

Urbanisation and Development in the Face of Climate Change:

A Transdisciplinary Lens

International Conference “Our Common Future“,
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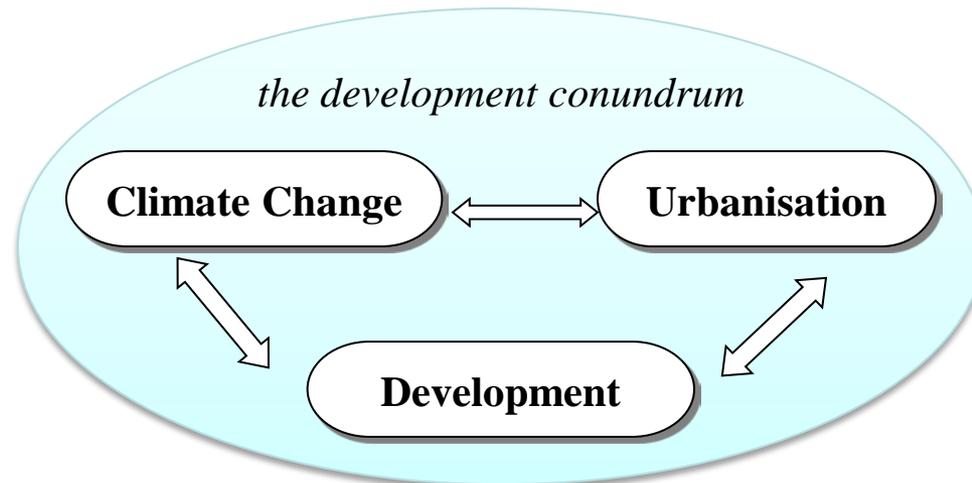
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Presentation Outline

1. Introduction
2. The Spirit of Climate Change Assessments
3. Meta-theory and Transdisciplinarity for Climate Change Response
4. Climate Change and Spirituality
5. Development and Spirituality
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7. Some Closing Remarks

Introduction: Three Vantage Points

- Climate change coincides with rapid global urbanisation
- Climate change calls into question humankind's current development path
- Urbanisation, climate change and (human) development shape the “development conundrum“



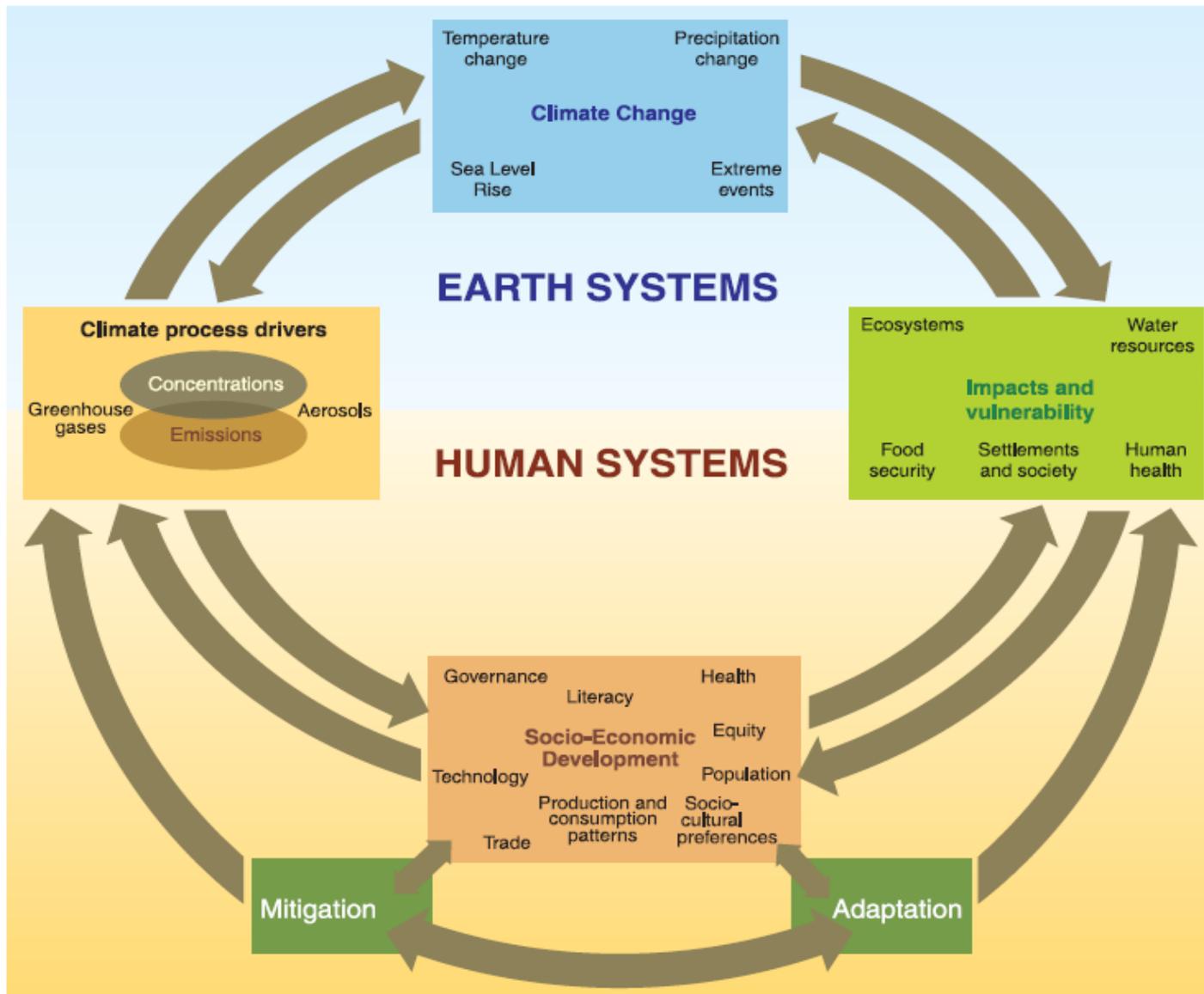
CC challenges contemporary approaches to urban development

“The relationship between energy use, development and climate has renewed the focus of planning analysis and policy on the complexity and uncertainty of environmental, social and economic systems. This is *forcing a reassessment of how planners envisage development* and the scope and appraisal of planning interventions. *Climate change therefore raises profound professional, technical and ethical issues for planners*”
(Davoudi et al. 2009: 7; emphasis added).

2. The spirit of climate change assessments

- CC usually understood as a matter of reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- the industrialized world focuses mainly on setting targets for mitigating CO₂ emissions
- human development, social justice, equity, human and environmental rights played a pivotal role in the negotiations for many governments particularly of developing countries
- Most of the scientific research on climate change has been carried out from a systems perspective

Schematic framework of anthropogenic climate change drivers, impacts and responses



Source: IPCC 2007, Synthesis Report, p. 26

Figure I.1. Schematic framework representing anthropogenic drivers, impacts of and responses to climate change, and their linkages.

3. Meta-theory and Transdisciplinarity

3.1 Blind spots in (urban) research on climate change

- omission of the inter-subjective (cultural) and subjective (psycho-spiritual) realms
- usually researched and proposed are measures to tackle the ***symptoms*** of consumption patterns, but not their foundational ***roots*** or ***causes***
- psychological development, and the role of culture, values, and worldviews is only just beginning to receive attention in climate change research

! Climate change is Cultural Change !

3.2 Meta-theory & Transdisciplinarity

- Climate change: complexity, multi-dimensionality, interrelatedness
- progressive fragmentation of knowledge, hence integration is needed
- principally all these efforts are critical response to the prevalent modernist reductionism

Transdisciplinarity

- seeks to break down traditional disciplinary boundaries and organise 'knowledge around complex heterogeneous domains'
- in moving beyond disciplines, transdisciplinary research attempts to generate synergies and new types of knowledge

4. Climate Change & Spirituality

- Spirituality increasingly seen as an important dimension framing and underlying the notions of and responses to climate change
- knowledge about planetary interconnectedness: climate change challenges us to think differently about human interdependence
- several initiatives are working towards integrating science and religion to address climate change: Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC); The International Society for Science and Religion (ISSR)

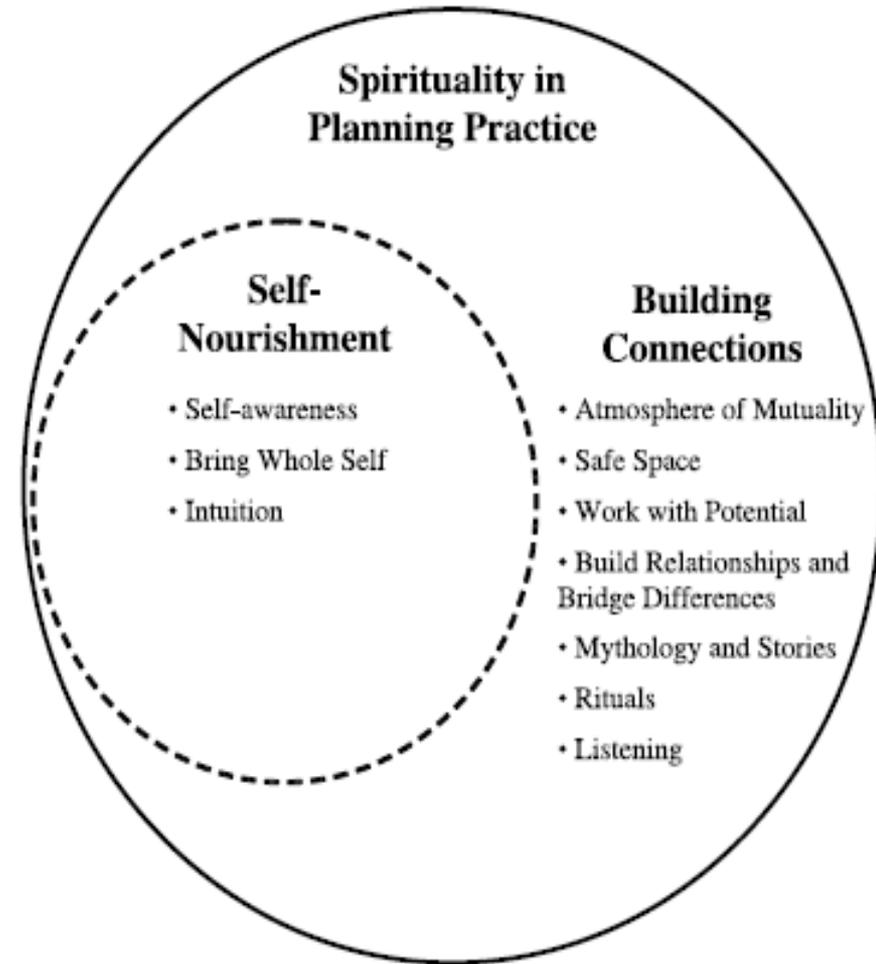
5. Development & Spirituality

- Spirituality intrinsic to human development but a “development taboo“ in contemporary discourse
- Empirical examples of the intrinsic nature of spirituality to development are fairly abundant: Gross National Happiness (Bhutan), Sarvodaya (Sri Lanka), Svadhyaya (India)

“The negative influence of material realism on the quality of modern human life has been staggering. Material realism poses a universe without any spiritual meaning: mechanical, empty, and lonely. For us – the inhabitants of the cosmos – this is perhaps the more unsettling because, to a frightening degree, conventional wisdom holds that material realism has prevailed over theologies that propose a spiritual component of reality in addition to the material one.” (Goswami 1993: 11)

6. Urbanisation/Planning & Spirituality

- “Large modern cities, as centres of human endeavour, tend to regard themselves as centres of the universe and have effectively declared their independence from nature” (Girardet 2008: 5).
- neglect of any link between urbanization or urban development and spirituality
- Spirituality is “profound connectedness”



Spirituality in Planning Practice
(source: Anhorn 2006: 73)

Some Closing Remarks

1. A fresh, new look at the city: the integral city
2. A review of planning theory and practice: from interdisciplinarity to transdisciplinarity?
3. Review of the relationship of humans (as urban dwellers) with nature
4. Review & re-definition of (human) development
5. Transformation(s) at the individual and societal levels