Perspectives from the Global South on the Anthropocene

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

2026

Biodiversity through time: Deep histories and living knowledge systems from the Global South.

INTRODUCTION

We invite specialists from diverse backgrounds and methodological traditions to participate in our newest report titled “Biodiversity through time: Deep histories and living knowledge systems from the Global South”.

Our goal is to bring together case studies and viewpoints from across the Global South in a collaborative, multi-authored report that can contribute to ongoing debates on biodiversity, restoration, and climate in multiple public and policy-facing arenas. These include the 2026 17th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Armenia, 2026 Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP31) in Türkiye, and other relevant international and regional frameworks. In doing so, we hope to help create a more inclusive and historically grounded contribution to current biodiversity debates.

With a particular emphasis on the Global South, this report aims to foreground perspectives from regions and communities that are both deeply affected by biodiversity loss and climate change, and central to the development of sophisticated knowledge and practices of environmental stewardship. Contributions should be approximately 600–1000 words in length (excluding references and footnotes) and may include 1–3 figures. Submissions may be multi-authored, provided that the lead author is from the Global South. Contributions may also be written in the language most comfortable for the authors, and translation support will be discussed collaboratively where needed.

BACKGROUND

The world is currently facing a biodiversity crisis, with accelerating species extinction, ecosystem degradation, and the erosion of ecological resilience. While this crisis is often framed as a recent phenomenon, its roots extend deep into the past, shaped by climate variability and long-term human impacts on their environments.

Contemporary biodiversity loss cannot be understood without acknowledging its deep historical drivers. Processes such as colonial expansion, industrialisation, extractive economies, and unequal development have profoundly transformed ecosystems, disproportionately affecting regions of the Global South, which today host the majority of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

Understanding biodiversity loss today, therefore, requires moving beyond short-term perspectives. It calls for a deep-time approach that can reveal how ecosystems have responded to shifting climates, how human communities have interacted with and shaped biodiversity over millennia, and how these dynamics have produced both resilience and vulnerability in present-day systems.

At the same time, biodiversity cannot be understood solely through species reconstructions. It is embedded in biocultural systems, networks of relationships linking species, environments, and knowledge systems. Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities have long navigated climatic variability while sustaining biodiversity through practices grounded in stewardship, reciprocity, and place-based knowledge. Their perspectives challenge dominant views of biodiversity as a static inventory of species, instead emphasising relational ontologies in which humans are integral to ecological systems.

The previous COP 16 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD16) took place in Cali, Colombia, and was deemed the "La COP de la gente," or the People's COP, due to the collaborative government and society mobilisation, and reaffirmed its commitment to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF). Outcomes from this CBD16 focused on working toward the KMGBF's upcoming '30 by 30' objectives to restore 30% of all degraded ecosystems and conserve 30% of land, waters, and seas by 2030. Cooperative objectives in the implementation of the KMGBF include a) conservation of biological diversity, b) sustainable use of biological diversity and c) fair and equitable sharing of benefits, which includes the elevation of the role of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) and increased engagement embedded in the global agenda.

Recent developments in global biodiversity policy, including outcomes from CBD COP16 and the ongoing UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, have reinforced the need for approaches that are not only ecologically effective but also socially just, locally grounded, and historically informed. In this context, we believe that long-term perspectives are essential for understanding biodiversity change and for shaping more equitable futures.

To contribute to this conversation, we are bringing together specialists from diverse backgrounds and methodological traditions. We are especially interested in dialogues among archaeology, history, palaeoecology, oral histories, and Indigenous and local knowledge systems, as these approaches can offer deeper insights into biodiversity dynamics and human–environment relations over time.

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REPORT STRUCTURE

1. Rethinking Biodiversity: Concepts, Ontologies, and Histories

This section will explore how biodiversity is conceptualised across disciplines and knowledge systems. We welcome contributions that:

- Examine biodiversity as a relational and biocultural system
- Explore diet and food web dynamics
- Engage with diverse ontologies of human–nature relationships
- Critically assess dominant conservation frameworks and their assumptions
- Explore how modelling approaches can help represent long-term biodiversity dynamics, human–environment relations, and biocultural systems

2. Deep Histories of Biodiversity Change

This axis focuses on long-term human–environment interactions and their impacts on biodiversity across different temporal scales:

2.1 Prehistoric Transformations

- Drivers of biodiversity change, such as climate shifts, overhunting, and habitat modification
- Evidence for early extinctions, species redistribution, and ecosystem restructuring

2.2 Historical and Early Modern Transitions

- Impacts of colonialism, the Columbian Exchange, industrialisation, extractive economies, ecocide
- Processes of ecological disruption, species introductions, and landscape transformation

REPORT STRUCTURE

2.3 Long-Term Human-Wildlife Coexistence and Conflict

- Millennial-scale dynamics of human–wildlife interactions
- Case studies highlighting coexistence, adaptation, and conflict

3. Conservation, Restoration, and Biocultural Futures

This section seeks to bridge the past and present to inform future biodiversity governance:

- Case studies of community-led and Indigenous conservation practices
- Heritage ecology and the role of communities in managing biocultural landscapes
- Integration of long-term ecological knowledge into contemporary conservation strategies
- Policy recommendations for inclusive, just, and effective biodiversity governance

4. Rooted Knowledge: Indigenous Peoples' Perspectives

This cross-cutting section centres the actions, knowledge systems, and governance practices of Indigenous communities:

- Documentation of Indigenous ecological knowledge and stewardship practices
- Community-led initiatives addressing biodiversity loss and climate change
- Reflections on land rights, sovereignty, and environmental justice
- Historical responsibility and restorative justice
- Collaborative and co-produced research approaches