

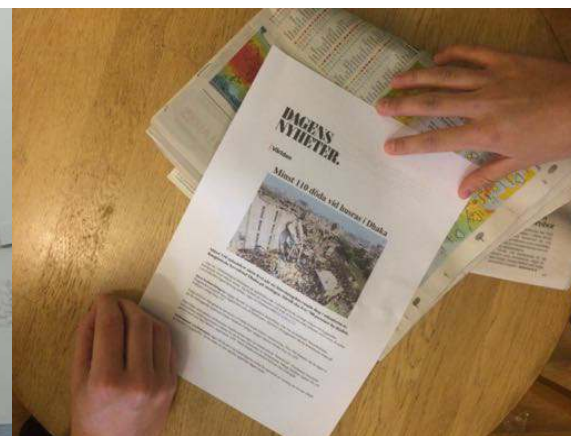
*Thinking Like A Social Scientist:
Making Tacit Knowledge Explicit for Students*



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Who am I?

Johan Sandahl, PhD: in five pictures



Swedish Curricula and School Setting

- Comprehensive School through ages 6-16 (primary and lower secondary)
- Vocational programmes or academic programmes through ages 16-19 (upper secondary, 98 % enrolment)
- Upper secondary school compulsory subjects: Swedish, English, Maths, PE, Natural Science, History, Religious studies, **Social Science**
- Social Science through ages 6-16, 1-4 courses in ages 16-19

The birth of the social science subject: in three pictures



“Vaccinating our youth against totalitarian ideas”

The Social Science Subject

Different national settings, but the “common core is human activity in society and students are taught to inquire social issues and to consider the role of values in these issues” (Barton, 2011)

Is often seen as “an important contribution in students ability to participate in the public sphere and to influence their desire to do so” (Barton & Avery, 2016)

=Both disciplinary knowledge and citizenship education (“enable students to become active citizens”)

At the centre: **Inquiry about contemporary society**

Social Science: Aims and Goals (upper secondary)

Teaching in the subject of social studies should aim at helping students broaden, deepen and develop knowledge of people's living conditions based on different social issues. [...] Students should be given the opportunity to develop a scientific approach to social issues and an understanding of scientific work on social issues. In addition, teaching should contribute to creating conditions for active participation in the life of society.

Content

Content

Ability

Ability

Ability

1. Knowledge of democracy and human rights, both individual and collective rights, social issues, social conditions, as well as the function and organization of different societies from local to global levels based on different interpretations and perspectives.
2. Knowledge of the importance of historical conditions and how different ideological, political, economic, social and environmental conditions affect and are affected by individuals, groups and social structures.
3. The ability to analyse social issues and identify causes and consequences using concepts, theories, models and methods from the social sciences.
4. The ability to search for, critically examine and interpret information from different sources and assess their relevance and credibility.
5. The ability to express their knowledge of social studies in various types of presentation.

**What knowledge is needed
in order to do inquiry?**

What knowledge? Powerful Knowledge!

The notion of **powerful knowledge** (Young, 2008; 2013; Young & Müller, 2013)

Michael Young spent most of his career in sociology of education, being critical towards school and its role in upholding an unjust system of inequality = "knowledge of the powerful"



Young 2008: What if that is the wrong way to approach it?

Young argues that school is the best place for our children to access to the best knowledge available: knowledge that have power to explain the world in better ways than everyday knowledge ever can, to take students beyond their everyday understanding = "powerful knowledge".

That knowledge is produces at universities and it is a democratic right for all children to have access to it.

What is powerful knowledge?

- Knowledge that provides students with “new ways of thinking about the world”
- Knowledge that provides students with powerful and reliable ways to analyse, explain and understand the world
- Knowledge that enables young people to follow and participate in debates on significant local, national and global issues

(cf. Maude 2016)

**Ok, that doesn't help: what does that mean for
social science teaching?**

What are the important concepts in this text?

Think!

THE RISE OF ISIS

The newest organization to promote the radical Islamist cause is ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), also known as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant).⁷

Its origins are traceable to the American invasion and occupation of Iraq that began in 2003. Although its populace is predominantly Shi'ite, Iraq had long been ruled by Saddam Hussein and the Sunni minority. Saddam's military, which was mostly Sunni, was immediately disbanded and dispersed by the Americans and their allies in the Iraqi Transitional Government. Sunni soldiers and their officers were unemployed. Even before the Shi'ite majority took power in 2006, they and their families were effectively frozen out of the political process. Then the newly elected Shi'ite president, Nouri al-Maliki, and his government made matters even worse. Seeking what they saw as their fair and long-overdue share of political power, Maliki's militias hunted down and murdered peaceful Sunni protesters. Increasingly desperate, impoverished, and powerless, many Sunnis looked to al-Qaeda in Iraq, until 2006 led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Formerly a hot-headed and violent Jordanian street thug, pimp, and drug dealer, Zarqawi became a devout convert to the extreme jihadist wing of the Salafist sect within Sunni Islam. Although he renounced his previous way of life, he retained one aspect of it—brutal and even spectacular violence directed against anyone who disagreed with him or his religious views. Among these views was the belief that the end of the world was near and that a caliphate or Islamic state would soon appear to wage an apocalyptic war against “crusaders” from the West. For Zarqawi, the American “blessed invasion” and occupation of Iraq was a dream come true and a prayer answered. Prophecy, he thought, was being fulfilled in his own lifetime. Taking advantage of the chaos and civil war in Iraq, he allied himself with al-Qaeda and took charge of its Iraqi operations. Many of Saddam's ousted

Evidence



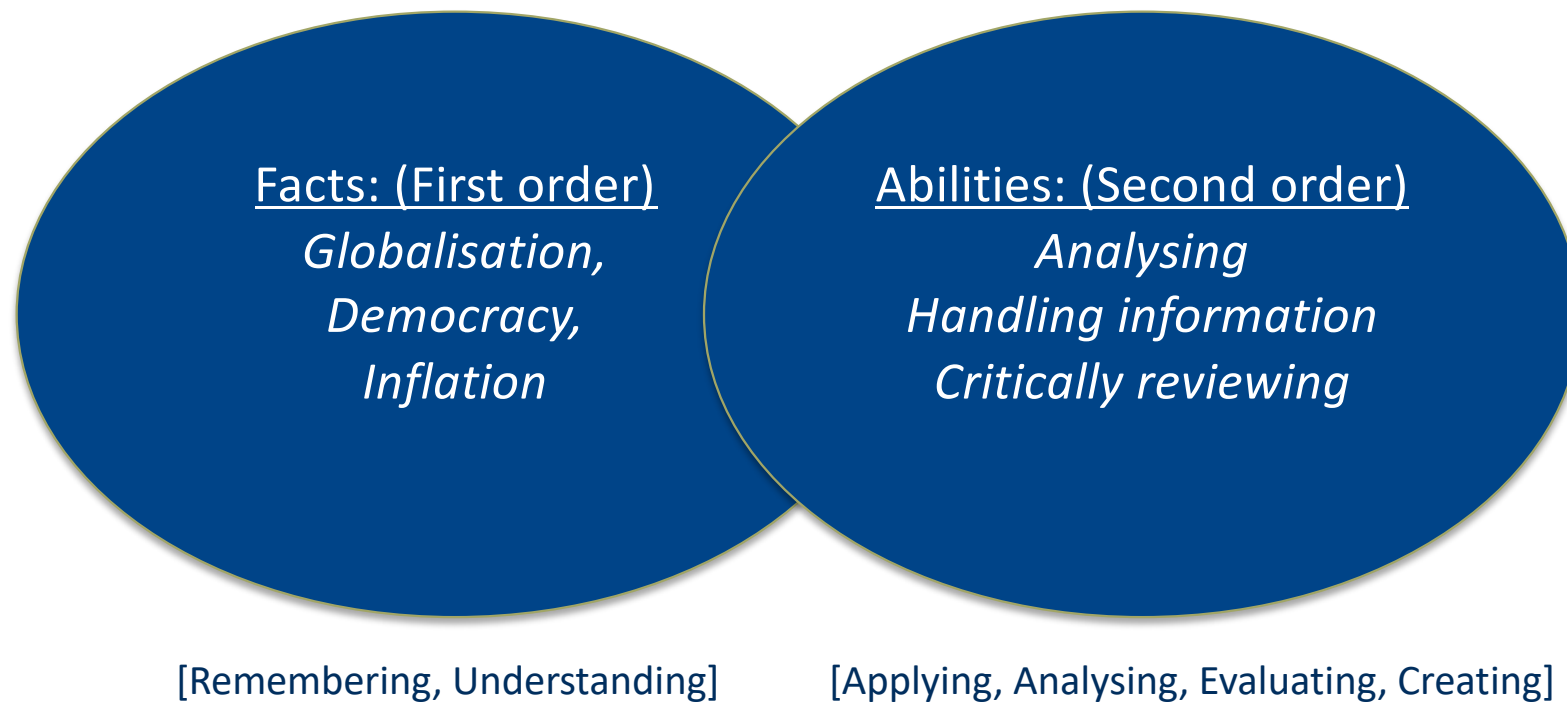
Cause

Cause

Consequence

Consequence

What knowledge is needed in order to do inquiry in social science?

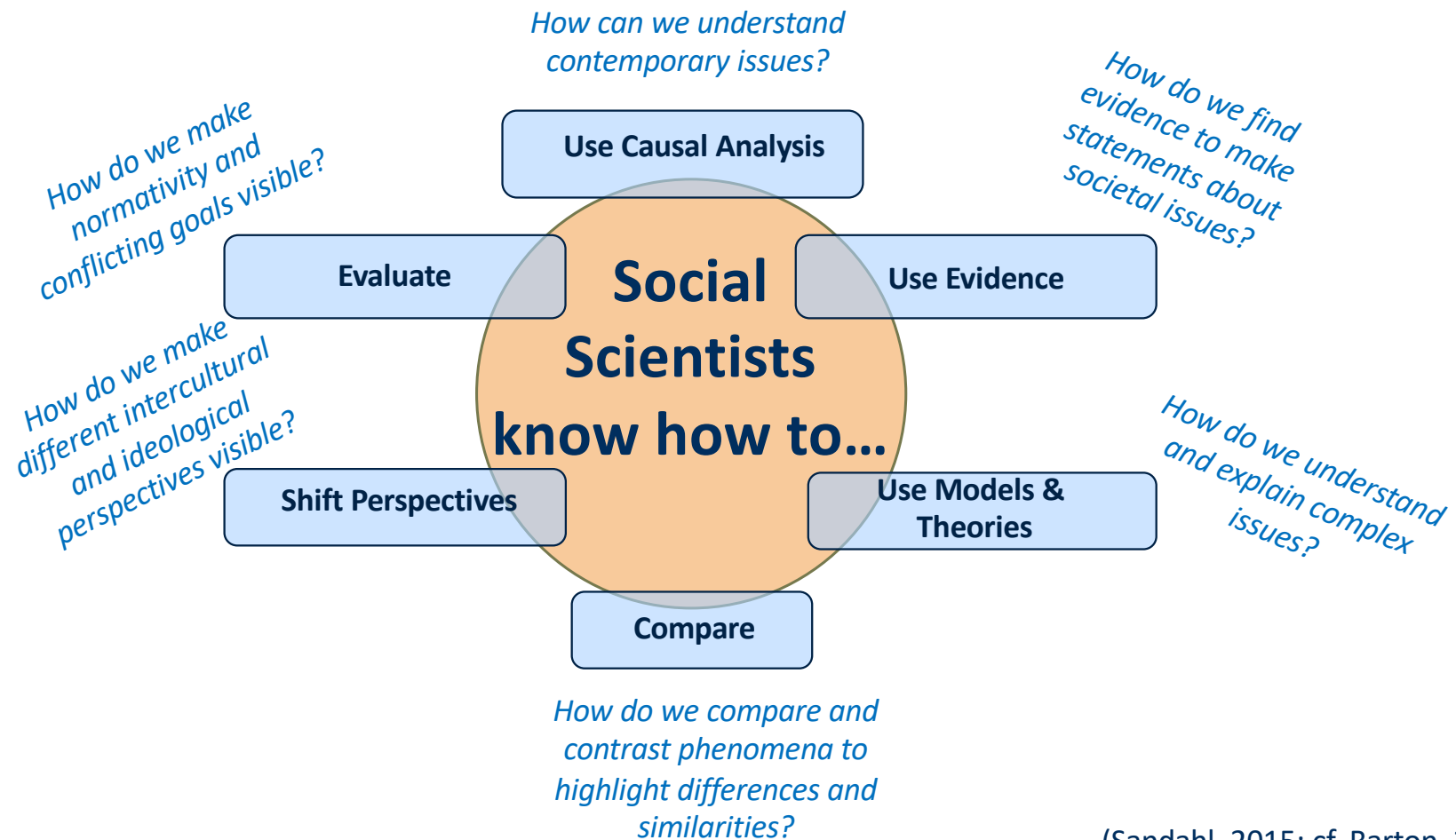


"Knowing"



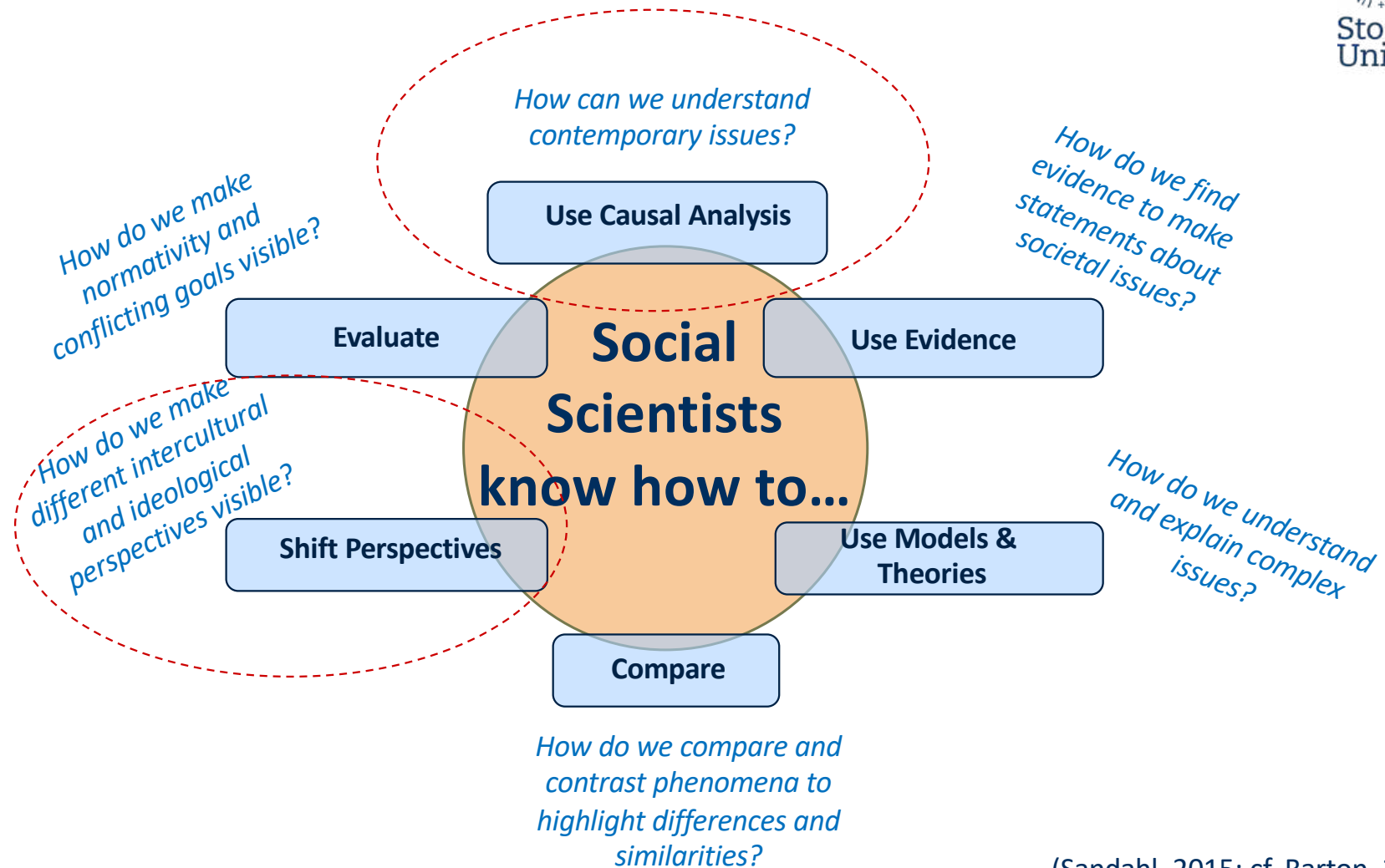
FACTS & ABILITIES

Six Second Order Thinking Concepts



(Sandahl, 2015; cf. Barton, 2017)

Six Second Order Thinking Concepts



(Sandahl, 2015; cf. Barton, 2017)

Cause & Consequence: Guideposts

1. Societal issues can be explained by multiple causes, and results in multiple consequences. These create a complex web of interrelated short-term and long-term causes and consequences that can vary in importance.
2. Societal development can be understood as an interplay of two types of factors: (i) actors, who are people (individuals or groups) who take actions that cause events, and (ii) the social, political, economic, and cultural conditions within which the actors operate.
3. Causes can covariate without influencing each other: difference between *correlation* and *causation*.
4. Actors can not predict the effect of their actions. These have the effect of generating unintended consequences.

Practising Second Order Concepts: “The Camel Cam”



Did the Straw Break the Camel's Back?

Once upon a time, there was a camel that went by the name of Cam. Cam was born with severe back problems that would affect him throughout his life. After growing up, he decided to join the traveling circus. Unfortunately for Cam, the circus camel trainer, Mack the Camel Slayer, was one of the most vicious and vengeful individuals you could ever have the misfortune of meeting. Mack had bad experiences of camels and hated Cam right from the start. Mack used Cam for packing and camel riding at the Circus and let him sleep in the cold outside. One day Mack decided to try a new trick and loaded piles of baggage on Cam's back – Mack realised he could break the world record for “amount of kilos on a camel!

When he couldn't pack more bags, Mack picked up a piece of straw off the ground and started chewing on it as he began to invite people to be a part of history in the making. Meanwhile, Cam struggled to remain standing and groaned as the weight of his load became overwhelming. Mack stood back and was proud of his efforts to set a new world record. He then took the piece of straw out of his mouth and casually tossed it onto Cam's back. Cam dropped to his knees, keeled over, and died of massive back collapse.

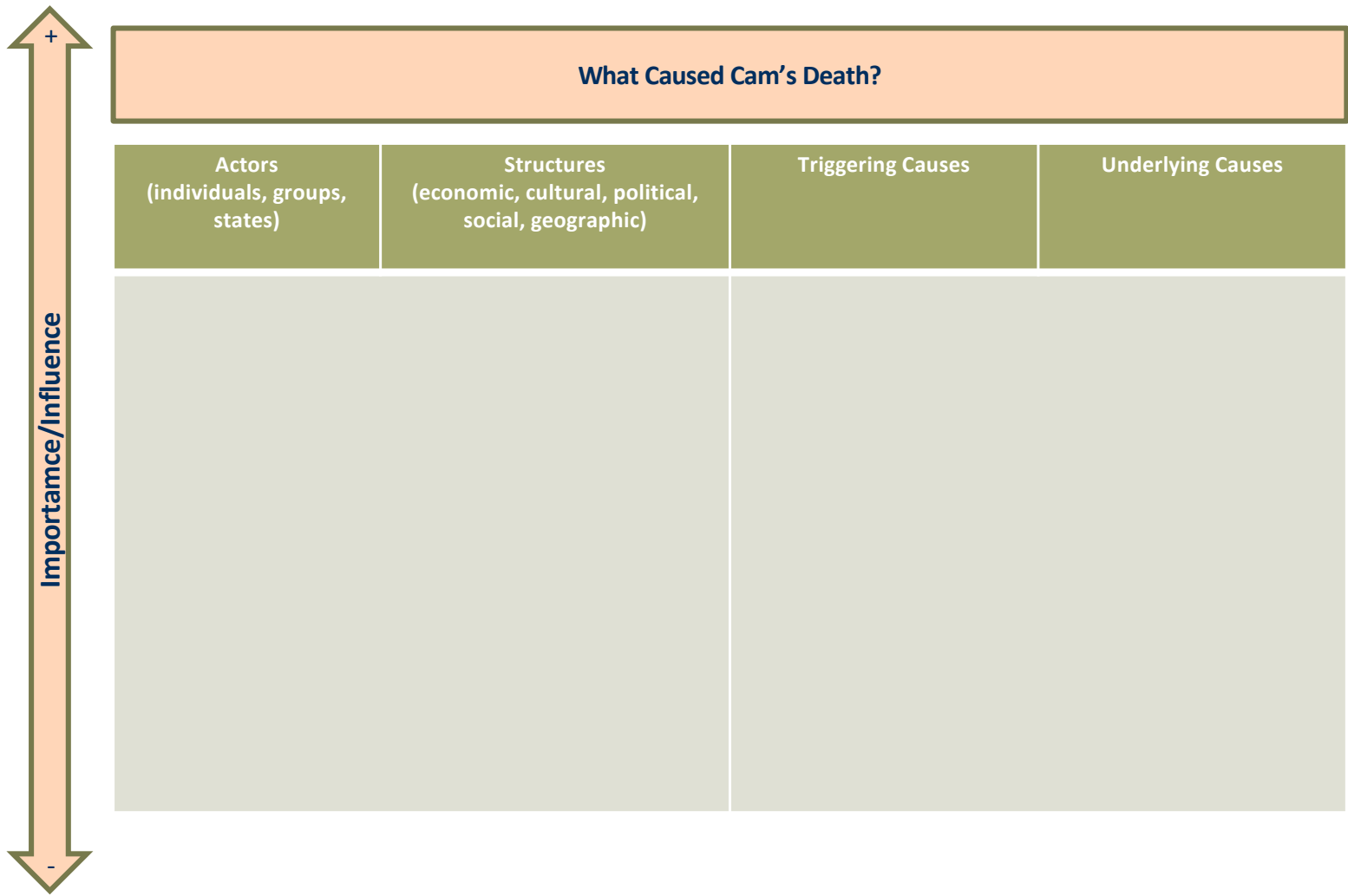
The main question that arises from all of this is, “Was it the straw that broke the camel's back?” (Waring 2010)

Cause & Consequence

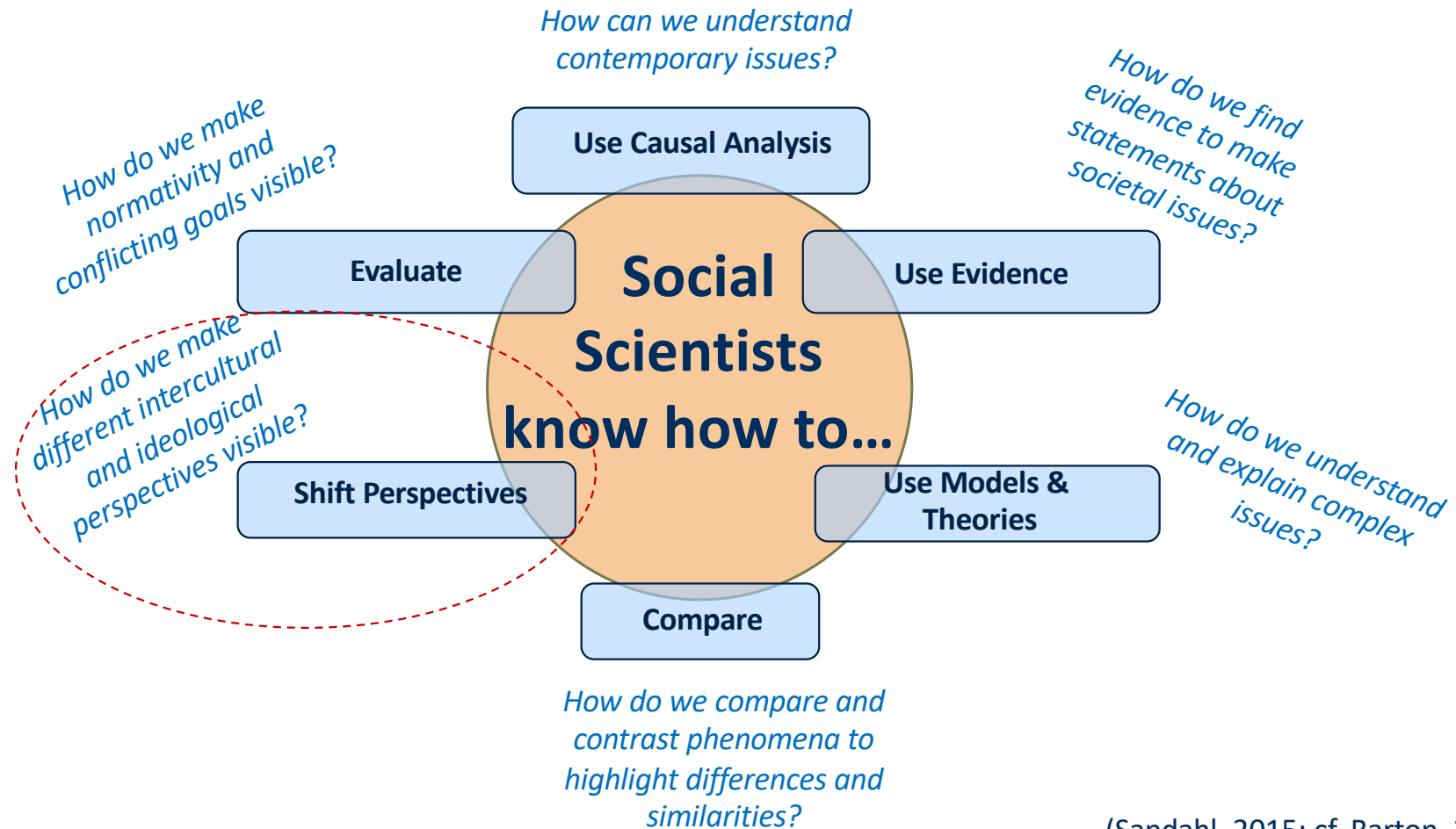
– scaffolding causal thinking –

1. What causes can explain the early death of the camel Cam? List all causes!
2. Sort the causes in **chronology**: what causes came first and what causes came close to Cam's death?
3. Sort the causes in **importance**: what causes are the most important?
4. Can the causes be explained by actions of **individuals or groups** or are there underlying **structures and conditions** that caused Cam's death?
5. From Mack's perspective: List possible **intended and unintended** consequences of his actions.
6. Things that happen are not inevitable. If one single action or condition is altered things might have turned out differently. Give examples of **actions and conditions** that might have prevented the death of Cam.

Cause & Consequence – scaffolding causal thinking –



Six Second Order Thinking Concepts

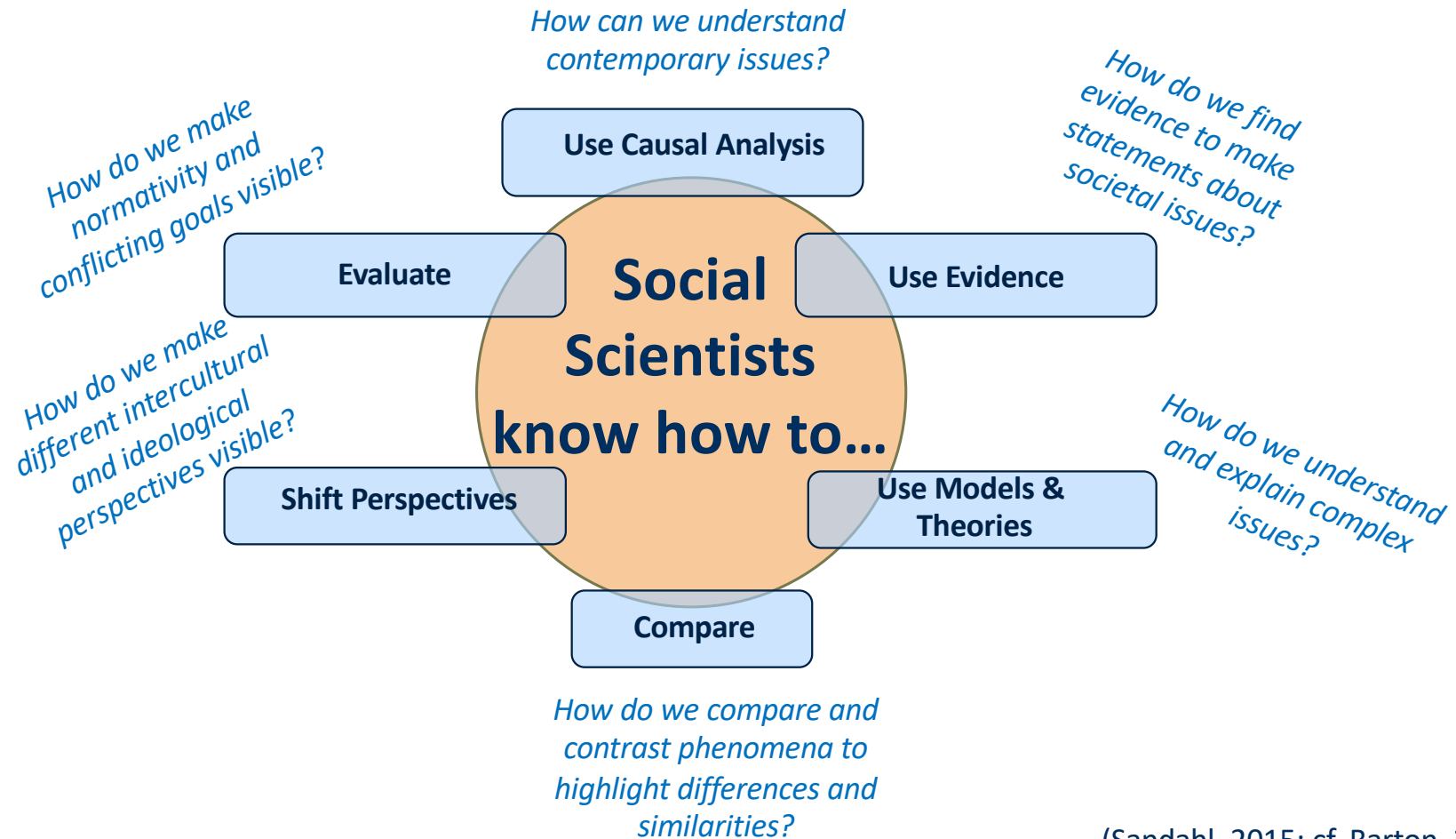


(Sandahl, 2015; cf. Barton, 2017)

Shifting Perspectives: Guideposts

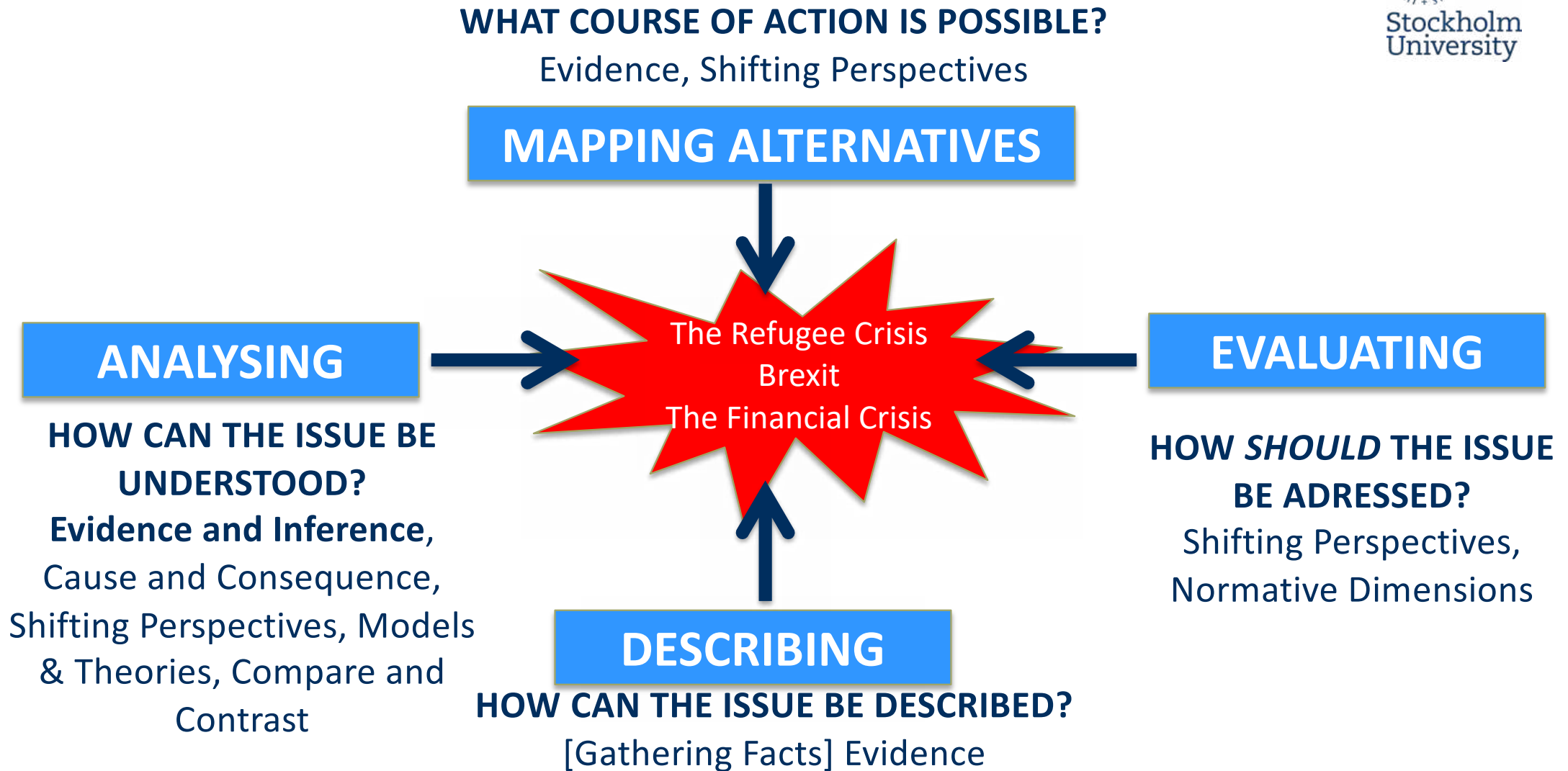
1. Shifting perspectives means understanding other actors and societies, not identification or sympathy
2. Perspectives are differential, i.e., different actors have diverse perspectives within a given setting that might seem homogeneous to an outsider
3. The perspectives of other actors are best understood through contextualisation, i.e., ideological, political, economical and cultural contexts
4. Shifting perspectives involves reflexivity, i.e., an awareness of one's own values, motives and convictions

Six Second Order Thinking Concepts



(Sandahl, 2015; cf. Barton, 2017)

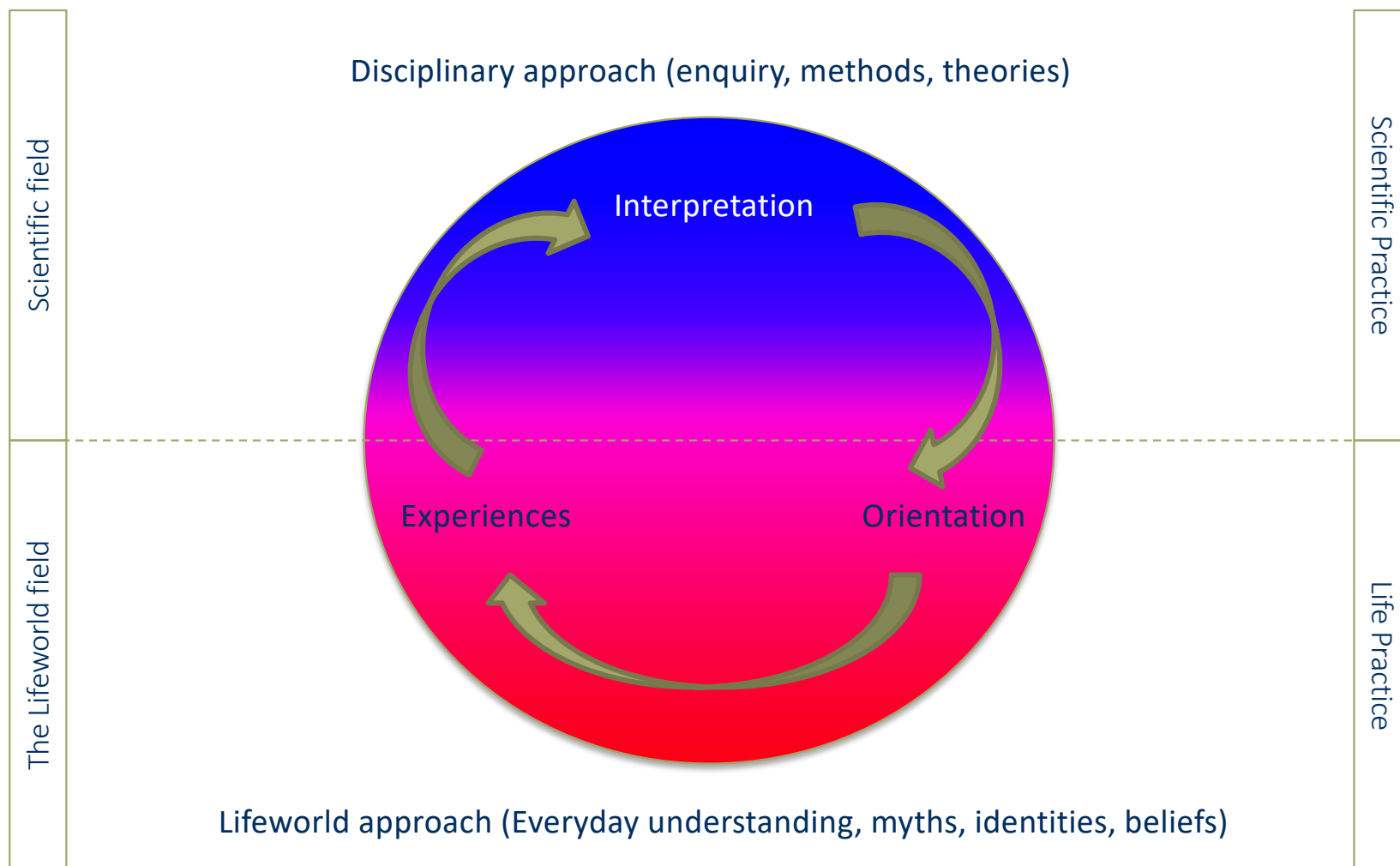
Inquiring Social Issues

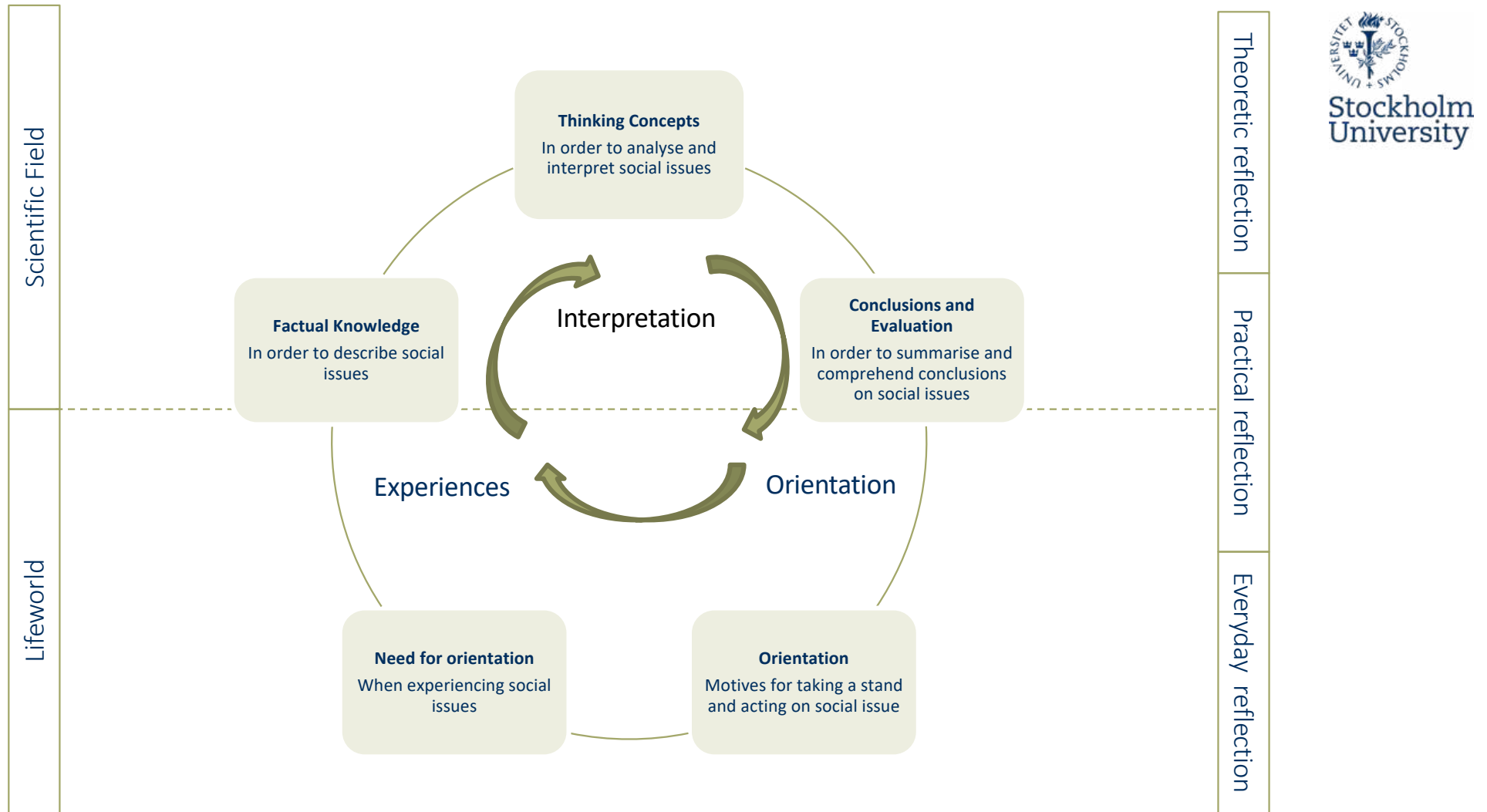


A word of caution...

Remembering the aim of social science (and perhaps an important difference between social sciences as disciplines and as a school subject):

“an important contribution in students ability to participate in the public sphere and **to influence their desire to do so**” (Barton & Avery, 2016)





(Sandahl & Johansson, 2020; cf. Rösen, 2004)

The Beutelsbach Consensus: Three Principles on Political Education

1. Prohibition against overwhelming the student

It is not permissible to catch students off -guard, by whatever means, for the sake of imparting desirable opinions, thereby hindering them from 'forming an independent judgment'. This is the difference between political education and indoctrination. Indoctrination is incompatible with the role of a teacher in a democratic society and the generally accepted objective of making students capable of independent responsibility and maturity (Mündigkeit).

2. Treating controversial issues as controversial

Matters which are controversial in scholarship and political affairs should also be presented as controversial in the classroom. This requirement is very closely linked to the first point above: a teacher who loses sight of differing points of view, suppresses options, and leaves alternatives undiscussed is already well on his or her way to indoctrinating students. We have to ask whether teachers have in fact a corrective role to play, that is, whether they should or should not specially set out such points of view and alternatives which are foreign to the social and political origins of students (and other participants in programs of political education).

3. Giving weight to the personal interests of students

Students should be put in a position to analyze a political situation and their own personal interests, as well as to seek ways to have an effect on given political realities in view of these interests. Such an objective strongly emphasizes the acquisition of operational skills, which follows logically from the first two principles set out above

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