

„During the night, a harvester drove through the forest like a tank – it cut a lane every 20 m – I lay in my bed awake, we have west winds here, so I could hear the crash of the snapping trees. And when I went to the forest the next day, I couldnt believe my eyes. I was so shocked, I couldnt even weep, I was totally shocked.“

(Interview S.K. 08/2020)

Founder of a citizens initiative that put serious political pressure on the forest service

„People are emotional – hmm positive towards the forest, they regard the forest as worth protecting, but they do not have any knowledge about it (the forest)!“

(Interview W.G. 08/2020)

Forester about people critically observing silvicultural activities





The art of not being an “expert”

About the importance and content of communication training in higher forest education

Prof. Dr. Stefanie Steinebach

University of Applied Forest Science Rottenburg / Germany

Importance of communication – one main activity of a forester

- Foresters in different institutions spend about 28% of their working hours on communication
- Time spend on communication increases

Für Kommunikation aller Art, d.h. nicht nur konfliktbezogen, wende ich ca. 28,2 Prozent meiner Arbeitszeit auf. (n = 364)

^{39a} Nachfrage: Hat sich dieses Aufkommen in den letzten Jahren verstärkt?

n=378

	Häufigkeit	gültige Prozente
ja	246	65,1%
nein	52	13,8%
vielleicht	31	8,2%
weiß nicht	49	13,0%

Quelle: FVA BW 2021



Frequency of forest related conflicts

- In average, foresters have to deal with forest related conflicts from several times a month to several times a week

38

Mit waldbezogenen Konflikten habe ich in meiner Berufspraxis wie folgt zu tun:

n=389


	Häufigkeit	gültige Prozente
täglich	54	13,9%
mehrmals die Woche	149	38,3%
mehrmals im Monat	125	32,1%
mehrmals im Quartal	36	9,3%
mehrmals im Jahr	19	4,6%
seltener	5	1,3%
nie	2	0,5%



Quelle: FVA BW 2021


 DEUTSCHER
 FORSTWIRTSCHAFTSRAT


 Forstliche Versuchs-
 und Forschungsanstalt
 Baden-Württemberg

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 für Ernährung
 und Landwirtschaft

aufgrund eines Beschlusses
 des Deutschen Bundestages

Challenges & goals in forest communication

- Forest visitors often react emotional and are not open to rational scientific arguments.
- Forest visitors do not have factual knowledge on the forest and their arguments are irrational.

(Seminar Alltagskommunikation, but see also Bethmann & Wurster 2016, Hafner 2020)

- Giving information on forest management
- Strengthening and maintaining the “foresters“ positive public image
- **Securing and maintaining public credibility (trust) in forest management**

(Beck 2015, Dög 2018)

Being an (forest) expert

The problem....



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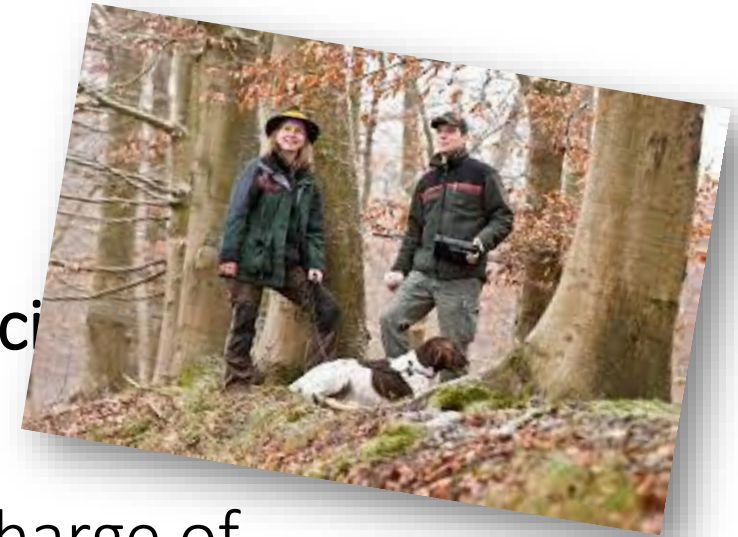
(Interview W.G. 08/2020)

Forester about people critically observing silvicultural activities



Being a forester

- Forestry as a state controlled activity supported by **scientific knowledge** of silvicultural **techniques**.
- Professional foresters as **technically** trained **elite** in charge of the **rational management** of forests.
- The basic role of scientists was to support these practitioners with scientific advise on the manipulation of natural processes in forests and on related technical operations



(Arts et. al. 2013)

Experts as (epistemic) Authority

„What they mean by an epistemic authority is an expert“.

- **Epistemic expertise** is the capacity to provide strong **justifications** for a range of propositions in a domain, while **performative expertise** is the capacity to perform a skill well according to the rules and virtues of a practice.

(Weinstein 1993)



- Forestry science and practice are traditionally close related since the 18th century

(Arts et al. 2013)

The forester as epistemic authority

- Various other figures of epistemic authorities can be found in different cultural settings throughout history, trusted, feared, and questioned: the elders, the sage, or the oracle, the church and the priest, ,**the forester!**
- Authority that comes with an asymmetric distribution of **knowledge** might be regarded as something natural by the addressee when the situation corresponds to a (habitual) cultural practice and authority is carried by an established authority figure.

(Cain et.al. 2021)

People (non-foresters) have no expertise

A member of the forest service in personal conversation about the protests on treefelling:

„I do not tell the carpenter how to build his furniture!“

(Interview forester 15.07.2019)

„I do not tell the farmer if he has to grow oat oder wheat oder barley“

(Interview forester 30.07.2020)

*„I think the main reason that they (the people) felt disturbed in their need to **nicely** take a walk in the forest.“*

(Interview forester 2 15.10.2019)

Experts

- Have knowledge based on well-organized, professional work experience, education, and academic forest research – **not on emotions or irrationality.**

(Halla 2022)

- Hold “objectivity” to be a central property of observables, or at least to be the property of scientific method that produces pure, **value-free facts.**

(Dettweiler 2019)

Appropriateness

- Role expectations carry with it a connotation of essence, so that appropriate attitudes, behaviors, feelings, or preferences for a citizen, official, or expert are those that are essential to being a citizen, official, or expert

(March and Olsen 2004)

„Appropriate“ forest experts are precisely the opposite of irrational emotional tree lovers!

Soester Anzeiger > Lokales > Welver

Förster werben für Verständnis

Erstellt: 29.04.2022, 13:00 Uhr
Von: [Dirk Wilms](#)

Kommentare



Förster Carsten Arndt und Referendarin Sophie Dohmann auf einem Stapel Roteichen, die auch aus dem Welveraner Wald entnommen werden. © Dirk Wilms



Communicating with “non-experts”

The challenge....



„And he (the forester who did historical research) confirmed that the beeches that grow at my favorite place that special place where god lives for me, in the forest, that these trees are 240 – 260 years of age... that these beeches are that old.“

(Interview S.K. 08/2020)

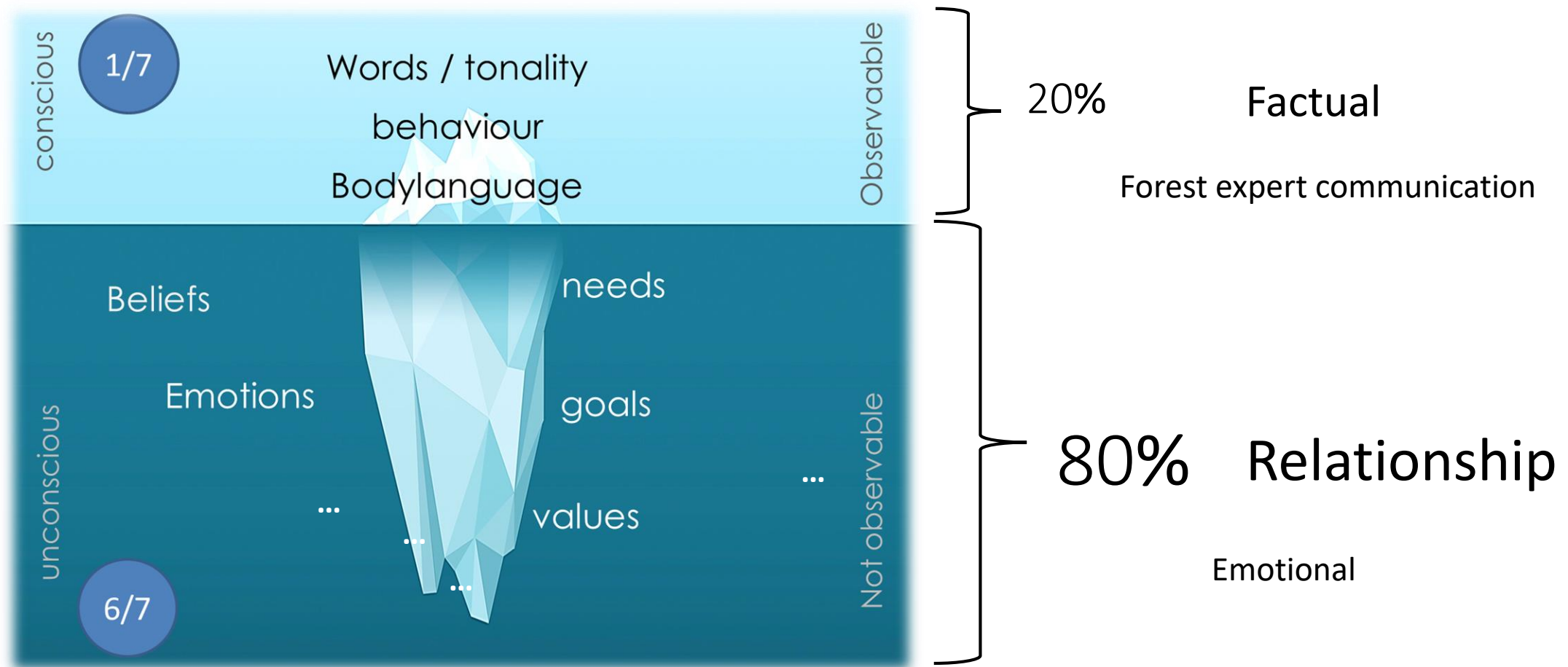
„We agreed the the beechtrees that stand on the ... could be felled. But the trunks should remain in the forest. But the foresters did not keep their promises.“



Wir hatten uns damit einverstanden erklärt, dass Buchen, die der Seilkrantrasse im Weg stehen, gefällt werden dürfen, allerdings sollte das Totholz im Wald bleiben. Auch an diese Zusage haben sich die Förster nicht gehalten.

Founder of a citizens initiative that put serious political pressure on the forest service

Iceberg Model of communication

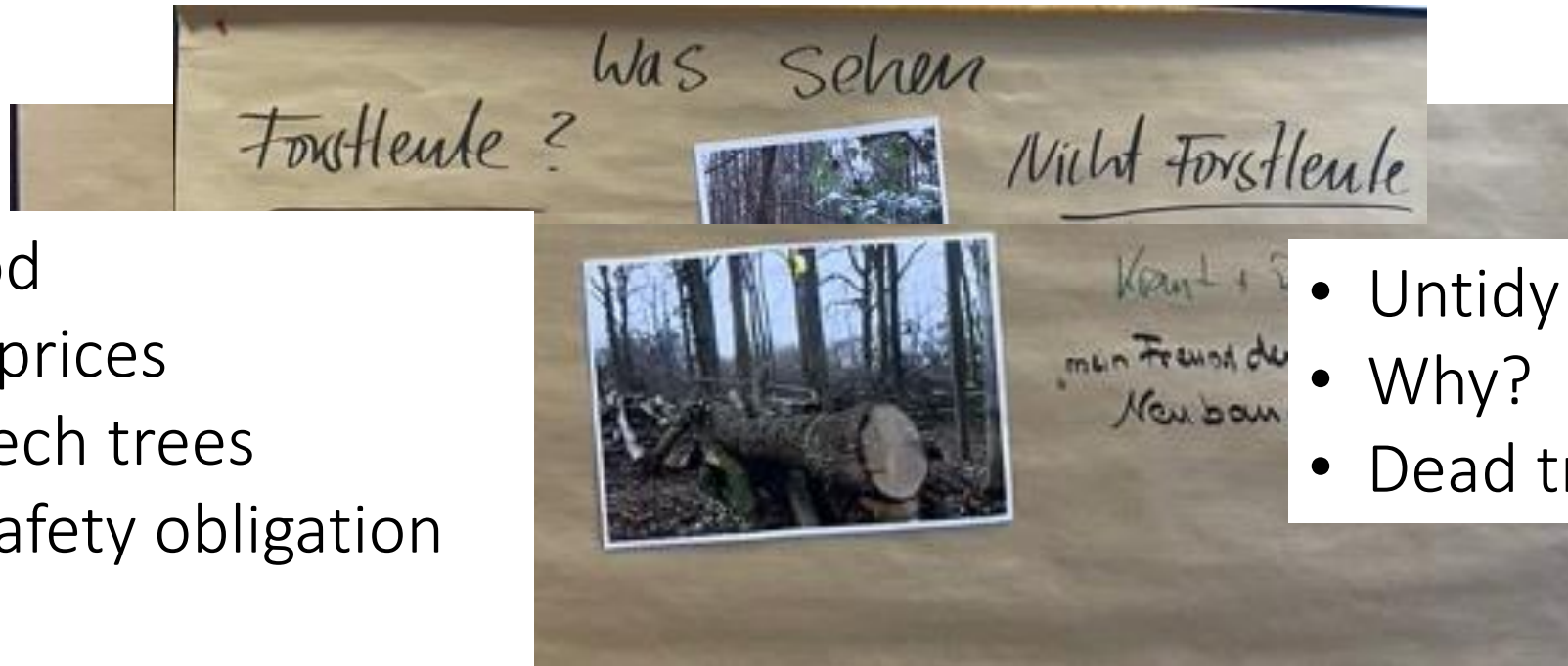


Iceberg Model of communication

“The nature of a relationship is dependent on the punctuation of the partners’ communication procedures.”

- **What we observe and experience is individual.** That version then colors our relationships.
 - **We filter all the information that we receive based on our experiences, values, beliefs and so on.** That means that one concept can have different meanings for different people.
- (Paul Watzlawick)

The (non-)foresters perspective



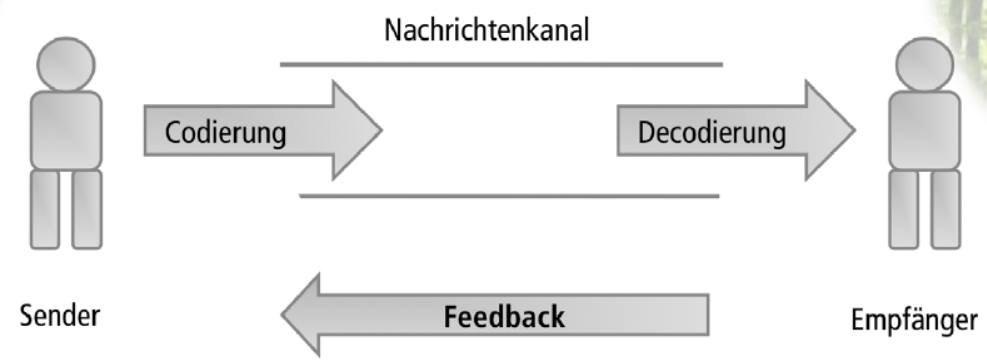
- Firewood
- Timber prices
- Oak/Beech trees
- Traffic safety obligation

- Untidy
- Why?
- Dead tree

Quelle: Steinebach, S. (2020): Seminarergebnis Alltagskommunikation im Forstbetrieb, Dümmer.

Non-foresters (non-experts) usually miss the economic aspects of forests

Technical terms in forestry ...



Is this communication...?



Foto: Steinebach, S. (2022)

... „you cannot not communicate“ ...

(Paul Watzlawick)

Emotions

The explanation



Emotions are chemical processes

1 Molecular Imaging of the Human Emotion Circuit

5

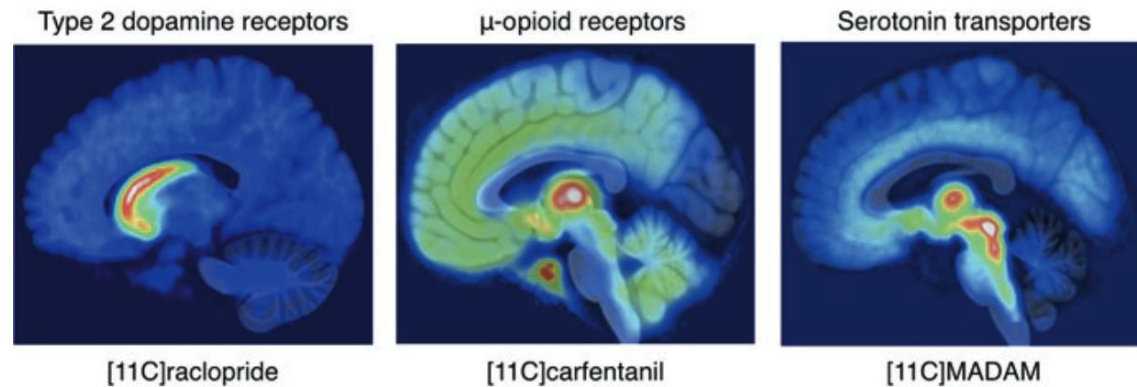


Fig. 1.2 Distribution of type-2 dopamine receptors, μ -opioid receptors, and 5-HT 1A transporters measured using PET radioligands

- Positive/negative words induce Dopamine / transmitter release
- Corroborating evidence for the role of the opioid system in processing primary rewards comes from studies showing that pleasurable social interaction

- At the root of our emotional connection to others is empathy.

(Spikins 2022)

Emotions shape relationships

- Emotions are connected with people's values, thinking, and thus behavior. They are present in human relations and also in relations to more-than-human, i.e., nature.
- Strategic communication is management of relationships
- Management of relationships is management of emotions!

All communication is emotional!

Expert communication?



Language and Emotions

- Forestry as well as technical terms in forestry are neither objective nor „value-free“.
- Language plays a crucial role since it both represents and forms the categories and concepts that transform content-weak sensations into content-rich emotions.

(Frevort 2022)



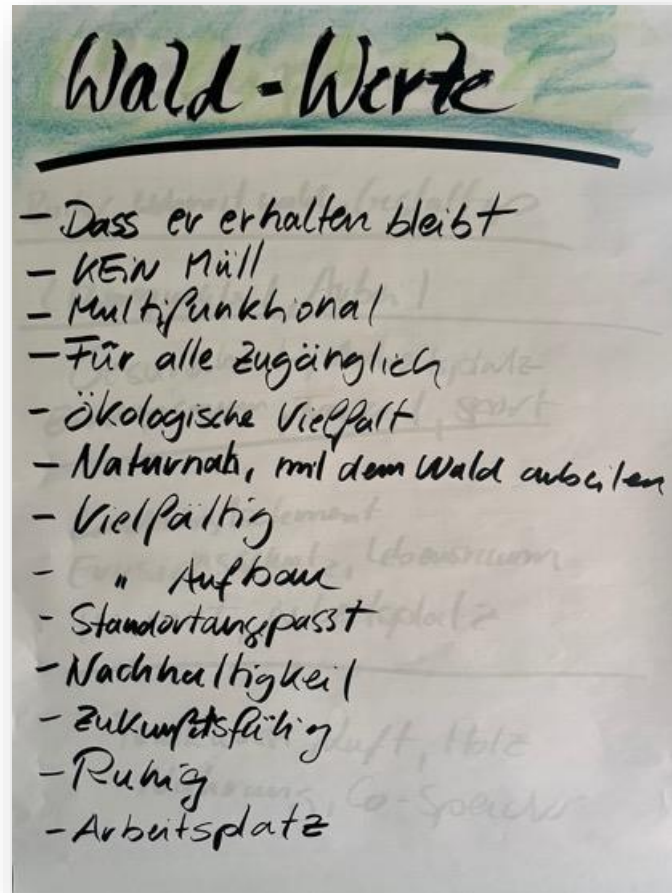
**People unable to communicate in „correct terms“ – are seen as
“merely” emotional**



Foresters are emotional

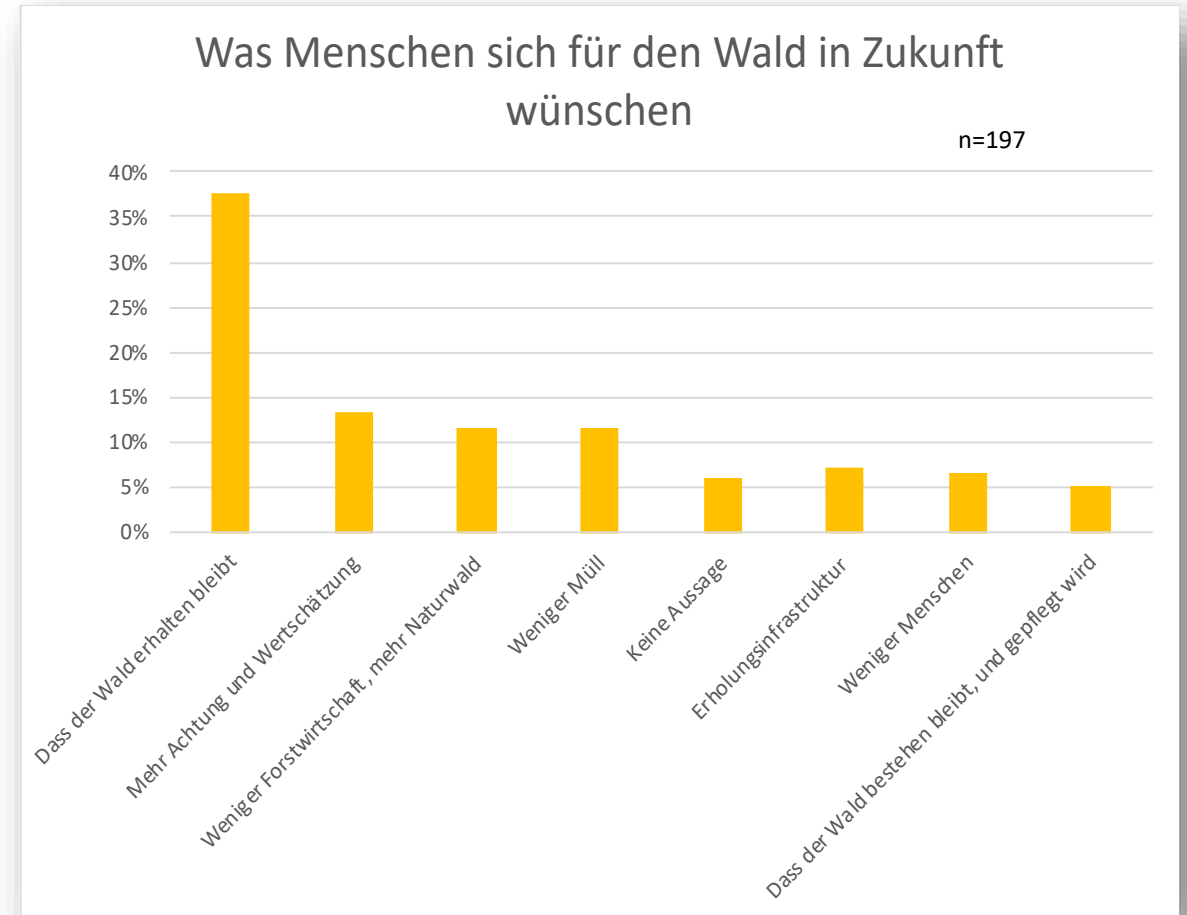
Good news ...

Forest related values of foresters



Quelle: Steinebach, S. (2021): Seminarergebnis Alltagskommunikation im Forstbetrieb. Böblingen.

Public forest related values



Quelle: Möckel, M. (2021): Gesellschaftliche Bedeutung des Walds in Zeiten von Pandemien.

The „private“ (non-expert) forester

I always loved to be out in the woods. I played in the woods, I searched for close contact with the animals. I think I have a very close relationship to the forest and to nature.

Interview P.W. 2023

Forest is something special for me. And if I just walk through the forest, I am not really interested in management aspects. I rather enjoy the beauty and the quietness of the forest.

Interview R.S. 2022



Non-experts are capable of relationship building

- Forest related values of foresters (at the personal level) are largely identical with forest related values of the larger public.
- Out of 33 interviewpartners, 21 described their individual relationship to the forest as an emotional connectedness with nature and especially forests.

(Hafner 2020)

Successful communication is not being „an expert“ !

Importance of Institutions in higher forestry education

A contribution to the solution?



Institutions shape experts

- Institutions can be conceived of as organizational arrangements that link **roles/identities**, accounts of situations, resources, and prescriptive rules and practices.
- Institutions guide behavior and stabilize expectations. Specific institutional settings also provide **vocabularies** that frame thought and understandings and define what are legitimate arguments and standards of justification and criticism.

So do Institutions of higher forest education...



(Frevert & Pahl 2022)

Emotional templates in higher forest education

- Institutions provided **guidelines** for their members on **how to feel and navigate emotions** and teach them which to express and which to eschew, at what intensity and through which kinds of behaviour.
- They offer suggestions for when and where certain emotions, but not others, should be addressed and performed.
- Institutions thus enabled, invited, incentivized, channelled, controlled, or prohibited emotional practices—that is, they develop templates for emotions.

(Frevert & Pahl 2022)

Institutions can shape „emotional“ experts

- Apart from providing cognitive frames and maps of meaning, institutions of higher forest education offer emotional modes that are shared among their members and aligned with organizational goals. They create a ‘logic of appropriateness’.

(Olsen & March 2004)

- Scientific or academic authority in this sense is thus based on education and sometimes current affiliation to academia, i.e., to universities or research institutions, bestowing professional authority at least in modern knowledge societies.

(Cain et.al. 2021)

Contents of forest communication education

Conclusion



Goals in forest communication revisited

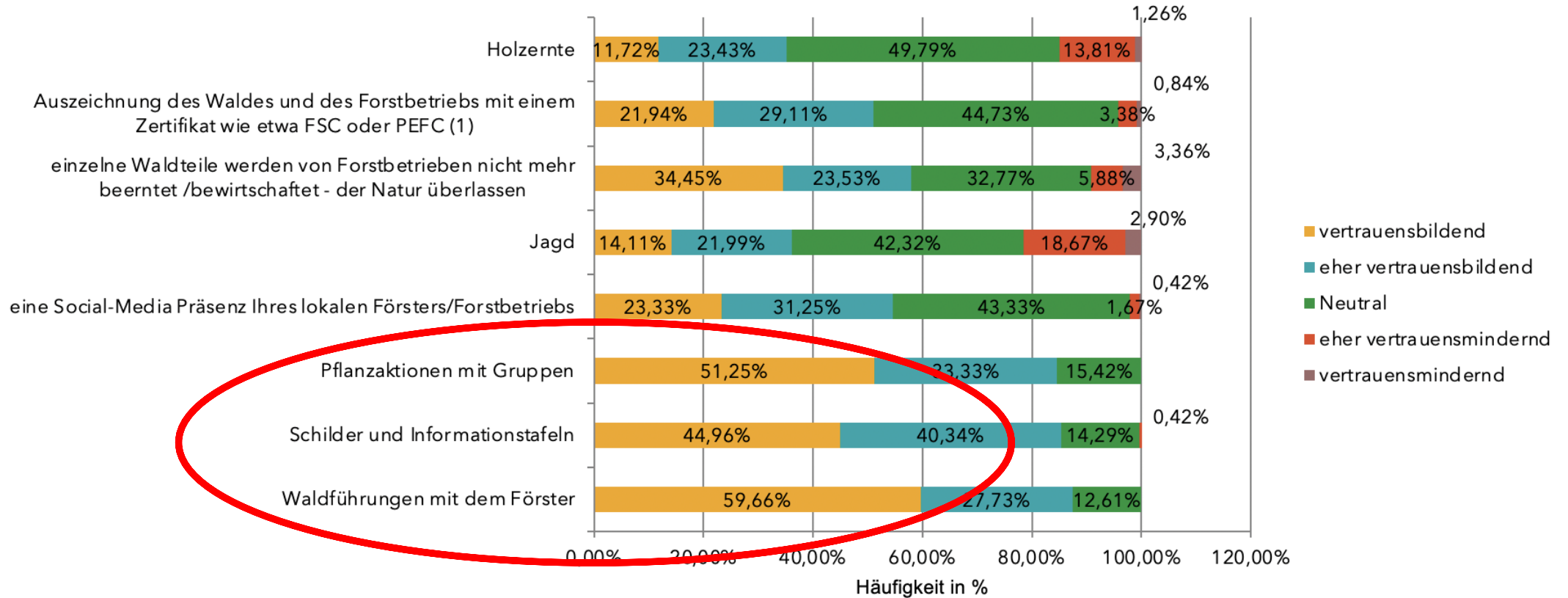
- Giving (understandable) information on forest management
- Strengthening and maintaining the “foresters” positive public image
- **Securing and maintaining public credibility (trust) in forest management**

...„Trust me“ is an emotional appeal ...

(Beck 2015, Dög 2018)



What kind of activities build trust in forest management / foresters



Quelle: nach Krause, J.T. (2022): Vertrauensbildendes Agieren im-Kontext der Forstwirtschaft.

Wenn Sie an die Holzernte denken, welche Maßnahmen könnte der Förster/die Försterin ergreifen, um Ihr Vertrauen zu erhöhen, bzw. um Ihr Vertrauen zu erhalten? n=167



People wish:
More UNDERSTANDABLE
information on forest
management and usage of
wood.

Quelle: Krause, J.T. (2022): Vertrauensbildendes Agieren im-Kontext der Forstwirtschaft.

Survey on public communication

Do you feel valued for your work in public?

Are goals and arguments of foresters communicated in an understandable way?

Do you think the public relations work is sufficient?



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Junges Netzwerk Forst 2023

Emotional Experts



- Are able to navigate the larger part of the iceberg
- Are able to understand other peoples icebergs
- Accept emotions as the basis of all relationships
- Are not afraid of emotions

Just two days ago during a forest pedagogic exercise
A forestry student was emotionally stricken by the the
sensual experience of feeling the tree and focusing on its
very individual features:

*„We should do this more often – we are trained to
estimate, measure and evaluate the whole stand but we
lose the mindfulness for the individual tree.“*



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