

Contribution of Forest Policy Research

In the last decades new ecological and economic challenges for forests and forest policies arises. Furthermore shifts in the governance system towards multiple levels, across multiple sectors and including diverse actors added new dimensions to the complexity of forest policy making. Forest policy research contributes to better understand and explain the knowledge on elements and the function of the forest political system.

Forests between different interests

Forests as a natural resource are the center of struggles between various economic and ecological interests with social implications. Contemporary national as well as international discussions related to forests, e.g. forest strategy plans, national forest programs, climate change, bio-energy, biodiversity, livelihood etc. clearly reveal the importance of the social and political dimension of forest management.

Shifts in forest policy making

Forest policy can be understood as the process of regulating and intermediate societal conflicts. In the last decades two shift in forest policy making have been detected: the first is a shift towards institutionalized forest policy making beyond the nation state and the second a shift from governmental regulation towards new governance mechanisms resulting in new ques-

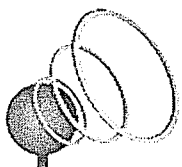
tions concerned with e.g. participation of non-state actors.

Forest Policy Research

In a world of changing governing systems for forests the importance of the social scientific perspectives is essential. Forest policy research as an applied social science contributes to two need: to empirical justification and development of social scientific theories and to gather policy relevant information supporting political decision making processes. In forest policy research multiple quantitative and qualitative methods are applied to for example identifying relevant factors explaining resistance as well as drivers of policy change. It enables to assess current forest policy situation and envisioned future scenarios against the normative ideal of democratic policy making.

Nordic Network on Forest Policy

The new challenges for forests and shifts in governance demand increased research on forest policy. This need has been acknowledged by researchers of this field in the Nordic European countries, mirrored by increasing research conducted at several scientific organizations. However, in comparison to central Europe, where forest policy research is established and has been further developed already for many decades the Nordic endeavour seems so far underdeveloped resulting from only loosely coupled diverse small research entities. The Nordic Network on Forest Policy Sciences is a first step to join forces for a competitive and effective forest policy research taken the Nordic perspective of forest policy into account.



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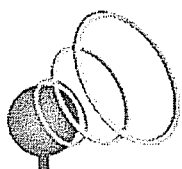
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NB Forest Policy and Research Briefs

Daniela Kleinschmit, SLU

Nordic Network of Forest Policy Sciences
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