

BRIDGES Rules of Procedure Annex 1



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PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BRIDGES AS A MOST SUSTAINABILITY SCIENCE COALITION

This document is submitted to the consideration of the Bureau of MOST Intergovernmental Council (IGC). It presents a proposal for the establishment of a UNESCO MOST Sustainability Science Coalition, under the name BRIDGES, directly working to implement the refined sustainability science paradigm inaugurated in 2017 with the launch of UNESCO's Guidelines for Sustainability Science in Research and Education.

This document provides a background history and process summary of BRIDGES. The Bureau of MOST Intergovernmental Council (IGC) is invited to examine, discuss and approve the proposal.

I) CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

In the words of the President of the UN General Assembly in 2013, “Achieving sustainable development is the overriding challenge of the 21st century”. The United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development lays out: 1) the global and local challenges humankind is facing with a view to the needed transformation towards sustainable development; and 2) how UN Member States have agreed to address these challenges. In the context of the United Nations there is unanimity that sustainability science, an emergent approach of science concerned with an integrated humanistic view of the main dimensions of sustainable development, can provide a vital contribution to international achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and, more specifically, help to realize the vision set by the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The UNESCO-organized project [Broadening the Application of the Sustainability Science Approach](#) was initiated in October 2015 with support of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (Japan/MEXT) to develop policy guidelines to help Member States harness the potential of sustainability science in their sustainable development strategies. This project aimed to help UNESCO Member States and other stakeholders introduce and reinforce a sustainability science approach to transdisciplinary research and education to enable these sectors to respond more effectively to global challenges. The project was carried out over three symposia organized during a two-year period (2015-2017) to foster dialogue and collaboration among sustainability experts and policy-makers. Based on the joint efforts of UNESCO’s Social and Human Sciences Sector, Natural Sciences Sector, Education Sector and Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific in Jakarta, the project benefited from the guidance of a multidisciplinary steering committee, a drafting sub-committee, and participation of sustainability experts from each of UNESCO’s five regions globally.

The major output of the project was UNESCO’s policy document [Guidelines for Sustainability Science in Research and Education](#) (hereafter SuS Guidelines). As framed in this key document, sustainability science (SuS) should be understood as science both *about* sustainability and *for* sustainability. In other words, SuS involves a two-way process encompassing the study and understanding of complex socio-ecological systems, on the one hand, and the strategic application of knowledge thereby produced towards the design of actions in favor of sustainability on the other hand.

UNESCO’s high-level approach is to promote the SuS Guidelines in dialogue with the national commissions of UNESCO member states, which are in the best position to liaise with relevant government ministries regarding how best to stimulate, in their own national contexts, the principles mapped out in the Guidelines document through individual or coordinated policy initiatives. However, it has been recognized from the start among all key partners involved in the framing of the Guidelines document that high-level, top-down efforts are not sufficient to see these principles achieved in practice. Equally important efforts must also be undertaken to “put legs under” the principles to ensure that they can be realized at various levels in society. This is where BRIDGES comes in as a crucial complementary initiative.

II) BRIDGES ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

In conjunction with the official launch of UNESCO’s SuS Guidelines during the 202nd session of the Executive Board (October 2017), discussions proceeded among selected UNESCO sectors and intergovernmental scientific programmes, as well as other international partners, to explore the potential for establishing a global coalition on sustainability science that would pick up where the project “Broadening the Application of the Sustainability Science Approach” left off. Promising exploratory discussions in 2018 led by the [UNESCO Management of Social Transformations](#) programme, the International Council for Philosophy & Human Sciences ([CIPSH](#)), and the [Humanities for the](#)

[Environment Circumpolar Observatory](#) resulted in a robust multistakeholder process during 2019 to establish the BRIDGES – UNESCO MOST Sustainability Science Coalition (hereafter BRIDGES).

In order to lay both the programmatic and the procedural foundations of BRIDGES as an international coalition for action in sustainability science, UNESCO’s MOST Programme organized a workshop on 5-7 October 2019 in Sigtuna, Sweden, co-organized by the Humanities for the Environment (HfE) Circumpolar Observatory and the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH). This workshop followed two other establishment workshops intended to pave the way for the launch of the BRIDGES coalition in 2020: the first hosted in March 2019 in Mação, Portugal, and the second in [June 2019 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris](#).

III) THE PURPOSE OF BRIDGES

The overriding purpose of BRIDGES is to operationalize the UNESCO SuS Guidelines in a variety of contexts, by connecting diverse communities of knowledge and action throughout societies in project-based activities. BRIDGES aims to harness the capabilities of higher education and research institutions to serve as vital touchstones in transdisciplinary efforts together with international councils of science, intergovernmental science programmes, research and educational networks, key local and national partners from public and private sectors, and from civil society.

Following extensive visioning efforts and robust consensus-building workshops among leading institutional and organizational partners from around the world as part of the 2019 establishment process,¹ the BRIDGES coalition is expected to launch in 2020 and thereby strengthen efforts of UN member states to meet their sustainable development goals and obligations within the Agenda 2030 framework. The objective is to foster sustainability science as a renewed, integrated approach that builds from the Humanities, encompassing the Arts, the Social Sciences and the Natural Sciences, as well as other knowledge domains and communities, based on voluntary and equitable processes of collaboration that prioritize co-design, co-production and co-ownership.

The principal outputs resulting from the strategic visioning and consensus-building deliberations over the course of the three establishment workshops included: 1) an articulation of BRIDGES core principles; 2) identification of strategic priorities guiding the realization of these principles in a portfolio of demonstration projects, pilot activities and capacity-building resources to be endorsed by the new BRIDGES coalition; 3) an identified process for consolidating the decisions reached in principle during the establishment process, as well as a concept outline for the proposed BRIDGES governance structure and a road map for transitional mechanisms and steps leading to the official launch of the coalition in 2020.

¹ Organizing partners of the establishment process include: UNESCO’s Management of Social Transformation Programme (MOST), International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH), Humanities for the Environment Circumpolar Observatory (for the HfE global observatories network), Nordic Network for Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies (NIES). Consulting partners in the establishment process include: Arctic Studies Centre, Liaocheng University; Cappadocia University Environmental Humanities Center; Earth Politics Center, Michel Serres Institute for Resources and Public Goods; National Centre of Scientific Research, Paris; University of Iceland; French National Research Institute for Development (IRD); Future Earth; German Commission for UNESCO; Humanities European Association for Culturally Integrated Landscape Management (APHELEIA); International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS); International Federation for Modern Languages and Literatures (FILLM); International Science Council (ISC); Institut fondamental d’Afrique noire (IFAN); International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences (UISPP); the Kogi People, Columbia; National Library of Lithuania; North Atlantic Biocultural Organization (NABO); Nobel Prize Museum; Shared Studios; Sigtuna Foundation; Stefansson Arctic Institute; Stockholm Resilience Center; Swiss Academic Society for Environmental Research and Ecology (SAGUF), Swiss Academy of Sciences; Tairona Heritage Trust; The Third Pole; UNESCO Chair on Global Understanding, Jena University; UNESCO Chair on Art and Science for the SDGs, ICN Business School; School of Education, University of Bristol; Uppsala University Chair on Climate Change; Mälardalen University; Europa.Blog; and the World Academy of Art and Science.

1) BRIDGES Principles

BRIDGES builds on the refined sustainability science paradigm inaugurated in UNESCO's SuS Guidelines, including the core principles set out in that key document. The six principles in the UNESCO SuS Guidelines are set out in the following terms:

1. *Sustainability Science responds specifically to the **interdependent, complex and mutually reinforcing character** of natural, social and cultural sustainability challenges that are ongoing globally and locally. Sustainable development, as expressed in the United Nations Agenda 2030, is exactly about the interplay of such challenges.*
2. *Sustainability Science aims at mobilizing, generating, disseminating and implementing **knowledge necessary to define and achieve sustainability** as a response to such challenges in the concrete contexts of different geographical and temporal scales. Such knowledge includes new technologies and innovative processes.*
3. *In addition to generating knowledge, Sustainability Science focuses on **solving problems, understanding dilemmas and conflicts of goals and interests**, with a view to move towards more integrated and coherent policy agendas, policy options and foresight scenarios that take into account both short-term and long-term needs.*
4. *Sustainability Science is crosscutting science by nature, having as a major goal to seek complementary **cooperation** between natural and social sciences, the humanities, the arts and, in particular, to ensure the participation of diverse non-academic stakeholders, through a collaborative process of co-design, co-production and co-management.*
5. *Sustainability Science is based on both **academic freedom and academic responsibility** towards societal needs.*
6. *Sustainability Science **requires important new capacities of individual scientists** for integrated critical analysis and foresight; the ability to cope with systems thinking, changing environments, risks and insecurity; and the capacity to recognize and address diverse values as well as conflicts of goals and interests, to empathize and work responsibly and collectively in diverse partnerships. Such capacities need to be strengthened through all forms of education.*

(UNESCO SuS Guidelines, 2-3)

The BRIDGES establishment workshops also saw consensus on five additional key principles that help to define the distinctive value and approaches BRIDGES will bring to sustainability science that are not otherwise programmatically addressed within the field.

1. *The BRIDGES Coalition is humanities-centered but not limited to the humanities. We value contextualized and diverse approaches to sustainability and we acknowledge that persistent challenges are often complex, yielding sometimes contradictory responses. We encourage robust debate in efforts to meet these challenges.*
2. *The BRIDGES partners understand the Earth not solely as a planetary system, nor as a reservoir of resources, but as a web of meanings and interactions that is inherently multilayered and pluralistic.*
3. *The BRIDGES Coalition is committed to a critical understanding of sustainability that emphasizes the diversity of its subjects, objects and timelines.*
4. *BRIDGES will work to establish a world of new relationships, based on convergent understandings and co-design among the co-inhabitants of the Earth.*
5. *The BRIDGES partners are committed to an ethical approach to resource mobilization and use.*

2) A BRIDGES Roadmap: Development of Strategic Capacity-Building Resources and Endorsement of Projects/Activities

Concept notes covering presumptive areas of strategic engagement (advocacy, communication, education, training, sites, principles and governance) were prepared in advance of the third workshop in Sigtuna by working groups formed during the second establishment workshop in Paris and which shaped the last workshop's consensus-building discussions. Coalition members participated in working groups of particular relevance to the priorities and interests of their respective partnering organizations, collectively assessing opportunities for potential synergies in future collaborations. Inputs from the working groups allowed the BRIDGES partners to build a vision and articulate the underlying principles motivating the establishment of BRIDGES consonant with the precedents of major international agreements such as the Paris Agreement, Agenda 2030, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), including its subsequent protocols. These documents also enabled the partners to identify the unique and necessary benefit the coalition can offer in its efforts to bridge and synergize with existing international programs devoted to the overarching goals and approaches of sustainability science as outlined in the UNESCO SuS Guidelines.

The 2019 establishment process called not only for the framing of an effective governance model for BRIDGES but also for the shaping of a viable plan enabling the coalition to translate its guiding principles into meaningful action for transformative change. There was broad agreement among the coalition's founding member entities that BRIDGES should develop an action framework, starting in 2020, that brings together diverse partners to design and implement a range of territory-based pilot projects and branded events, combining different knowledge sources and traditions and based on an underlying expectation of equitable collaboration and co-ownership among academic and non-academic partners.

Proposals under consideration in the launching phase of BRIDGES are being submitted by the current members of the coalition and their identified partners. A number of proposals have already been evaluated by the founding partners (UNESCO MOST, CIPSH and Humanities for the Environment) in an initial round at the end of 2019 and a second round is expected to take place during the first half of 2020. The explicit evaluation criteria are identified in Annex 1.

A preliminary selection has been made from these proposals of high-quality, territory-based projects and activities that are judged to be sufficiently mature and well-resourced; these project will be in an inaugural portfolio of BRIDGES-endorsed projects when the coalition launches officially in autumn 2020. An overview of the project proposals recommended for endorsement and other proposals returned for further development based on reviewer feedback is available in Annex 1.

Further rounds of proposals for projects and activities seeking BRIDGES endorsement will be open for submission following the formal launch of the coalition in 2020, with appropriate mechanisms instituted to facilitate this process. Applications for admittance to the coalition to be reviewed and considered by the coalition's executive council on a regular basis. A mechanism will be identified in the BRIDGES statutes to enable this process.

BRIDGES will promote a general conceptual framework for transformation to sustainability rooted in transdisciplinary approaches to research and education. The challenge is to support sustainable and inclusive territorial development capable of realizing profound transformations that cannot be achieved solely through the application of technical solutions such as renewable energy, better water management, innovative building, etc. Rather, such solutions must be part of a comprehensive approach rooted in *processes* of social, economic, institutional and cultural transformation that can enable territorial stakeholders to question, critically examine, and possibly rethink not only longstanding or prevailing ideas about territorial integrity, but also their own attitudes, practices and

behaviour as these may impact the territory. Such a meta-perspective requires continuous analysis and evaluation of prevailing modes of stakeholder participation in knowledge co-production as well as ongoing assessment of the fora and mechanisms that serve to bring distinct domains, traditions and communities of knowledge together (sometimes in hybrid forms). This includes technical knowledge about various systems, institutionally embedded knowledge concerning policy and governance, and scientific knowledge about how particular ecosystems, habitats and social environments function, as well as informal knowledge, knowledge embedded in communities of purpose and practice, and indigenous knowledge where any of these may be applicable.

The crucial aim is to enable multiple kinds of knowledge to be brought together without forcing them to clash or without resorting to false choices between them. The BRIDGES coalition aims to offer such a space.

3) MOST IGC : GOVERNANCE AND THE PROCESS OF LAUNCHING OF BRIDGES

The BRIDGES proposal, including background history and process summary, is hereby submitted for formalization within the MOST Programme.

The Bureau is invited to recommend to the Intergovernmental Council at its Extraordinary Session scheduled in September 2020 in Paris at UNESCO Headquarters, to approve the official launch in 2020 of BRIDGES — a UNESCO MOST Sustainability Science Coalition.

The Bureau is invited to welcome the ambition for BRIDGES to be supported by an autonomous global secretariat representing the interests of the founding partners, working effectively as a cohesive and strategically focused network of networks to promote and operationalize UNESCO's Guidelines for Sustainability Science in Research and Education.

Efforts to identify an institutional host for the BRIDGES secretariat were initiated in late 2019 and are advancing in early 2020, with the aim of concluding negotiations regarding local measures necessary to support and operate the secretariat for an initial four-year period by end 2020. In the meantime, clarifying discussions are expected to be taking place between the MOST Secretariat, the appropriate national commission of UNESCO and the proposed host institution regarding the ambitions to establish a BRIDGES secretariat and efforts to strengthen the secretariat through formal mechanisms.

The BRIDGES proposal is further submitted to the Scientific Advisory Committee for its consideration in order to enable it to advise the IGC and its Bureau. The Scientific Advisory Committee has received a summary description for each of the projects and activities to be included in an inaugural portfolio of BRIDGES-endorsed projects, as well as for project proposals returned for further development.

Annex 1 : Projects approved for endorsement*

Project title / Project bearers
LODET-CULT: CULTURAL INTEGRATED LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT OF LOW-DENSITY TERRITORIES / The International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH)
“Response to Threats to Science and Heritage in Greenland” (RESPONSE) / City University of New York ; Memorial University of Newfoundland Greenland National Museum and Archives ; University of Greenland /Ilisimatusarfik; Archaeological Inst. Iceland University of Iceland Stefansson Arctic Institute University of Stirling; University of Edinburgh; University of Glasgow; National Museum of Denmark; University of Aarhus; Bifrost Program.
Gateway to the Atlantic: Climate change threats to heritage and island sustainability in the Northern Isles of Scotland / University of Bradford Bradford Visualising Heritage; University of the Highlands and Islands ; William Paterson University; City University of New York; Swandro-Orkney Coastal Archaeology Trust, Historic Environment Scotland; Rousay Egilsay and Wyre Development Trust, Rousay Heritage Trust.

Annex 2: Project proposals returned for further development – next deadline for submission:
29 February

Project title / Project bearers
Anthropocene Campuses / Centre des Politiques de la Terre (Université de Paris, Sciences Po, Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris)
CULTIVATING WATER / <i>Organización Gonawindua Tayrona</i> (OGT); La Fundación Estación Biológica Bachaqueros – FEBB. The University of Magdalena Film and Audiovisual Media Programme; Tairona Heritage Trust; The University of Wales Trinity St David, Department of Humanities; Michel Serres Institute for Resources and Public Goods.
VALIDATION — A Documented Negative Outcome. How Geographers Immobilized the Past Climate of Asia / Swiss Academic Society for Environmental Research and Ecology (SAGUF); Oeschger Centre for Climate Change Research (OCCR), University of Bern (Switzerland); Mountain Societies Research Institute (MSRI), University of Central Asia, Khorog (Tajikistan);

* The explicit evaluation criteria included: scientific content; expected impacts; stakeholder participation; the timeline for specific actions; a resource mobilization strategy and plan; the expected benefit from BRIDGES endorsement; conformity to BRIDGES’ principles; and clarification of the project/activity’s viability.