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The diffusion of climate legislation in Latin America: regional trends, national particularities

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The adoption of climate acts has become an international best practice in climate policy. Latin America has been part of this trend, with 10 of 20 countries in the region enacting such legislation. Nevertheless, this empirical phenomenon has largely been neglected by both the international literature and regional academia. Drawing on policy diffusion studies, this paper examines the temporal and spatial dynamics of climate acts adoption in Latin America. By analyzing the characteristics of these acts, the paper seeks to reconsider the lessons highlighted by the international literature. The findings demonstrate that climate acts reflect the distinctive features of the region's presidential political systems. Given the need to expand the frontiers of climate action research in Latin America, this study concludes by outlining future research avenues.

Keywords: climate acts, framework laws, climate policy, Latin America, policy diffusion.

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La difusión de legislación climática en América Latina: tendencias regionales, particularidades nacionales

La adopción de actas climáticas se ha convertido en un estándar internacional de política climática. América Latina no ha sido ajena a esta tendencia, y 10 de sus 20 países han promulgado legislación en este sentido. Sin embargo, este fenómeno empírico ha pasado inadvertido, tanto para la literatura internacional como para la academia regional. Con base en estudios sobre la difusión de políticas, este artículo explora la dinámica temporal y espacial de la adopción de legislación climática en América Latina. Al analizar las características de dichas actas, este texto también se propone repensar las lecciones destacadas por la literatura internacional. Los resultados demuestran que las actas climáticas reflejan las características distintivas de los sistemas políticos presidenciales de la región. Considerando la necesidad de expandir las fronteras de la investigación sobre acción climática en América Latina, el estudio concluye delineando futuras líneas de investigación.
Palabras clave: actas climáticas, leyes marco, política climática, América Latina, difusión de políticas.

A difusão dos atos climáticos na América Latina: tendências regionais, especificidades nacionais

A adoção de atos climáticos tornou-se uma prática de política climática internacionalmente reconhecida. A América Latina tem seguido esta tendência, com 10 dos seus 20 países a terem promulgado legislação neste sentido. No entanto, este fenómeno empírico tem sido amplamente negligenciado, tanto pela literatura internacional como pela academia regional. Com base em estudos sobre a difusão de políticas, o presente artigo analisa as dinâmicas temporais e espaciais da adoção de legislação climática na América Latina. Ao analisar as características destes atos, o artigo também procura reavaliar as lições salientadas pela literatura internacional. Os resultados demonstram que os atos climáticos refletem as características distintivas dos sistemas políticos presidenciais da região. Tendo em conta a necessidade de alargar as fronteiras da investigação sobre ação climática na América Latina, o presente estudo conclui com a definição de futuras linhas de investigação.
Palavras-chave: atos climáticos, leis-quadro, política climática, América Latina, difusão de políticas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it is widely accepted within the literature that climate change is one of the greatest threats against humanity. With the Paris Agreement as a reference point, international political efforts have focused on designing policies that address the complex nature of climate change by integrating mitigation and adaptation measures. Research-wise, studies on the matter have pointed out that collaboration and coordination among different actors, organizations, and levels of government are a key condition to develop an effective climate policy.

This article examines climate policy in Latin America, which is defined as the set of measures, decisions, and instruments that governments implement to address climate change — including both mitigation and adaptation policies (Dubash et al., 2013). Although Latin America is far from being a monolith on the matter (Edwards & Roberts, 2015), the different countries in the region share climate vulnerability as a common denominator (Solorio, 2024). Against this backdrop, and in line with the focus of this dossier, this paper stands for the need to understand Latin America as an analytical setting for climate governance and policy that fosters both conceptual and theoretical innovations, which, in turn, engage with the findings of international literature (Porto de Oliveira & Maillet, 2024).

Climate action requires a long-term commitment (Clare et al., 2017), while its practical implementation demands overcoming state fragmentation, both at the ministerial and administrative levels (Cejudo & Trein, 2023). Thus, the adoption of climate acts (also known as framework laws) has become a standard feature of the international response to climate change. Their origins date back to 2008 with the adoption of the United Kingdom's Climate Change Act (Lockwood, 2013). Despite this being one of the most common forms of climate legislation worldwide, it has been met with criticism.

Several authors have noted that, as aftermath of the post-Paris climate regime, climate change acts embody neoliberal environmental governance (Ciplet & Roberts, 2017).

Focusing the analysis at the national level, this article presents an overview of how climate change acts, as an instrument of climate policy (Porto de Oliveira & Maillet, 2024), have spread across Latin America. There are two research questions:

1) What have been the temporal and spatial dynamics regarding the adoption of climate change acts in Latin America?

2) Given the characteristics of climate change acts in the region, how does the Latin American experience allow us to rethink the lessons learned from the international literature?

This research follows up on the literature's findings indicating that different national experiences adapt the concept of a climate change act to their own contexts (Townsend et al., 2013). In agreement with Muinzer (2020), a "climate change act" is understood as a comprehensive legislation proposed to address the phenomenon of climate change in a broad and strategic manner. Prior to proceeding with this study, two observations are needed. On the one hand, "climate change act" is an English term, which is characterized by a certain degree of flexibility. Therefore, it is used to describe different types of legislation related to climate change. On the other hand, "climate change act" should be understood as a synonym for "framework law." Although the latter is more commonly used in Latin America (González & Poncini, 2024; Villares, 2022), this text favors the use of "climate change act" in order to establish a dialogue with this research agenda.

The following section presents the analytical framework of this study. We situate the discussion of policy diffusion within a broader body of literature that explores how policies travel from one place to another, which is one of the most widely adopted approaches for studying climate policy from the perspective of policy studies (Porto de Oliveira & Maillet, 2024). This analytical section also introduces the main debates in the literature on climate change acts. Following this, a methodological section explains the decisions made regarding the creation and analysis of the database on climate change acts in Latin America. The empirical section is divided into two parts, each addressing one of the research questions. The discussion section highlights the contribution of the Latin American experience to the literature on climate change acts. The conclusions close this text by outlining, in accordance with the focus of this special issue, future research agendas that emerge from this work.

2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE POLICIES' JOURNEY

2.1 Latin America and the diffusion of climate policies

For the past couple of decades, policy studies have observed the parallel development and convergence of policies across multiple sectors of government activity in various countries (Marsh & Sharman, 2009). Environmental policy, due to its legislative vigor, has been one of the most researched sectors in an effort to explain how and why this phenomenon occurs (Jörgens et al., 2013). By delving into the water, weather, energy, and waste management subsectors, Pacheco-Vega's (2021) text compiles

the key insights drawn from the international literature regarding the actors, processes, and policy elements that have been part of this dynamic in the environmental field, offering clues on how to further this research agenda.

Due to factors such as colonial legacies, economic dependence, the circulation of power, and trends driven by international institutions, countries in the Global South have historically imported models from the North (Porto de Oliveira et al., 2020). Most studies on this topic have primarily focused on cases regarding developed countries, and Latin America has been a notable exception (Marsh & Sharman, 2008). Regional academia has shed light on policy innovations from fields as diverse as mobility (Montero, 2017), participatory budgeting (Porto de Oliveira, 2017), and social policy (Osorio-Gonnet, 2018). This has led to a reconfiguration of the traditional dynamics of policy diffusion: the flow is not only from North to South, but also from South to South and even from South to North (Porto de Oliveira et al., 2019; Stone et al., 2019).

Academic research on how policies go from one place to another has been marked by intellectual fractures (Porto de Oliveira et al., 2019). While the concept of 'policy diffusion' has been predominant in the American debate (Shipan & Volden, 2008), the term 'policy transfer' is more popular in British academia (Benson & Jordan, 2011; Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). The concept of circulation has been more prevalent in the French school (Béal et al., 2018). Porto de Oliveira (2021) argues that the three research agendas represent different ontological and epistemological priorities, although they are not mutually exclusive. The way out of this *impasse* lies in simplifying frameworks according to the nature of policy movements. This text conceives 'policy diffusion' as the collective adoption of a public policy, while 'transfer' is reserved for the movement of a policy from one jurisdiction to another, and 'circulation' is for a broader and more prolonged flow across time and space (Porto de Oliveira & Faria, 2017, p. 30).

Contrary to the region's main contributions on policy diffusion (Porto de Oliveira et al., 2019), this study focuses on a case of policy importation: the climate change act, a legislative innovation first adopted in the United Kingdom that later spread around the world, soon reaching Latin America. This text contributes to the literature on policy diffusion by addressing a field largely unexplored by regional academia: climate policy. In this regard, it is worth noting that the climate policy model has not remained intact. Quite the contrary, it has been subject to policy translation processes (Hassenteufel & Zeigermann, 2020; Stone, 2012), as illustrated by Milhorance et al. (2022) in their exploration of adaptation strategies in Brazil and Colombia. This study, however, is largely limited to capturing the dynamics of the diffusion of climate change acts within the region.

2.2 Climate change acts as a model for legislation in Latin America

By 2024, nearly 60 countries already had a climate change act in force (Averchenkova et al., 2024). In what has been called the "Paris moment," most of the world's existing climate change acts have been adopted after the Paris Agreement came into effect (Duwe & Bodle, 2020). Certainly, the number of climate change acts in effect is not a perfect indicator of the global response to climate change (Townsend et al., 2013). It is important to note, however, that for several authors, this legislative instrument has the potential to act as a compass to guide national efforts toward global commitment (Lacobuta et al., 2018). Yet, more critical perspectives have pointed out that climate change acts embody the neoliberal turn in environmental governance. In particular, the preference for market

mechanisms over regulatory instruments has been questioned, as has their role in distributing the responsibility for climate action among all countries, rather than emphasizing the polluter pays principle (Ciplet & Roberts, 2017).

Like other aspects of climate governance (Sapiains et al., 2020), the academic discussion on climate legislation has been predominantly centered on the Global North. The United Kingdom and Europe have garnered the most attention, as this is the geographical region where not only did this phenomenon start, but also where the most legislative development has taken place (Evans et al., 2023). The tendency to focus on the Global North is reflected by the major collective publications on the subject, whether it be the book edited by Alina Averchenkova and colleagues, the book edited by Thomas Muinzer, or the special issue edited by Sarah Nash, Diarmuid Torney, and Simon Matti that was published in the journal *Climate Policy*.

With the exception of Mexico (Averchenkova, 2021; Solorio, 2021), Latin America has been excluded from this international discussion. In contrast, several studies from the region have examined this legislative phenomenon from a Latin American perspective (González & Poncini, 2024; Villares, 2022). While it is important to acknowledge the contributions of these previous studies to understand the diffusion of climate change acts in Latin America, this paper argues, as part of its contribution to this special issue (Porto de Oliveira & Maillet, 2024), that a critical engagement with global literature is needed. In particular, it posits that it is necessary to confront prevailing definitions with legislative experiences in the region.

Similar to the academic discussion on policy travel, the literature on climate change acts has carried its own fractures. One of the main points of debate has been whether climate change acts refer to primary legislation belonging exclusively to the national level. While Muinzer (2020) limits the use of this concept to national legislation, Nash and colleagues include subnational legislation in their definition. This tension stems from experiences such as Scotland, where multilevel dynamics have led the subnational level to demonstrate greater ambition than higher government levels (Nash, 2021). Capturing the European parliamentary tradition (Cheibub & Rasch, 2021), both perspectives agree that climate change acts must originate from the Parliament.

Furthermore, there is no consensus on the scope of climate change acts. The definition by Nash et al. (2021) explicitly emphasizes mitigation, while other perspectives are broader and highlight the importance of incorporating climate change adaptation (Muinzer, 2020; Townsend et al., 2013). Averchenkova and Nachmany (2017) argue that climate change acts are broad legislative pieces, but do not provide comprehensive treatment on all issues related to climate change (thus leaving room for subsequent policy formation). The proposal of policy anchoring builds on this, suggesting that climate change acts tend to shape later policies (Bailey et al., 2023). Muinzer (2020) suggests that this trend is hardly surprising given that this type of legislation stimulates climate action. At the same time, he warns against falling into semantic traps where the label "climate change act" is used to refer to narrow climate policy instruments. The truth, however, is that the literature offers only a vague picture of what the scope of climate change acts should be.

Drawing on Lorenzoni and Benson (2014), there were four innovative elements of the UK's climate change act: (1) the establishment of binding targets for the long-term reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; (2) the imposition of carbon budgets that various government entities must meet; (3) the establishment of an independent committee to monitor compliance with targets and progress toward established goals; and (4) the inclusion of adaptation measures. However, as research on

climate change acts has progressed, it has become clear that countries approach the policy-making process differently, depending on their regulatory culture and the development of their climate policy (Townshend et al., 2013). For example, while some countries adopt legislation through national parliaments and assemblies, others do so through executive orders (Averchenkova et al., 2017). Similarly, it has been shown that countries in the Global South have placed greater emphasis on adaptation policy than what international guidelines prescribe (Milhorance et al., 2022). There is therefore no consensus on the core components of climate change acts.

3. METHOD

The study of climate change acts in Latin America has been conducted as part of global databases. The Climate Change Laws of the World database of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE, 2026) and the National Climate Policy Inventories at Tufts University (2026) are two international initiatives that include the Latin American climate change acts. Within the region itself, the Observatory of Chile's Framework Law on Climate Change (2026) is the most comprehensive database of climate change acts available in Spanish. In all of these, Latin America is merely a subset of the phenomenon observed at the international level.

Using the LSE database as an international reference and comparing with various regional inventories (González & Poncini, 2024; Villares, 2022), we obtained an approximate number of climate change acts in the region. Following this, the research team conducted a literature review of the various laws to ensure they aligned with the definition established in international literature. This exercise is presented in the Appendix.

To explore the scope of climate change acts in the region, a table of indicators was developed based on a World Bank (2020) document that identified 12 components across various international experiences. Based on academic literature, these were grouped into 6 components. To measure the indicators, a ternary logic system was chosen, which allows for a more nuanced range of values than traditional Boolean logic. The assigned values are 0 (total absence), 1 (partial presence), and 2 (total presence).

In line with the concept of policy anchoring, the table of indicators presented in the empirical section considers not only the climate change acts but also provisions introduced by subsequent legislation. To this end, it is understood that the strict distinction between law-making and rule-making ignores the strategic exercise of bureaucratic power (Potter, 2019). Consequently, the regulations issued by the executive branch to complement climate change acts can acquire a relevance comparable to—or even greater than—that of those issued by the legislative branch.

4. THE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF CLIMATE LEGISLATION IN LATIN AMERICA

4.1 Dynamics of the diffusion of climate legislation

Although Latin America has been largely overlooked in the international literature, this region stands out for its enthusiastic adoption of climate legislation. As Table 1 illustrates, 10 of the 20 countries in the region have adopted this type of legislation, excluding the Caribbean islands and overseas territories. In line with the region's economic characteristics, its five largest economies have climate

change acts: Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, and Chile. The left column also includes the region's main GHG emitters, Brazil and Mexico. In contrast, the cases of Ecuador and Venezuela stand out: oil-dependent economies that lack climate legislation. Bolivia deserves special mention; it has an innovative environmental policy, but is placed in the right-hand column for not following prevailing policy models. Costa Rica is a particular case too: it has a solid climate policy but lacks a full-fledged climate change act (González & Poncini, 2024).

TABLE 1 LIST OF LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES WITH AND WITHOUT A CLIMATE CHANGE ACT

With a Climate Change Act	Without a Climate Change Act
Argentina	Belize
Brazil	Bolivia
Chile	Costa Rica
Colombia	Ecuador
Guatemala	Salvador
Honduras	Guyana
Mexico	Panama
Nicaragua	Suriname
Paraguay	Uruguay
Peru	Venezuela

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 1 illustrates the timeline of climate policy diffusion. It is interesting to note that the region's largest GHG emitters were also the first to adopt climate policies: Brazil in 2009 and Mexico in 2012. In fact, these cases provide the most information about the implementation process. Regarding Brazil, various studies detail how Brazilian climate policy has been subject to political shifts and has been affected by a harmful cycle of policy building and dismantling (Castro-Pereira & Viola, 2024; Hochstetler, 2021). As for Mexico, multilevel paralysis and dismantling have affected Mexican climate policy (Solorio, 2025). Taking into consideration narratives and actor coalitions, Özel (2025) describes Mexico's fall as a regional leader in climate change.

Most climate change acts date from the so-called "Paris moment," including those enacted by Paraguay, Colombia, Peru, Argentina, Nicaragua, and Chile (cases where the recent timing of these laws means little is known about their implementation). Regarding potential transfer dynamics, two points are worth noting. On the one hand, there is both temporal and geographical proximity between the adoption of climate legislation in Mexico (2012), Guatemala (2013), and Honduras (2014). This dynamic suggests a possible influence of the Mexican case as an example of climate legislation on its Central American neighbors. In line with Osorio-Gonnet's (2023) findings, climate policy indicates

that, within the wave of diffusion, policy transfer processes can also be observed. On the other hand, Brazil's initial move did not elicit a similar response from its neighbors: Paraguay adopted its climate change act in 2017, Colombia and Peru in 2018, Argentina in 2019, and Chile as late as 2022. This trajectory is undoubtedly an invitation to pay greater attention to the time variable in diffusion studies (Morais de Sá e Silva & Porto de Oliveira, 2023).

FIGURE 1 TIME SERIES OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF CLIMATE CHANGE ACTS IN LATIN AMERICA



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Although Latin America is characterized by centralized, presidential political systems, most climate change acts were approved by the respective legislative branches, as the literature suggests (see Table 2). Nicaragua is the only exception: its climate change act was enacted by presidential decree. However, we are yet to see the dynamics of policy anchoring and how subsequent climate policy instruments will be adopted.

Table 2 lists the number of articles contained in the climate change acts. In Latin America, there is a phenomenon that can be termed "micro-climate change acts"—legislation of limited scope that lays the groundwork for national climate policy. Peru, Paraguay, and Nicaragua fall into this category, with Brazil being the most notable case. This could explain why the international literature considers Mexico, rather than Brazil, to be the first country to adopt a climate change act in the region. The next section delves into both the characteristics and the scope of the various climate change acts in Latin America.

TABLE 2 COMPILATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE ACTS IN LATIN AMERICA

Country	Act	Year	Method of enactment		Number of articles
			Legislative mandate	Presidential decree	
Argentina	Law on Minimum Budgets for Adaptation to and Mitigation of Global Climate Change (Law 27520).	2019	x		30
Brazil	Law on the National Policy on Climate Change (Law 12.187).	2009	x		13
Chile	Framework Law on Climate Change (Law 21455).	2022	x		54
Colombia	Law 1931 establishing Guidelines for Climate Change Management.	2018	x		36
Guatemala	Framework Law to Regulate Vulnerability Reduction, Mandatory Adaptation to the Effects of Climate Change, and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation (Decree 7-2013).	2013	x		28
Honduras	Climate Change Law. (Decree N° 297-2013).	2014	x		41
Nicaragua	Decree 7-2019 establishing the National Policy on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation and creating the National Climate Change Response System.	2019		x	13
Mexico	General Law on Climate Change.	2012	x		116
Paraguay	National Climate Change Law (Law 5.875).	2017	x		19
Peru	Framework Law on Climate Change (Law 30754).	2018	x		23

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

4.2 Climate change acts in Latin America: characteristics and scope

This section presents the characteristics and scope of climate change acts in Latin America. The findings are illustrated in Table 3. Before presenting the results, it is important to explain the arrangement of their components and operationalization.

- Component A distinguishes between stated climate policy objectives (1 point) and explicit GHG reduction goals, whether short-, medium-, or long-term (1 point).
- Component B distinguishes between the obligation to report information on physical climate risks and vulnerabilities (1 point) and the requirement to develop short-, medium-, and long-term plans and strategies for mitigation and/or adaptation (1 point).
- Component C considers both the adoption of instruments to achieve climate change objectives (1 point) and the existence of financing mechanisms (1 point).
- Component D includes both inter-institutional coordination structures at the vertical (1 point) and horizontal (1 point) levels.
- Component E distinguishes between the development of structures and processes for public participation in climate policy (1 point) and the development of structures for the participation of scientific experts in decision making (1 point).
- Component F refers to the generation of compliance reports (1 point) and independent evaluation processes (1 point).

As any comparison involving an intermediate number of cases, the following is a simplified overview of national climate policies. The purpose, however, is not so much to assess the scope of these policies as it is to compare them with the expectations outlined in the literature. The nuances of the various national experiences are presented in the following sections. To facilitate a better comparison with the international benchmark, Table 3 also includes the original model from the United Kingdom.

TABLE 3 COMPARISON OF CLIMATE ACTS BY COMPONENT

	(A) Objectives and goals	(B) Assessment and planning	(C) Instruments and financing	(D) Inter-institutional coordination	(E) Social and expert participation	(F) Accountability
United Kingdom	2	2	2	0	2	2
Argentina (AR)	1	2	0	1	2	0
Brazil (BR)	2	1	2	2	2	0
Chile (CL)	2	2	2	2	2	2
Colombia (CO)	2	2	2	2	1	2
Guatemala (GT)	1	1	2	2	1	2
Honduras (HN)	1	1	1	2	1	2
Nicaragua (NI)	1	1	0	2	1	2
Mexico (MX)	2	2	1	2	2	2
Paraguay (PY)	1	1	1	1	1	0
Peru (PE)	1	1	1	1	1	0

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

A. Objectives and goals

Following the example of the United Kingdom, the literature highlights the importance of short-, medium-, and long-term reduction goals to guide national climate action and complement broader public policy objectives (Lorenzoni & Benson, 2014). In contrast, the region's climate change acts set rhetorical objectives but only a few set explicit mitigation goals (4 out of 10 legislations). Brazil and Chile share the characteristic of setting medium- or long-term goals without defining a pathway: Brazil proposed reducing GHG emissions by 36.1% to 38.9% by 2020 (BR, 2009), while Chile aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 (CL, 2022). Mexico defines pathways for GHG reduction toward 2050, but this goal is incorporated into transitional provisions, which affects its temporal validity (MX, 2012). Meanwhile, the Colombian case is characterized by policy anchoring. Although the 2018 act does not contain explicit mitigation objectives (CO, 2018), a complementary legislation was adopted in 2021 to establish GHG reduction goals and carbon neutrality: reducing GHG emissions by 51% by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 (CO, 2021).

B. Assessment and planning

There is consensus in the literature regarding the complementary nature of risk assessments and the processes of preparing and implementing strategies, plans, and policies (Averchenkova et al., 2025; Gundlach & Gerrard, 2019). In Latin America, however, the common trend is to request planning

instruments without a prior assessment. Brazil, Paraguay, and Peru mandate the development of plans without requiring the government to publish information on risks and vulnerabilities. Argentina envisions the creation of a National Climate Change Information System for assessment and plan development (AR, 2019). Mexico has a Climate Change Information System that generates indicators to serve as inputs for national climate planning.

Regarding the combination of short- and medium/long-term planning as proposed in the literature (Averchenkova et al., 2025), only Mexico and Chile follow this trend. The former has the National Climate Change Strategy as the guiding instrument for medium- and long-term national policy. In contrast, the Special Climate Change Program is short-term and subject to government priorities (MX, 2012). The Mexican experience has shown that short-term thinking tends to prevail over the long term, and the priorities of each government prevail (Solorio, 2021). In Chile, the Long-Term Climate Strategy spans a 30-year timeframe, while sectoral mitigation and adaptation plans need to be reviewed and updated every 5 years (CL, 2022). Although most climate change acts adopted after the Paris Agreement take international agreements as a reference point for planning, short-term plans remain the main feature of climate planning in Latin America. In this regard, the region stands out for its tendency to place equal emphasis on mitigation and adaptation. This is the case in Argentina, Guatemala, and Nicaragua (AR, 2019; GT, 2013; NI, 2021). Honduras, for its part, requires only the adoption of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan (HN, 2014).

C. Instruments and financing

Climate change acts typically incorporate various climate policy instruments along with financial provisions to mobilize, allocate, and disburse the financial flows necessary for climate action (Averchenkova et al., 2025). Regarding climate policy instruments, the inclusion of carbon markets and emissions trading schemes is a growing trend in Latin America. Chile issues emissions certificates; Colombia issues tradable emission allowances; Guatemala and Honduras provide for carbon markets; and Mexico provides for emissions trading. As for financial mechanisms, except for Argentina and Nicaragua, which lack mandates for this component, the region's climate change acts typically include specific funds earmarked for climate action, as well as fiscal, tax, and financial instruments designed to mobilize resources for this purpose. Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Guatemala include explicit provisions regarding dedicated climate change funds. Mexico was part of this trend until 2020, when the Climate Change Fund was eliminated (Solorio, 2025).

D. Inter-institutional coordination

Inter-institutional coordination ensures that climate policy planning and implementation are aligned across different sectors (horizontally) and across different levels of government (vertically) (Averchenkova et al., 2025). In this regard, best practices highlight the importance of having mechanisms for horizontal and vertical coordination among key government agencies (Banco Mundial, 2020). Mexico was the first country in the region to adopt this model by establishing the Inter-Ministerial Commission on Climate Change to bring together the State secretariat (ministries) (horizontal coordination) and the National Climate Change System to integrate different levels of government (federal, subnational, and local) (Guzmán, 2023). Argentina, Chile, and Colombia have

similar experiences. Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Paraguay consolidate both horizontal and vertical coordination into a single mechanism. Peru, for its part, has two mechanisms similar in composition and purpose: the High-Level Commission on Climate Change and the National Commission on Climate Change (PE, 2018). Both include representatives from national and subnational governments, but the latter also incorporates non-state agents.

Brazil deserves special attention. Their act establishes the Interministerial Commission and the Interministerial Committee on Climate Change, without detailing their functions. After a prolonged period of dismantling of Brazilian climate policy (Castro Pereira & Viola, 2024), in 2023, President Lula da Silva reestablished, by decree, the Committee as a mechanism for inter-institutional coordination, but modified its functions and composition (BR, 2023, 2024). It combines horizontal and vertical coordination tasks. Similarly, Colombia created by decree the Presidential Cabinet's Intersectoral Commission for Climate Action (CO, 2022).

E. Social and expert participation

The literature highlights the need for inclusive climate action that involves a diverse range of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of climate policy (Averchenkova et al., 2025). However, there is no model of participation considered best practice. In Latin America, the main trend in participation is the incorporation of social agents into the inter-institutional coordination mechanisms described previously. Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Peru have followed this model. In contrast, three countries have opted to establish advisory commissions outside the executive branch as mechanisms for social participation: Mexico, Argentina, and Chile. In both Argentina and Mexico, this includes scientists and experts alongside individuals from the private and social sectors. Chile has established a Scientific Advisory Committee, composed solely of academics and researchers with recognized expertise, which must issue a report prior to the approval of national-level planning instruments (Averchenkova et al., 2025). The case of Brazil is noteworthy: "Consultative Chambers" for Social Participation and Scientific Advisory are created by executive decree and form part of the inter-institutional coordination mechanism (BR, 2024).

The region's climate change acts outline mechanisms for public participation. In Mexico and Chile, it is explicitly mandated that all planning instruments and regulations must undergo a public consultation process. Peru leverages existing regulations on prior consultations to include the participation of non-state actors in the implementation of the climate agreement and explicitly safeguards the participation of indigenous peoples.

F. Accountability

International literature agrees not only on the importance of transparency and accountability in the implementation of climate policy, but also that it should be subject to independent evaluation (Averchenkova et al., 2025). Although most climate change acts in Latin America include oversight and monitoring mechanisms, the general norm in the region is that these are linked to the executive branch. Mexico and Colombia stand out as notable exceptions for having independent evaluation mechanisms. However, institutional dismantling in Mexico has called this status into question by reducing the independence of the National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change (INECC, its

Spanish acronym), which heads the Evaluation Coordination. In Paraguay's case, it does not have any oversight or monitoring mechanisms.

5. ANALYSIS

Latin America's climate change acts reflect the region's political and institutional context, as well as the varying economic and administrative capabilities that exist at the national level, and the varying degrees of commitment to addressing climate change. Most national experiences concentrate significant power within the federal executive branch, leaving limited space for the participation of other jurisdictions (subnational and local) and for social involvement. Similarly, it is worth noting that most experiences in the region fit the archetype of neoliberal environmental governance: they favor market-based instruments over regulatory ones and promote the depoliticization of climate policy. For example, a common feature of the region's climate policies is the establishment of limited social participation mechanisms that neither alter the distribution of power among actors nor empower the communities most affected by climate change. Experiences such as those in Mexico show us that, despite a detailed institutional design, it is not easy to integrate different levels of government and social sectors into national climate policy—even less so in diverse and multicultural societies such as those in Latin America.

Given their particularity, the phenomenon of "micro-climate change acts" in the region is worth highlighting. As demonstrated, despite not having the scope expected by the literature, these legislations fulfill the primary functions of climate change acts. Focusing on Brazil's experience, it offers several lessons for international literature. First of all, climate change acts do not necessarily have to be extensive in scope or reach. All it takes is that they trigger national climate action and set a precedent for future decisions. Following the policy anchoring approach, micro-acts can be subsequently supplemented, in this case through presidential decrees. In this sense, the preference for presidential decrees as decision-making mechanisms may well be merely a reflection of Latin America's presidential systems. The truth, however, is that the dismantling processes to which Brazil's climate policy (as well as Mexico's) has been subjected highlight the need to reflect on how to ensure the continuity of national climate change policies beyond political changes.

Colombia's case illustrates the importance of policy anchoring. After adopting its climate change act in 2018 through the parliamentary process, it has been reinforced using both parliamentary acts and executive decrees. The Colombian experience shows that regulations issued by the executive branch to complement climate change acts can be as relevant as—or even more relevant than—those issued by the legislature. It remains to be seen what will happen to Colombia's climate policy after President Gustavo Petro's leaves the presidency. In this regard, a comparative perspective should help us better understand which variables make the dismantling of climate policy more likely in countries from this region. Contrary to assumptions in the literature, experiences such as Mexico's teach us that climate change acts approved by Parliament can be easily dismantled by subsequent governments.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In line with this special issue's focus on the value of policy studies for understanding the institutional dynamics related to climate policy, this research aimed to provide a clear picture of the diffusion of climate policies in Latin America. By establishing the state of the art on climate policies in the

region and employing the policy diffusion analytical approach, this study identified the challenges for advancing this research agenda. Most national experiences stem from what the literature refers to as the "Paris moment," making it difficult to conduct an in-depth study of the success or failure of their implementation. Therefore, as the introduction to this special issue rightly points out, future contributions should focus on the policy implementation process (Porto de Oliveira & Maillet, 2024). Given their scope, particular attention should be paid to Colombia and Chile. In terms of policy transfer, what appears to be a "domino effect" of Mexico's climate change act on its Central American neighbors is noteworthy. This calls for studying the dynamics of policy transfer that influenced the adoption of climate change acts in this subregion of Latin America, as well as Mexico's potential role as a regional inspiration for this type of legislation. In contrast, Brazil's experience requires further empirical research, but precisely for the opposite reasons: due to the (apparently) negligible influence it had on its South American neighbors. In relation to the cases of Brazil and Mexico, it is important to explore other experiences that have been subject to rollback processes. Milei's Argentina, with its climate change denialist stance, is an ideal candidate for this research agenda. Further research is also needed to understand why 10 countries in the region have decided not to follow this trend in climate governance and policy.

Latin America is a region that has enthusiastically joined the global trend of climate change acts. However, this work opens up several lines of research. On the one hand, it is necessary to understand which international or regional actors influenced the adoption of existing climate change acts. On the other hand, the centrality that several climate change acts give to climate adaptation makes it necessary to study policy translation processes. Another component that must be analyzed through the lens of policy translation is the adoption of inter-institutional coordination mechanisms in the region that do not exist in the original UK model. There is also a need to go deeper into discussions on policy anchoring. In particular, it remains to be seen how different national political contexts influence the fact that, in some cases, subsequent legislation is adopted through presidential decrees and in others through acts of Parliament. Last but not least, we need to understand the factors that have led to legislative innovations in the region and how mechanisms for social and expert participation have functioned. Given that policy studies on climate action in Latin America are only just emerging (Porto de Oliveira & Maillet, 2024), the questions raised above should be viewed as an invitation to join an urgent debate—one to which the region is only now being brought to the table. Fortunately, collective works such as this special issue help enrich the academic debates in this field.

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Israel Solorio: Conceptualization (Equal); Data selection (Equal); Formal research analysis (Equal); Acquisition of funding (Equal); Methodology (Equal); Project management (Equal); Supervision (Equal); Drafting of the original manuscript (Equal); Manuscript review and editing (Equal).

Cecilia Ibarra: Conceptualization (Equal); Acquisition of funding (Equal); Supervision (Equal); Drafting of the original manuscript (Equal).

Jorge Guzmán: Resources (Equal); Software (Equal); Validation (Equal); Visualization (Equal).

Beatriz Pogorelow: Resources (Equal); Software (Equal); Validation (Equal); Visualization (Equal).

DATA AVAILABILITY

The entire dataset supporting the results of this study, which is not included in the appendices, is available upon request to Israel Solorio. The dataset is not publicly available because it is stored in the project's Drive folder.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USAGE

No artificial intelligence tools were used.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A COMPARISON OF STUDIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE ACTS IN LATIN AMERICA

	Global		Latin America		
	LSE - Grantham Research Institute	(CR)2 I CDA – University of Chile	ECLAC	SSF - Sustainability Without Borders*	ANDES – UNAM**
Argentina	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Brazil	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chile	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colombia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Guatemala	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Honduras	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Nicaragua	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Mexico	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Paraguay	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peru	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

* Acronym by its name in Spanish "Sustentabilidad Sin Fronteras"

** Name in Spanish "ACTAS CLIMÁTICAS ANDES"

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

TABLA B LIST OF CLIMATE CHANGE ACTS AND SUBSEQUENT LAWS REFERRED TO

Country	Code	Legislation
Argentina	AR, 2019	*Law No. 27,520. (2019). Minimum Standards for Adaptation and Mitigation of Global Climate Change*. https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/detalleAviso/primera/224006/20191220
Brazil	BR, 2009	*Law No. 12.187.* (2009). Instituye la Política Nacional sobre el Cambio Climático. http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2009/lei/l12187.htm
	BR, 2023	*Decree No. 11.550, de 5 de junho de 2023*. (2023). Institui a Política Nacional sobre Mudança do Clima (PNMC). https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2023-2026/2023/decreto/D11550.htm
	BR, 2024	*Decree No. 12.040, de 5 de junho de 2024*. (2024). Institui a Política Nacional sobre Mudança do Clima e o Sistema Nacional sobre Mudança do Clima. https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2023-2026/2024/decreto/d12040.htm

(Continue)

Country	Code	Legislation
Chile	CL, 2022	*Law No. 21,455. (2022).* Framework Law on Climate Change (Law No.21,455). https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1177286
Colombia	CO, 2021	*Law No. 2169.* (2021). Promoting the country's low-carbon development by establishing minimum targets and measures regarding carbon neutrality and climate resilience, and enacting other dispositions. https://dapre.presidencia.gov.co/normativa/normativa/LEY%202169%20DEL%2022%20DE%20DICIEMBRE%20DE%202021.pdf
	CO, 2022	*Decree No. 172* (2022). Establishing the Presidential Cabinet's Intersectoral Commission on Climate Action. https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=176866
	CO, 2018	*Law No. 1931.* (2018). Establishing guidelines for the management of climate change. https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=87765
Guatemala	GT, 2023	*Decree No. 7.* (2013). The Congress of the Republic of Guatemala. https://www.congreso.gob.gt/assets/uploads/info_legislativo/decretos/2013/07-2013.pdf
Honduras	HN, 2014	*Decree No. 297.* (2013). Law on Climate Change. https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/hon148582.pdf
Mexico	MX, 2012	*General Law on Climate Change.* (2012). New Law published in the Official Journal of the Federation on June 6, 2012. https://www.ordenjuridico.gob.mx/Documentos/Federal/pdf/wo71395.pdf
Nicaragua	NI, 2019	*Presidential Decree No. 07.* (2019). Decree establishing the National Policy on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation and creating the National System. http://legislacion.asamblea.gob.ni/__062569d000710dd9.nsf/09cf45d6fc893868062572650059911e/0b27da3d8139fab606258ac1005e3c3f
Paraguay	PY, 2017	*National Law No. 5875.* (2019). Of Climate Change. https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/8712/ley-n-5875-nacional-de-cambio-climatico
Peru	PE, 2018	*Law No. 30,754.* (2018). Framework Law on Climate Change. https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/dispositivo/NL/1638161-1

Source: Elaborated by the authors.