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Editorial

Studying public policies and climate change in Latin America

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The issue of climate change is transversal and of global concern today. It is a superwicked problem (Levin et al., 2009), whose impacts cut across social, economic, environmental, and political dimensions, requiring coordinated and innovative governmental responses. In the international literature, there is a broad body of studies on climate policies, originating from different disciplines and interdisciplinary approaches. These works range from technical research in meteorology and energy transition to contributions from geography and environmental and urban studies.

Recent research has increasingly incorporated theories and approaches from public policy studies, such as policy diffusion, policy design and dismantling, citizen participation, multilevel governance, and climate federalism. Despite this progress in the international arena, in Latin America the production of public policy knowledge on climate change remains incipient and is still in the process of consolidation (Porto de Oliveira & Maillet, 2026).

This special issue, organized through a collaboration between researchers from higher education institutions in Brazil and Chile, reflects a Latin American partnership seeking to fill this gap and thus contribute to the international debate. We received 47 article proposals, of which only 7 could be accepted for the final composition of this dossier, following a rigorous peerreview process. The high number of submissions demonstrates the growing interest in — and the urgent relevance of — the topic for researchers in the region.

There are signs of a trend toward increasing research output in the coming years, not only due to the increasingly evident effects of climate change in the region, but also as a result of major global climaterelated events being organized in Latin America, such as the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 16 on Biodiversity) in Cali, Colombia, in 2024; and the 30th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP30) in Belém, Brazil, in 2025.

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[Translated version] Note: All English quotes were translated by this article's translator.

The topic has been incorporated into the agendas of various governments in the region, as shown by the proliferation of climate action plans at different levels (from national to subnational). In addition, funding agencies have created calls for research on climate change, such as the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) in the state of São Paulo, and CNPq at the national level. Finally, recent public policy conferences the issue have been discussed in recent, such as the International Public Policy Association event scheduled to take place at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, in July 2026, with workshops on public policy and climate, including discussions of Latin American cases. There is, therefore, an expectation of growth in research output and an expansion of the research agenda in general, and in the field of public policy in particular.

The introduction to this special issue presents six key questions for analyzing climate change from a public policy perspective in Latin America, emphasizing their relevance from both empirical and theoreticalconceptual standpoints (Porto de Oliveira & Maillet, 2026). These are: the specificities of different Latin American and Global South countries; the construction, dismantling, and reconstruction of policies; climate policy capacity; the design and use of climate policy instruments; climate governance beyond borders, in its multilevel, global, and transnational dimensions; and social participation in the formulation of climate policies.

This dossier also includes the following articles, which explore multiple facets of the climate challenge in Latin America: "The diffusion of climate legislation in Latin America: regional trends, national particularities," by Israel Solorio, Cecilia Ibarra, Jorge Guzmán, and Beatriz Pogorelow; "Public policy instruments, institutional innovation, and agricultural adaptation to climate change in Brazil," by Mathews Vichr Lopes and Eduardo de Lima Caldas; "The Napoleonic footprint: how administrative tradition influenced collaborative climate adaptation in Cartagena, Colombia," by Gustavo Enrique Valdivieso Cervera; "Climate change and food on the agenda of Brazilian Ministries," by Catia Grisa, Christiane Marques Severo, and Fernanda Castilhos França de Vasconcelos; "Transforming global commitments into local actions: governance challenges in implementing the climate agenda," by Ariane Roder Figueira, Eduardo Russo, and Gustavo Gomes Rocha; "Risk-framing governmentalities in a changing climate: political rationalities and discursive fields," by Andrea Carrión and Julien Rebotier; "Climate governance and indigenous women: narratives from institutions and personal perspectives," by Rocío Yon Jorquera and Francisca Constanza Carril Cares.

These articles offer an indepth view of the dynamics of climate policy production in the region. We hope that this special issue will contribute to readers — both in academia and in practice — developing a critical perspective on the topic, supporting theoretical, conceptual, and empirical discussions, as well as the development of more effective and equitable public policies to address climate change.

We wish you an excellent reading experience!

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