




Bringing to the foreground underlying and invisible social science questions

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Overview

- The ISSC in brief
 - Promoting social science research on global change
 - The ISSC's *Transformative Cornerstones* knowledge framework
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1. The ISSC

- An international non-governmental organisation
- Established in 1952, following a 1951 UNESCO General Conference resolution
- A mixed and growing membership organisation
 - 17 Associations/Unions
 - 35 Organisations: Academies, Research Councils and regional bodies (Africa, Latin America, Asia)
 - 13 Associate members
- The primary organisation representing the social, behavioural and economic sciences at the international level

Our mission

- **To represent and advance the social sciences – their quality, novelty, and utility – in all parts of the world**
 - **To bring the best social science to bear on the biggest challenges of our time**
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Our primary objective

To increase the production and use of social science knowledge in all parts of the world in order to contribute to solving global priority problems



Our roles

- **Scoping and agenda-setting**
 - **Advocacy and promotion**
 - **Capacity development**
 - **Networking**
 - **Information brokerage and dissemination**
 - **Science policy development and resource mobilisation**
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2. The call for 'integration', e.g. Future Earth

If research is to:

- provide better understanding of the complexity of the challenges we face, and
- be more effective at meeting user requirements, informing robust policy and sustainable 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, recognising that users are also producers of knowledge

Truly global in nature: works with multiple socio-geographic perspectives and approaches






The emphasis on integrated research has focused sharply on the social sciences:

**Social science knowledge is
indispensable knowledge**

So we need more social science,
better social science ...



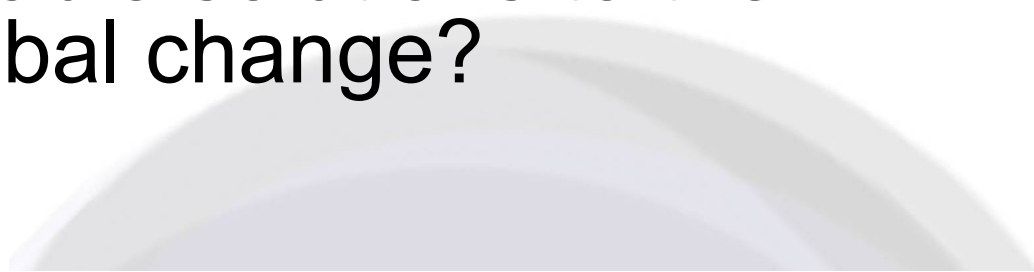


BUT:

What kind of social science for global change?

What do the social sciences bring to integrated research?


What are the unique contributions that the social sciences can and must make to increase knowledge for more effective, equitable and sustainable solutions to the many problems of global change?

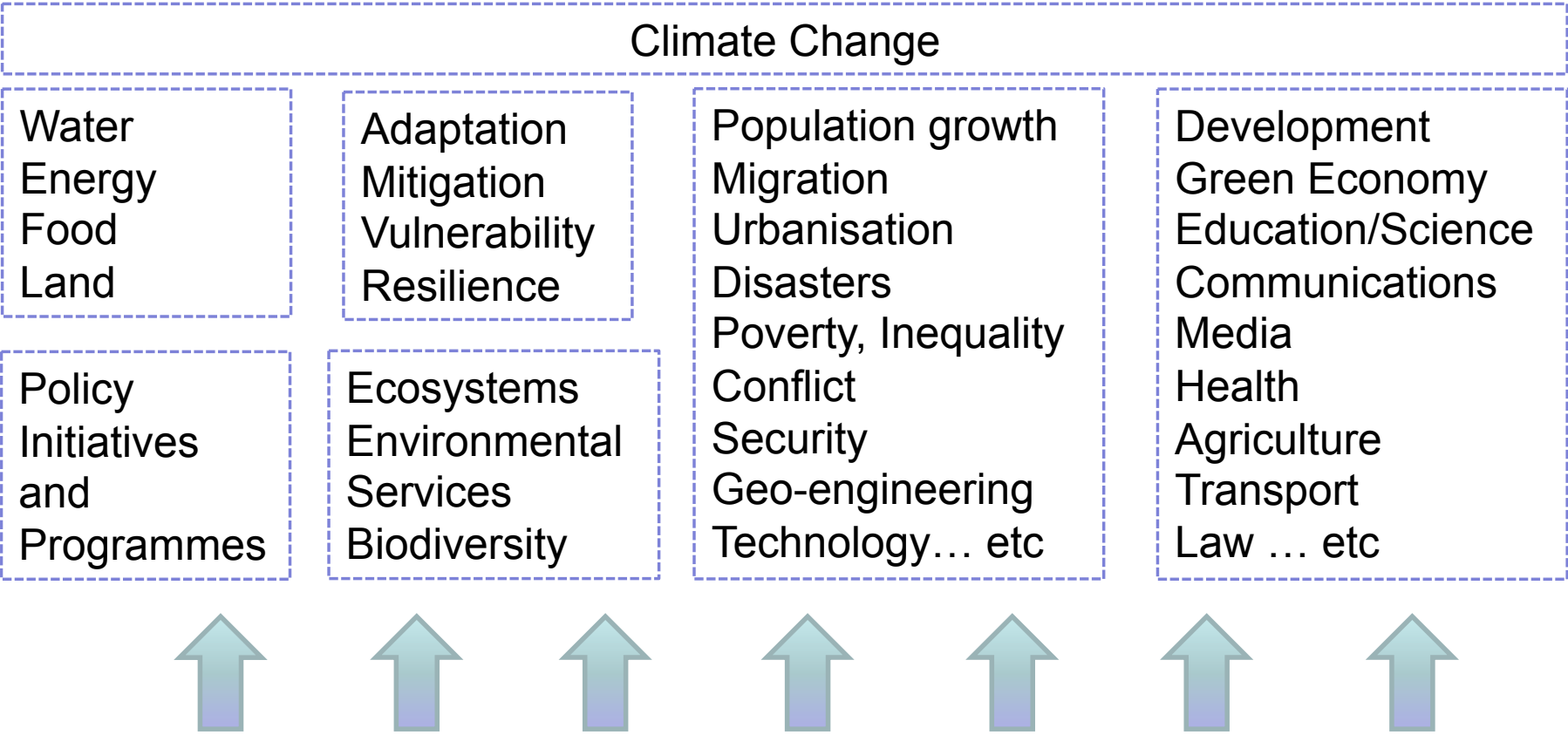


3. The *Transformative Cornerstones*

Development of a knowledge framework for the social sciences based on a process of global enquiry and consultation (2009-2011):



Conclusions:

- The specific, concrete challenges we face are shared challenges, demanding joint efforts
 - Hence we should be co-designing integrated thematic agendas
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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 and other processes of GEC as social processes 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 such processes and inform action for deliberate transformation towards equitable sustainability
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1. Historical and contextual complexities

- Distinguishing different yet connected stressors and drivers of global change; understanding the interdependency of peoples' vulnerability to a spectrum of "crises"
 - Dealing with differences across geographical, cultural, personal, professional contexts and identities
 - Learning from history
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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
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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
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4. Interpretation, subjective sense making

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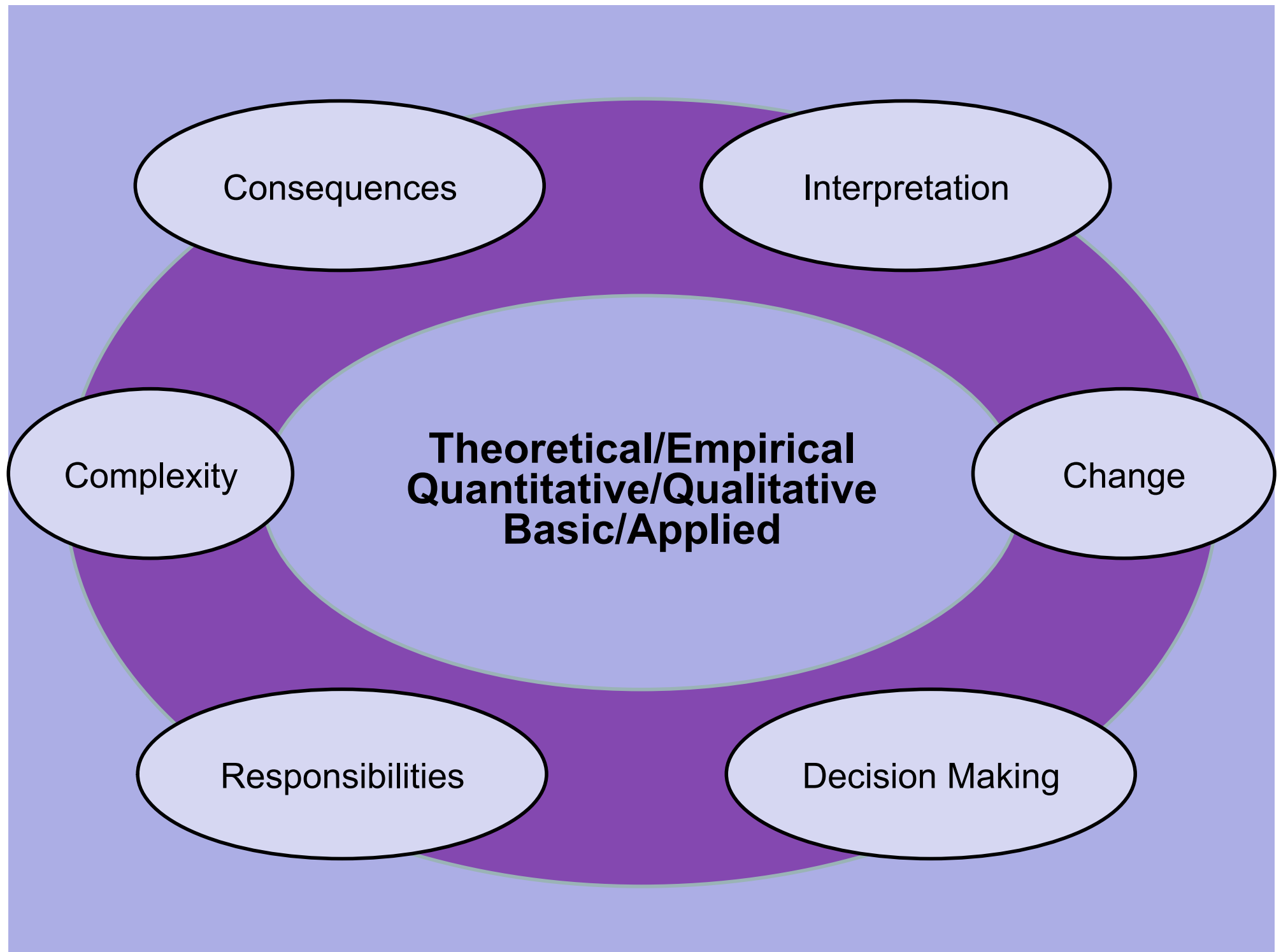
5. Responsibilities

- Foregrounding normative agendas
 - Fostering global and inter-generational justice
 - Safeguarding ethical approaches
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6. Governance and decision making

- Coming to grips with policy processes, understanding political will
 - Making knowledge work
 - Building relevant institutions and structures at different levels
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Consequences

Interpretation

Complexity

**Theoretical/Empirical
Quantitative/Qualitative
Basic/Applied**

Change

Responsibilities

Decision Making



The Transformative Cornerstones

- Bring fundamental, critical social science knowledge to bear on the many and urgent challenges posed by GEC

and

- Challenge the social sciences to take the lead in developing a new integrated, transformative science of global change
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**Next Steps in mobilizing and supporting
the international social science
community to do that:**

Producing the 2013 World Social Science
Report on “*Changing Global Environments*”

Working to establish an international
“Transformations to Sustainability” funding
programme



www.worldsocialscience.org

