

Putting humans into their environmental contexts

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What if you had access to an online research tool that provided a vast knowledge base about humans and their historical relationships with their physical landscapes?

SFI External Professor and archaeologist Tim Kohler thinks such a [tool](#) would be broadly useful, not just to archaeologists but to researchers and [policy makers](#) in many fields for which the nexus of humans and their environments are of interest: history, ecology, geography, sustainability, and many more.

Kohler, an anthropologist at Washington State University, and Keith Kintigh, an anthropologist at Arizona State University, are developing just such a tool, which they call SKOPE, for Synthesized Knowledge of Past Environments.

Although the project has, to date, focused on the American Southwest, the long-term aim is to provide integrated information about the environment experienced by humans in many places and times, past and present. The project's furtherance is the subject of this week's invitation-only working group at SFI.

Having grown, in part, out of the 2002-14 Village Ecodynamics Project, SKOPE could lead to a broader understanding of the mutual dependency of [human](#) societies and their natural environments.

"SKOPE could be useful for research in other areas," says Kohler, "from

political science and sociology to sustainability. It can find data and synthesize it for people who are not experts."

SFI, because of its modeling work, is the perfect venue for deciding how to implement it, Kohler says. Plus, he adds, SKOPE "could get some cross-talk going between the archaeologists and the non-archaeologists at the Institute."

Provided by Santa Fe Institute

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