

XXIV IUFRO World Congress - *“Sustaining Forests, Sustaining People: The Role of Research”*

Session 136: The knowledge that counts – analyzing science policy interactions in forest policy

Call for Papers

Organizers:

IUFRO-division 9.05.07 “science-policy interactions”

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Conventional rhetoric stresses the necessity to involve the “best available scientific knowledge” in forest policy making in order to effectively address and govern the sustainable use and protection of the world’s forests, particularly when facing major challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, or growing demand for biomass. Moreover, there is a continuous and perhaps even growing demand for scientific knowledge in forest related policy making. Yet, the interaction between both ‘worlds’, science and politics, is a troublesome one – scientific knowledge does not simply flow into policy processes and change a policy, nor can forest policy makers ignore uncomfortable new knowledge in the long term. Rather, the science policy interface in forest policy is characterized by various, often conflicting and overlapping coordination mechanisms that differ greatly depending on the regional political context.

In this way, the science policy interface in forest policy reflects well shifting paradigms on science – policy interactions in the social sciences. In the literature on the science-policy interface, the longtime dominant idea that scientific knowledge can be transferred to policy practice in a simple linear manner has been contested due to empirical observations that scientific knowledge is sometimes taken up and used, but in very different ways, and often not in a manner that scientists would have expected. This leads to consequences for the organization of the science policy interface as well: For practical utilization in forest policy-making it seems simply not to be enough that researchers provide the latest available scientific knowledge. The availability of scientific research results alone does not necessarily lead to more evidence-based policy making. Rather, there are certain aspects of the science-policy interface that have to be more deeply understood to estimate conditions under which scientific knowledge may have impacts on forest policy. One major assumption with regard to this is that science and policy practice is not compatible with each other because of the different guiding principles of the two spheres: science relies on finding the “truth”, politics is about gaining power. As a result, several models of science-policy interactions have distanced themselves from the linear model of scientific knowledge transfer, and try to describe science policy interactions in a distinct way: Co-productionist models, for instance, argue that “policy making is very obviously a product of both scientific and policy judgments, under scrutiny from an increasingly active and vocal citizenry which is suspicious of leaving important decisions about policy safety to either politicians or experts, or to both” (Hulme 2009: 104). Co-productionist models highlight that the utilization of scientific knowledge is by no means independent from the policy process. The terms “politicization of science” and “scientization of politics” (Maasen/Weingart 2005:

4) express that contrary to linear understandings of scientific knowledge transfer there are numerous “interactions between policymakers and experts” (Maasen/Weingart 2005: 7) influencing the use of scientific knowledge in political practice.

In this session, we take the overall topic of the IUFRO world congress “Sustaining Forests, Sustaining People: The Role of Research” as a starting point and invite papers and posters that discuss the interactions between scientific research and forest policy making and practices. More concretely, we invite papers and posters that

- address problems and prospects of scientific knowledge transfer in forest policy in a conceptual/theoretical manner,
- present interesting case studies on science-policy-interactions, and how scientific research has been (or has not been) incorporated into forest policy practice,
- assess long term developments and trends of the science policy interface in forest policy.

The aim of the session is to further establish a network of researchers for future research activities in science-policy interactions in forest policy. Moreover, we intend to select interesting papers for a special issue related to the issue of this session.

Please send your abstracts for contributing a paper or poster to this session by referring to the guidelines available under <http://iufro2014.com/scientific-program/abstract-submissions/> and use only the online tool for submitting.