

**The Politics of Climate Change:  
A Comparative Study of Local Community  
Responses**

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### 2. Statement of Research Question

The team will identify the policies and political structures that most effectively address climate change by investigating and comparing current policies in Anchorage, Alaska, Tromso, Norway and Tatabanya, Hungary. With a greater understanding of these policies, the team will return to Anchorage and work with the Mayor's Chief of Staff David Ramseur to develop a Climate Action Plan for the Municipality of Anchorage.

### Community Problem

Following suggestions by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), communities are developing a mix of response strategies that combine policies with incentive-based approaches at all levels of government. Additional existing climate change literature suggests that cooperative local and sub-regional solutions are the most effective means to address this issue. Given that the United States lacks national policy initiatives on climate change, the emphasis on local response is a particularly exciting opportunity to craft the type of policy strategies for our community that are recommended by the IPCC. To this end, Anchorage would benefit immensely from reviewing the proactive steps taken by similarly sized communities in Hungary and Norway.

After the team completes their research, they will work to accomplish the project's second goal of creating a Climate Action Plan to propose to the Municipality of Anchorage. Currently, the MOA has no such Plan. Using the experiences of Tromso and Tatabanya, students will identify and work with community groups and city officials in Anchorage to draft a plan, and promote its adoption to local governing bodies.

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### Discussion of Present Understanding and Knowledge

The three communities chosen, Tromso, Tatabanya and Anchorage, present sufficient demographic similarities to warrant comparison of communities profoundly impacted by climate change, and yet the degree to which each community has adopted response and mitigation strategies to this phenomenon differs significantly.

By researching these similarities and differences, we will acquire critical information which can be used to predict the success of local climate change policies. For example, like its sister city Anchorage, Tromso is a mid-size northern coastal city on the front line of climate change. Environmentally, the two share much in common. They both face the dichotomous need to develop policies that balance human use of the living resources of the Arctic with sustainable environmental practices. They both base their economies on resource extraction, benefiting from primarily the commercial fishing and oil industries. They both share a rich environmental diversity and access to some of the scarcest of the world's resources found within the Arctic ecosystem.

Anchorage and Tromso share demographic similarities as well. Both are part of nations with a long history of democratic governance. Both are cultural and scientific centers that are growing to meet increasing demands of the greater populations of their states. Both are becoming more international in nature, yet still draw on the presence of indigenous populations as part of their true nature.

Tatabanya, on the other hand, is a mid-size city located in central Europe, far from the Arctic edge. Hungary, a nation emerging from its communist past, is a landlocked state whose economy is evolving from mineral extraction to non-resource based light industry development. Despite its non-democratic roots, Tatabanya is quickly

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becoming Hungary's leader in promoting community-based responses to climate change. They have created a local climate change group and are in the process of developing the first local climate change strategy in Hungary. Tatabanya has undertaken and implemented many climate change initiatives, including launching an Energy Neighborhood project, establishing a heat and UV alert plan (the first in the country), developing programs for local nonprofit organizations to promote climate change actions, and mounted a city wide environmental education campaign. They have also begun using alternative fuels in city buses, reducing emissions and fuel consumption costs for the city. Most recently, Tatabanya officials have been instrumental in the creation of the Alliance of Hungarian Climate Friendly Cities and prompting the Hungarian General Assembly to accept its local climate change strategy and the local heat and UV-alert plan.

Anchorage stands out from Tatabanya and Tromso in that it is the one community that has not developed a comprehensive climate change strategy or policy according to officials with the Mayor's Office of Economic Development. Tatabanya's comprehensive approach is described in brief above, and Tromso is in the process of establishing a think tank to "address emerging issues related to Arctic climate change [that] will distinguish Tromso as a forward looking, international leader in outlining and adapting to the impacts of global warming." Although Anchorage has taken steps in addressing climate change, it has not yet initiated a comprehensive adaptation or mitigation strategy.

### Project Plan

The team will gather information regarding political structures of each city and determine the process for formulating local policies within each. The team will also

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research the political structures of Norway, Hungary and the United States in order to understand how local strategies fit within those of their respective national governing bodies. This enables a comparison of centralized and decentralized political systems and provides an answer to the question of whether centralized systems such as those found in Europe elicit greater cooperation and compliance in local response strategies.

The team will determine the specific institutional mandates to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and identify what, if any, adaptation strategies have been implemented in each community.

In August 2008, the team will travel to Norway and Hungary to gain a broader understanding of each city's policies. The team will conduct interviews with local officials and stakeholders to determine how policies were developed, which organizations were involved, and what organizational approaches were in operation. We will be focusing specifically on the process of policy development and the role of different government structures in that process. The team will be assisted by Dr. Barbara Botos in Hungary whose experience with developing community based climate action plans has been instrumental in that nation's success in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. With the assistance of Dr. Botos, we have begun to secure interviews with community leaders in both Hungary and Norway.

In addition to interviews with policymakers and active stakeholders, the team will conduct surveys and informal interviews with community members in both countries to better understand public opinion about carbon reduction policies. Surveys will cover the policy development process, opinions about current policies and views about future policies. Surveys will be catered to each locality's actual policies. For example, if one

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city has a carbon tax policy, the survey respondents will be faced with questions about that specific policy. A draft copy of our survey is attached to this application.

### Anticipated Results

The team will work with David Ramseur to develop a Climate Action Plan to be presented to the Municipality of Anchorage. The plan will be designed with insights from Norway and Hungary, as well as a full understanding of how such policies should fit within State and National policies.

### 3. Project Budget

Type of Expense	Kelcie Ralph	Marcus Welker
Personnel	\$0	\$0
Supplies	\$0	\$0
Equipment	\$0	\$0
Travel	\$1000	\$1000

### Justification for budget

Currently both Kelcie and Marcus have secured \$750 each from USUAA's travel board as well as major support from the Chancellor's Special Projects Fund and the Center for Community Engagement and Learning; however the cost of travel to Tatyabanya, Hungary and Tromso, Norway is approximately \$3300. Without further financial support we will not be able to travel to Hungary and Norway to conduct the in depth study of the two communities.

While in Hungary we will be accompanied by Dr. Barbara Botos, the Strategic and Environmental Manager for the Municipality of Tatabanya, Hungary and will need no other special personnel. In Norway we do not expect as much of a language barrier as in Hungary and will not need to be accompanied by a translator.

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Funding for supplies and equipment has been secured through other grants, such as the Chancellors Special Projects Fund.

The funding will not be used to travel to conferences.

### 4. References

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Bulkeley, Harriet. *Cities and Climate Change: Urban Sustainability and Global Environmental Governance*, Taylor & Francis, Inc., 2003.

Denton, Fatman. "Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts, and Adaptation: Why Does Gender Matter?" Oxfam Publishing, 2002.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007: Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, M.L. Parry, O.F. Canziani, J.P. Palutikof, P.J. van der Linden and C.E. Hanson, Eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 7-22.

Rizvi, Haider. "Women Demand Voice in Climate Debate," Inter Press Service, September, 2007.

Stoparic, Bojana. "Women Push for Seats at Climate Policy Table," Womensnews, July 06, 2006.

Stuhl, Andrew, *Arctic Resilience: An Overview of the Arctic Frontiers Conference and Development of a Tromso-Based Think-Tank*, The Nelson Institute of Environmental Studies, January, 2007.

### 5. Project Timeline

August 1, 2008- Preliminary research on political structures and policies completed

August 3, 2008- Travel to Budapest, Hungary for one week

August 10, 2008- Travel to Tromso, Norway for one week

August 16, 2008- Return to Alaska

August, 2008- March, 2009- Develop Climate Action Plan

March, 2009- Complete Climate Action Plan for Municipality

April, 2009-Presentation at the Undergraduate Research Symposium

May 31, 2009- Expenditure Deadline

June 15, 2009- Final written report deadline