Tackling inequalities on stage and backstage of science conferences

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Conferences are constituting spaces of scientific fields shaped by and shaping their social and epistemic structure.

(Koch/Matviichuk 2021; building on Henderson 2020)
Conferences reflect and reinforce inequalities along the lines of gender, race and ethnicity, social class and caste, geographical location ...

(Blumen/Bar-Gal 2006; Casadevall/Handelsman 2014; Derudder/Liu 2016; Dubrow et al. 2016; Eden 2016; Ford et al. 2019; Sabharwal et al. 2020; Johnson et al. 2017; Timperley et al. 2020; and many more)
Case study from the field of forest science: an analysis of IUFRO World Congresses 2010, 2014 and 2019 with a focus on gender and geographical representation

→ number of women and scholars based in Southern world regions has increased, especially among key note speakers and presenters

→ dominance of male scholars affiliated with Northern institutions still striking and most pronounced among session chairs and members of scientific committees

(Koch/Matviichuk 2021)
What to do?


Recommended key considerations for conference organisation
Yes, but also:

as scientific communities, associations and organisations, reflect on and reconsider prevailing valuation practices and their impact on social and epistemic diversity in the conference space
Thank you!

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