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| <b>InsSciDE Work Package 7:</b>                                  |                                                                     |
| <b>Environment: Monitoring as an Arena for Science Diplomacy</b> |                                                                     |
| <b>Case Study n°7.5</b>                                          | <b>Traditional knowledge and monitoring in climate negotiations</b> |
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### Abstract

Article 7.5 of the Paris Agreement, developed at COP21 in December 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, says that adaptation policies should be “guided by the best available science and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge, knowledge of indigenous peoples and local knowledge systems”.

This InsSciDE case study deals with the inclusion of traditional knowledge alongside science expertise in the climate regime and, more specifically, in the monitoring techniques. We propose first a genealogy of this inclusion of traditional knowledge in the climate regime as a co-production of different actors: different scientific communities, indigenous organizations and international institutions. We will then analyze a local experience of monitoring climate change in indigenous communities of Panama.

### Introduction

The proposed study seeks to address the following questions:

How is traditional knowledge used as an alternative category to science in climate diplomacy?

How, at local level, is traditional knowledge concretely used as a monitoring tool complementary to techno scientific methods?

Can we, at a global as much as a local level, observe an actual dialogue of knowledge between traditional indigenous knowledge and scientific western knowledge?

The inclusion of traditional knowledge in climate talk is tightly linked to the rise of the adaptation approach but also to the critique of the top down approach promoted by the United Nations system with the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and the UNFCCC (*United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*). This domination of complex and abstract models and global metrology data such as “global mean temperature” or “tonne of carbon” has been criticised for its tendency to erase differences in human experiences, understandings, epistemologies, values and meanings of climate change. Hence, some actors are calling for a repolitisation and reterritorialisation of the governance of climate change, which will demand better inclusion of traditional and local knowledge in the assessment of climate change.

We will look at how this discourse about using traditional knowledge to monitor climate change is concretely implemented on the ground at the local level. Our case study will analyse the Indigenous Peoples’ Bio Cultural Climate Change Assessment Initiative (IPCCA) that has emerged as an innovative response, bringing together indigenous knowledge and science in a process which links bio cultural realities with complex global climatic processes. The IPCCA is a global network including nine projects in North and South America, Asia, Africa and Europe, which promotes a methodology for local climate change monitoring based on participatory mapping



and workshops for dialogue between scientists and indigenous people. It links indigenous communities and scientists in order to monitor climate change in contexts submitted to climate change. We will follow the IPCC initiative in Panama, in the indigenous region of Kuna Yala, where the IPCC initiative has been implemented to carry out an assessment of the impacts of climate change with the goal of providing local adaptation options for coping with the phenomenon.

## Actors

The salience of traditional knowledge in the climate arena — and the fact that **indigenous peoples** now have their authorised representatives present in the international forum of discussion — was not always a given. It is the result of a complex and open political process. The emergence of traditional knowledge in the climate arena has depended crucially on the emergence of a strong “indigenous peoples” actor able to speak for all indigenous peoples, despite the heterogeneity of the realities covered by this expression. The main claim of indigenous peoples’ global movement has always been specific collective and territory rights, as defined and promoted in the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples since 2007. Their agenda is clearly political, involving: first, more rights for indigenous peoples, and second, recognition of traditional knowledge. In many ways, the claim for traditional knowledge is used as a diplomatic tool to advance their agenda about rights and territory.

**Anthropologists and scientists** from related disciplines have also played an important role as spokespersons for traditional knowledge in the climate change arena. They are key players, acting all around the stage, as an “epistemic community” that defends the value and legitimacy of traditional knowledge. The first step in the building this “epistemic community” occurred in the early 2000s, when a growing body of anthropological studies documented that climate change affects Arctic peoples. The globalisation of this epistemic community intensified in 2011 with a conference in Mexico co-organised by the IPCC, combined with a new institutional publication by UN University and UNESCO that presented a broad overview of “traditional knowledge and climate change”. More recently, a small cluster of scholars is producing a growing body of literature combining early studies of the Arctic with a new set of publications on traditional knowledge and tropical forests, and on monitoring, risk reduction or agricultural resilience.

Several **Northern European states, Peru, Mexico and the Philippines** have supported indigenous peoples with financial and political resources and by relaying their demands in climate negotiations. But discussion on the draft proposal of the Paris Agreement also showed that these states were looking, against the will of indigenous organisations, to impose a specific framing that disconnects knowledge from rights. The main driver of this kind of support may be the desire to benefit from the input of traditional knowledge in the global response to climate change, without paying the higher political cost of backing indigenous peoples’ rights. The mention of traditional knowledge in the operative section of the Paris Agreement bearing on adaptation reflects a form of compromise between a “rights first” versus a “knowledge first” approach.

## Fields and disciplines, interfaces with technology

From a science and technology studies perspective combined with anthropology, we will look at how different scientific fields (meteorology, geography, ethnobotany, etc.) are made to interact with traditional knowledge in the monitoring of climate change. We will pay special attention to the appropriation of different techniques (mapping, GPS, drones, etc.) by indigenous people and the impact on their traditional knowledge and practices.

## Networks and communication

Indigenous environmental diplomacy about environmental knowledge responded primarily to the deficit of bottom-up approaches in the UNFCCC mainstream diplomacy arena driven by Big (Global) Science. Incorporating local knowledge responds to the southern countries’ demand for concrete adaptation tools but



represents a challenge for European diplomacy. Supporting indigenous claims is a good way for European countries to communicate on human rights and environmental politics. At the same time, however, it implies advancing on the recognition of specific rights to a certain category of citizens (namely the indigenous people) – which contradicts a certain ideal of universal rights.

### **Disciplinary/methodological approach**

Theoretically, we combine different lines of analysis with a strong constructivist perspective, inspired by STS and political anthropology. In line with the anthropology of international institutions (Müller 2013), anthropology of indigenous performance on the UN stage (Bellier 2013), and analyses of the use of knowledge and worldviews as political resources (Blaser 2009), traditional knowledge is analysed here as a category of global governance (Brosius 2006) with a strong political dimension (Dumoulin Kervran 2003). We combine this global focus with more directly ethnographic approaches at the local level.

Methodologically, our analysis will be grounded on our experience of collaborative ethnography of transnational mega events, in a systematic review of academic and grey literature (from UN bodies and NGO reports), and in interviews with key actors who promote traditional knowledge. For the local case studies, interviews and participant observation will also be used.

### **Essential bibliography**

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