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**Science for Development — Policy Broker or Ivory Tower ?**

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**Abstract**

Policy-making is a complex process influenced by a multitude of factors and effects which are not always transparent, and is executed by policy-makers which do not always act rationally. Following the concept of evidence-based policy making, science and research (S&R) should inform policy-makers in such a way that the process of policy-making is rational, rather than opinion-based (Sutcliffe, Court 2006; Davies 2004).

However, the existence of evidence alone is not a guarantee that it will inform policy-makers, as shown by today's realities in developing (as well as in developed) countries. Besides fulfilling quality standards such as credibility, problem specificity, solution orientation, and communicability, the given evidence has to be placed into the policy process which consequently, demands more action on the side of S&R institutions. Often, it lacks of formal or informal information channels and linkages between S&R institutions at national and international levels, and with other actors in the policy arena. Additionally, existing linkages are not fully used.

This paper presents network analysis as a tool to identify relevant actors, and the existing or missing paths and channels among them. It uses a case study in Burkina Faso as an example and examines the reasons for success and failure in efforts for evidence-based policy making. The analysis is based on results of a two-year research on policy networks in Burkina Faso (2001–2003).

In particular, the role of an independent agricultural research network (focusing on land policy) will be examined. Its role as a policy broker in the arena of natural resource management indicates the importance of active networking to communicate scientific evidence, even though manifold obstacles are present, and the potential of such organisations is still not fully used.

The results show that network analysis can be a useful tool to support S&R's role (and responsibility) as a policy broker to avoid inaccessible ivory towers full of evidence.

**Keywords:** Burkina Faso, evidence-based policy making, natural resource management, network analysis, policy analysis, policy broker, Science & Research