{is.leaf}$). This is contrary to what we expected from our first hypothesis. Furthermore, an interaction was observed between mean wind speed and the functional dispersion of the nitrogen content per leaf mass unit trait ($FD_{is.Nmass}$). Communities with low $FD_{is.Nmass}$ had the highest recruitment at low mean wind speeds, but the lowest recruitment at high speeds. Higher functional dispersion of this trait means higher complementarity between species and could explain the highest predicted recruitment of high- $FD_{is.Nmass}$ communities under more wind load, thus partially corroborating our first hypothesis. However, low- $FD_{is.Nmass}$ communities showed better adaptation to low wind speeds with more tree recruitment.

Finally, tree mortality had one trait associated with resource acquisition (leaf mass per area, CWM.LMA) and one index that captures five functional dimensions (i.e., tree stature, dispersal/germination/seedling development, stress tolerance/environment, underground, and leaf, $FD_{is,5}$) as its main feature. Communities with high functional dispersion had higher biomass losses than communities with low functional dispersion, meaning that higher functional diversity does not necessarily enhance each forest productivity components even if many other studies observed an overall gain in forest productivity (Paquette & Messier, 2011; Zhang et al., 2012; Liang et al., 2016; Zheng et al., 2021). Like many studies (Allen et al., 2010; Das et al., 2016; Xie et al., 2022), our models were unable to fully explain the variability in tree mortality, as mortality was highly stochastic and the least well explained component. As a result, we should interpret our findings regarding mortality cautiously. However, there seems to be an interaction between wind load and CWM.LMA, as high-CWM.LMA communities showed increasing mortality with increasing wind load and low to medium-CWM.LMA communities showed opposite patterns. Indeed, the latter seems less susceptible to winds, with lower tree mortality at high wind loads. Communities with high LMA are typically composed of species that use resources conservatively and have persistent leaves (i.e., conifer stands, either pure or mixed with a high proportion of conifer species), whereas in communities with low LMA, species rely on acquisitive resource use and fast growth strategies (i.e., broadleaf stands, either pure or mixed but with a high proportion of broadleaf species) (Poorter et al., 2009; Reich, 2014; Díaz et al., 2016). Tree species differ in their anatomical properties providing them with different levels of wind resistance (Díaz-Yáñez et al., 2017). For example, birches were found to be more flexible and have a greater resistance to bending stresses due to their morphology (Jalkanen & Konopka, 1998; Díaz-Yáñez et al., 2017). Furthermore, being leafless in winter and lower crown area for snow attachment and wind loading, broadleaved species were also found to be less susceptible to snow and wind damage (Peltola et al., 1997; Päätaalo et al., 1999; Díaz-Yáñez et al., 2017). It is thus typical for damage to increase with the presence of conifers in the stand (Peltola et al., 1997; Päätaalo et al., 1999; Mitchell, 2013), which is supported by our results showing higher predicted mortality in high LMA communities under more wind loading. Finally, low

FD_{is.5} communities seems less susceptible to winds, with lower tree mortality at high wind loads. This further corroborates the contrasting patterns found for tree recruitment according to wind, depending on the functional dispersion of the communities. According to the studied trait or group of traits, complementarity interactions in the more functionally diverse communities can either increase (FD_{is.Nmass}) or decrease (FD_{is.Leaf} and FD_{is.5}) biomass gains when exposed to more wind. Therefore, we cannot corroborate our first hypothesis that communities with higher functional diversity should have a better ability to respond to wind. Yet this contributes to the idea that in some cases, wind may have a greater effect than community trait structure on forest productivity.

3.6.3 Wind—Canopy Structure

Our results clearly show differences in biomass accumulation between homogeneous and heterogeneous canopies. Homogeneous canopies (closed canopies with low canopy density and low horizontal variability) had the highest survivor growth and tree recruitment. Even when stand density was reduced, forest productivity in stands with a homogeneous, fully-filled canopies was found to remain relatively constant, as crowns in the lower layers compensated for growth losses in the upper layers (Pretzsch & Schütze, 2005; Pretzsch, 2014). The tree density and more optimal spatial arrangement of tree crowns in a homogeneous canopy can thus lead to increased forest productivity driven by increased survivor growth and tree recruitment. However, the relationship between survivor growth and wind is relatively constant despite varying community gap area and canopy density values, meaning low interactions between wind and canopy structure. Given that no fluctuation in biomass was observed as wind increased our second hypothesis was only partially corroborated, as the wind seems to have little effect on this relationship.

The relationship between tree recruitment and wind also showed low interactions between wind and canopy structure. However, communities with homogeneous canopies (high canopy closure) were observed to have more tree recruitment when subjected to higher wind speed than communities with heterogeneous canopies. This last result partially

corroborates our second hypothesis as tree recruitment was indeed observed to be higher in communities with fuller, more homogeneous canopies that offers more protection to smaller trees. Research indicates that enhanced level of canopy closure can promote the emergence of beneficial complementarity effects, and thereby define the long-term success of the most diverse communities (Urgoiti et al., 2022). Through facilitation, one species can improve the environmental conditions (e.g. wind protection) for another species, thereby increasing the stability of the stand in the face of wind (Callaway, 1995; Man & Lieffers, 1999; Stachowicz, 2001; Justes et al., 2014). Facilitation has been shown to play a dominant role in community structuring, through the establishment of species under the cover of other species (Clair et al., 2013; Caldeira et al., 2014). Also, against wind penetration, stands with a more complex inner structure (optimally filled homogeneous canopy) were found to provide a wider range of stability (Díaz-Yáñez et al., 2017) and could increase protection for tree recruitment. However, a closed canopy implies more competition for light. Trees can significantly alter their crown allometry to increase light interception and stand productivity (Pretzsch, 2014, 2017). A study showed that increasing the structural complexity of the canopy first reduced light interception. Then, subsequently, light interception was increased through canopy space optimization and crown complementarity (Rissanen et al., 2019). It was also observed that broadleaf species tend to fill more space in the canopy stratum when present (Reich et al., 2007; Poorter et al., 2009; Ruiz-Jaen & Potvin, 2011) and that broadleaf dominated communities were found to have a closed canopy cover characterized by porous and low-density crowns (Dupont-Leduc et al., 2024). The greater leaf clumping that characterizes these communities allows more light to pass through the upper canopy and increases photosynthesis in the understory (Pretzsch & Schütze, 2016; Fotis & Curtis, 2017) than conifer dominated canopies with denser and sharp crowns (Parker et al., 2004; Bolton et al., 2015; Véga et al., 2016; Rissanen et al., 2019; Dupont-Leduc et al., 2024). The presence of broadleaved species with porous crowns in the studied communities may explain our results of increased tree recruitment in communities with homogeneous canopies. Moreover, it has been observed that tree recruitment is positively correlated with mean wind speed. This

implies that wind may facilitate more uniform light distribution within the canopy (Fournier et al., 2015), thereby shedding light on the mechanisms behind the surge in tree recruitment.

Finally, as mentioned, mortality is the least well explained component by our models and must be interpreted with caution. Predicting tree mortality is challenging and the effects of canopy structure on ecosystem functioning can be hidden by differences in resource availability and can influence species complementarity (Healy et al., 2008). Tree mortality globally increased with wind load and was even more noticeable for communities with homogeneous canopies (low horizontal variability). However, for communities with heterogeneous canopies (high horizontal variability), mortality was higher when wind load was lower. In those communities, trees may be more adapted to endure increased wind pressures, enabling them to sustain significant wind load levels. Therefore, for this model, our second hypothesis is refuted as less tree mortality was expected to be observed as wind load increased in the communities with homogeneous canopies.

3.6.4 Limits and perspectives

A few things should be considered when studying the effects of the wind–trait–canopy structure relationships on forest productivity. First, regarding how to quantify wind loads, we used published species-specific equations of North American species to estimate crown parameters. Our models would benefit from obtaining more accurate crown parameters for the studied species, mirroring the approach taken in Eastern Canadian boreal forest where such data was gathered for four species (Meunier et al., 2002; Achim et al., 2005; Elie & Ruel, 2005). As the environment and species composition within a forest play a crucial role in defining tree crown morphology (Purves et al., 2007; Thorpe et al., 2010; Seidel et al., 2011; Dieler & Pretzsch, 2013; Pretzsch, 2014), there is a heightened necessity to gather refined data specific to the species under examination that reflect local conditions. In addition, the Environment and Climate Change Canada's Wind Atlas (E. and C. C. C. Government of Canada, 2003) mean wind speed data have a very low resolution (i.e., 5 km resolution). By monitoring wind using anemometers (Bonnesoeur et al., 2016; Hicks et al.,

2016; Duperat et al., 2021) or other sensors (Xing et al., 2019), the data would be much more accurate. This, however, would be very complex to implement over a broad study area.

Moreover, working at large scale is very limiting in terms of data availability, especially on traits which are difficult to find in the literature and very laborious to quantify when working on several species. Some trait classes are underrepresented, for example, frost-related or belowground traits that are difficult to collect. As a result of this lack of data, we worked with trait averages across Canada, which fail to account for intraspecific variability and to assess changes in trait values along gradients. Consequently, species-specific trends may be hidden behind these averaged traits. Our results should therefore be interpreted with caution, as they are representative of the mean and trait value measurements could be biased in favor of populated and accessible areas.

It is also worth mentioning that we used models relying on variables acquired through traditional forest inventories to predict lidar-derived vegetation metrics as proxies for canopy structure. This innovative method enables the quantification and analysis of forest canopy structure by utilizing historical inventories. However, the accuracy of the data would be significantly enhanced if the canopy structure were measured directly with lidar at each interval. This would provide a more accurate observation of the impact of canopy structure on biomass accumulation patterns, particularly in relation to wind forces. Remote sensing is evolving rapidly, meaning that new metrics could be developed that are more relevant to our study and to the detection of wind effects. Thus, more refined metrics could perhaps be selected to better capture the different structures of the canopy. For example, voxel-based lidar metrics have proven to be excellent descriptors of complex forests (Blackburn et al., 2021; Whelan et al., 2023).

We were also limited by the forest inventory data for the choice of explanatory variables (i.e., forest attributes and environment). Among other things, we did not have enough information on past disturbances, which could have had an impact on forest productivity in these forests. Our study also relies solely on the examination of merchantable trees, leaving a portion of the total biomass unexplored. The biomass of saplings should

however be low, as a study conducted in softwood forests found that saplings accounted for a mere 5% of the total biomass in locations with a stand volume of 100 m³/ha (Boudewyn et al., 2007), which is the volume of most of the studied stands. Finally, the findings hold relevance for the studied forests, it should be borne in mind that they may not hold the same weight if applied to more diverse forest ecosystems. Wind, trait, and canopy structures might be different if the study extended into more diverse forests.

3.7 CONCLUSIONS

Trait structure and spatial complementarity of tree crowns are key factors in the beneficial effects of biodiversity on forest productivity. However, wind effects on ecosystem functioning are rarely considered in studies on forest productivity. Therefore, analyzing the interactions among wind, trait, and canopy structure is essential to understand their impact on forest productivity. To provide insight into how wind affects forests in eastern Canada, we analyzed the wind–trait–canopy structure relationships to better understand their effect on ecosystem functioning and demographic processes, namely, survivor growth, recruitment of new trees, and mortality. Our results showed that wind loading and mean wind speed as proxies for the average wind force exerted on trees were key predictors of survivor growth, recruitment, and mortality. The study revealed a discernible pattern: as the intensity of wind load increased, there was a notable reduction in survivor growth and tree recruitment, coupled with a rise in tree mortality. Based on the combined trends of the three models, it was demonstrated that in the long term as wind load increases, a shift in resource allocation patterns is likely to reduce net forest productivity. The impact of mean wind speed on forest productivity components was found to be less significant when contrasted with the effects induced by wind load. Nonetheless, its analysis has uncovered potential short-term effects of wind at the gas exchange level.

Furthermore, our research builds upon previous examinations of the interactions between trees and wind, providing fresh perspectives on the ways in which the trait structure of tree communities and the canopy structure engage with wind dynamics to affect the

different components of forest productivity. The study yielded evidence of relationships between community trait structure and wind. Our findings suggest that the patterns of biomass accumulation in drought-tolerant communities are altered by the intensity of wind load, with greater investment to belowground compartments when exposed to more wind. It was also determined that a greater species complementarity, in terms of the nitrogen content per leaf mass unit (Nmass) trait, contributes to improved recruitment when subjected to increased mean wind speeds. Our findings also corroborate the common observation that coniferous species within a forest stand tend to exacerbate the extent of wind damage. This was reflected by the higher tree mortality predicted for communities with high leaf mass per area (LMA) values when subjected to increased wind load. Finally, although the interactions between canopy structure and wind was low, we found clear differences in biomass accumulation patterns between communities with homogeneous and heterogeneous canopies. These findings provide further evidence that communities with homogeneous canopies can maximize the use of aboveground space and thus increase forest productivity through higher survivor growth and recruitment.

Overall, our results suggest that wind in eastern Canadian forests have a strong impact on each component of forest productivity, encouraging its incorporation into future work in other regions and at a larger geographic scale. Such studies would be extremely useful in determining the effect of wind on tree communities, and in providing guidelines for sustainable management strategies.

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3.10 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION APPENDIX

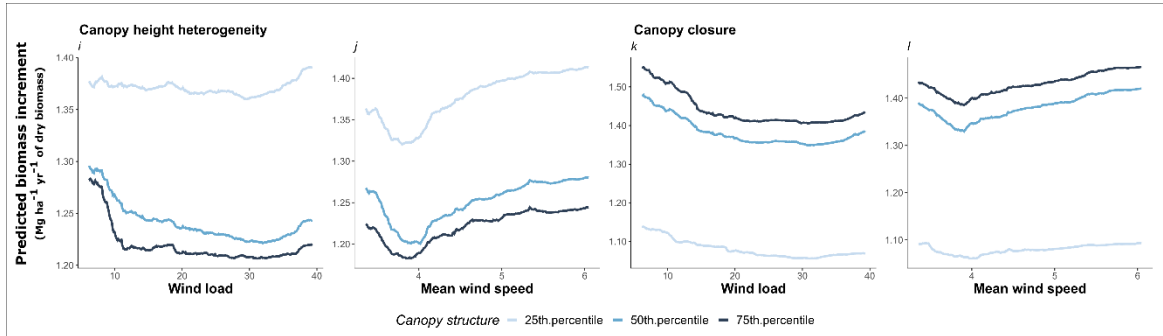


Figure S2. Survivor growth (SG) predicted biomass increment ($\text{Mg ha}^{-1} \text{yr}^{-1}$ of dry biomass) is plotted as a function of wind load and mean wind speed, with variations (25th-75th percentiles) in the third and fourth most important canopy structure variables (*I-L*), based on observed data range (limited to between the 10th and 90th percentiles).

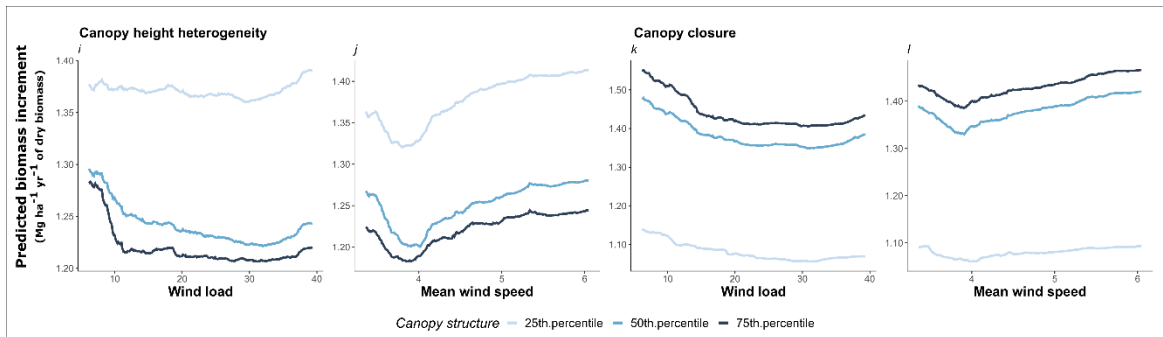


Figure S3. Recruitment (R) predicted biomass increment ($\text{Mg ha}^{-1} \text{yr}^{-1}$ of dry biomass) is plotted as a function of wind load and mean wind speed, with variations (25th-75th percentiles) in the third and fourth most important trait structure variables (*I-L*, i.e., the community-weighted mean of the drought tolerance trait (CWM.TolD) and the functional dispersion index based on five traits (FDis.5, i.e., average maximum height, frequency of a good crop year, drought tolerance, root depth, and leaf longevity)), based on observed data range (limited to between the 10th and 90th percentiles).

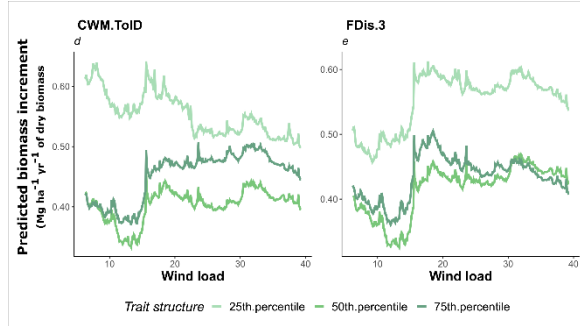


Figure S4. Mortality (M) predicted biomass increment ($\text{Mg ha}^{-1} \text{ yr}^{-1}$ of dry biomass) is plotted as a function of wind load, with variations (25th-75th percentiles) in the third and fourth most important trait structure variables ($D-E$, i.e., the community-weighted mean of the drought tolerance trait (CWM.ToID) and the functional dispersion index based on three traits (FDis.3, i.e., ectomycorrhiza, wood decay resistance, and vegetative reproduction)), based on observed data range (limited to between the 10th and 90th percentiles).

CONCLUSION GÉNÉRALE

Dans le contexte forestier actuel, où l'accent est mis sur l'amélioration de la résistance, la résilience et la capacité de réponse des peuplements face aux changements climatiques, il est essentiel de continuer à étudier les effets de la diversité sur la productivité des forêts. Cette thèse visait spécifiquement à approfondir la compréhension des dynamiques complexes entre la diversité et la productivité forestière dans l'est du Canada pour, d'une part, accroître la productivité des peuplements, et d'autre part, réduire leur vulnérabilité face aux aléas environnementaux. Cela nécessitait d'acquérir de nouvelles connaissances en écologie forestière, en examinant divers éléments qui influencent les relations diversité-productivité. À l'aide d'une analyse de données provenant du Gouvernement du Québec et de celui de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador, ce travail de recherche doctoral a été articulé autour de trois axes clés. Dans un premier temps, l'influence des traits des arbres et des variations climatiques (température et précipitations) sur la productivité forestière et ses composantes (croissance des arbres survivants, recrutement de nouveaux arbres et mortalité) a été explorée (chapitre 1). Par la suite, le lien étroit entre la diversité et l'agencement spatial des houppiers a guidé les efforts pour étudier le rôle des traits dans la configuration de la structure de la canopée des communautés d'arbres (chapitre 2). Enfin, l'impact du vent sur la productivité forestière, en tenant compte de la structure des traits et de la canopée des communautés d'arbres, a été examiné (chapitre 3). Cette recherche s'inscrivait dans une démarche visant à enrichir les connaissances sur les interactions complexes entre les traits des arbres, l'arrangement spatial de leurs houppiers au sein des communautés forestières et les conditions environnementales, offrant ainsi des perspectives précieuses pour une gestion forestière plus éclairée et durable. La conclusion débutera par une récapitulation des objectifs, des hypothèses et des résultats clés de chaque chapitre, mettant en lumière leur caractère novateur et leur contribution à l'avancement des connaissances. Ce sera suivi d'une section consacrée aux limitations de l'étude, puis d'une autre abordant les perspectives de recherche. Enfin, la conclusion se

clôturera par une synthèse des contributions apportées par cette thèse aux connaissances actuelles.

5. CHAPITRE 1

La compréhension de la dynamique entre la structure des traits des communautés d'arbres et la productivité forestière, ainsi que leur réponse aux fluctuations climatiques, était le cœur du premier chapitre. Les résultats ont mis en lumière les liens significatifs entre les traits et indices de diversité fonctionnelle et les composantes de la productivité forestière, corroborant plusieurs des hypothèses initiales. Les résultats obtenus dans ce chapitre constituent une avancée significative pour la compréhension de l'impact de la diversité des arbres sur la productivité forestière. Ils apportent une contribution majeure à la littérature scientifique de plusieurs manières. Tout d'abord, les résultats ont mis en évidence l'importance individuelle de chaque composante de la productivité forestière, offrant une vision plus détaillée de ses différents contributeurs. En soulignant que la croissance des survivants joue un rôle prépondérant dans la productivité forestière, suivi par le recrutement et la mortalité des arbres, cela permet de hiérarchiser ces composantes et enrichit la compréhension de la dynamique forestière. La croissance est certes un facteur prépondérant de la productivité forestière nette, mais en ignorant le recrutement et la mortalité des arbres, on omet une part significative de l'effet de la diversité fonctionnelle des arbres sur l'évolution des forêts. Cela remet en question une approche exclusivement axée sur la croissance pour évaluer la productivité, démontrant l'impact plus large de la diversité des arbres sur l'écosystème forestier.

Un autre aspect novateur réside dans l'identification de trois traits (quantifié avec l'indice CWM), liés à différentes stratégies des végétaux, comme étant les plus prépondérants pour prédire la PFN. Par conséquent, l'emploi de la moyenne pondérée basée sur les traits individuels au sein de la communauté semble mieux capturer la variabilité de la productivité forestière et de la plupart de ses composantes par rapport aux indices de diversité fonctionnelle, tels que le FDis fréquemment utilisé dans diverses études récentes (Morin et

al., 2011; Paquette & Messier, 2011; Hao et al., 2018; Bell et al., 2023; Looney et al., 2023). En mettant en évidence l'importance des traits foliaires pour expliquer la croissance des arbres survivants, ainsi que d'un trait associé à l'acquisition de ressources pour expliquer le recrutement, les résultats ont soutenu les deux premières hypothèses (i-ii). Enfin, la complexité inattendue observée dans le rôle des traits liés à la mortalité des arbres ouvre de nouvelles perspectives. Bien qu'un trait lié à la survie soit important pour prédire la mortalité des arbres, comme le prévoyait la troisième hypothèse (iii), un mélange de traits reflétant diverses stratégies des végétaux y a également joué un rôle. L'implication de divers traits associés à des stratégies végétales différentes suggère qu'une approche multidimensionnelle (trois ou cinq traits) semble plus adaptée pour comprendre l'effet de la diversité fonctionnelle sur la mortalité des arbres. Cette proposition de schéma à trois ou cinq dimensions représente une avancée pour une meilleure compréhension de la mortalité au sein des écosystèmes forestiers. En mettant en évidence l'influence spécifique de certains traits sur les composantes distinctes de la productivité, cette étude contribue à affiner la compréhension des mécanismes sous-jacents et offre des pistes pour des modèles plus complets et précis dans l'évaluation de la diversité fonctionnelle et de son impact sur les écosystèmes forestiers.

Les conclusions de cette étude apportent également une contribution significative à la compréhension des interactions entre les traits des arbres et les variations climatiques. Contrairement aux attentes (hypothèse iv), la diversité fonctionnelle des communautés n'a pas systématiquement favorisé une meilleure adaptation à un plus grand gradient climatique. Les réponses contrastées observées selon les groupes de traits étudiés contredisent les conclusions antérieures qui soutenaient l'effet positif de la diversité sur la capacité des peuplements forestiers à maintenir leur productivité dans un contexte de CC (Ammer, 2019; Hisano et al., 2018; Morin et al., 2018). Ils sont cependant cohérents avec ceux qui ont trouvé un soutien généralement mitigé quant à l'effet de la diversité sur l'atténuation des effets des CC (Paquette et al., 2017; Ammer, 2019; Grossiord, 2020). L'étude offre ainsi des pistes intéressantes pour évaluer dans quelles circonstances la diversité peut véritablement influencer de manière positive la productivité des forêts. Les résultats établissent une structure de référence pour déterminer le trait, ou l'ensemble de traits, à prioriser en fonction

des projections climatiques. Cette démarche axée sur la tolérance aux conditions climatiques ouvre la voie à des stratégies de gestion forestière plus adaptatives et durables, en mettant en évidence des moyens potentiels d'atténuation des effets des CC sur les écosystèmes forestiers.

6. CHAPITRE 2

Les objectifs de ce chapitre ont gravité autour de la relation entre la structure de la canopée et les traits des communautés d'arbres, avec un accent particulier sur leur influence pour la configuration de la canopée. Il a alors été possible de préciser le rôle des traits des communautés d'arbres sur les changements observés dans la structure de la canopée forestière. Les résultats de ce deuxième chapitre apportent une contribution significative aux connaissances existantes basées sur la littérature, les méthodes conventionnelles de mesure des houppiers et les technologies de balayage lidar en proposant une approche novatrice pour évaluer la structure de la canopée forestière. Cette approche, basée sur des variables issues d'inventaires forestiers traditionnels, permet de prédire efficacement la structure de la canopée sans recourir à des données lidar, permettant ainsi la quantification de la structure de la canopée des inventaires historiques ou encore entre deux relevés lidar successifs. Les modèles obtenus offrent une opportunité précieuse pour étudier l'évolution au fil du temps de la structure de la canopée forestière, ouvrant alors plusieurs perspectives prometteuses pour de futures recherches.

Par ailleurs, l'analyse approfondie des traits des arbres a mis en évidence leur contribution à la formation de la canopée forestière. Les différences significatives observées entre les feuillus et les conifères, notamment en termes de masse foliaire par unité de surface (LMA), ont souligné l'influence majeure des traits pour la configuration de la canopée, confirmant ainsi l'hypothèse initiale (v). Les arbres des communautés à faible LMA (feuillus) occupaient plus d'espace, produisant une canopée homogène et entièrement remplie. À l'opposé, les communautés avec une LMA plus élevée (conifères) ont présenté des canopées plus variables tant horizontalement que verticalement, en raison notamment de la

morphologie particulière de leurs houppiers. Ces résultats renforcent l'idée soutenue par plusieurs études que la diversité des arbres au sein des communautés joue un rôle essentiel dans la structure de la canopée forestière (Pretzsch, 2014; Sapijanskas et al., 2014; Jucker et al., 2015; Niklaus et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2017; Cattaneo et al., 2020), en offrant une nouvelle perspective pour mieux comprendre l'interaction entre les traits et la structure de la canopée dans les écosystèmes forestiers.

7. CHAPITRE 3

Le but du troisième chapitre était de sonder les interactions entre les traits, la structure de la canopée et la force du vent pour déterminer leur influence sur la productivité forestière, en examinant la croissance, le recrutement et la mortalité des arbres. Les résultats ont mis en évidence la charge et la vitesse moyenne du vent comme des prédicteurs clés des composantes de la productivité. Une tendance nette est apparue : à mesure que la charge du vent augmentait, la croissance des survivants et le recrutement de nouveaux arbres diminuaient significativement, tandis que la mortalité des arbres augmentait. Ces conclusions soulignent un possible changement dans l'allocation des ressources à long terme lorsque la charge du vent s'accroît, pouvant entraîner une baisse de la PFN.

Les interactions complexes entre les traits, la canopée et le vent ont été soulignées, révélant des adaptations spécifiques des communautés d'arbres face au vent. Notamment, les communautés tolérantes à la sécheresse ont montré des adaptations face à une charge de vent plus importante, investissant possiblement davantage dans les compartiments souterrains, bien que ceci n'ait pu être vérifié. Cependant, contrairement à l'hypothèse initiale (vi), la diversité fonctionnelle des communautés ne semble pas toujours permettre une meilleure productivité face au vent. En effet, il a été déterminé qu'une plus grande complémentarité des espèces, en termes de teneur en azote par unité de masse foliaire (FDis.Nmass), contribue à un meilleur recrutement lorsque les vitesses moyennes du vent augmentent. En revanche, une plus grande diversité des traits foliaires (FDis.Leaf) semble entraîner une réduction du recrutement avec l'intensification des vitesses moyennes du vent. De plus, en accord avec

des observations préexistantes (Peltola et al., 1997; Päätaalo et al., 1999; Mitchell, 2013), la présence de conifères a été associée à une mortalité accrue en cas de charge de vent élevée, reflétant ainsi la sensibilité accrue de ces espèces aux vents. Enfin, bien que les interactions entre la structure de la canopée et le vent aient été moins marquées, les différences entre les communautés avec une canopée homogène et hétérogène ont été perceptibles, avec une productivité forestière potentiellement améliorée pour les communautés avec des canopées homogènes grâce à une utilisation plus efficiente de l'espace aérien et une protection accrue (hypothèse vii). Ces résultats approfondissent la compréhension des interactions complexes entre les arbres et le vent, mettant en lumière l'importance des traits et de la structure de la canopée dans ces interactions et suggérant des implications significatives pour la gestion et la protection des forêts selon le régime de vent local.

8. LIMITES

Bien que les résultats obtenus aient apporté des avancées significatives dans les connaissances sur les relations traits–canopée–climat–vent–productivité, plusieurs limites méritent d'être soulignées. Tout d'abord, par rapport à l'approche des traits, bien que de nombreux indices de diversité fonctionnelle aient été développés pour étudier les traits des communautés d'arbres (Lavorel et al., 2008; Laliberté & Legendre, 2010; Dias et al., 2021), il est envisageable que des indices plus adaptés existent pour saisir pleinement les changements de biomasse liés à la productivité forestière. De plus, pour explorer exhaustivement la matrice de traits, conformément au modèle multidimensionnel de traits de Westoby (1998), une évaluation complète de toutes les itérations possibles de trois ou cinq traits aurait été nécessaire. Cependant, des contraintes de ressources ont limité cette approche. Une méthode de regroupement a été utilisée pour réduire la complexité de l'analyse, rendant ainsi le travail plus réalisable dans le temps et les capacités de traitement informatique disponibles. Par ailleurs, travailler sur un vaste territoire est très contraignant en termes de disponibilité des données sur les traits, notamment ils peuvent être difficiles à trouver dans la littérature (début des bases de données sur les traits) et très laborieux à quantifier lorsque l'on travaille sur un grand nombre d'espèces. Certaines classes de traits sont sous-

représentées, par exemple les traits liés au gel ou les traits souterrains qui sont difficiles à collecter. En raison de ce manque de données, des moyennes de traits à travers le Canada ont été utilisées, ce qui ne permet pas de tenir compte de la variabilité intraspécifique et d'évaluer les changements dans les valeurs des traits le long des gradients. Par conséquent, les tendances spécifiques à l'espèce peuvent être cachées derrière ces moyennes de traits. Les résultats doivent donc être interprétés avec prudence, étant donné qu'ils représentent des moyennes et pourraient être biaisés en faveur des zones peuplées et accessibles.

Le choix des métriques dans le deuxième chapitre repose sur la volonté d'étudier différents aspects de la canopée. Toutefois, il faut reconnaître qu'il existe une gamme étendue de métriques lidar, parmi lesquelles certaines, plus raffinées, pourraient peut-être mieux caractériser la complexité structurale de la canopée. De plus, l'analyse basée sur une seule couche de la canopée pourrait sous-estimer la complexité interne des forêts plus diversifiées, soulignant un besoin potentiel de mesures plus détaillées et sensibles, notamment via les métriques lidar basées sur les voxels pour mieux quantifier la complexité de la structure de la canopée (Blackburn et al., 2021; Whelan et al., 2023). Par conséquent, les nouvelles avancées en matière de télédétection pourraient permettre de mieux comprendre la complexité interne de la canopée d'une forêt, par exemple en examinant comment les caractéristiques individuelles des arbres conduisent à une plus grande densité au niveau du couvert. De plus, la collecte de données lidar à une densité de points plus élevée, peut-être via des drones ou des balayages laser mobiles, pourrait permettre d'examiner plusieurs caractéristiques significatives sur le plan écologique à des échelles plus fines (Hambrecht et al., 2022; Blanchard et al., 2023). Enfin, il est important de souligner que les relevés ALS du QC et de TNL présentent des différences, non seulement en ce qui concerne les capteurs utilisés et la densité de points, mais également en termes de période de relevé. Les relevés ALS à TNL ont été réalisés durant la période de croissance maximale (août-septembre) pour correspondre à un inventaire forestier effectué pendant la même période. Quant aux relevés ALS du QC, ils ont été effectués par plusieurs prestataires de services à différentes périodes (mai-décembre) et ont été associés à des données d'inventaire forestier collectées dans la même zone avec un délai maximum de deux ans. Idéalement, pour une comparaison

optimale, il aurait été nécessaire que les relevés ALS soient tous effectués dans des conditions similaires et pendant la période de croissance maximale (arbres avec feuilles), en plus de les rendre synchrones avec les inventaires forestiers.

Concernant le troisième chapitre, les modèles bénéficieraient de l'obtention de paramètres de houppiers plus précis pour les espèces étudiées, par exemple en utilisant une approche similaire à celle adoptée dans la forêt boréale de l'est du Canada pour quatre espèces d'arbres (Meunier et al., 2002; Achim et al., 2005; Elie & Ruel, 2005). La généralisation des observations concernant la réponse des arbres au vent peut être limitée à des conditions locales ou à des espèces spécifiques. L'environnement et la composition des espèces au sein d'une forêt jouent un rôle crucial dans la définition de la morphologie des houppiers des arbres (Purves et al., 2007; Thorpe et al., 2010; Seidel et al., 2011; Dieler & Pretzsch, 2013; Pretzsch, 2014), soulignant le besoin de données plus fines et spécifiques aux espèces étudiées et qui reflèteraient les conditions locales. De plus, l'exactitude des conclusions pourrait être impactée par la précision des mesures liées au vent. En effet, les données sur la vitesse moyenne du vent de l'Atlas éolien d'Environnement et Changement climatique Canada ont une très faible résolution. Une meilleure résolution de ces mesures, potentiellement obtenue via des capteurs plus précis (Bonnesoeur et al., 2016; Hicks et al., 2016; Xing et al., 2019; Duperat et al., 2021), pourrait améliorer la justesse des conclusions. Cependant, l'implémentation de telles méthodes sur de vastes zones d'étude peut être complexe. Il convient également de mentionner que des modèles reposant sur des variables acquises dans le cadre d'inventaires forestiers traditionnels ont été utilisés pour prédire les métriques de la végétation dérivées du lidar comme indicateurs de la structure de la canopée. L'utilisation de ces modèles, bien qu'innovante, ne permet pas la même précision qu'un relevé ALS à chaque intervalle. Cela permettrait une observation plus précise de l'impact de la structure de la canopée sur les schémas d'accumulation de la biomasse, en particulier en relation avec les forces du vent.

Aussi, les modèles de forêts aléatoires se distinguent par leur efficacité à gérer de grands ensembles de données comprenant un grand nombre de variables. Ils sont également

hautement performants autant pour faire des prédictions que pour mettre en évidence les variables importantes, ce qui était justement un des principaux objectifs de leur utilisation. Un avantage majeur réside dans leur capacité à modéliser des relations complexes sans nécessiter de préconception sur la forme de ces relations. Cependant, l'inconvénient de cette approche est que les relations peuvent être difficiles à visualiser et complexes à interpréter. Il est également pertinent de souligner que la sélection des variables explicatives a été restreinte par les données disponibles issues des inventaires forestiers. Des variables non incluses dans l'étude, telles que la qualité du sol ou les perturbations passées, pourraient également influencer la productivité des forêts étudiées. Les écosystèmes naturels sont complexes, et malgré une analyse approfondie, il peut exister des interactions entre les variables étudiées qui n'ont pas été entièrement explorées.

Enfin, les conclusions de cette recherche sont applicables aux forêts étudiées, mais leur généralisation à des écosystèmes forestiers plus diversifiés nécessiterait une approche plus vaste. Les liens entre biodiversité et productivité ont été documentés dans divers contextes forestiers (Liang et al., 2007; Pretzsch et al., 2010; Morin et al., 2011; Paquette & Messier, 2011; Zhang et al., 2012; Pretzsch, del Río, et al., 2015; Liang et al., 2016; Pretzsch & Schütze, 2016; Tobner et al., 2016; Forrester, 2017; Pretzsch et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2021). Étendre les modèles issus de cette thèse à des gradients plus larges est essentiel pour évaluer leur validité sur une plus grande variété d'écosystèmes et de mélanges d'espèces, ainsi que pour mieux comprendre l'impact des variations climatiques. Cependant, une telle extrapolation nécessite une harmonisation des inventaires provinciaux pour assurer la cohérence des données (NRC, 2023).

Ces limites mettent en évidence la nécessité de recherches ultérieures pour mieux saisir les liens entre les traits des arbres, la structure de la canopée, les variations climatiques, le vent et la productivité forestière. En somme, elles offrent des opportunités pour des recherches futures plus approfondies, nécessitant une attention particulière à la diversité des écosystèmes et à l'acquisition de données plus spécifiques et détaillées, ce qui permettrait une meilleure compréhension des interactions complexes au sein des écosystèmes forestiers.

9. PERSPECTIVES ET ORIENTATIONS FUTURES EN RECHERCHE

Il est désormais pertinent de s'interroger sur le processus de transfert de ces avancées scientifiques vers les pratiques forestières actuelles et futures. Il est proposé ci-après une série de recommandations portant sur l'intégration des résultats dans la gestion forestière adaptative, sur l'optimisation des méthodes de suivi et de collecte de données ainsi que sur la sensibilisation et collaboration des différents acteurs du milieu forestier.

L'approche des traits offre un potentiel considérable pour élaborer des stratégies adaptatives aux CC dans la gestion forestière. En effet, la diversification des peuplements, en plantant des espèces adaptées à l'écosystème local dans les conditions présentes ou futures, pourrait permettre de renforcer la capacité de réponse des forêts (stratégies à long terme) face aux changements climatiques. Pour ce faire, cette approche permet premièrement d'identifier des traits spécifiques des arbres liés à la tolérance face à des conditions climatiques changeantes, comme à la sécheresse ou aux températures extrêmes. Cela offre aux gestionnaires forestiers la possibilité de sélectionner et de privilégier les espèces les mieux adaptées. En utilisant les projections climatiques, il devient possible d'utiliser des méthodes comme la migration assistée et la sélection d'espèces et de génétique adaptées aux conditions futures pour accroître la capacité d'adaptation des forêts. L'introduction d'une variété d'espèces présentant des traits diversifiés et complémentaires dans les aménagements offrirait ainsi palette d'adaptations face à des conditions climatiques variables. La prise en compte des traits dans la gestion forestière peut orienter celle-ci vers la préservation d'une diversité fonctionnelle. Cela contribuerait au maintien de fonctions écologiques importantes même face à des pressions environnementales grandissantes. De plus, comme les traits des espèces varient d'un site à l'autre, elles évolueront de manière divergente face au changement climatique. Pour une gestion forestière réactive, il devient essentiel de surveiller les arbres et voir si les traits changent au fil du temps, en plus de suivre comment les assemblages de traits dans les communautés évoluent. Les modifications dans les traits peuvent signaler des changements environnementaux, permettant ainsi d'ajuster la gestion en conséquence afin de favoriser l'adaptation.

Comme démontré dans cette thèse, l'intégration des données sur les traits dans les modèles de prédiction peut permettre d'estimer les réponses des peuplements forestiers à différents scénarios de changement climatique. Il est évident que la diversité revêt une importance pour la productivité. Cependant, certains traits spécifiques fournissent plus d'informations pour prévoir les patrons d'accumulation de biomasse, et ce, autant pour la croissance, que pour le recrutement et la mortalité des arbres. Il est important d'intégrer ces données aux modèles utilisés par les acteurs du milieu forestier pour aider à anticiper les besoins en matière de gestion forestière. L'investissement dans la recherche sur les traits est donc nécessaire pour mieux comprendre l'adaptation des arbres aux changements climatiques et ouvrir la voie à de nouvelles stratégies de gestion plus efficaces.

De plus, en comprenant mieux comment la structure des traits des communautés d'arbres influence la structure et la formation de la canopée, les pratiques de gestion forestière pourraient être adaptées pour promouvoir des structures de canopée spécifiques. Par exemple, en favorisant la régénération de certaines espèces ou en ajustant les densités de plantation pour obtenir des canopées homogènes ou plus diversifiées qui maximiseraient la productivité de ces peuplements tout en protégeant la biodiversité. Cela pourrait contribuer à maintenir la santé globale des écosystèmes forestiers. Les connaissances sur la relation traits–canopée pourraient également aider à concevoir des stratégies de gestion adaptatives aux CC. En anticipant les changements de structure de la canopée en réponse aux conditions climatiques changeantes, les gestionnaires pourraient mieux planifier les interventions forestières.

Comme mentionné, l'approche novatrice de prédiction de la structure de la canopée sans recourir aux données lidar ouvre des possibilités pour surveiller et évaluer l'évolution des forêts au fil du temps. Cela pourrait être appliqué de plusieurs manières dans les inventaires forestiers. Étant donné que l'acquisition de données lidar étendues n'a commencé qu'au cours de la dernière décennie, les inventaires forestiers passés ne permettent pas de comprendre précisément leur structure. L'application des modèles du deuxième chapitre permettrait une analyse historique de la canopée, ce qui permettrait de mieux comprendre

comment le couvert forestier évolue selon ses caractéristiques. Ces avancées dans la prédiction de la structure de la canopée à partir de données conventionnelles ouvrent la porte à des méthodes de surveillance plus accessibles et moins coûteuses, permettant un suivi plus régulier de l'évolution des forêts.

Les connaissances acquises par rapport aux vents offrent également des perspectives intéressantes. L'intégration de la résistance au vent dans la sélection des espèces et des caractéristiques des peuplements pour renforcer la résistance, la résilience ou la capacité de réponse face aux vents extrêmes ou chroniques. Cette approche peut favoriser des espèces plus résistantes au vent ou ajuster la densité des peuplements pour atténuer les effets néfastes du vent sur la productivité dans les zones les plus à risque. Cependant, cela implique de poursuivre la recherche pour mieux comprendre les mécanismes complexes entre le vent et la productivité forestière. En parallèle, il est nécessaire de mettre en place des systèmes de surveillance pour mieux évaluer et compléter les informations déjà disponibles sur les effets du vent sur les peuplements forestiers et de développer des modèles prédictifs pour évaluer les risques pour les écosystèmes. Ceci permettrait de continuer d'adapter les méthodes de récolte pour minimiser les dommages induits par les vents suivant l'ouverture du couvert forestier, en considérant la structure de la canopée et les traits des arbres. Des stratégies comme la coupe sélective ou la modification des densités de peuplement pourraient favoriser l'adaptation des peuplements résiduels en ayant le temps d'ajuster leur allocation de ressources face à des conditions plus venteuses. De plus, en planifiant des structures de canopée plus homogènes et une diversité fonctionnelle spécifique, cela pourrait favoriser une meilleure adaptation des communautés d'arbres aux vents.

Transposer ces avancées scientifiques dans les pratiques forestières nécessitera une approche progressive et collaborative, en intégrant les découvertes récentes tout en tenant compte des spécificités de chaque écosystème forestier. Il est nécessaire de sensibiliser les différents acteurs du milieu forestier sur les avantages de la diversification des espèces pour la santé à long terme des écosystèmes forestiers dans le but d'intégrer ces nouvelles connaissances dans les pratiques forestières actuelles et futures. La collaboration entre les

scientifiques, les gestionnaires forestiers et les décideurs politiques est essentielle pour traduire ses nouvelles connaissances en politiques et en pratiques de gestion forestière plus efficaces et durables.

10. SYNTHÈSE

En définitive, le travail de recherche présenté dans cette thèse apporte des contributions substantielles aux connaissances actuelles en explorant les relations complexes entre la diversité des arbres et la productivité forestière, mettant en lumière plusieurs points essentiels. En regardant la diversité de manière différente, l'approche des traits a premièrement permis de souligner l'impact des traits sur la PFN et sur ses composantes, démontrant leur importance dans la dynamique des écosystèmes forestiers. Les variations climatiques se sont avérées déterminantes pour ces relations. Cette approche offre ainsi un potentiel considérable pour élaborer des stratégies adaptatives aux CC dans la gestion forestière. De plus, le lien entre la structure de la canopée et les traits des arbres a été mis en évidence, offrant de nouvelles perspectives pour évaluer et anticiper les changements au sein des écosystèmes forestiers. La structure de la canopée s'est avérée être étroitement liée aux traits des arbres, permettant de différencier les peuplements de feuillus et de conifères d'un point de vue fonctionnel et morphologique, une découverte qui ouvre des portes pour une gestion forestière plus ciblée et plus efficace. Enfin, un autre aspect clé concerne l'impact significatif du vent sur la productivité des forêts, mettant en lumière l'importance de la structure des traits et de la canopée des communautés d'arbres dans la réponse des arbres à la force du vent. Ces conclusions ont des implications importantes pour la gestion des forêts dans les zones sujettes à des vents forts ou extrêmes. Tout en apportant de nouvelles connaissances, ce travail doctoral souligne également des limites, notamment en termes de données plus spécifiques et détaillées qui sont nécessaires pour une compréhension plus approfondie des interactions au sein des écosystèmes forestiers. Ces limites offrent cependant plusieurs opportunités pour des recherches futures visant à approfondir la compréhension de la relation entre les traits des arbres, la structure de la canopée, les variations climatiques, le

vent et la productivité forestière, dans le but d'améliorer la gestion forestière et de relever les défis à venir.

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