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Abstract Session 6.1 – Navigating the science policy interface: forest researcher perspectives.

There is a growing interest – and need – among researchers and research organizations to contribute with societally relevant work as well as to demonstrate the policy impact of their research. Diverse science-policy interfaces (SPIs) aim for scientifically informed policymaking by connecting scientists with policymakers. Effective SPIs need to be grounded in credibility, relevance and legitimacy; at the same time, however, they become part of the complex, politicised web of public policymaking. In this article we examine how forest researchers who participate in diverse SPIs in the context of the Global South navigate this complexity. We apply the concepts of credibility, relevance and legitimacy to explore the barriers and tensions that researchers experience, as well as the strategies that researchers apply when responding to them. The research is based on in-depth interviews with 23 forest researchers and highlights the tensions related to ensuring the continued interest of powerful policy actors, whose benevolence is crucial, particularly for research-led SPIs. Personal and institutional reputation and networks built over the years were perceived to be crucial for fostering credibility and legitimacy, although value- and interest-based contestation of scientific information and expertise emerged in sensitive and controversial policy issues. We also discuss the tensions caused by the need to demonstrate the policy impact of the research. We conclude by highlighting the need to understand power relations in hindering or facilitating effective SPIs.

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