

Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Ecocentrism and Climate Resilience: A Reflection on the Significance of Worldviews in Climate Change

ANOUSKA TAMULI

IRC Government of Ireland Scholar, Department of Archaeology, University of Galway

Abstract

Traditional Ecological Knowledge or the knowledge systems of the Indigenous peoples and local communities may be translated into lifeways that are climate resilient. Indigenous and local practices related to weather forecasting, resource management, architecture and the use of social capital in times of crisis facilitate sustainable production and consumption, carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation and disaster management, all of which are of immense importance to climate change adaptation and mitigation. However, it is crucial to note that TEK translated into climate-resilient practices is founded on an ecocentric worldview that ascribes agency and a moral standing to the non-human entities of Nature. In contrast, the lifeways of modern Western society and those built on its model are largely found to have a negative impact on the environment as they result in unsustainable production and consumption, pollution and biodiversity loss. Anthropocentrism which tells about the worldview of modern Western society asserts the centrality of the human species and reduces the rest of Nature to a mere resource that ought to be exploited for meeting human needs. Undoubtedly, worldviews have a bearing on human behaviour. Measures taken by intergovernmental organisations to adapt to and mitigate climate change largely focus on enabling lifestyle changes of the masses that would promote climate resilience and minimize the adverse impact of anthropogenic activities on the environment. That such measures have not been effective enough is confirmed by reports such as the Adaptation Gap Report 2023 by the UNEP and the NDC Synthesis Report 2021 by the UNFCCC. This paper discusses the significance of Indigenous worldviews and practices in the context of climate action and encourages a rethinking and restructuring of the dominant anthropocentric worldview in favour of a more holistic, ecocentric one as embodied by Indigenous peoples and local communities to better facilitate the achievement of sustainable development and help address climate change.

Keywords: Traditional Ecological Knowledge; Worldviews; Ecocentrism; Anthropocentrism; Climate Resilience; Climate Change.