



WORLD SOCIAL SCIENCE
fellows programme

The International Social Science Council (ISSC) calls for applications from outstanding early career social and other scientists around the world to become

World Social Science Fellows¹

and to participate in an interdisciplinary World Social Science Seminar on

Risk Interpretation and Action: Decision-making under conditions of uncertainty

7 – 15 December 2013

Wellington and Christchurch, New Zealand

In collaboration with the [IRDR Risk Interpretation and Action working group](#), [the International START Secretariat](#), [IRDR ICoE Taipei](#) and the [Royal Society of New Zealand](#)

Following the 2010-2011 Canterbury earthquake sequence in New Zealand, many risk management policies have been called into question and are under review. The issues highlighted by these events are not unique to New Zealand; they are key to enhancing sustainability, and to improving the resilience of communities to disasters.

A key issue emerging from this and other recent disasters is understanding the ways in which people interpret risks and how they respond based on these interpretations. Acceptable risk in the context of risk reduction and building safety always involves interactions between natural (physical) and human (social and behavioural) factors. Decision-making under conditions of uncertainty has been inadequately described by traditional models of 'rational choice.' Attention is now shifting to the ways in which people's interpretations of risks are shaped by their own experience, personal feelings and values, cultural beliefs and interpersonal and societal dynamics. Recent research has shown that lack of access to and the framing of risk information have contributed to much of the misunderstanding between groups.

In order to determine acceptable levels of risks, an integrated understanding of risk language, public perception of risk and engineering performance is required. Integrated research and knowledge implies the combined efforts of social and behavioural sciences, history and the humanities, as much as physical sciences, engineering, land-use planning. It involves close cooperation between scientists and with affected individuals and communities, and various government departments and agencies.

A recent publication by the working group on Risk Interpretation and Action of the Integrated Research on Disaster Risk programme (IRDR) aims to develop a conceptual framework to guide future research on the issues outlined above. At the intensive working seminar in New Zealand, participants will explore if and how the RIA-IRDR conceptual framework for response to natural hazards (Eiser et al 2012; <http://bit.ly/116mM6k>) can be integrated across disciplines and cultural contexts.

Up to thirty World Social Science Fellows will be selected to participate in this seminar. The WSS Fellows are talented, early career social scientists from around the world. Scientists from other, non-social science disciplines are also invited to apply.

Along with the Fellows, a number of leading thinkers will be involved in the seminar. David Johnston (Massey University/GNS Science and IRDR) is the main scientific convenor, and joining him will be Christine Kenney (Edith Cowan University), Richard Eiser (Sheffield University), Douglas

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Paton (University of Tasmania), and Allan Lavell (FLASCO), as well as a range of other scientists and relevant policy makers.

As with the previous World Social Science Fellows [seminar](#), work will start at the seminar, but it will not end there. Fellows will be expected to produce a co-authored report of seminar discussions, which will be submitted to a peer reviewed publication. Fellows will also be encouraged to take discussions forward in other publications and research projects. There will be opportunities for further involvement in activities around disaster risk and interpretation. These include the IRDR general conference in June 2014 and competitive seed grants for collaborative, interdisciplinary research.

Selection process

To be eligible to apply, you have to be:

- A post-doctoral researcher with a maximum of five years research experience following a PhD (candidates with more research experience can also be considered, if they explain why they should be eligible); or
- An early career researcher without a PhD but with an equivalent level of research experience and output;
- Under 40 years of age (candidates over the age of 40 can also be considered, if they explain why they should be eligible)

To apply for selection as a World Social Science Fellow, please submit the following, in English:

- A Curriculum Vitae of no more than 2 pages, including information about education, research projects and networks, awards and prizes and other pertinent experiences. Please highlight relevant experience you have in interdisciplinary research projects.
- In addition to the 2 page CV, add a list of your most important publications.
- A statement (one page maximum) outlining how your work (potentially) fits in/contributes to the the RIA-IRDR conceptual framework for response to natural hazards.
- An overview (one page maximum) of key influences on your scientific work. Which texts or bodies of literature have you used as the basis for your research? If there is a particular publication that has had an important impact on your work, please list it as well.
- Agreement from your home institution about your participation in the seminar, including a short outline of how you will share knowledge you have gained at the seminar with your colleagues/students after you return

The seminar will be held in English. Please indicate if this is a problem for you.

Applications can be submitted electronically and in one file (preferably PDF) to Fellows@worldsocialscience.org

Deadline for submission of applications: 15 July 2013, 00.00hrs GMT

Successful applicants will be informed by early September 2013.

The [ISSC](#) is an international organisation that aims to advance the practice and use of the social and behavioural sciences in all parts of the world, and to ensure their global representation. This seminar is organised in partnership with the Risk Interpretation and Action working group and the [ICoE Taipei](#) of the [IRDR](#) (the Integrated Research on Disaster Risk programme) and the International [START](#) Secretariat. The [World Social Science Fellows Programme](#) is sponsored by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency ([Sida](#)).

