

The traditional model of research communication tends to be heavily reliant on one-directional processes from researchers to practitioners. Analyses have shown that this is often not very successful. Mistra-SWECIA therefore focused on improved communication and exchange of knowledge with stakeholders.

Bridging the gap: problem-driven science-stakeholder dialogue

Development of knowledge for the “real world” is a complicated process and one that is rarely given sufficient attention in research projects and programmes. Stakeholders are consulted when a research project is planned, and they may attend the final event after the research is concluded. In between these two milestones, research communication tends to be heavily reliant on one-directional processes from researchers to practitioners, through for example publications of popularised versions of research results. This fails to make use of stakeholders’ knowledge and tends not to be very effective.

Realising the shortcomings of the “traditional” approach, in phase II of Mistra-SWECIA, communication and cooperation between researchers and stakeholders was strengthened by continuous collaboration throughout the actual research process. Substantial resources were dedicated to this approach.

Basically, the idea was to link research *on* adaptation with knowledge *for* adaptation. It was deemed best to use a flexible approach with a work plan that was developed gradually, and jointly, by researchers and stakeholders as the time passed.

Shared value resulting from continuous interaction

In order to facilitate continuous cooperation between researchers and stakeholders, a working group was set up with Mistra-SWECIA researchers on the one hand, and practitioners within forestry and/or adaptation on the other. The latter represented industry, forest owner organisations and authorities at the national and regional level.

Within this framework, researchers and practitioners met repeatedly and discussed issues related to implementation of adaptation research based on Mistra-SWECIA’s findings. This facilitated a smoother flow of information than is generally the case. The interaction also involved identifying joint interests, which were followed up with events in the form of a workshop, a round table talk, and two forest excursions for more in-depth participatory discussions among a larger set of stakeholders and researchers from outside the working group.

Topics in focus included the need for science-based decision support systems for adaptation practitioners; how to manage natural reserves and support biodi-



versity in a changing climate; and how to develop risk management strategies for forest owners in the light of the new set of uncertainties brought about by climate change. In addition to these events, a synthesis study was also carried out in which Mistra-SWECIA research on climate change adaptation strategies was applied to the forest management guidelines of Holmen Skog, a large industrial forest owner in Sweden.

Flexibility and responsiveness

Flexibility was a key factor in facilitating this type of problem-driven work. It made it possible to respond to on-going events and to adjust the agenda as needed. For example, the final event carried out within this framework was a two-day forest excursion in 2015 to an area devastated by the large forest fire of 2014. This event was obviously not on any set agenda before the fire actually happened and, in fact, the risk of forest fires had rarely been up for discussion in the working group despite the fact that climate change is expected to increase fire risk. The fire made it very clear that here was a relevant topic that had been somewhat neglected beforehand and demanded increased attention.

The excursion, against the very real and touching backdrop of forest fires, considered risks pertaining to climate change in general.

A novel approach, a pioneering approach?

This form of engaging both researchers and stakeholders was novel to adaptation research in Sweden and as such also somewhat experimental in nature. But it proved quite fruitful and contributed both to the researchers' and stakeholders' insights and efforts. The continuous contact enabled not only the utilisation of researcher expertise in dealing with practical issues; there was also unexpected added value in the form of new research ideas that came up as a result of the discussions. In several cases, actual events also facilitated chance meetings between programme researchers and stakeholders in addition to those represented in the working group, which led to partnerships that greatly benefited the programme's research.

During 2016, a thorough evaluation of the researcher-stakeholder work in Mistra-SWECIA will be made. We expect the results to be important in the further development of methods to bridge the gaps between the high halls of science and the boots in the forest. □