

The 3rd International Forest Policy meeting (IFPM3): a virtual success story Knowledge about forest policy and governance is more relevant than ever before. Challenges like climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and diminishing water supply and quality need ambitious policymaking and governance based on broad stakeholder engagement and state of the art scientific expertise.

The 3rd International Forest Policy Meeting (IFPM3) gathered 146 scholars from 33 countries to exchange on conceptual and empirical insights around forest and environmental policymaking. Because of the ongoing pandemic, the event had to go virtual. But also in this new format, the IFPM3 was a success.

Originally set to take place in Copenhagen in April 2020, the IFPM3 had to be postponed in the midst of the first Covid19 wave. Through some twists and turns the IFPM3 could finally take place online on March 17-18 2021. This time organized by the Chair of Forest and Environmental Policy at the University of Freiburg in collaboration with IUFRO Division 9.05. Thanks to the financial support by SNS Nordic Forest Research we could facilitate a smooth exchange of the latest research in the field and provide a unique opportunity to present, discuss and interact in a welcoming online environment.

Our initial fears of online meeting fatigue soon faded as a growing number of registrations kept coming in (160+). We also received many panels proposals (15) and individual abstracts (30), finally amounting to 96 presentations. Instead of impeding collaboration, the virtual format opened the network for participants joining from all continents as you can see in the map below. But since participants didn't have to travel all the way to Freiburg, the online format also had environmental benefits. We saved emissions up to 94-190 tons of Co2-equivalents (see blog post for detailed calculations).

The strength of the IFPMs is in fact our small, tightly-knit network, that offers a unique opportunity to present and discuss exciting research in a welcoming and familiar environment. It is particularly welcoming for early-career scientists. The online version was no different in this regard. If anything, it provided young scholars with an open, online venue to present and discuss their research. For example, the 3-minute-thesis competition (3 MT) put the spotlight on early-career scientists in the network. Having just 1 slide and three minutes, the seven competing Report for annual networks 3doctoral candidates demonstrated remarkable capabilities to comprise their research into an easily digestible message for both experts and a non-academic public. With the help of judges, Bas Arts, Eva Lieberherr and Tobias Schulz plus the engaged audience the overall winner was Eulàlia Baulenas (University of Freiburg, Germany): Forest and water policy integration: happily ever after?

Among the many highlights of the conference was the key-note speech by Aarti Gupta, from Wageningen University (The Netherlands). Gupta inspired an insightful discussion about radical transparency in global environmental governance. Together with the audience, she discussed questions related to who gains from the staggering data collection concerning forests.

Other memorable panels brought up the covid19 pandemic and its effects on governance of urban forests (see blog post by Clive Davis) and the big-scale of small-scale forestry (see blog post by Kendisha S. Hintz and Marcel Starfinger). Current topics such deforestation, bioeconomy, and gender were all well-represented in the program and you can read it on the IFPM3 website. It is no exaggeration to say that forest policy and governance research is going strong. There's a bright future in the many competent early-career researchers.

From the organizing committee in Freiburg we want to thank all participants for their digital engagement and for making the 3rd International Forest Policy Meeting a success despite the physical distance.

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