




Transformative cornerstones of social science research for climate change

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Overview

1. International global environmental change research policy challenges and responses
 2. The call for integrated research and demand for stronger social science voices
 3. Meeting the demand: The ISSC's Climate Change Design Project
 4. Transformative cornerstones of social science: A new knowledge framework and charter for the social sciences
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GEC research policy on the move

Since 2009:

- Visioning future environmental change challenges
 - Identifying priority research agendas
 - Building new networks
 - Creating new partnerships
 - And new institutional arrangements
- 



BELMONT
FORUM

 **ICSU**
International Council for Science



 **UNITED NATIONS**
UNIVERSITY

Earth System Sustainability Initiative (ESSI)

ISSC
international
social
science
council


United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

 **IGFA**
INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF
FUNDING AGENCIES FOR
GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH


UNEP


WMO as an observer



**ESSI as a new architecture
building on existing strengths,
reorganising the international
GEC research landscape**


Facing unprecedented challenges

New sense of urgency and staggering complexity in the face of:

- Planetary boundaries and tipping points
 - Multiple converging crises: climate, food, finance, inequalities, social discontent
 - Increasing magnitude, rate and scale of environmental problems and disasters
- 



And in the world of science:

- Unrelenting pressures to be relevant: informing effective policy responses, making a real difference
 - To accelerate delivery of knowledge
 - To de-fragment and focus efforts
 - To better connect scientific and funding landscapes
 - And cope with persistent funding pressures
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A common call for 'integration'

If research is to be more effective at meeting user requirements, informing robust policy and livable implementation:

Business as usual is not an option

We need new ways of producing knowledge and making sure it gets used





We need **integrated research**, which is

Inter- or cross-disciplinary: works across all disciplines and fields of science

Trans-disciplinary: works with society

Truly global in nature: incorporates the episteme of the majority world


Walking the talk of integration?



Looking to the social sciences

Current emphasis on integrating natural and social sciences acknowledges:

Social science knowledge is indispensable knowledge

- Snowballing effects of human actions on global conditions
 - Clock to 'game over' ticking
 - Social causes and consequences call for social solutions
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Are the social sciences delivering?

Experience and mapping suggests we need:

More social science

More mainstream social science


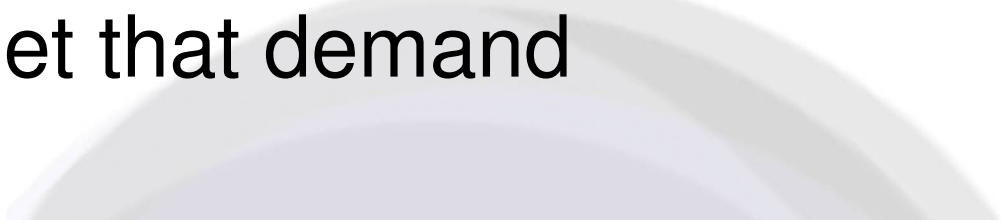


**Bringing global environmental change to
the heart of the social sciences**



ISSC's Climate Change Design Project



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- Working at the invitation of Swedish SIDA
 - And in cooperation with key partners:
UNESCO, UNRISD, IHDP
 - On a **proposal for a 10 year global research funding programme on climate change for the social sciences**
 - As a response to the increased demand for social science contributions
 - And the absence of resources at the global level to meet that demand
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Programme Objective:

To increase the knowledge needed for more effective responses to climate change for equitable sustainability

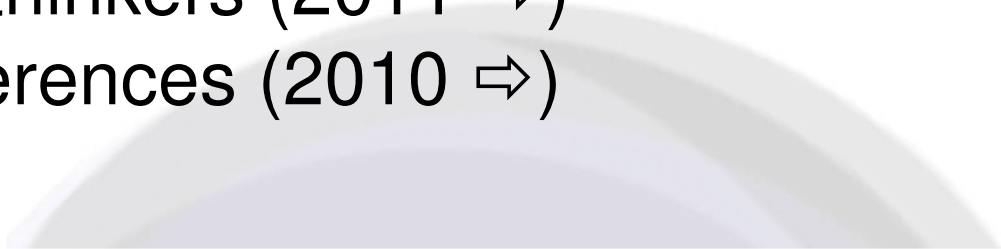
What kind of knowledge would that be?

What unique contributions can the social sciences bring to integrated climate change research?






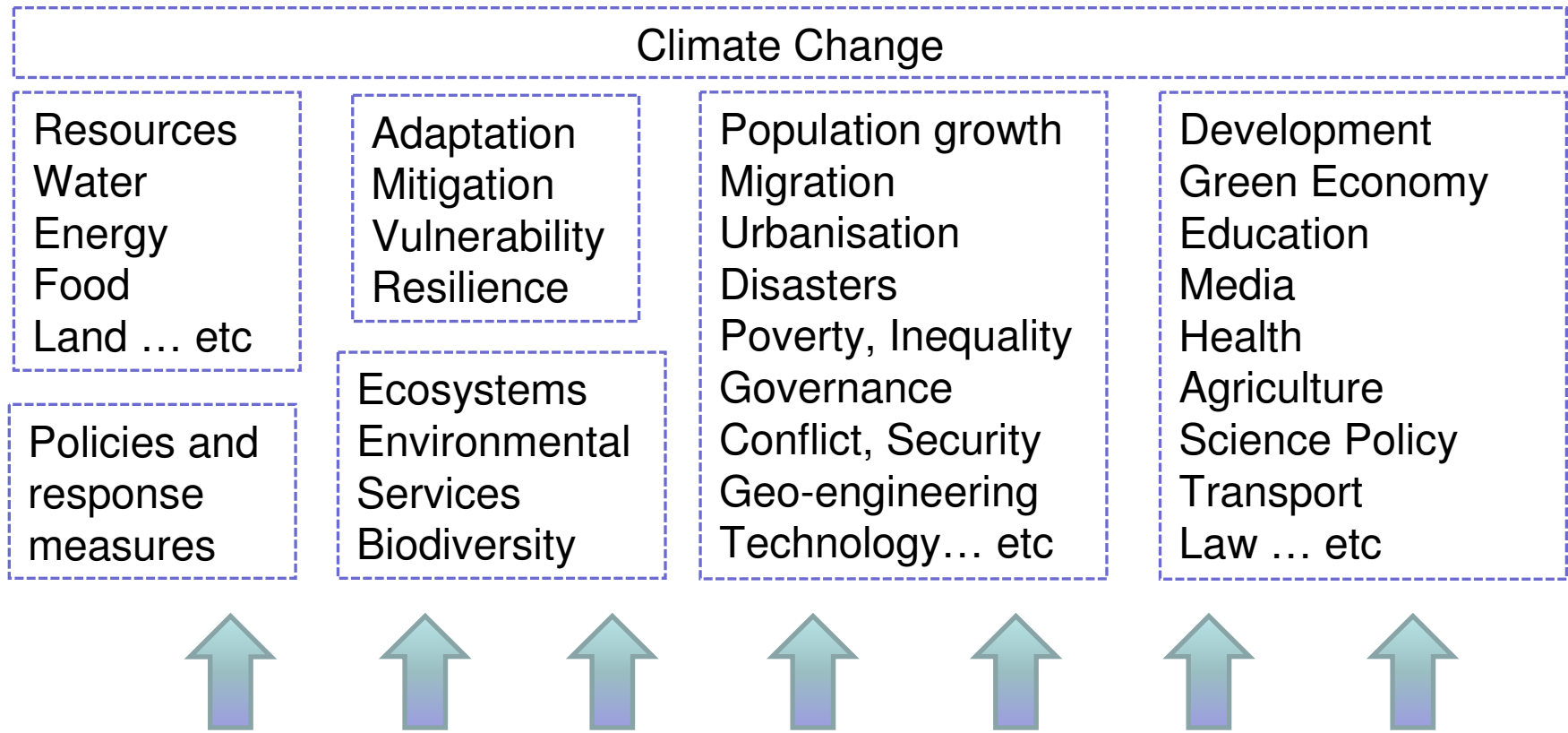
Global enquiry and consultation:

- Global GEC agenda-setting processes (2009 ⇒)
 - ICSU-ISSC Visioning
 - ESF RESCUE Foresight Exercise
 - IHDP Survey
 - Belmont Forum Challenge development
 - Earth System Sustainability Initiative strategy work
 - ICSU-UNESCO Rio+20 preparatory meetings
 - ISSC-Belmont Forum Social Science Agenda-Setting Workshop (June 2011)
 - Survey of recommended experts (2011)
 - Interviews with leading thinkers (2011 ⇒)
 - Key seminars and conferences (2010 ⇒)
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Emerging Consensus:

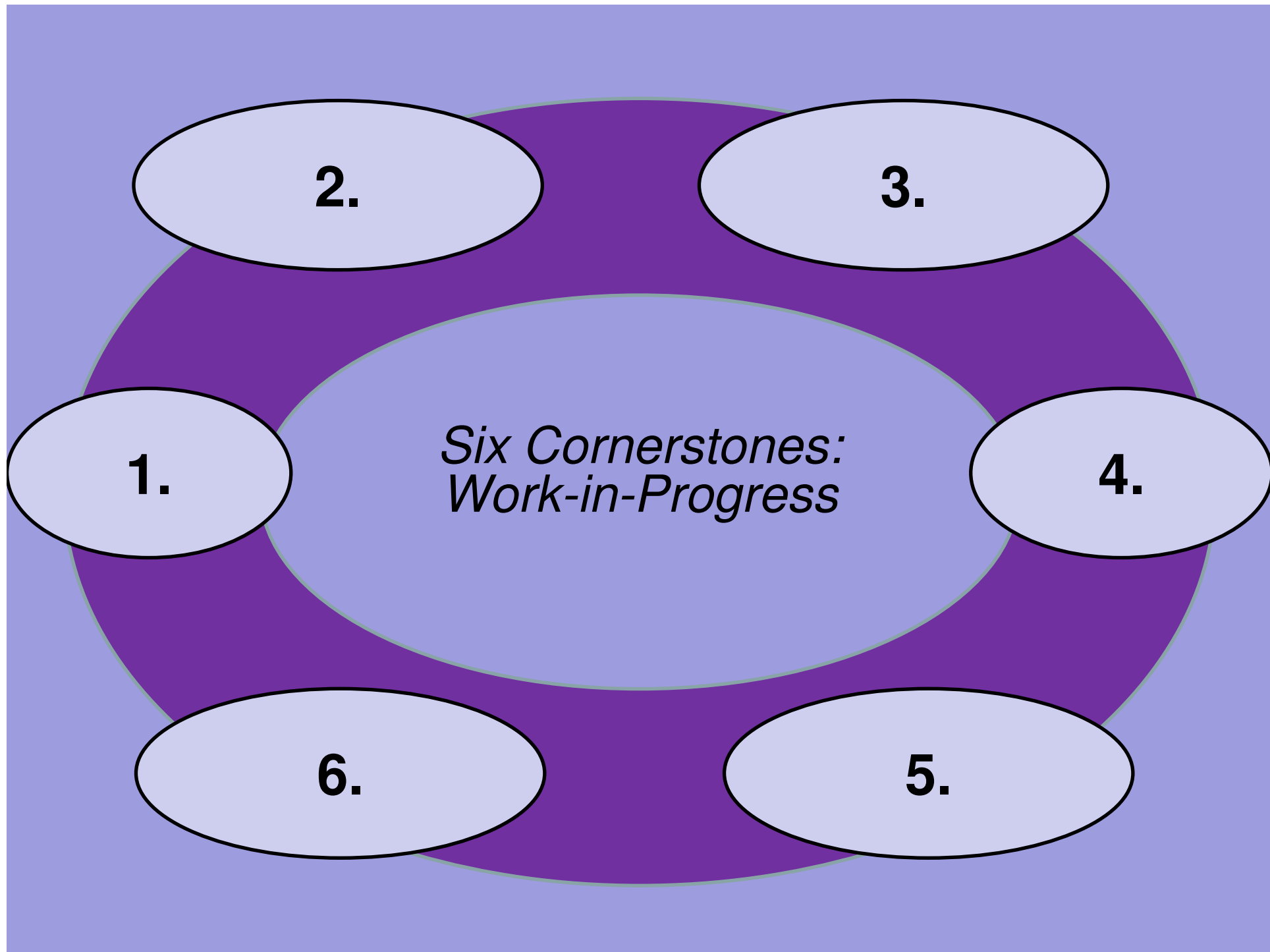
- The concrete challenges we face are shared challenges, demanding joint efforts
 - Joint efforts require a deeper, more meaningful and constructive form of collaboration
 - Integrated research hinges on timelier dialogue; shared framing, and then joint design, execution and application of research
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Transformative social science cornerstones

The social science questions that have to be asked regardless of the concrete issue being addressed

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- Lenses for understanding climate change as a social process embedded in specific social systems, past and present
 - Tools for critically questioning and rethinking the shape and course of those systems in the future
 - Transformative because they work together to contest climate change and inform action for deliberate transformation towards equitable sustainability
- 



1.

2.

3.

4.


5.

6.

*Six Cornerstones:
Work-in-Progress*




1. Historical and contextual complexities

- Distinguishing multiple stressors, drivers and interdependencies
 - Dealing with differences across geographical, cultural, personal, professional contexts and identities
 - Learning from history
- 




2. Consequences

- Living with global change: Taking stock of threats and impacts across different groups and regions
 - Identifying social boundaries and tipping points
 - Measuring success: Improving the outcomes of specific actions and instruments
- 




3. Conditions and visions for change

- Understanding how we can change behaviour and social practice
 - Speeding and scaling up processes of change
 - Building consensus on the directions for change
- 




4. Subjective sense making

- Understanding the nature and role of values, beliefs, assumptions, interests, worldviews, hopes, needs and desires
 - Exposing blindspots
 - Explaining indifference and denialism
- 





5. Responsibilities

- Foregrounding normative agendas
 - Fostering global and inter-generational justice
 - Safeguarding ethical approaches
- 




6. Choice and decision making

- Coming to grips with policy processes and political will
 - Making knowledge work
 - Building relevant institutions and structures at different levels
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Across the six cornerstones lies the responsibility of the social sciences to stimulate and support innovation and out-of-the-box thinking for solutions to climate and broader global change



Consequences

Sense Making

Complexity

Climate change is not something external to the social sciences; on the contrary, it is a domain par excellence of our disciplines

Change

(ISSC Nagoya Declaration, December 2010)

Responsibilities

Decision Making

A charter for social science research on climate change

Bringing fundamental social science knowledge to bear on the many and urgent challenges posed by climate change

Putting the social sciences at the very center of a new vision for and practice of research for change that is robust and fair

Challenging the social sciences to take the lead in developing a new integrated, transformative science of climate change

www.worldsocialscience.org

