

# Always a bridesmaid, never a bride: The supportive role of social science in coproduction

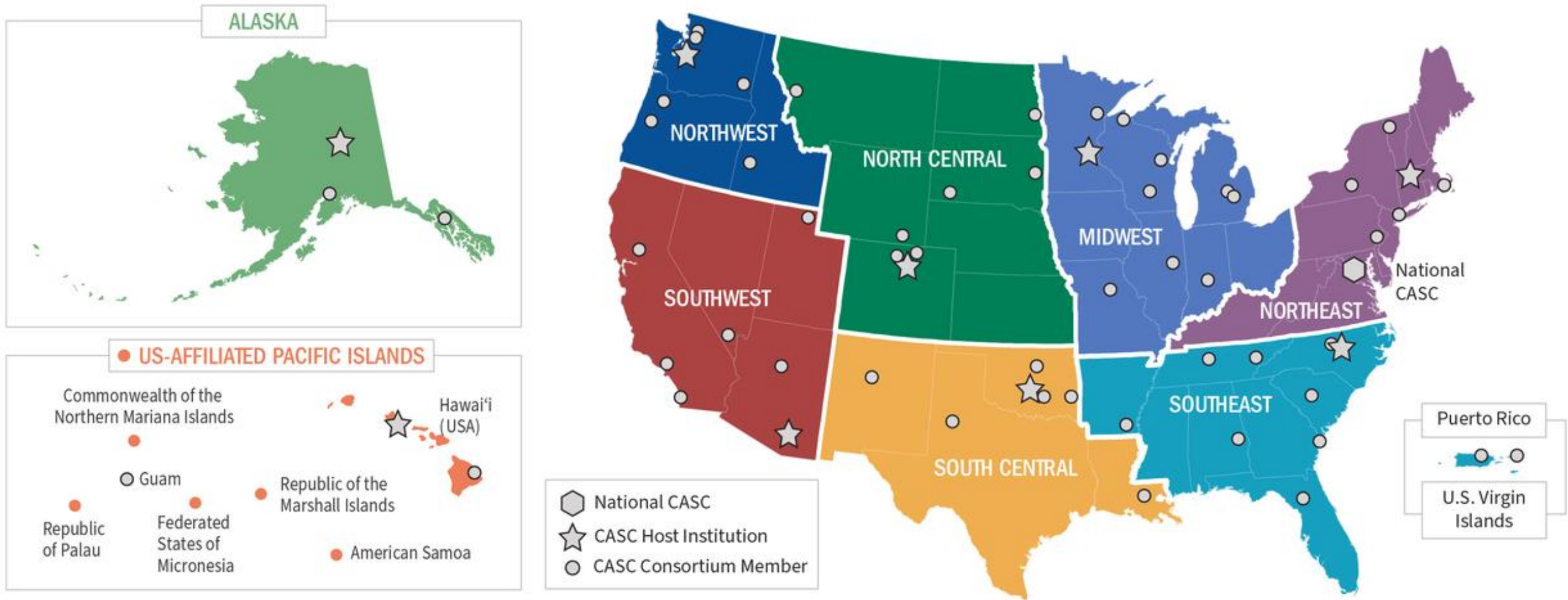
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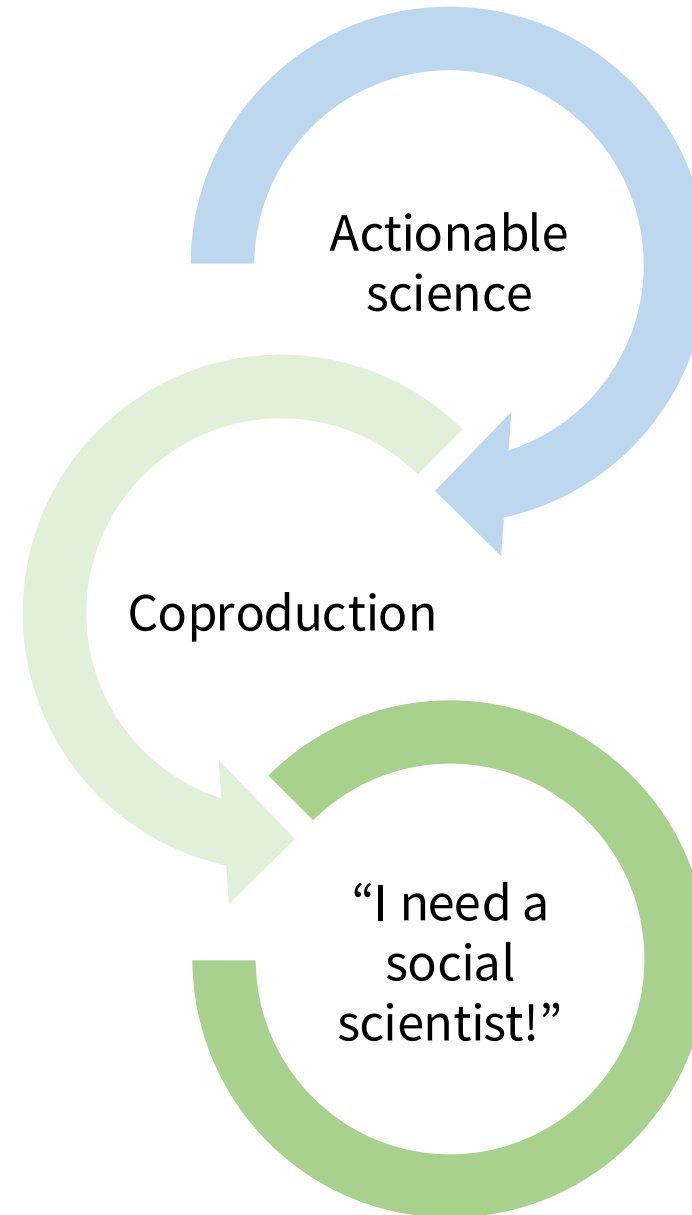


# Climate Adaptation Science Centers





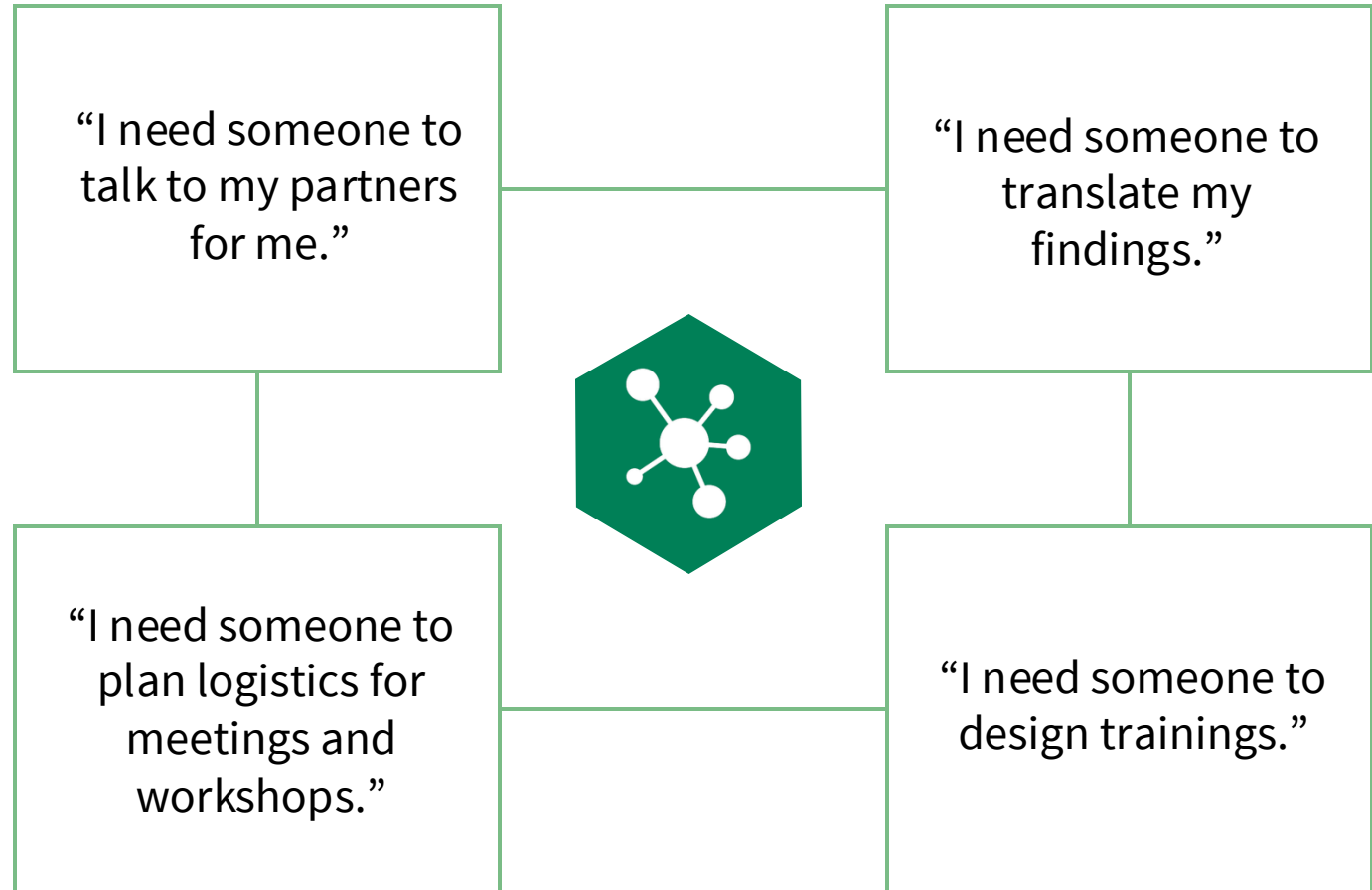
# The “Call”



***“I need a  
social  
scientist!”***



## What it often means...



*“I need a  
social  
scientist!”*

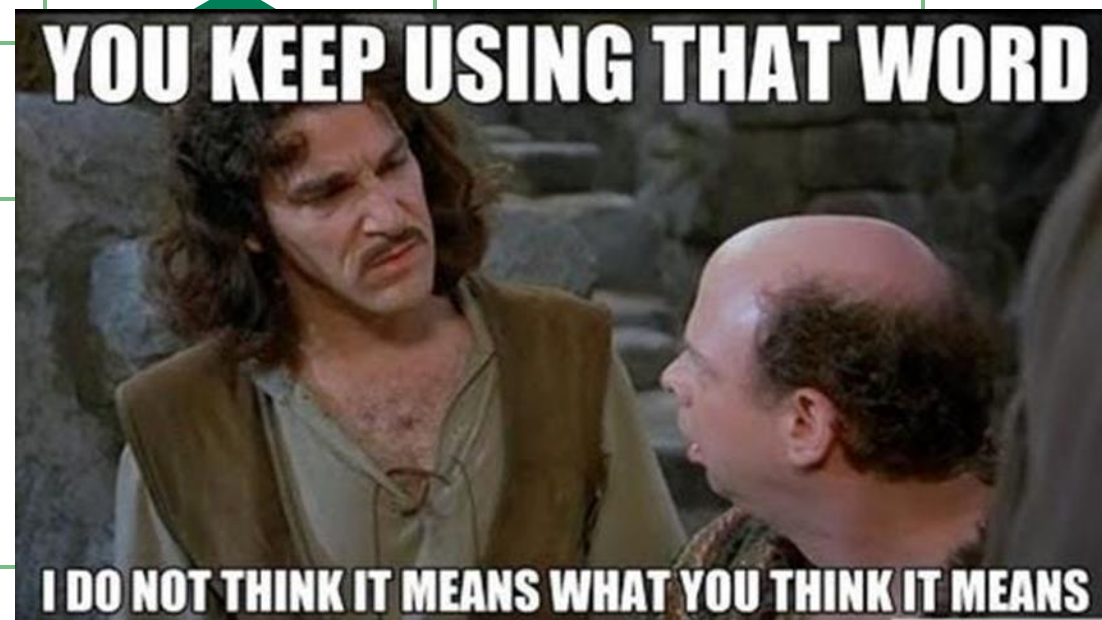


What it often means...  
**This is outreach and  
engagement... Not  
social science!**

“I need someone to  
talk to my partner  
for me.”

“I need someone to  
translate my  
findings.”

“I need someone to  
plan logistics for  
meetings and  
workshops.”





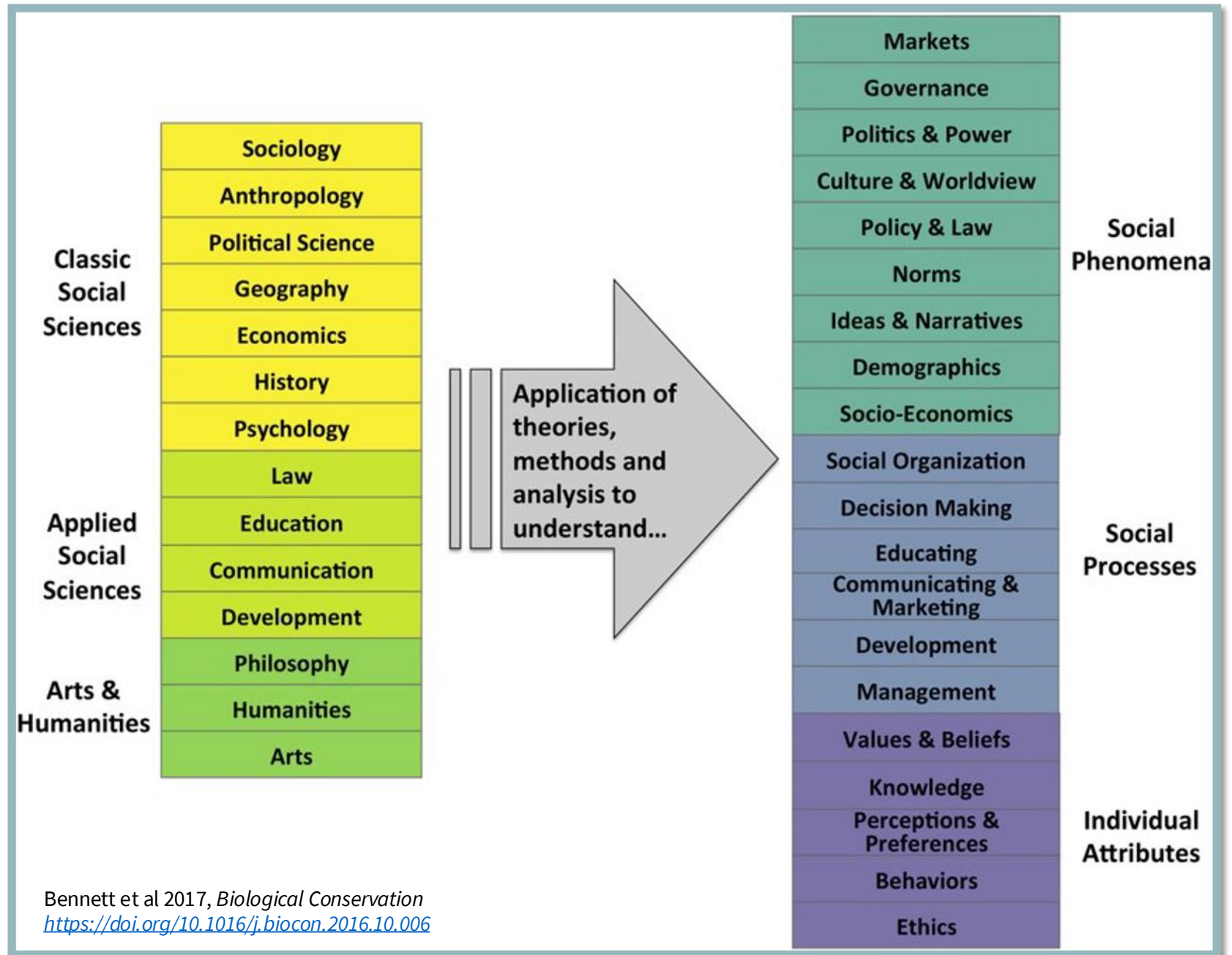


# Social Science is science!





# Social Scientists come in different “flavors”





# Research Goals vs Operational Goals

- I want to understand what tools, information, and data decision-makers are using to adapt to climate change.
- I want to understand how environmental changes interact with societal changes to influence decisions and actions.
- I want to understand what institutions are most important for supporting local scale climate adaptation.
- I want to make my tool or dataset useful to decision-makers.
- I want to communicate the findings of my model to partners because I know this resource is culturally important.
- I want to build relationships with communities so that I can collect field data and communicate research findings.





# Research Goals vs Operational Goals

- I want to understand what tools, information, and data decision-makers are using to adapt to climate change.
- I want to understand how environmental conditions interact with decision-makers.
- I want to know which institutions are most important for supporting local scale climate adaptation.

**Who is affected, and how?**

**How do they react?**

**How does that affect the system?**

- I want to make my tool or dataset useful to decision-makers.
- I want to find ways to work with decision-makers because of cultural differences.
- I want to work with community-based organizations to collect field data and communicate research findings.

**Foster trusting relationships.**

**Maximize the success of projects.**

**Produce actionable science.**



# Too many hats!



Co-PI  
Intellectual



Communicator  
Boundary Spanner

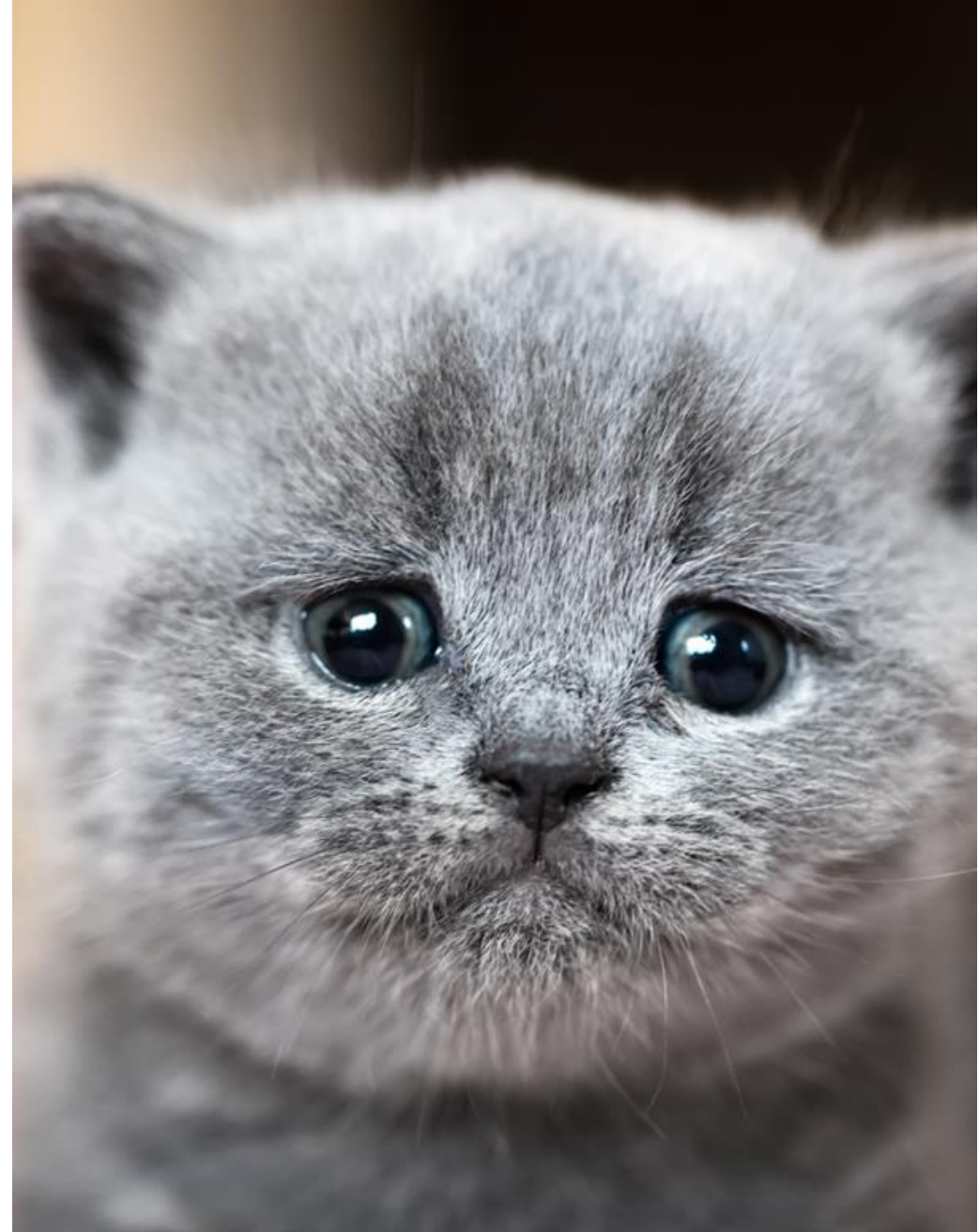


Coproduction Specialist  
Facilitator



# Isolation & Marginalization

- Single social scientist on a multi-disciplinary team.
- Lack of understanding of skills by the broader team.
- Fewer contributions to social science literature with potential to impact career growth.





# Potential Solutions

Bring social scientists in earlier and at a leadership level.

Be intentional about the disciplinary perspective of social scientists you are working with.

Ensure your social scientists are resourced to answer their research questions.

Ensure the project is resourced so social scientists are not doing double duty – define roles well in advance.



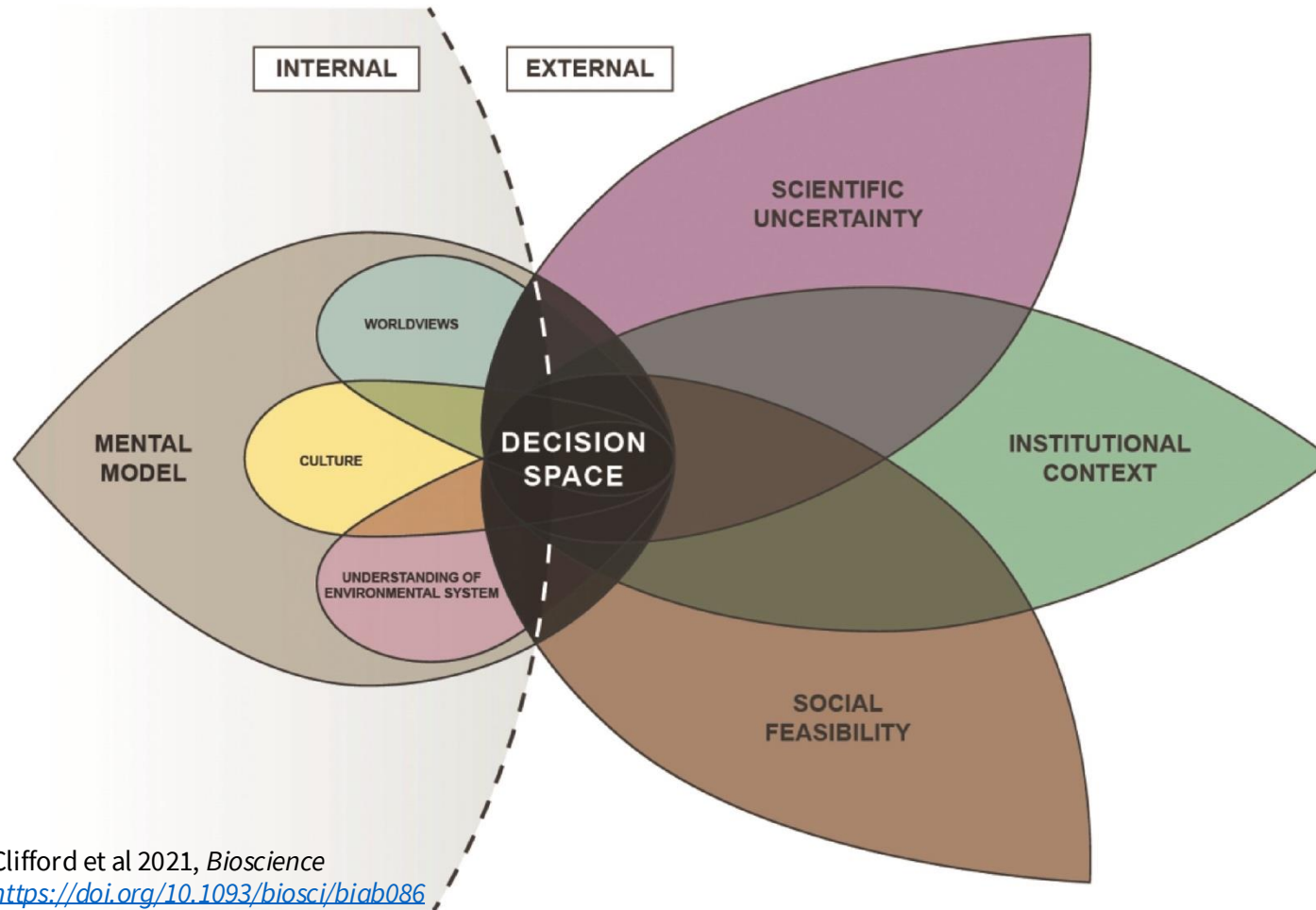
# What does this look like in practice?







# Cross-Park Resist-Accept-Direct Project



Clifford et al 2021, *Bioscience*  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biab086>

## CASE STUDIES



Acadia National  
Park, Maine



Sequoia & Kings  
Canyon National  
Parks, California



North Cascades  
National Park,  
Washington



Glacier National Park  
and Confederated  
Salish & Kootenai  
Tribes, Montana

CPRP Project Page:  
<https://cascprojects.org/#/project/4f83509de4b0e84f60868124/625ed273d34e85fa62b7f7ab>



# Project Design

- Led by a social scientist (and included other social scientists!)
- Focused on the intersection of individual worldviews and institutional contexts
- Cross-case study research design, particularly suited for causal mechanisms
- Methods include semi-structured and unstructured interviews, focus groups, and workshops



# Expected Results and Products

## Result 1

*Each park has an internal conversation about social factors influencing decisions.*

**WHAT:** Each park receives park-level findings in the format determined to be most useful and actionable for that park's decision-making and/or interpretive needs.

**POTENTIAL FORMATS:** Webinar series, storyboards to support decision-making, interpretive videos

## Result 2

*Park managers work with interested local partners (e.g., Tribes) to jointly consider ecological transformation.*

**WHAT:** Lessons learned build NPS capacity to engage partners in co-management of resources.

**POTENTIAL FORMATS:** Reflections on good practices of engagement tailored to the NPS context, presentations to NPS staff and leadership

## Result 3

*Enhanced capacity to support field-level managers in making decisions about ecological transformation.*

**WHAT:** Build capacity to support social aspects of decision-making by field-level managers; build connections between managers at different units.

**POTENTIAL FORMATS:** Case study round table event to facilitate peer to peer learning, presentations to NPS and DOI staff and leadership to facilitate agencywide learning, incorporate results into existing trainings

## Result 4

*Contribute to social science theory about influencing decisions about ecological transformation.*

**WHAT:** How emotions and mental models interact to influence decision making, and how institutional context influences decision making.

**POTENTIAL FORMATS :** Peer-reviewed journal articles

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social  
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## Key Takeaways

- Social science is not a monolith.
- Social science approaches are necessary to answer the big climate research questions.
- Social scientists should be empowered to lead.
- We need to create space in the climate research community to support each other.
- We need to be adaptable and resilient in how we design and conduct research.



# Thank you!

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