

Three Transformative Knowledge Networks launched byISSC

Three “Transformative Knowledge Networks” will be funded as part of the innovative Transformations to Sustainability Programme, the International Social Science Council (ISSC) announced today. The programme aims to harness the potential of the social sciences to contribute to solving some of the world’s most urgent sustainability challenges by means of a better understanding of the processes of social transformation.

“We need the social sciences in order to address the challenges of global change. Social scientists bring a wealth of knowledge about processes of social transformation that will be critical to dealing with issues of environmental change and sustainability. This programme is pioneering holistic research approaches to sustainability and social justice. It represents a major contribution to the agenda of the Future Earth Programme,” said ISSC President and Programme Steering Committee Chair Alberto Martinelli.

Three networks have been selected for funding following an open call for proposals which generated a tremendous response from researchers all around the world. They will carry out comparative solutions-oriented research projects on needs and opportunities for social transformation in specific locations in view of the enormous challenges posed by environmental change. Each network involves local research partners in at least three countries, including low- and lower-middle income countries, with a view to building capacity for international research cooperation globally. The networks are led by social scientists and mobilize researchers from other scientific domains as well as relevant stakeholders such as civil society organisations, NGOs, the media and policy makers.

“This Programme aims to ensure that the knowledge produced actually gets used to make a difference,” said Mathieu Denis, Executive Director of the ISSC. “We are therefore developing a Global Knowledge Trust – an openly accessible repository of knowledge on social transformations towards sustainability, drawing on the expertise of the extended community of researchers involved in each network”.

Three selected Transformative Knowledge Networks will each receive €850,000 over three years through the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) for the Transformations to Sustainability Programme. They are:

- [The “Transgressive Learning” \(T-Learning\) project](#), led from Rhodes University, South Africa. T-Learning will study communities worldwide that are vulnerable to negative and unjust impacts of human activity on climate and on energy, food and water security to understand what kind of learning can catalyse social change and how this kind of learning can be scaled-up to generate transformations at many levels.
- [The “Transformative pathways to sustainability” \(Pathways\) project](#), led jointly by researchers at the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET), Argentina, and the STEPS Centre at the University of Sussex, UK. This project will explore how to bring about concrete and complementary social, technological and institutional change in ways that balance global demands, local realities, needs for greater social justice and respect for planetary boundaries. Their cases will span three thematic areas: sustainable urban water and waste; low carbon energy transitions for the poor; and sustainable agricultural and food systems for healthy livelihoods.
- [The “Academic-Activist Co-Produced Knowledge for Environmental Justice” project \(ACKnowl-EJ\)](#), led jointly from the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ICTA) at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain, and the Kalpavriksh Environment Action group, India. This group will study the transformative potential of community responses to extractive activities that cause wide-ranging and serious social and environmental impacts and injustices. The network will learn from citizen movements, participatory approaches to environmental politics and new institutional practices born from diverse knowledge

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systems, to empower civil society and to show how alternative visions and possibilities may be born from resistance.

In addition to the three funded networks, other sources of funding are being sought to support a further [five short-listed proposals](#).

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About Transformations to Sustainability

The Transformations to Sustainability Programme was launched by the International Social Science Council in 2014 to mobilize social science knowledge for a more sustainable and just future for people worldwide. The Transformations to Sustainability Programme is financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The call for proposals and grant management for the Transformative Knowledge Networks is supported by the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa.

About the International Social Science Council (ISSC)

The ISSC is an international, membership-based NGO and the primary body representing the social sciences, including economic and behavioural sciences, at an international level. Its mission is to strengthen global social science to help solve global priority problems. Through its members and programmes, the ISSC reaches hundreds of thousands of individual social scientists working across a wide range of disciplines and representing all parts of the world. This global reach enables the ISSC to support and mobilize the full diversity of perspectives and approaches required to generate knowledge that contributes to solving the many urgent challenges facing societies today. The ISSC has developed a dynamic portfolio of activities, including the World Social Science Report, the Transformations to Sustainability Programme, the World Social Science Fellows Programme and the World Social Science Forum, the largest gathering of social scientists of its kind.

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