ISSC Activities Report, 2017

This document provides an update on the activities of the secretariat and the ISSC since the 30th General Assembly held in Oslo, Norway, in October 2016. The report of activities presented there, entitled “Global, Relevant, Open – our portfolio”, includes longer descriptions of ISSC activities, information about co-sponsored programmes, as well as key results for the years 2013-2016. This report be read here:


Secretariat

1. The Merger Transition Process
   Following joint strategic reflections with the International Council for Science (ICSU), the ISSC Executive Committee took a resolution in 2016 to engage the organisation resolutely in preparing a merger process with ICSU for the creation of a new, single global council for the social and natural sciences. The priority given to consultations with members, the development of the organisational strategy for the new Council, and the preparation of meetings associated with the merger process - including a joint ISSC–ICSU General Assembly in October 2016, two joint meetings of the Executives, two meetings of the Strategic Working Group and the Transition task Force, an Extraordinary ISSC General Assembly and a second ISSC-ICSU Joint Meeting in October 2017 - has impacted on the secretariat. All ongoing scientific activities were maintained and organisational commitments respected.

2. Human Resources
   In 2016, the ISSC and ICSU Executives agreed not to hire additional staff until the joint deliberations about the merger were finalised. The ISSC Secretariat currently comprises seven full-time staff and one senior adviser.

   Two positions were filled in 2017:

   • Anda Popovici joined the Secretariat as an Administrative Assistant for the Secretariat and for the Transformations to Sustainability programme, and
   • Cleo Baskin as a Programme Assistant to support the 2018 WSS Forum.

   Hibaq Dougsiyeh joined the Secretariat for a three-month communications internship, supporting the Communications Officer with website content management, social media and blogging for the T2S programme.
ISSC Publications

3. Experts publication
In April 2017 the ISSC launched the 'Experts: Past, Present, Future' online publication in collaboration with Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies Potsdam (IASS) and the Material Cultures of Energy project at Birkbeck College, University of London. The publication, which is the first output of the Futures Past: Experts, Development and Sustainability conference held on 27–29 April 2016 at IASS, Potsdam, features 10 blogs on the topic of expertise on sustainability and energy from the 19th century to the present day. Authors include Libby Robin, Frank Trentmann, John Toye and Fredrik Albritton Jonsson. A book resulting from the conference will be published in 2018.

Url: https://experts-past-present-future.net/

4. Migrations publication
Following the 'On the Move' conference organized in October 2016 in Oslo, Norway, a number of speakers have submitted short pieces which have been published as a series of blogs from September 2017. Contributing authors include Saskia Sassen, Anna Triandafyllidou, Knut Kjeldstadli and Alberto Cimadamore, all of whom were speakers at the meeting. Several ISSC Fellows have also contributed pieces for the publication, including Aliyu Barau and Manase Chiweshe.

Url: https://medium.com/people-on-the-move

Scientific Activities

5. World Social Science Forum 2018 - Security and Inequality for Sustainable Futures
The ISSC World Social Science Fora provide a platform for showcasing and debating the world’s best, most creative social science contributions with a wide set of stakeholders and in areas of major scientific and societal interest. They aim to shape global research agendas, energise the further development of innovative research, and assist with its effective application to society.

The 2018 WSS forum on “Security and Equality for Sustainable Futures” is co-organised with the Science Council Japan and hosted by Kyushu University. It will take place in Fukuoka, Japan, on 25–28 September 2018. The WSS Forum Executive Committee is chaired by Professor Kazuo Miyamoto (Vice-President, Kyushu University). The Scientific Programme Committee comprises 21 international experts and is chaired by Elisa Reis, ISSC Vice-President for Scientific Planning and Review.

The programme will include four plenary sessions, 15 invited sessions, and up to 90 parallel and networking sessions. The call for panels generated 168 proposals. A call for individual papers will open in December 2017.

Url: http://www.wssf2018.org/
6. **World Social Science Report 2016 - Challenging Inequalities: Pathways to a Just World**

The ISSC has produced four World Social Science Reports (WSS Report) addressing important societal and research challenges, taking stock of social science capacities and contributions, and making recommendations for future research, policy and practice. All Reports have been co-published with UNESCO, and with OECD (2013) and IDS (2016). The editorial responsibility of the WSS Reports is carried by the ISSC.

The publication of the 2016 WSS Report successfully concluded 18 months of work with more than 100 authors from over 40 countries. With a thoroughly multidimensional approach to understanding inequalities, the 2016 WSSR reviews current trends worldwide, assesses responses and policies, and proposes seven priorities for a global research agenda on inequalities. With almost twenty international presentations, its use as reference document in international meetings, and 56 media mentions, the 2016 WSS Report has generated a bigger international response than previous editions.

- Several events in 2017 have served to present the WSS Report to new audiences and spark debate about the publication:
  - Side event at the 55th session of the Commission for Social Development, New York. Speakers included Daniela Bas (Director, Division for Social Policy & Development, UN DESA); H.E. Pauline Irène Nguene, Minister of Social Affairs, Cameroon; Dr Ndri Assie-Lumumba, Professor at Cornell University, NY; Nada Al-Nashif, Assistant Director-General, Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO; Cesar Alierta, Global Advisor of the UN’s SDG Fund for Digital Education and Sustainable Development; and Naqesh Kumar, Director, Division for Social Development, ESCAP. (3 February 2017)
  - WSS Report Director Melissa Leach (IDS) was invited to present the Report to UK’s Economic and Social Science Research Council’s international development advisory group. (17 February 2017)
  - Presentation by Dendev Badarch (UNESCO, Director Social and Human Science Sector) and John Crowley (UNESCO SHS) at the 1st Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Asia-Pacific on ‘building inclusive societies’, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (20-23 March 2017)
  - WSS Report Director Melissa Leach (IDS) led a panel on interdisciplinarity and inequality research at the London International Development Centre’s Biennial conference. (27 April 2017)
  - Mathieu Denis presented the Report during a workshop organised by Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP), at Social Policy, Inequality, and Poverty in Post-Socialist Societies, in St Petersburg, Russia. (13 June 2017)
  - Session on the Report at the at the 69th Annual Congress of the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science, chaired by Elisa Reis (ISSC Vice-President for Science), with presenters Mathieu Denis and Ricardo Paes de Barros (Chief Economist of the Ayrton Senna Institute), and commentator Helena B. Nader (President of the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science). (24 July 2017)
  - Report Director John Gaventa presented the Report in a session at the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) Nordic Conference 2017, in Bergen, Norway. The session was chaired by Julia Schöneberg (EADI/University of Kassel, Germany) and included Alberto D. Cimadamore, University of Bergen, and Scientific Director, CROP, and Laura Camfield, University of East Anglia. (21-23 August 2017)
  - Session on the Report at the 18th Brazilian Congress of Sociology, organized by the Brazilian Sociological Society in Brasilia. ISSC vice-president Elisa Reis presented the Report, with additional input by Simon Schwartzman (Senior Fellow of the Research
Institute on Labor and Society, IETS, and former president of the Brazilian governmental agency for geography and statistics (IBGE)) and Flavia Biroli (University of Brasilia, chair of the Research Network on Democracy and Inequalities, DEMODE).

- Following an approach from the Research and Policy Advice Network for the German presidency of the G20, two articles from the Report have been posted on www.g20-insights.org as recommended background reading on inequality for G20 members.
- The Report was featured in at least 56 press articles worldwide, including in national press in the following countries: Afghanistan, Cuba, Colombia, Dominican Republic, India, Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela and Zimbabwe. It was also covered by theafricaneews.net and caribeannews.net.
- To date, we are aware of 17 citations of the Report in academic journals. In the eleven months following publication of the Report, it was downloaded in full a total of 18,278 times. The executive summaries in French, Spanish and English were also downloaded frequently over the same period, with each version having been downloaded over 4,000 times. The Spanish translation of the Summary is by far the most-downloaded version (7,152 downloads).

URL: [http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002458/245825e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002458/245825e.pdf)

7. Transformations to Sustainability

The Transformations to Sustainability (T2S) programme, launched in 2014 for an initial period of four years, saw the ISSC take on a more active role in supporting research on societal challenges. With funding from the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the T2S programme promotes, coordinates and finances research on the complex processes of social transformation that will be needed to achieve a more just and sustainable world. Each of the three funded research projects ('Transformative Knowledge Networks' or TKNs) is led by a social scientist and involves researchers from multiple disciplines, sectors of society and regions of the world. The outputs of the programme will form the basis of an openly accessible set of knowledge resources on social transformations that should inform the development of solutions to sustainability problems well beyond the formal lifespan of the programme. The programme is an ISSC contribution to the work of Future Earth and has already had significant success in leveraging new funding for social science research on transformations.

7.1 Steering Committee composition

The membership of the programme Steering Committee was renewed in the second half of 2016. In consultation with the Steering Committee members, six new members were appointed by the ISSC Executive Committee. The 14-member panel has representation from the social and natural sciences, the humanities, key ISSC partners (Future Earth and UNESCO) and non-governmental organisations. The committee will have a physical meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 31 Nov – 1 December 2017.

[https://transformationsstosustainability.org/about-the-programme/steering-committee/](https://transformationsstosustainability.org/about-the-programme/steering-committee/)

7.2 Midterm programme review
The ISSC commissioned an independent midterm review of the T2S programme for self-evaluation and learning purposes. The consultancy company Firetail performed the review between December 2016 and May 2017. The full report is available on request. The conclusions of the review were largely positive, indicating that the programme is unique in the funding landscape and appreciated by the wider community of research funders and transformations researchers, and that it has already achieved significant impact.

The main recommendations of the evaluation report were as follows:

- ‘Clarify, reviewing and communicating the intended long-term impact of the programme.’ This is being addressed in the development of the programme communications and engagement strategy and also in the plans for development of a second phase of T2S.
- ‘Review T2S’s communications strategy for the remainder of the programme.’ The ISSC has been dedicating more resources to communications and engagement: see 7.3 below.
- ‘Secure additional funds to maximise the value of investment and programme activities to date.’ Programme sustainability is being discussed with Sida (see below).
- ‘Keep the membership of the Steering Committee under review.’ Attention has been paid to maintaining the diversity of disciplines, sectors and geography represented in the Steering Committee.

7.3 Communications

- Communications activities under the T2S programme have been stepped up. A programme flyer has been published and a website for the programme was launched in August 2017. The website presents resources created under the programme in a format that allows for searching by topic or keyword, and includes profiles of researchers involved in the programme. To date, it has featured 11 opinion pieces and blogs from programme researchers and others.
- A communications strategy is being developed for the programme, and will be presented to the Programme Steering Committee in November 2017.

Url: www.transformationstosustainability.org

7.4 Transformative Knowledge Networks (TKNs) and activities

The three funded projects (Transformative Knowledge Networks/TKNs) are currently midway through their three-year lifespan (2016–2018). In general, the ISSC is very satisfied with their progress. Particularly noteworthy are numerous cross-TKN activities, ranging from mutual attendance of project workshops to joint writing of papers, a result of the emphasis the programme has given to building a community of practice and to increase support to early career researchers and low- to middle-income country researchers to participate in joint activities.

The TKNs all started activities approximately four months later than expected due to administrative delays. The secretariat anticipates allowing the TKNs an extension until April 2019, conditional on funding of a second phase of the programme by Sida (see 7.7 below).

Two major programme activities in 2017 are:

a) Transformations 2017 conference, “Transformations in Practice”, Dundee, Scotland, 30/8–1/9/17: A total of 14 speed talk sessions featured work from the programme. Susi Moser, Senior Adviser to the programme, gave a keynote presentation and speed talk.
The ISSC convened a very well-attended practice session on the theme of ‘**Accelerating social change for the 1.5°C Challenge**’, and the ACKNOWL-EJ TKN organized a one-day pre-conference workshop.

**b) 4th Transformative Knowledge Workshop**, Buenos Aires, 26/11–30/12/17: The annual workshop will focus on sharing and advancing methodologies for engaging with non-academic partners in research. The workshop has been designed by a committee of members of each TKN and ISSC staff, and will be attended by five members of each TKN. The workshop will be hosted by the Argentinian partners of the PATHWAYS TKN.

7.5 Knowledge synthesis and dissemination

One of the main objectives of the ISSC’s Transformations to Sustainability (T2S) programme is to synthesize and disseminate co-produced, integrated knowledge for sustainability. The ISSC has approached and reached an agreement with the journal *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability (COSUST)* and their publishers, Elsevier, to introduce a standing series of review papers on transformation-related topics to the regular bi-monthly COSUST issues. From this series of academic review papers, the ISSC will furthermore develop ‘Knowledge Briefs’ targeted at non-specialist (practitioner and policy) audiences. The programme team is working to produce the first COSUST papers and associated knowledge briefs in 2018.

7.6 Belmont Forum–NORFACE Collaborative Research Action on Transformations to Sustainability

The ISSC’s T2S programme inspired the [Belmont Forum–NORFACE Collaborative Research Action on Transformations to Sustainability](#), which generated 14.5m EUR in commitments from 17 funders, including 3.5m EUR from the European Commission. With funding of 500k EUR from Sida, the ISSC is participating in the programme to support researchers in low- and lower-middle-income countries to participate in the research consortia. Of the 155 eligible outline proposals received, 40 were invited to proceed to full proposal stage, of which 26 involve applicants for ISSC-Sida funding.

7.7 Programme development

In mid-2017 Sida invited the ISSC to draft a proposal for an extension of the T2S programme. The secretariat has submitted a proposal for an initial two-year extension of the programme and anticipates a decision from Sida in November. If accepted, the secretariat will be in a position to concentrate on increasing the impact of the existing projects and programme activities, while participating in the Belmont Forum–NORFACE programme.

8. **World Social Science Fellows programme**

*Between 2012 and 2016, the ISSC, with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), led an international scientific ‘fellows’ programme designed to build a new generation of social scientists willing to help solve global priority problems that have a particular relevance for low- to middle-income countries.*

- The Fellows programme ended in 2016 with the publication of a report: [Url](http://www.worldsocialscience.org/activities/world-social-science-fellows-programme/fellows_report/)
• The Secretariat continues to manage a mailing list for the programme, to share opportunities and news (conference participation, Fellows’ publications and appointments, etc.), which are also recorded on the ISSC website. The group represents a pool of excellent early career scientists that the ISSC regularly mobilizes.
• In 2017, WSS Fellows have thus far published 9 (co-)authored articles and one book chapter, and edited one book.
• Fellow Aliyu Barau was selected to join the Scientific Steering Committee of the Cities and Climate Change Science Conference: Fostering new scientific knowledge for cities based on science, practice and policy, which takes place 5-7 March 2018 in Edmonton, Canada.
• Fellow Carolina Adler was appointed Executive Director of the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI).

9. **Global Initiative for Trainings in Transdisciplinarity**

The ISSC was invited by the Belmont Forum in 2013 to take the lead in designing a Global Initiative in Transdisciplinary Training comprising introductory and advanced training material that is focussed on doing science with society to resolve real-world problems, practice-oriented and adaptable to cultural and research contexts. The ISSC sees its role in enhancing coherence and consistency in the understanding, practice, and evaluation of TD research internationally. The ISSC will focus its efforts into working with TD partners around the world to develop trainings, training materials, and a global network of trainers.

• The ISSC, with support from the South African NRF and the US NSF, has taken the lead in convening two TD Research curriculum development events bringing together organisations and experts keen on collaborating in this capacity building initiative. The meetings took place in South Africa in April 2016 and in Paris in February 2017. Key collaborating partners include ICSU, START, the Sustainability Institute (Stellenbosch University), td-Net and TD-Lab (Zurich), the Belmont Forum, Future Earth and the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research.

• A draft proposal for the development of a **Globally-led Transdisciplinary Research Training Initiative for Sustainability** was submitted to the NSF for their review. If accepted, the ISSC /the new Council would take the lead in this collaborative proposal to develop and test a global training initiative to build capacity and the conditions for successful TD research. The role of the ISSC/new organisation would be convene and catalyse resources and partners, incubate and co-ordinate the development phase and the learning and evaluation of the programme, with implementing partners rolling out the globally distributed capacity building efforts.

• The ISSC held various transdisciplinary (TD) training workshops for scientists and practitioners in Africa and Europe.

  - The ISSC has developed and delivered the 2 (of 3) Transdisciplinary Research Training Courses as part of the **Learning Integrated Research in Africa 2030** programme. The ISSC and the Network of African Science Academies partner with ICSU in delivering this Sida supported, grant funded programme. The first training was in Nairobi with 35 early career African scientists applying for the LIRA 2030 research grant, and the second training was held with 31 prospective grantees at Makerere University, in Kampala, Uganda.
  - The ISSC co-organised and facilitated a TD research workshop organised for Future Earth core programmes in November 2016.
10. Stein Rokkan Prize for Comparative Social Science Research

The Stein Rokkan Prize for Comparative Social Science Research is awarded for very substantial and original contributions in comparative social science research. The Stein Rokkan Prize was first awarded in 1981 in honour of Stein Rokkan (1921-1979), who pioneered this type of research. Since 2008, and thanks to the generous support of the University of Bergen, where Stein Rokkan was professor of comparative politics, the Stein Rokkan Prize amounts to $US 5000 and is awarded on an annual basis with and is presented jointly with the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR).

The 2017 Stein Rokkan prize was awarded to Abel Escribà-Folch (Universitat Pompeu Fabra) and Joseph Wright (Penn State University) for their book *Foreign Pressure and the Politics of Autocratic Survival* (Oxford University Press, 2015). The prize jury was unanimous in its decision, noting:

“Escribà-Folch and Wright have written a book that exemplifies the academic virtues that the Stein Rokkan Prize is intended to honour. It asks big questions and it gives bold answers that are informed by rich empirical information, analysed with conceptual, theoretical and methodological flair and rigour. If, as many argue, autocracies are on the rise and democracies in retreat, this book helps to explain why; but it also provides perhaps surprisingly practical insights into what can be done to contain and push back autocracies.”

Url: http://www.worldsocialscience.org/activities/scientific-prizes/