

The Science/Policy Nexus: Who defines the problem?

A substantial body of work exists which highlights the fundamental importance of effective communication of science to decision makers and the broader public. However, it might well be argued that in that debate there is an assumption which, upon closer inspection, should be challenged. The assumption that the process begins with science and that the main task is for the effective transfer of that science to policy makers at various technical levels. However can we say with confidence that scientists are best placed to develop the initial questions that policy makers need answering? Might this process between policy makers and scientist be better conceptualised as an iterative process, which should start with or at least involve policy makers? Some might suggest that this is indeed the current process and that this already exists but there is precious little evidence of this in the real world. This conference aims to address these issue in the context of environmental management in the developing world and invites policy makers of all hues to discuss the policy science interface and their experience of this association and, importantly, how scientists might better interact with the needs of policy makers in the developing world. Some of the key questions that the conference might aim to address include but are not limited to:

- 1) How do we as the scientific community start a dialog with decision makers *before* designing our science
- 2) What social and cultural assumption might be inherent the outputs of some scientific outputs
- 3) What are the barriers to the commissioning and utilisation of science by decision makers
- 4) How can we as scientists create an environment where policy makers can influence the activity of science without perceived conflict
- 5) As scientists do we sometimes develop policy when we should be advising policy makers – and if so what impact does that have on the capacity of the policy making community
- 6) How should new and significant finding in science be introduced to decision makers
- 7) How can scientist involve decision makers in the actual process of science and what are the barriers to this

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- Date: 7th of July 2014
 - Location: Charles Darwin House, Central London
 - Number of participants: max 30
 - Participants:
 - 4-6 policy and decision makers from India, Bangladesh, Malawi, Peru and Colombia

- up to 15 UK based researchers (mainly from the University of Southampton) covering different disciplines
 - 2 to 3 UK politicians with in interest in international development / cooperation
 - up to 5 expert from NERC, DFID, ESPA etc
 - 2 to 3 communication experts
 - Format:
 - 1 day workshop
 - about 1.5 hours of brief presentations and views on the topic
 - facilitated small working groups using different interactive approaches
 - putting together the groups findings incl action points
 - final discussion and recommendations
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As next steps we do have the following ideas

1. to have a moderated follow-up discussion on various social media platforms
2. to hold a major presentation or small conference at the University of Southampton to present the findings and recommendations and to discuss with at bigger group of Southampton colleagues
3. to develop guidelines for a successful and forward looking cooperation between academia, decision and policy makers and politicians