

Bringing together climate, science and policy in Latin America: a study of three cases

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Outline

- Context
- Problem
- Study questions
- Method
- Results
- Recommendations



Context: the path to the topic

- An informal Canadian-Latin American research network focused on climate adaptation in semi-arid regions (water scarcities)
- Interdisciplinary projects oriented to support the development of policies and programs
- The need for a planned adaptation where the government plays a central role

The science/policy interface:

- A deliberative space where the interactions between researchers and policy makers take place
- A “wicked issue” in the area of climate change (challenges and barriers)
- Ours efforts and frustrations....



Bringing together climate, science, and policy: contributions for influential science in Latin America

- A regional study: Cochabamba (Bolivia), Mendoza (Argentina) and Coquimbo (Chile)
- An exploratory research
- Supported by the Canada International Development Research Center (IDRC)

Study Questions

- What are the differences and similarities that exist between the climate knowledge produced by climate scientists (supply) and knowledge needs of policy makers (demand)?
- What are the roles played by the dimensions of scientific evidence, the connections between scientists and policymakers, and context in affecting the supply and demand for climate knowledge in the interface?

The method

- In depth interviews
- A regional sample of 15 social and natural scientists; 15 policy-makers; and 5 representatives of intermediate organizations (total sample = 128)
- A common interview guide
- Interviews were transcribed and coded and analyzed using NVivo

General conclusions

- Mutual recognition of the relevance of science and policy, which does not translate into an even basic interface
- A more developed interface in Chile and Argentina, but where the supply is varied and uncoordinated and where the needs of the demand are unclear.
- Absence of institutional channels that allow for a fluid transfer of information between the two communities.
- A simple dualist image of each other that reinforces the lack of communication
- Evidence is not an issue – context and limited connections seems to problematic factors
- Emphasis on the natural sciences among policy makers

Mendoza, Argentina

- **Supply and Demand**
- Policy makers state scientists produce too much diagnostic information in a format and language that is not useful to them
- Different motivations as a main obstacle: investigation vs. public interest or theoretical vs. useful knowledge
- Incapacity of the policy community to transform knowledge into action
- **Roles played by evidence, connections, and context**
- Lack of institutional continuity of political changes and political agenda
- Policy makers would seek to legitimize their decisions based on scientific knowledge, but contingent on scientists being motivated to establish contacts with policy makers

Coquimbo, Chile

- **Supply and Demand**
- Concentration of existing knowledge on climate change in natural sciences
- Research objectives are not focused on policy needs
- Policy-makers rarely ask request access to scientific knowledge
- Access to scientific information is difficult (complex results disseminated in scientific publications)
- **Roles played by evidence, connections, and context**
- Institutional water governance system is a reality that block solutions
- A 'no-man's land' exists between the two with considerable distance and gaps
- Absence of structures of coordination and of a common language between actors (lack of clarity of who or what is responsible for this)

Cochabamba, Bolivia

- **Supply and Demand**
- Scientists believe there is ample information; policy makers argue there is not pertinent or necessary information
- Public sector lack knowledge about climate change
- **Roles played by evidence, connections, and context**
- Evidence suffers from lack of technical support, lack of data, and better programs of dissemination
- Social organizations most relevant for the policy agenda, followed by NGOs, local leaders and international cooperation agencies
- Lack of human capital in the policy community

What do we need?

The interface is a process of exchange of knowledge and experiences and not a lineal dynamic: we need a new institution able to mediate and facilitate the exchange.

To develop the public commitment of science and the knowledge of the policy maker

Thanks.....
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