

From anthropology in climate change  
to anthropology of climate change:  
an epistemological shift.

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- **What is the current contribution of anthropology as a discipline to the climate change research and intervention?**
- **How can anthropology's current contribution to the climate change research and intervention be effectively enhanced?**

**Anthropology can be defined as the study of humankind in all times and places <sup>4</sup>**

## **Distinct characteristics of Anthropology <sup>4</sup>**

- Broader scopes
- Holistic approach (multifaceted)
  - Long-term fieldwork
- Qualitative research methodologies
  - Bottom-up approach
- Participants play a more active role (co-creator of knowledge)
  - Cross-cultural (not Eurocentric)

## Why Anthropology?

1. Varying perceptions of different groups about the “real threat” of climate change <sup>1</sup>
  2. Ineffective international political negotiations <sup>2</sup>
3. In-depth understandings of the local contexts where climate change adaptations and mitigation projects are to be implemented <sup>1</sup>
  4. Socio-cultural, economic, political, historical and behavioral complexities of the climate change debate <sup>3</sup>
  5. Power dynamics in the negotiation processes <sup>2</sup>

# Anthropology's Current Involvement in CC debate

- “Interventionist” approach – predominantly focusing on the local socio-economic contexts <sup>1</sup>
- Current approach underpinned by anthropology’s flagship trait of qualitative research methods and long-term fieldwork <sup>2</sup>
- Not using the rich tradition of anthropological theoretical perspectives and analytical frameworks <sup>1</sup>
- **Is that all anthropology can offer to the climate change debate?**

- Anthropologists working as mere qualitative researchers under the supervision of natural scientists, economists, planners, project managers and policymakers
- Subsidiary role and research/project/policy problems and priorities are set by non-anthropologists
- Anthropological research methods are applied

- Anthropologists conducting theoretically grounded research
- Climate science itself becomes an object of critical scrutiny in addition to the application of anthropological data collection methods
- Along with anthropology's qualitative research methods and long-term fieldwork tradition, broad holistic approach and anthropological theoretical repertoire are utilized

## **Anthropology of Climate Change will facilitate the analysis of:**

1. Climate change in terms of human systems that generate greenhouse gases <sup>1</sup>
2. The complex socio-cultural, economic and political contexts where climate science is produced, circulated and translated into policy <sup>7</sup>
3. International and regional political negotiations and decision-making <sup>3</sup>
4. How different groups perceive, understand and respond to climate change and changes in local weather pattern <sup>2</sup>
5. Varying impact of climate change on people around the world
6. Diverse and complicated socio-cultural mechanisms that drive adaptation and mitigation <sup>6</sup>

1. Relationship between science and knowledge- how we know what we know about climate change <sup>7</sup>
2. Scientists' attitude towards climate change are shaped by their epistemologies and worldviews and sometimes by their affiliation to particular scientific communities <sup>8</sup>
  3. Studying scientific meetings and climate negotiations <sup>1</sup>
4. Not to undermine scientific knowledge but to understand how knowledge is generated in a particular socio-cultural, political and economic context <sup>3</sup>
5. As these contexts influence research questions, the methods used to answer these questions and the transmission of results <sup>3</sup>
6. Circulation and interpretation of scientific knowledge in everyday practice, policy arenas, media discourse and popular culture <sup>7</sup>
7. Why and how some facts become politically contested and not others <sup>7</sup>

# GOBESHONA 5

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## Take-home Message

Both anthropological analytical rigor and methodologies need to be employed in climate change research and intervention



# References

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