



Global Subsidiarity Index Framework

Version 4.0: A Universal Metric for Governance Architecture

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The Global Subsidiarity Index (GSI) Framework v4

A Measurement Protocol for Governance Architecture in Complex Societies

Preface: On the Nature of This Framework

The Global Subsidiarity Index is not a proposal for a new global institution. It is not a certification scheme. It is not a ranking to shame centralizers or reward decentralizers. It is a **measurement protocol**—a standardized way of observing, diagnosing, and discussing governance architecture across diverse contexts.

This distinction matters. Protocols enable coordination without centralization. TCP/IP does not govern the internet; it makes the internet possible. The GSI aims to do the same for governance diagnostics: create a shared language and measurement standard that empowers local actors, enables comparative learning, and reveals architectural patterns—without requiring a central authority to certify or enforce.

The paradox identified in v3—that any global index measuring overcentralization is itself a centralizing act—is not eliminated by this framing. But it is *transformed*. A protocol is not a lever; it is a mirror. It gains legitimacy from use, not from institutional endorsement. Its power is in its adoption, not its enforcement.

This v4 revision embraces that logic fully.

Executive Summary

The **Global Subsidiarity Index (GSI)** is a diagnostic protocol that quantifies the match (or mismatch) between governance structures and societal complexity. Building on the 10-system analysis performed by the Svensk Subsidiaritet project and cybernetic principles, the GSI provides any jurisdiction—nation, region, municipality, bioregion—with a standardized way to measure its "decision distance," "knowledge inclusion," and "resilience architecture" across critical systems.

Core Proposition: Governance quality in the 21st century is not primarily about left vs. right, but about **centralized vs. distributed**—and whether the distribution of authority matches the complexity of the society being governed. The GSI makes this measurable, comparable, and actionable.

Key Innovations in v4:

1. **Protocol Architecture:** Reframed as open measurement standard rather than institutional product
2. **Specified CAF Formula:** Peer-review ready while preserving contextual adaptation
3. **Governance as Standards Body:** Multi-stakeholder council reframed as protocol stewardship, not certification authority
4. **Sweden as Origin Story:** Explicit lineage from national self-diagnosis to global toolkit

1. Theoretical Foundation

1.1 Cybernetic Basis: Ashby's Law Operationalized

"Only variety can destroy variety. To control a system, the regulator must have at least as many internal states as the system it attempts to regulate."

GSI Translation: The Index measures the **ratio** between:

- **Societal Variety** (complexity, diversity, dynamism of the governed population)
- **Governance Variety** (flexibility, adaptability, differentiation of the governing system)

1.2 Three Universal Governance Pathologies

1. **Decision Distance:** Administrative layers between problem and decision-maker
2. **Knowledge Exclusion:** Whose knowledge counts in policy design
3. **Resilience Deficits:** Single points of failure in critical systems

1.3 From Index to Protocol: A Necessary Reframing

The shift from "index" to "protocol" is not semantic. An index implies a single institution doing the measuring and ranking. A protocol implies a standard that anyone can use. The GSI v4 is a protocol first. The Global Subsidiarity Council, should it emerge, would be a *stewardship body*—maintaining the standard, curating the pattern library, resolving disputes—not a certification authority that issues official scores.

This distinction protects against the very centralizing tendency the GSI seeks to diagnose. A protocol cannot be captured in the same way an institution can. It can be forked, adapted, contested. Its legitimacy is distributed across its users.

2. The GSI Protocol: Four Dimensions, Sixteen Indicators

DIMENSION 1: DECISION PROXIMITY

How close are decisions to those affected?

Indicator	Measurement	Scale (0-10)	Data Sources
1.1 Administrative Distance	Average layers between citizen and decision-maker across 5 domains	0 (Household) - 10 (Supranational)	Gov. org charts, policy tracing
1.2 Fiscal Sovereignty	% of local budget controlled locally vs. mandated from above	0 (0% control) - 10 (100% control)	Budget analyses, grant tracking
1.3 Regulatory Autonomy	Ability to adapt national rules to local conditions	0 (No adaptation) - 10 (Full adaptation)	Legal analysis, opt-out provisions
1.4 Emergency Response Latitude	Local authority during crises	0 (Centrally directed) - 10 (Locally determined)	Emergency protocols, crisis case studies

DIMENSION 2: KNOWLEDGE INCLUSION

Whose intelligence informs decisions?

Indicator	Measurement	Scale (0-10)	Data Sources & Verification
2.1 Expert vs. Experiential Balance	% policy inputs from experts vs. citizens	0 (All expert) - 10 (Balanced)	Public committee records, parliamentary transcripts, budget documents
2.2 Participatory Mechanism Quality	Quality of citizen involvement in decision-making	0 (Token) - 10 (Co-design)	Municipal records, participation demographics, follow-up reports
2.3 Indigenous/Local Knowledge Integration	Recognition of traditional ecological/community knowledge	0 (Ignored) - 10 (Formally integrated)	Land management agreements, official ceremony records, court rulings
2.4 Feedback Loop Efficiency	Time from problem to policy adjustment	0 (Years) - 10 (Days/Weeks)	Emergency declarations database, policy revision logs, ombudsman reports

DIMENSION 3: RESILIENCE ARCHITECTURE

How systems handle disruption and diversity

Indicator	Measurement	Scale (0-10)	Data Sources
3.1 Critical System Redundancy	Backup mechanisms in 10 key systems	0 (Single point) - 10 (Fully distributed)	Infrastructure audits, system mappings
3.2 Adaptive Capacity	Speed of response to shocks	0 (Rigid) - 10 (Agile)	Crisis response data, innovation indices
3.3 Diversity Resilience	Handling of cultural/ethnic/regional differences	0 (Homogenizing) - 10 (Inclusive)	Policy impact assessments, diversity metrics
3.4 Long-term Sustainability	Balance of short vs. long-term planning	0 (Reactive) - 10 (Foresightful)	Planning documents, scenario exercises

DIMENSION 4: COHESION AND INTEGRATION

How distributed systems maintain unity without fragmentation

Indicator	Measurement	Scale (0-10)	Data Sources
4.1 Inter-Level Coordination	Effectiveness of protocols linking local to national	0 (Silos) - 10 (Seamless)	Coordination agreements, joint exercises
4.2 Shared Value Alignment	Degree of common principles across levels	0 (Conflicting) - 10 (Harmonized)	Value surveys, constitutional analyses
4.3 Conflict Resolution Mechanisms	Speed and fairness in resolving disputes	0 (Adversarial) - 10 (Collaborative)	Dispute logs, resolution outcomes
4.4 National Solidarity Metrics	Resource sharing between regions	0 (Zero-sum) - 10 (Mutual support)	Transfer payments, solidarity funds

3. The Complexity Adjustment Factor (CAF): Specified Formula

Problem Addressed: Small, homogeneous nations naturally have lower "optimal" decision distance than large, diverse federations.

CAF v4.0: Multi-Dimensional Complexity Scoring (Peer-Review Ready Specification)

Formula: $CAF = (G \times E \times D \times T) \div C$

Where each component is precisely defined:

G = Geographic Diversity Score (0-10)

$$G = \min(10, (Cz \times 0.4) + (Tt \times 0.3) + (Er \times 0.3))$$

Where:

- **Cz** = Climate zones count (Köppen classification major types), normalized: 1-5 zones = 0-10 scale
- **Tt** = Terrain types (mountains, plains, coasts, etc.), normalized: 1-6 types = 0-10 scale
- **Er** = Ecological regions (WWF ecoregions per 100k km²), normalized to 0-10

Example calculation: Canada: Cz=5 (zones) → 10; Tt=6 (types) → 10; Er=15 regions/100k km² → 9.2; G = (10×0.4)+(10×0.3)+(9.2×0.3) = 4+3+2.76 = **9.76**

E = Ethnolinguistic Diversity Score (0-10)

$$E = \min(10, (EL \times 0.6) + (EF \times 0.4))$$

Where:

- **EL** = Effective number of language groups ($1/\Sigma p^2$), normalized: 1-20 groups = 0-10 scale
- **EF** = Ethnic fractionalization index (standard Alesina et al. measure), 0-1 scale ×10

Example calculation: India: EL=15.2 groups → 7.6; EF=0.81 → 8.1; E = (7.6×0.6)+(8.1×0.4) = 4.56+3.24 = **7.8**

D = Development Disparity Score (0-10)

$$D = \min(10, (Gini \times 0.4) + (RGV \times 0.4) + (UR \times 0.2)) \times 10$$

Where:

- **Gini** = Gini coefficient (0-1)
- **RGV** = Regional GDP variance (coefficient of variation across subnational units), normalized 0-1
- **UR** = Urban-rural divide (ratio of urban to rural service access), normalized 0-1

Example calculation: Brazil: Gini=0.53 → 5.3; RGV=0.48 → 4.8; UR=2.1 → 4.8 (inverted); D = ((5.3×0.4)+(4.8×0.4)+(4.8×0.2)) = 2.12+1.92+0.96 = 5.0 → **5.0**

T = Threat Environment Score (0-10)

$$T = \min(10, (CV \times 0.4) + (BC \times 0.4) + (DF \times 0.2))$$

Where:

- **CV** = Climate vulnerability (ND-GAIN Index vulnerability score), normalized 0-10
- **BC** = Border conflict risk (expert-coded: 0=no disputes, 10=active armed conflict)
- **DF** = Disaster frequency (EM-DAT events per year per million population), normalized 0-10

C = Central Capacity Score (1-10)

$$C = \max(1, (GI \times 0.5) + (CPI \times 0.3) + (TI \times 0.2))$$

Where:

- **GI** = Government effectiveness index (World Bank WGI), normalized 0-10
- **CPI** = Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International), normalized 0-10
- **TI** = Technology infrastructure index (ITU development index), normalized 0-10

Note: C is a divisor with floor of 1 to prevent division-by-zero and avoid over-penalizing low-capacity states.

CAF Application:

Raw GSI scores are adjusted by CAF to generate **contextualized scores**. The formula yields typical ranges:

- Low-complexity nations (Singapore): CAF \approx 0.3-0.8
- Medium-complexity (Sweden, Switzerland): CAF \approx 1.5-3.0
- High-complexity (India, Brazil): CAF \approx 4.0-8.0

Contextual Targets: For each indicator, the protocol provides CAF-derived "optimal ranges" (e.g., for Administrative Distance, optimal = 4-6 for CAF=2.0 nations; 6-8 for CAF=5.0 nations). This prevents one-size-fits-all judgments while maintaining comparability.

4. Scoring and Aggregation Methodology

- **Indicator Scoring:** 0-10 scale, with clear behavioral anchors at each point
- **Dimension Scores:** Average of indicators
- **Overall GSI:** Weighted average of dimensions (equal weights default; adjustable per context with transparency)
- **Resilience Multiplier:** Optional final adjustment: score \times (1 + Resilience Bonus) where bonus = average shock response in last 5 years (0-0.2)

Anti-Gaming Protocols:

1. **Data Triangulation:** Require 3+ independent sources per indicator
 2. **Anomaly Detection:** AI flags unusual patterns (e.g., sudden jumps inconsistent with institutional change)
 3. **Citizen Validation Panels:** Random 1,000-citizen surveys to confirm scores (crowdsourced via partner organizations)
 4. **Transparency Mandates:** All raw data public; blockchain anchoring for key metrics
 5. **Forkability:** Any user can generate alternative scores using different weightings or data sources—the protocol enables comparison, not enforcement
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5. Data Confidence and the Transparency Protocol

The Data Confidence Tier System

To address the "Data Availability Nightmare" without excluding opaque nations:

Tier 1 (Gold) — Highest confidence: Verified by at least three independent sources (government + NGO/academic + citizen panel) with full transparency.

Tier 2 (Silver) — Moderate confidence: Government data corroborated by at least one independent check, with partial citizen validation.

Tier 3 (Bronze) — Low confidence: Estimated via proxy inferences due to absent or unreliable primary data. Proxies explicitly labeled with inference logic and margin of uncertainty.

Transparency Principle: All GSI implementations must publish their data sources, confidence tiers, and margin of error. There is no "official" GSI score—only implementations with varying confidence levels.

6. Governance as Standards Stewardship

The **Global Subsidiarity Council** (if formed) would not certify or rank. Its functions would be:

1. **Protocol Maintenance:** Regular updates to measurement specifications based on evidence and use
2. **Pattern Library Curation:** Database of interventions tagged by dimension, CAF level, and outcome—community-contributed, peer-reviewed
3. **Dispute Facilitation:** When conflicting implementations emerge, provide neutral technical assessment (not binding arbitration)
4. **Capacity Building:** Training and documentation for users worldwide

Composition (Advisory, Not Governing):

- 30% National government representatives (rotating)
- 30% Local/municipal government representatives
- 20% Civil society & indigenous representatives
- 10% Academic/technical experts
- 10% Private sector (infrastructure providers)

Funding Model:

- Tiered membership fees for organizations using the protocol commercially
 - Philanthropic support for civil society participation
 - No single funder >20% to prevent capture
 - All financial flows transparent and published
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7. From Swedish Diagnosis to Global Protocol: The Origin Story

The GSI did not emerge from a UN working group or a philanthropic initiative. It emerged from **Svensk Subsidiaritet**, a Swedish project that spent years diagnosing the overcentralization of one small, high-trust, homogeneous nation.

This origin matters for three reasons:

1. **It proves the diagnostic works in its original context.** Sweden's meticulous self-measurement demonstrated that even well-governed nations suffer from structural pathologies.
2. **It establishes legitimacy through humility.** This is not a top-down framework imposed by global institutions; it is a national self-diagnosis that scaled because it proved useful.
3. **It provides a template for adaptation.** If Sweden can measure its governance architecture, any jurisdiction can—with adjustments for local context.

The GSI is offered as Sweden's contribution to 21st-century governance innovation: a toolkit developed at home, refined through use, and shared freely for others to adapt.

8. The Academic Anchor Paper (Core Asset)

Title: *"Measuring Governance Architecture: A Complexity-Adjusted Subsidiarity Index"*

Authors: [Svensk Subsidiaritet researchers + academic partners]

Length: 25-35 pages

Structure:

1. **Introduction:** The architecture gap in governance measurement
2. **Theoretical Framework:** Ashby's Law, polycentric governance, cybernetic tradition
3. **The Swedish Case:** How national self-diagnosis revealed structural patterns
4. **The CAF Formula:** Derivation, validation, and sensitivity analysis
5. **Indicator Specifications:** Detailed measurement protocols for all 16 indicators
6. **Pilot Results:** Initial applications in 5 archetypal cases (Sweden, Switzerland, Singapore, India, Rwanda)
7. **Discussion:** Limitations, controversies, and paths forward
8. **Conclusion:** Governance measurement for the polycrisis era

Target Journals: *Governance, Public Administration Review, Ecology and Society, Journal of Institutional Economics*

Pre-print Strategy: Post to arXiv, SocArXiv, and a dedicated GSI website immediately upon submission. The protocol lives in public domain; journal publication provides peer-review validation but does not control access.

9. Phased Rollout as Protocol Adoption, Not Product Launch

Phase 0: Foundation (2026)

- Publish academic anchor paper
- Launch open-access website with full protocol specifications
- Seed pattern library with 50+ interventions from initial research
- Convene first standards workshop (invitation-only, 50 participants)

Phase 1: Adoption (2027-2028)

- Early adopters: 10-20 jurisdictions, research institutions, and civil society organizations implement the protocol
- Document implementations, refine specifications based on feedback
- First "State of Global Subsidiarity" report (aggregating public implementations, not issuing official scores)
- Pattern library grows to 200+ entries

Phase 2: Network (2029-2030)

- 50+ regular implementations across all continents
- Regional hubs emerge (Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia) adapting protocol to local contexts
- Begin integration with SDG reporting as voluntary complementary metric
- Protocol maintenance body formalizes (lightweight governance)

Phase 3: Infrastructure (2031+)

- Protocol becomes default standard for governance architecture diagnostics
- Used by national governments, municipalities, bioregions, civil society, researchers
- Forked adaptations for specialized contexts (indigenous governance, corporate governance, digital platforms)
- Pattern library functions as distributed knowledge commons

10. Responding to Criticisms

Criticism	Response
"One-size-fits-all metric"	CAF provides contextual adjustment; protocol enables forking and adaptation
"Too quantitative for qualitative reality"	Balanced with participatory assessments, citizen validation; confidence tiers signal uncertainty
"Could be gamed by governments"	Open-source protocol, multiple implementations, citizen validation, forking—gaming one implementation doesn't corrupt the standard
"Ignores cultural differences"	Cultural dimension explicitly included in knowledge inclusion; protocol designed for local adaptation

Criticism	Response
"Another burdensome index"	Integrates with existing data where possible; designed as diagnostic, not compliance burden
"Singapore Trap"	CAF explicitly addresses low-complexity cases with contextual targets
"Who watches the watchers?"	No central watchers—protocol distributes observation across all users; transparency and forking are the safeguards

11. Conclusion: Governance Measurement as Common Infrastructure

The GSI v4 is offered not as a finished product but as a **starting point for collective infrastructure**. It makes no claim to neutrality—it begins from a thesis about the importance of architecture and subsidiarity. But it makes that thesis transparent, its measurements contestable, and its methods adaptable.

The polycrisis of the 21st century—climate disruption, democratic erosion, technological transformation, geopolitical instability—demands governance systems that can match societal complexity. The GSI provides a way to see whether our systems are up to that task.

Why this matters now:

1. **Polycrisis demands resilience** → Distributed systems are inherently more resilient
2. **Digital enables coordination without centralization** → New possibilities for governance
3. **Democratic legitimacy requires proximity** → Distant decisions breed distrust
4. **Complexity cannot be governed centrally** → Cybernetic law, not opinion

The Swedish contribution: By measuring our own centralization meticulously, we provide the proof of concept and methodology for global application. The GSI transforms Sweden's national diagnosis into humanity's diagnostic toolkit.

Final vision: Within a decade, governance architecture will be as routinely measured as economic output—not because a global institution mandates it, but because the protocol proves useful to those who need to understand and improve their systems.

Appendices (Available Separately)

1. **GSI Technical Manual** (detailed measurement protocols)
2. **Country Adaptation Guidelines** (context-specific frameworks)
3. **Digital Platform Specifications** (open-source dashboard architecture)
4. **Pilot Nation Case Studies** (Sweden, Germany, Canada, Rwanda, South Korea)
5. **Research Validation Papers** (academic foundations)
6. **Implementation Roadmap**
7. **Training and Capacity Building Framework**

8. Legal and Ethical Framework

Next Steps:

1. **Publish academic anchor paper** (Q3 2026)
 2. **Launch open protocol website** (Q4 2026)
 3. **Convene first standards workshop** (Q1 2027)
 4. **Document first 10 implementations** (2027)
 5. **Release first pattern library** (2028)
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The Global Subsidiarity Index Protocol is offered as a contribution to 21st-century governance innovation, developed from Swedish experience but designed for global adaptation and use. It is free, open, and forkable. No permission is needed to use it, adapt it, or improve it.