Vulnerability risk assessment in the context of climate change – the need for interdisciplinarity

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Addressing wicked problems such as climate change vulnerability require a process whereby evidence of different kinds, interests, values and meanings are brought together in order to understand and anticipate the effects of change (such as a climate change) on health and health inequities in a population and then decide how best to respond. Understanding and addressing climate change vulnerability requires understanding complex climate science, policy making and politics, individual level decision making, history, nature, society, culture, urban planning, economics, structure and agency - the list goes on.

Health Impact Assessment provides a framework and process for carrying out this task of bringing together different stakeholders and types of disciplinary knowledge. However, this involves intellectual, social, and practical challenges including:(a) dealing with concepts that originate from unfamiliar disciplines and that may be multidisciplinary, complex and sometimes contested;
(b) collaboration between colleagues who have different discipline and profession backgrounds;
(c) finding shared meaning and ways of communicating; and
(d) deciding how we understand knowledge, the role of different types of evidence and ways of theorizing explanations and evaluating their practical adequacy.

This presentation will:
1. Outline a framework for conceptualising the multilayered, emergent, complex open systems within which the mechanisms of multiple entities interact to cause climate change vulnerability.
2. Describe and differentiate multi /inter/trans/-disciplinary approaches
3. Suggest strategies for how to support interdisciplinary approaches to addressing climate change vulnerability.