Presentation,

Paris, 16th

November 2022

v.7.1

16th November

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PROGRAMME DESIGN FOR TRANSFORMATIONS TO SUSTAINABILITY:

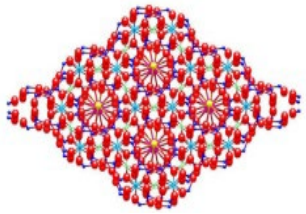
INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM A LEARNING SYNTHESIS OF THE T2S PROGRAMMES

ABOUT EMERALD NETWORK

We work in global S-S-N teams – in this case with both insider and outsider knowledge of T2S

Our work over the past decade has focused on transformations to sustainability from the perspectives and interests of multiple sectors, including CBOs, NGOs, social movements, governments, bilateral and multilateral donors, development banks and philanthropies

While a lot of our work is evaluative, we also work as scholar-activists on transformations strategy, programme design, implementation and research



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FRAMING THE LEARNING SYNTHESIS

1. "A critical synthesis of **analytic and catalytic knowledge** from T2S programme 2 relevant to transformations to sustainability"

2. "A comparative analysis of **T2S programme design** as a means to surface useful insights for the design of future international research programmes which aim to foster integrated, engaged research for transformations to sustainability."

Analytic knowledge: – Understanding:

- What transformational change is
- How transformational change to sustainability is operationalized

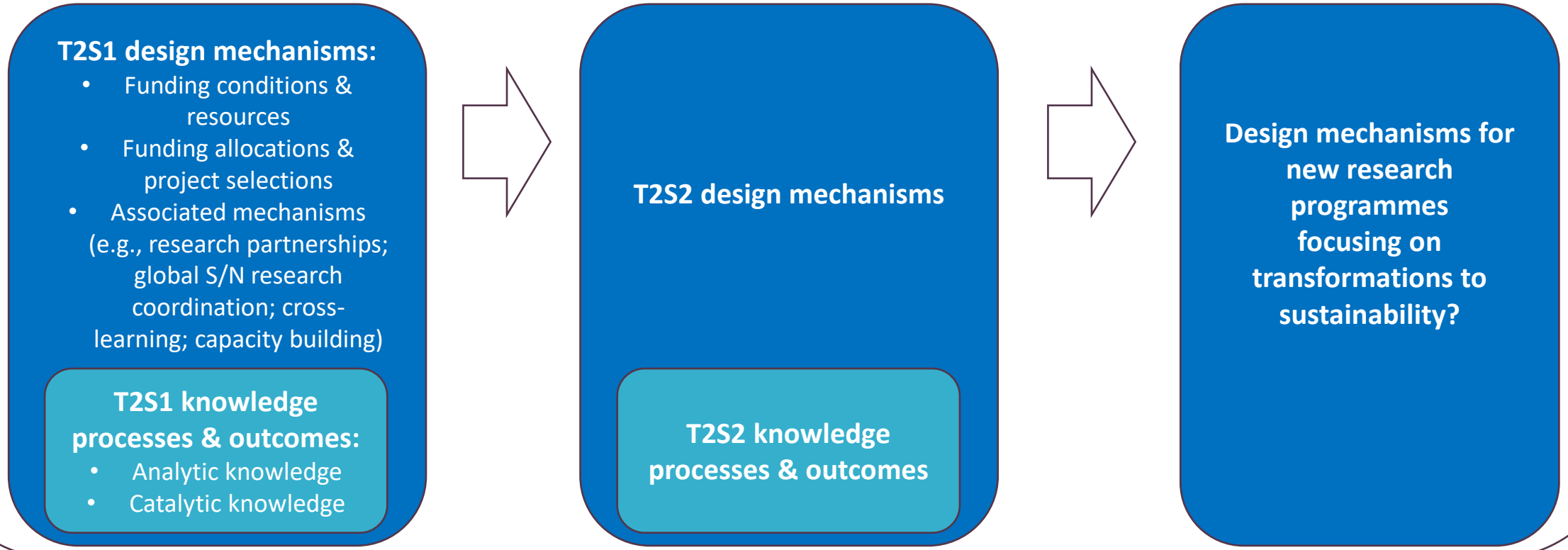
Catalytic knowledge: – Learning about:

- Research as transformation
- How research can be designed and practiced so as to catalyse and/or contribute to transformations?

APPROACH

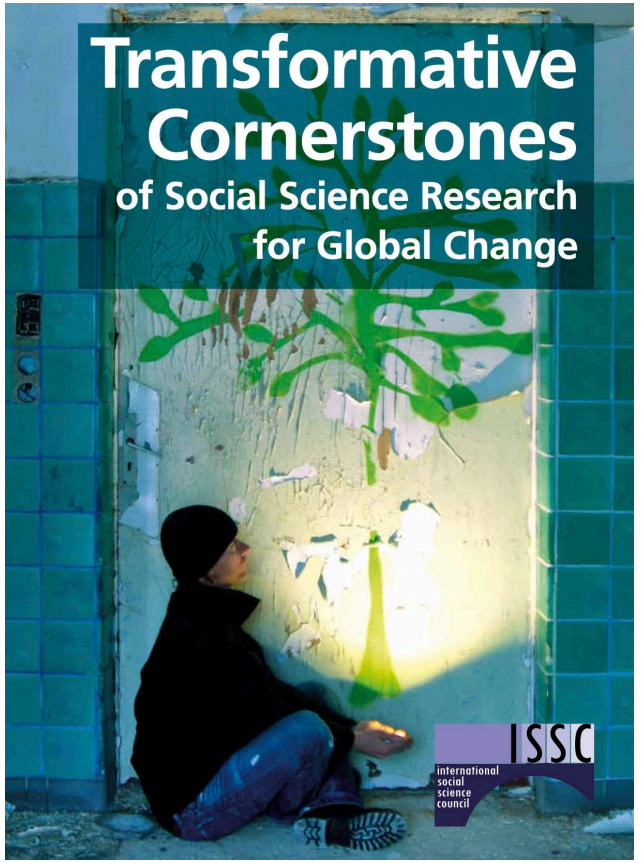
Context (2012 - 2022):

- Developments in the global economic system as enabler or barrier to sustainability
- Developments across the different social and material domains of sustainability
- The framing and politics of transformations to sustainability
- Science policy and practice that is relevant to T2S



CONTEXT: 2012 - 2014

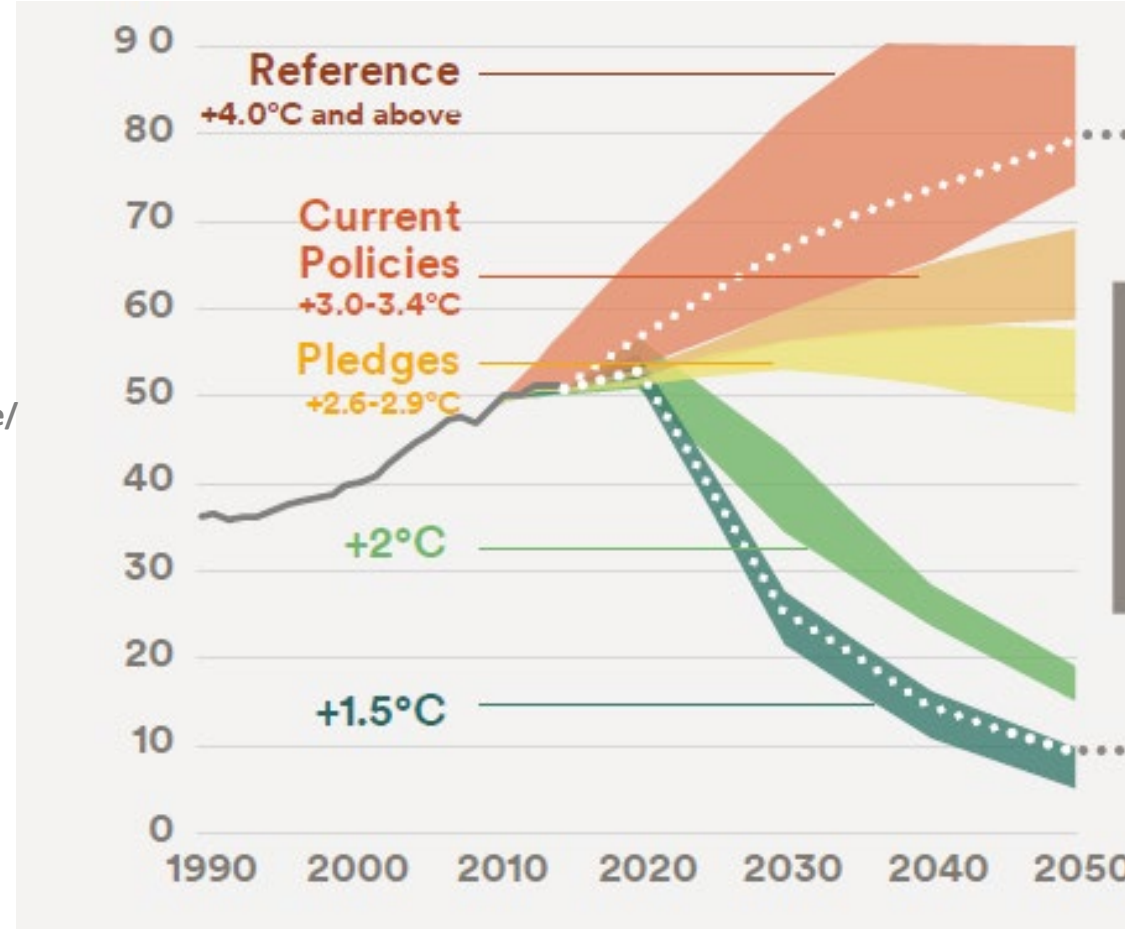
futureearth



SIX TRANSFORMATIVE CORNERSTONES

CORNERSTONE 1 Historical and contextual complexities	Understanding the **political economy of environmental change**
CORNERSTONE 2 Consequences	Exposing the **diverse realities of living with global change**
CORNERSTONE 3 Conditions and visions for change	Understanding **how change happens, at what levels and scales, and in what directions**
CORNERSTONE 4 Interpretation and subjective sense making	Understanding the **personal and collective values, beliefs, assumptions, interests, worldviews, hopes, needs and desires** that underlie people's experiences of and responses to global change processes
CORNERSTONE 5 Responsibilities	Understanding how we can best bring a normative agenda that **foregrounds obligations, duties and responsibilities to the poor, the vulnerable and future generations**
CORNERSTONE 6 Governance and decision making	Social science knowledge is needed on **how decisions are made in the face of uncertainty, what pathways are available for influencing decision making, what determines the success or failure of political agreements and what drives political will**

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE THEN?



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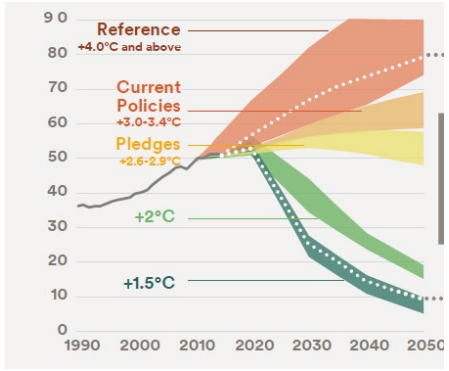
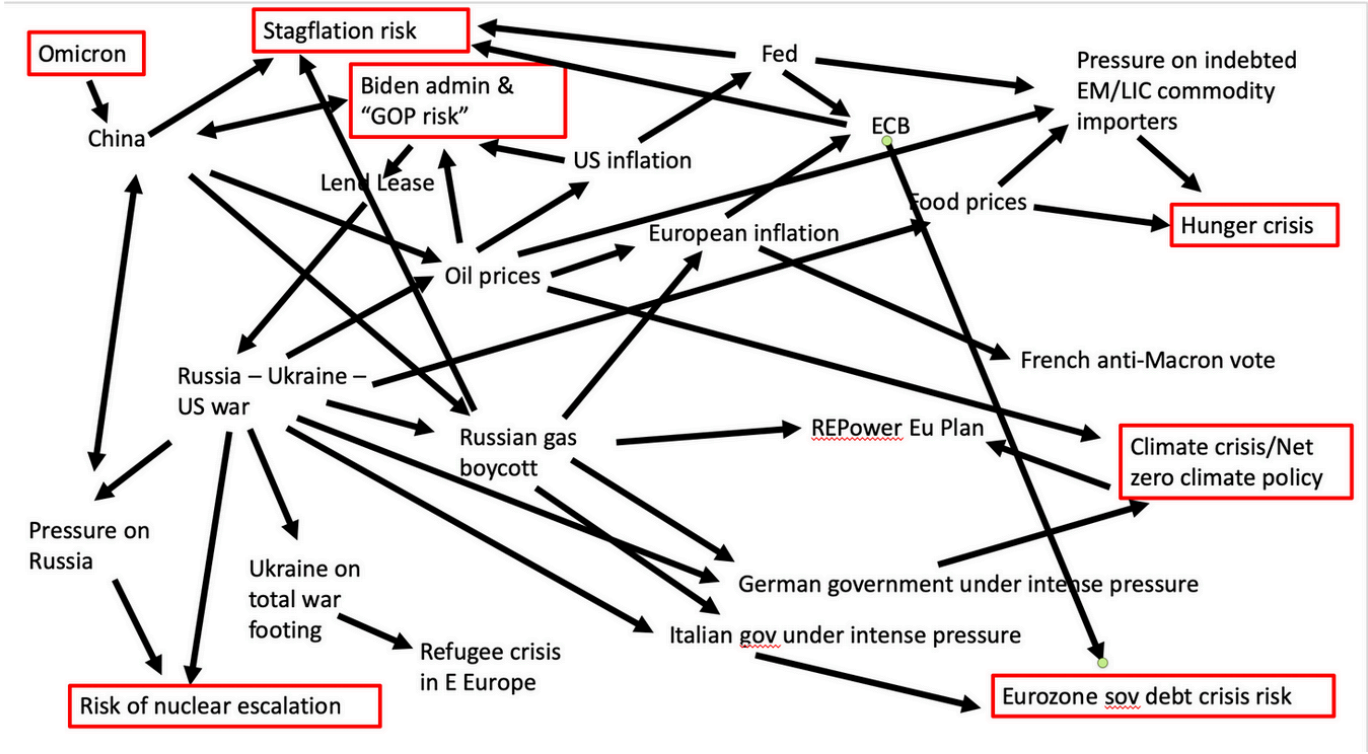
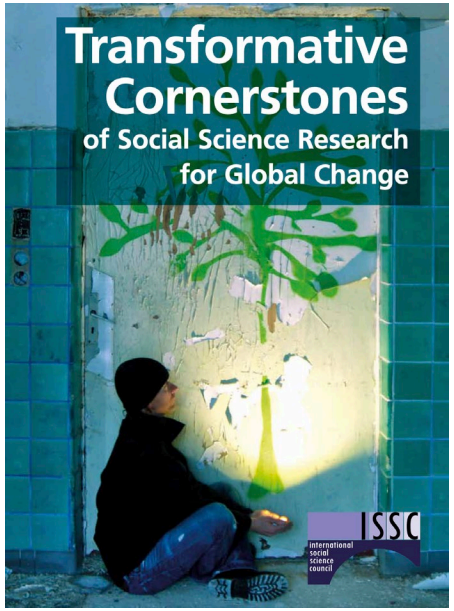


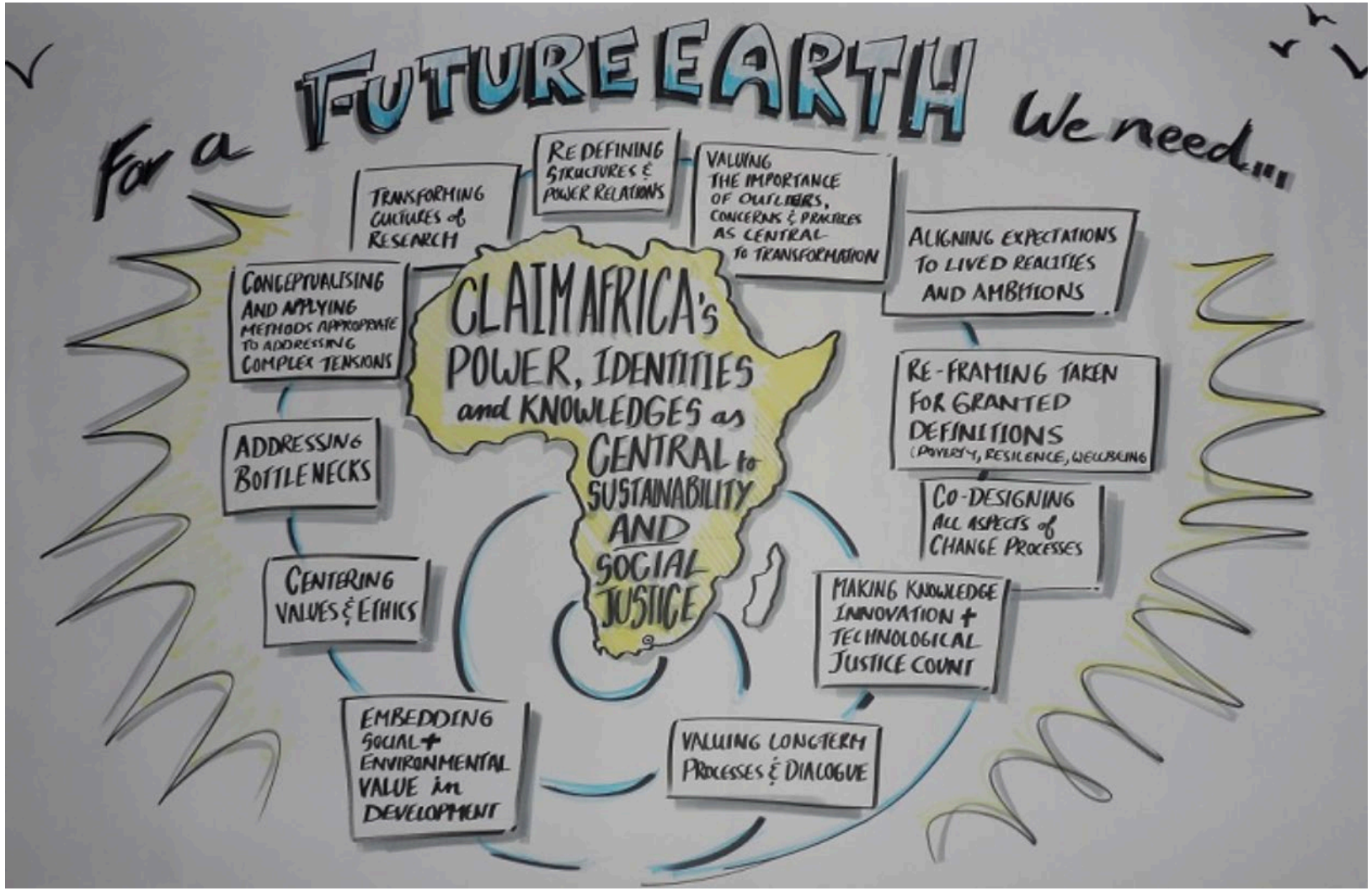
Polycrisis



Permacrisis

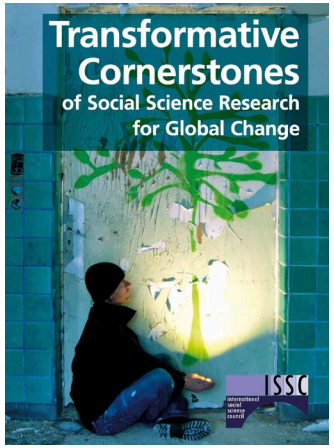
WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE THEN?

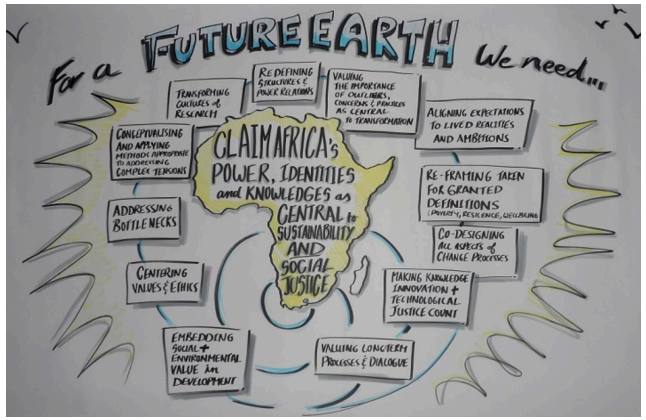




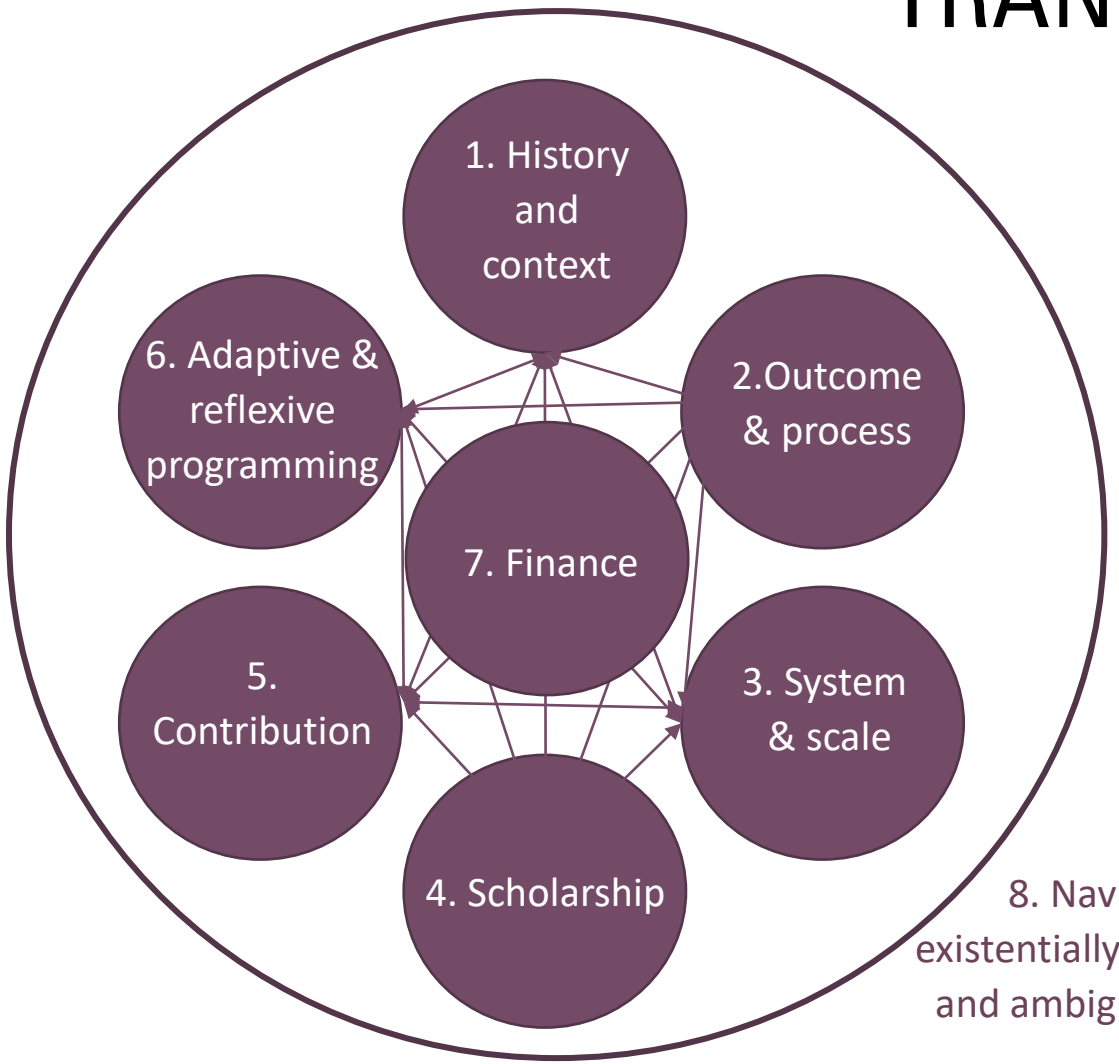
Seedbeds of Transformation, Port Elisabeth, 2018

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE THEN?





EIGHT INTERDEPENDENT PRINCIPLES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMME DESIGN



Why?

- Learning from the value of principles in the design of P1
- Value of principles when designing into complexity (MQ Patton) – supported by our own evaluation experience

Recommended principle 1:

Design with history and context in mind by:

(i) drawing on and learning from contextualised, long-term as well as more recent historical analysis, and

(ii) considering both dominant and emerging patterns and opportunities.”

1: DESIGN WITH HISTORY & CONTEXT IN MIND

Context (2012 - 2022):

- Developments in the global economic system as enabler or barrier to sustainability
- Developments across the different social and material domains of sustainability
- The framing and politics of transformations to sustainability
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T2S1 design mechanisms:

- Funding conditions & resources
- Funding allocations & project selections
- Associated mechanisms (e.g., research partnerships; global S/N research coordination; cross-learning; capacity building)

T2S1 knowledge processes & outcomes:

- Analytic knowledge
- Catalytic knowledge

T2S2 design mechanisms

T2S2 knowledge processes & outcomes

Design mechanisms for new research programmes focusing on transformations to sustainability?

1: DESIGN WITH HISTORY & CONTEXT IN MIND

2: OUTCOME & PROCESS

Recommended principle 2:

Reframe programme outcome and process by:

- Embracing systems complexity, plurality and uncertainty, while recognising the need to bound transformation systems-of-interest and the value of coherent visions of potential futures.
- Agreeing **who** should be involved in framing purpose and directionality within programme design.
- Agreeing who should convene and mediate this process and how should they do this.
- Agreeing how these framing processes – including of systems-of-interest boundaries - might reflect principles of procedural and cognitive as well as remedial and distributional justice.

3: SYSTEM & SCALE

Recommended Principle 3:

Design for **system change** through:

- Combining perspectives, theories, disciplines, knowledges and methodologies,
- The development of individual capacities, collective and relational agency
- Influencing structures and systems that hold power.
- Addressing issues of **scale** including a mix of engagement through bottom up, top down and 'middle out' processes
- Attending to cognitive justice and how it can enable or constrain transformational change.

3: SYSTEM & SCALE

Example:

- Projects across both programmes adopted a multi-scalar conceptualisation of transformation.
- For most the entry point was the local, highlighting the relevance of local structural change and its amplification.
- Some explored transdisciplinary leverage with global decision makers or national governments

4: SCHOLARSHIP

Recommended principle 4:

Deepen the application of transdisciplinary scholarship in programme design by:

- Paying attention to interdisciplinary science by fostering further steps in integrating social science, natural science, arts, humanities
- Recognising that the transformative impact of transdisciplinary methodologies is not inherent to those methodologies, but instead, depends on the manner in which researchers position themselves ethically and normatively in applying these methodologies in their research journeys
- Tap into and value plural forms of knowledge and values as part of navigating the politics of knowledge towards epistemic and cognitive justice.
- Integrate learning and action-oriented scientific research with activism to develop agency and challenge oppressive power and power relations

4: SCHOLARSHIP

Example:

- Across both programmes, the starting point of many of the research projects was the lived reality of marginalised people, with projects designed not only to listen to this knowledge but also to enter into transdisciplinary dialogue with the perspectives and visions of marginalised people.
- Research projects provided evidence of the value of local knowledge but also critiqued how current systems, including policy at a national and global level, exclude the visions that marginalised peoples have for their future or make it very difficult for marginalised people to live into their visions for themselves.
- Projects paid attention to knowledge, including whose knowledge has power and helps shape policy, as a core dimension of decolonisation, which some scholars conceptualise as cognitive or epistemic justice.

5: CONTRIBUTION

Recommended principle 5:

Design for contribution to wider transformational processes by:

- Distinguishing between the transformation system-of-interest and the role and positioning of research including social science in contributing to this transformation.
- Recognising that a key contribution of social science includes decolonising knowledge and contributing to cognitive justice.
- Entering into dialogue with the perspectives and visions of marginalised people, while also mediating these perspectives into broader transformations systems.

Example:

Some projects saw themselves as making a small contribution to a range of transformation processes; whereas others sought to take full account of transformative systems

6: ADAPTIVE & REFLEXIVE PROGRAMMING

Recommended principle 6:

Transform programming design, monitoring, evaluation and learning by:

- Supporting emergent and adaptive programming through built in learning cycles, reflexive use of theory of transformational change, and flexibility in contracting processes.
- Supporting a broadened set of transdisciplinary research team roles, and the development of cognitive, emotional and agency capacity at both individual, project and programme levels.
- Designing for experimentation.

Example:

Both programmes highlighted the value of designing for single, double and triple-loop learning as part of developing, implementing and improving alternatives, model solutions/ prototypes and addressing resistance to change

7: FINANCE

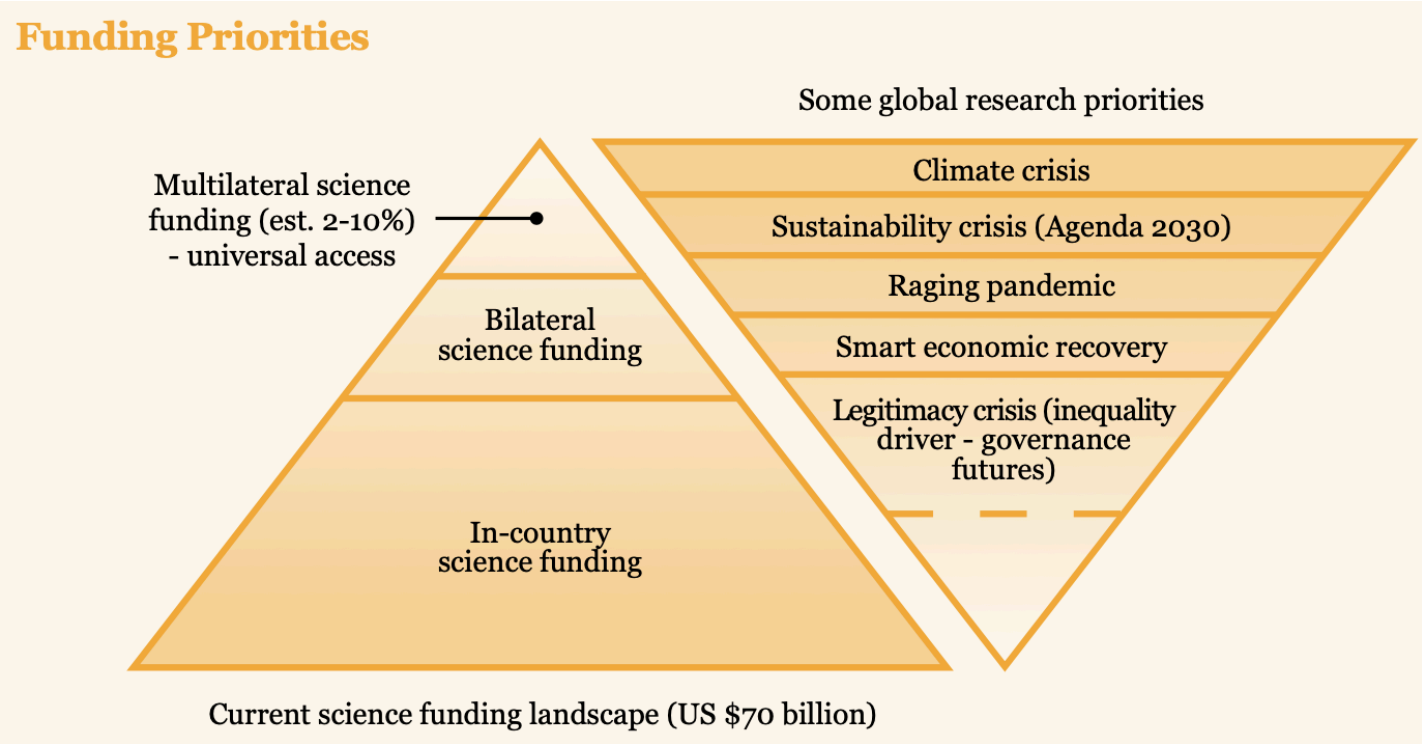
Recommended principle 7:

Transform finance towards transdisciplinary research by:

- Ensuring that science funding systems globally maximise the contribution of science to broader transformative processes rather than centring the role of science per se.
- Providing long-term funding support to ensure effective contribution to transformational processes, within a framework of adaptive and reflexive programming.
- Providing adequate long-term funding for programme coordination across the whole programme cycle and including cross-project and cross-programme learning
- Radically increasing support for scientific research, capacities and infrastructure in the Global South, and for international collaboration led by partners located in the South

7: FINANCE

- Tempering the appeal and potential hubris of big bet, mission oriented programmes in the light of this recommended set of eight design principles
- Mixing ‘big bets’ with multiple, smaller and more rapid experimental investments that support all transdisciplinary partners.

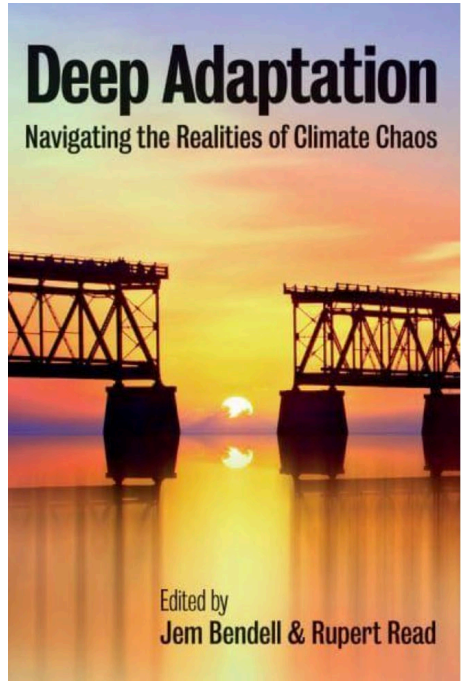


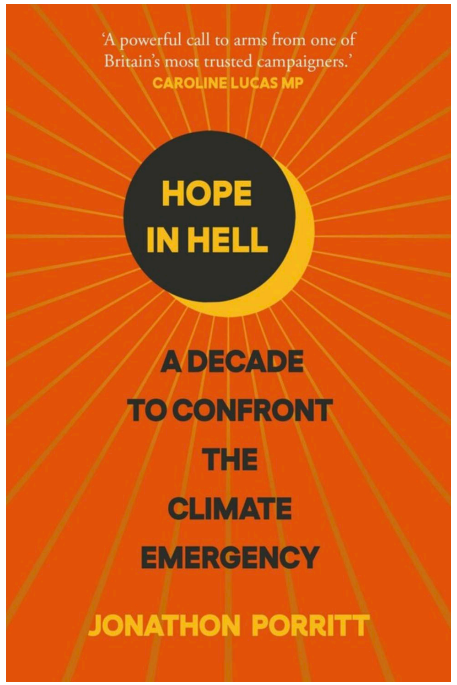
8: NAVIGATING EXISTENTIALLY CHALLENGING AND AMBIGUOUS TIMES

Recommended principle 8:

Invest in institutional practices which engender hope and support within science funding bodies by creating spaces and opportunities in which to

- Reflect together on the existential nature of current challenges
- Embrace the unknown and unknowable, with care and hope
- Factor arising insights into research programme design





QUESTIONS FOR THE SMALL GROUP EXERCISE

1. Which of these principles resonate with your project experience? Please provide evidence/ examples.

2. Beyond your project, which of the remaining principles resonate with you?

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