

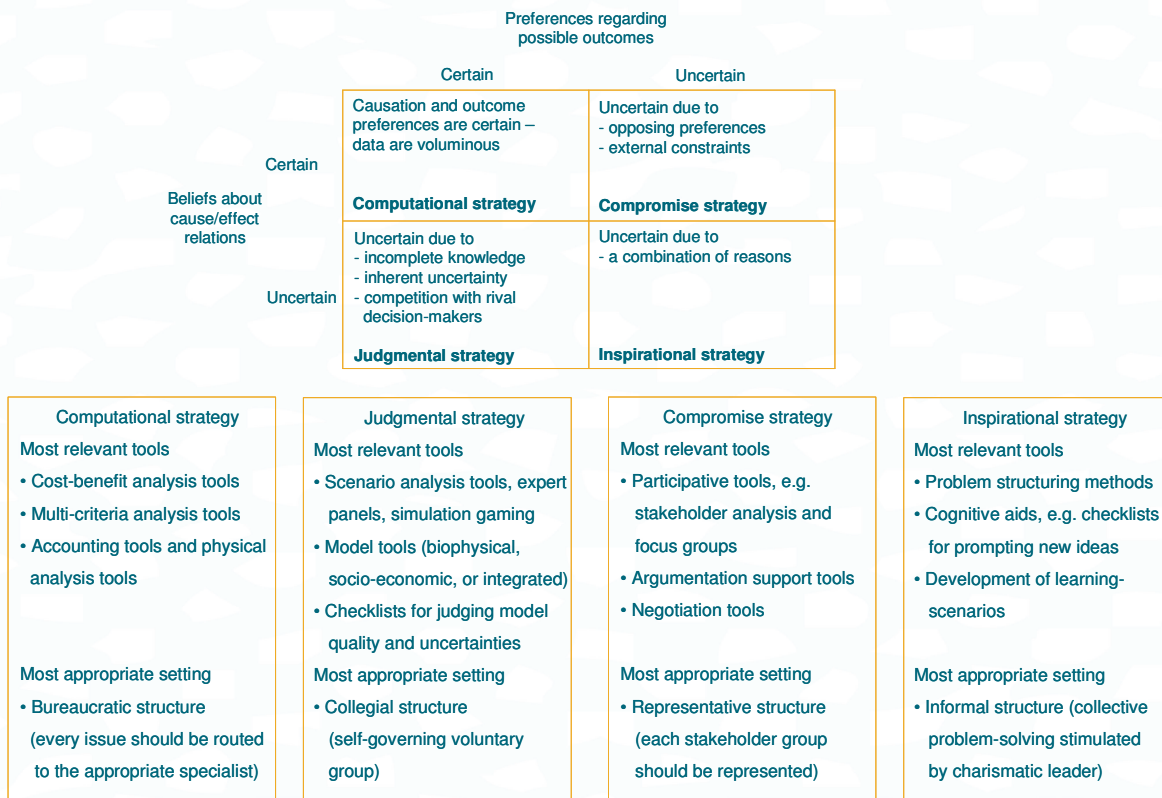
IC 10 Frame-based guide to situated decision-making on climate change

Climate change adaptation and mitigation requires decision-making that is highly sensitive to the specifics of a situation. It calls for “situated decision-making” that can stand in the service of adequate action. However, guides to decision-making generally ignore the specifics, focusing largely on methods and tools that abstract information out of situations without any reflection on the context.

Situated decision-making is based on strategies that enable a decision-maker to be informed by a rich store of information and, at the same time, ensure a degree of flexibility and adaptability.

The development of a decision-making strategy can be supported using Thompson’s two basic dimensions of decision. The first dimension refers to beliefs about the cause/effect relations that are instrumental for what the decision might actually accomplish; the second refers to preferences regarding the possible outcomes of the decision. Accordingly, there can be certainty or uncertainty regarding causation and certainty or uncertainty regarding outcome preferences. Figure 1 presents the patterns of uncertainty of the two dimensions.

Figure 1. The two basic dimensions of decision combined



The pattern of uncertainty in Figure 1 depends on how the specifics of the situation are perceived. For example, discussions may frame the problem as: “How can we reduce uncertainty in our estimates of future climatic conditions and how climate change will impact us?” (e.g. choose a judgmental strategy?) In contrast, the discussion may focus on: “Given that there is considerable uncertainty about our future, how can we best manage this coastal area to increase system resilience?” (e.g. choose an inspirational strategy?)

It is the contrasting impact of these questions that explains why situated decision-making may gain by making frames more explicit. Frames are generally conceived as organizing principles that enable a person to predict and qualify the continuous changes in his or her environment as a basis for action. Our objective is to make the role of frames in climate-related interactions more transparent for all the actors involved (e.g. scientists, practitioners, policymakers) by providing guidelines and practical tools.

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