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Presentations	Session 8.2	<i>Gender equality and diversity in practice: methodological and theoretical inquiries to the forest sector(s).</i>

Abstract Session 8.2 – Gender- and geography-related inequalities in global forest science conferences: an actor-centred analysis of IUFRO World Congresses.

Inequality has become a prime topic in forest research: Forest scholars have investigated how socio-economic and gender inequalities impact on forest use, how power asymmetries shape forest governance, and how gendered professional norms contribute to the marginalisation of women in forest industry and education. However, to what extent the forest science community is itself structured by inequality has so far rarely been explored.

We address this gap by analysing the composition of actors involved in global forest science conferences. Our study covers the World Congresses of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) taking place in 2010, 2014 and 2019. We examine the social structure of these events with a focus on the dimensions of gender and geography, and disaggregated by different conference roles.

Our results show that the actor composition notably diversified over the course of congresses, with more women and scholars from Southern world regions actively engaged. However, male forest scientists based in Northern regions still dominate the events in numerical terms. Significant gender and geography-related inequalities persist, and they remain particularly pronounced in actor groups with high agenda-setting and gate-keeping power.

Our analysis points at social patterns within the forest science community that are likely to impact on the knowledge it generates. To make global forest science conferences a more inclusive space of scholarly exchange, we suggest two sorts of ‘affirmative action’ in the context of conference organisation: tackling ‘backstage’ inequalities by involving more scientists from under-represented groups as members of congress scientific committees and session chairs; and making conscious choices about place.

With our study, we contribute to the emergent scholarship concerned with inequality and its epistemic effects in forest and environmental research fields, and aim at initiating a critical-constructive reflection among members of the forest research community.