

Article

Risk-framing governmentalities in a changing climate: political rationalities and discursive fields

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This article analyzes the political rationalities and discursive fields informing the articulation between disaster risk management and climate change adaptation in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. Through critical discourse analysis, the study examines regulatory frameworks, public policies and national plans adopted between 2015 and 2024. The research identifies four dominant discursive fields: evidence-based decision-making, urgent climate action, common but differentiated responsibilities, and compensation for damages and losses. Findings suggest a multilevel epistemic coloniality, privileging global agendas, future climate scenarios, impact modeling, and risk financialization. As a result, technocratic approaches and reactive measures prevail, limiting the problematization of structural causes of vulnerability.

Keywords: governmentality, risk management, climate adaptation, Andean Region.

Governamentalidades de risco das mudanças climáticas: racionalidades políticas e campos discursivos

Este artigo analisa as racionalidades políticas e os campos discursivos que informam a articulação entre a gestão de riscos de desastres e a adaptação às mudanças climáticas na Bolívia, Colômbia, Equador e Peru. Por meio da análise crítica do discurso, o estudo examina marcos regulatórios, políticas públicas e planos nacionais adotados entre 2015 e 2024. A pesquisa identifica quatro campos discursivos dominantes: tomada de decisão baseada em evidências, ação climática urgente, responsabilidades comuns, porém diferenciadas, e compensação por danos e

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perdas. As descobertas sugerem uma colonialidade epistêmica multinível, privilegiando agendas globais, cenários climáticos futuros, modelagem de impacto e financeirização de riscos. Como consequência, prevalecem abordagens tecnocráticas e medidas reativas, limitando a problematização das causas estruturais da vulnerabilidade.

Palavras-chave: governamentalidade, gestão de riscos, adaptação climática, Região Andina.

Gubernamentalidades del riesgo en un clima cambiante: racionalidades políticas y campos discursivos

Este artículo analiza las racionalidades políticas y los campos discursivos que enmarcan la articulación entre la gestión del riesgo de desastres y la adaptación al cambio climático en Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador y Perú. Mediante un análisis crítico del discurso, el estudio examina los marcos regulatorios, las políticas públicas y los planes nacionales adoptados entre 2015 y 2024. La investigación identifica cuatro campos discursivos dominantes: la toma de decisiones basada en la evidencia, la urgencia de la acción climática, las responsabilidades comunes pero diferenciadas, y la compensación por daños y pérdidas. Los hallazgos sugieren una colonialidad epistémica multinivel, que privilegia las agendas globales, los escenarios climáticos futuros, la modelización del impacto y la financiarización del riesgo. Como consecuencia, prevalecen los enfoques tecnocráticos y las medidas reactivas que restringen la problematización de las causas estructurales de la vulnerabilidad.

Palabras clave: gubernamentalidad, gestión de riesgos, adaptación climática, Región Andina.

1. INTRODUCTION

Disaster risk management (DRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) have evolved as distinct yet intertwined analytical concepts and political rationalities. While both involve risk monitoring, vulnerability reduction, and resilience-building, they differ in purpose, temporal scales, knowledge bases, and governance frameworks (Birkmann & Teichman, 2010; Klein et al., 2015). DRM studies have challenged the nexus between risks, development models, and the environment, shifting the focus from hazards to vulnerabilities (Alcántara-Ayala, 2019; García-Acosta, 2005, 2018). The key message is that disasters are not natural (Maskrey, 1993). The #NoNaturalDisasters campaign seeks to reframe terminology, emphasizing that while hazards may be natural, disasters are human-made. The concern for disaster risk prevention stems from critical academic reflection, particularly from the Latin American Network for Social Studies in Disaster Prevention (founded in 1992), which has influenced national, regional, and international policies (Lavell, 1996). The Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2014) further framed climate risk management, highlighting the interaction between climate variability, vulnerability, and exposure.

As a policy field, DRM adopts a broader perspective on potential hazards, requiring concrete actions to reduce vulnerability, address short-term risks, and respond to disasters. However, DRM often confronts pragmatic expectations from the field of extreme event management. Addressing the root causes of disasters clashes with the logic of public action, which tends to perpetuate the status quo rather than drive structural change (Pahl-Wostl, 2009). The critical dimension of vulnerability weakens as it becomes institutionalized and structures international action (Revet & Metzger, 2024). Some argue that its dilution as an analytical category is a condition for its global success as a category of action (Revet, 2021). Thus, the focus shifts to disaster risk governance, avoiding explicit public policies that reduce vulnerability (Stengers, 2013).

Meanwhile, the climate change narrative has dominated environmental issues, leading to a “climatization” of environmental concerns (Almeida et al., 2024). Climate change polarizes diverse public policies, from agriculture (Caldas & Massardier, 2020) to urban agendas (Carrión & Rebotier, 2025) and risk management (Aykut, 2020). However, the concrete implications of this pervasive narrative are heterogeneous (Hrabanski & Montouroy, 2022). Initially, mitigation emerged as a

coordinated capacity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, followed by adaptation as a means of adjusting to global warming. Yet, after three decades of global negotiations, substantial progress in mitigation or adaptation commitments remains elusive. Faced with the inability to meet agreed-upon targets, scientific evidence of rising global temperatures, and increasing extreme climate events, the concept of “loss and damage” has emerged as a key governmentality (Jackson et al., 2023).

During global negotiations, the connections between these rationalities have not been straightforward (Lyster, 2020; Wen et al., 2023). For public action, climate change is linked to long-term systemic inertia, the incorporation of harmful impacts into social functioning, and the growing responsibility of local actors. In contrast, disaster risk management is characterized by vertical, institutionally structured interventions focused on events. In tandem, two institutional worlds are taking shape — from municipal governments to the United Nations system — introducing competition for resources, budgets, and the legitimacy of the dominant narrative.

However, there is increasing evidence that extreme and slow-onset weather events are linked to global warming, but disasters result from the materialization of latent conditions (Field et al., 2012; IPCC, 2023). The Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (SREX) achieved some consensus among DRM and CCA experts (Cardona, 2012). Despite efforts to align positions around sustainable development and resilience, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework have fostered differential approaches among multilateral organizations and international cooperation. Global conferences, assessments, and strategies remain disjointed, with greater resources, funding, and accountability mechanisms associated with the climate regime.

The evolution of discursive fields has not been without criticism. The climatization of disasters includes labeling some crises as “climate change disasters,” naturalizing climate phenomena, distancing them from other risks, providing cover for administrative negligence, and creating a sense of urgency for financial aid (Grant et al., 2015). This obscures the root causes of vulnerability, while scientific knowledge claims and technocratic interventions take center stage. The goal becomes addressing the adverse effects of climate change and compensating victims, rather than questioning structural inequalities or politicizing risk management.

The strengthening of evidence-based management, detached from ideology, is an argument for more technical and practical perspectives. However, defending the absence of ideology is itself an ideology (Lefort, 2010), reinforcing asymmetries between discourses and the interest groups that promote them, favoring dominant groups. The discursive space of risks and responses is structured by rationalities that contribute to the hegemony of current technical, instrumental, and supposedly apolitical approaches. These rationalities correspond to frameworks of thought that structure regimes of truth and forms of authority. In line with the analytical axes introduced in this special issue (Porto de Oliveira & Maillet, 2024), this article examines how political rationalities and climate narratives in the Andean Region are configured within a multilevel governance framework, institutional capacities, and the circulation of policy instruments. By analyzing the articulation between disaster risk management and climate adaptation through the lens of governmentality, the research directly engages with the special issue’s themes regarding Latin American specificities, the centrality of policy instruments, and the production and circulation of climate knowledge.

2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Theoretical Framework: Political Rationalities, Technologies of Government, and Strategic Action Fields

Michel Foucault introduced the concept of “governmentality” to describe “the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit complex, form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security” (Foucault, 2006, p. 136). This term combines “government” and “mentality” to express the regimes of truth that underpin practices aimed at structuring the field of action of others, guiding their behavior and its potential effects (Dean, 2009; Foucault, 2000).

Rose and Miller (1992) propose studying governance in terms of political rationalities and technologies of government. Political rationalities are discursive fields within which the exercise of power is conceptualized, including moral justifications for appropriate political conduct, epistemological conceptions of the nature of governed bodies, and the intellectual machinery that makes reality thinkable. Dominant discourses reveal the reflections, objectives, and aspirations informing projects toward particular ends (Rose et al., 2006). Language plays a performative role, enabling the conceptualization and articulation of governance forms (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 177).

Technologies of government include institutions, norms, structures, programs, calculations, techniques, apparatuses, documents, procedures, and practices that operationalize governmental ambitions (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 175). The art of governing can be achieved at a distance, through domains outside formal politics—such as technical knowledge, philanthropy, or pastoral power (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 188). In some cases, experts extract contested issues from the political sphere and relocate them within a discursive production of scientific truths. Expertise can also support processes that concentrate, intensify, and defend both power and authority.

Jessop (2008) proposes interpreting political rationalities in three moments: sketching the genealogy, understanding the trajectory, and identifying the emergent fields of strategic action. This involves exploring variations in objects, subjects, purposes, and government technologies; the selection of certain technologies and practices over others; and the retention of some as they integrate into state or class strategies with connected interests. The circulation and adoption of political rationalities and technologies of government require mechanisms of appropriation, questioning, and reinterpretation at the local level (Porto de Oliveira & Pal, 2018).

In this analysis, we propose incorporating the multifaceted matrix of coloniality to capture the diversity of mechanisms involved in political rationalities and government technologies. The circulation of power is also a function of the multiple structures of the social world (Lefort, 2010), where coloniality of being, knowledge, and power manifests. The social status of individuals, the hierarchy of knowledge, and the possibility of autonomous decision-making depend on a position within a modernity born from European colonialism that largely organizes the world (Quijano, 2007). A dual process of domination emerges — relations of force based on divergent interests and colonial domination based on different positions in Eurocentric modernity — shaping the specific circulation and experience of hegemonic environmental rationalities.

2.2. Methodological Framework: Discourse Analysis to Study Political Rationalities

Political rationalities and government technologies are expressed in public policy instruments, which define what is desirable and possible through governmental action. Discourse analysis helps recognize manifest and latent messages within texts, which must be deconstructed to explore their fields of power and dispute (Fairclough, 2003, 2013). The methodology examines documents to identify dominant narratives, understanding how a topic is constructed as a public problem requiring resolution. Thus, discourse analysis questions how certain concepts and discursive practices are used, normalized, and resisted in the ongoing construction of power across public management and among actors at different levels of government.

The research question is: *What are the political rationalities and discursive fields underlying the construction of the public problem at the interface between disaster risk management and climate change adaptation?* Two interpretations can be formulated. The first hypothesis is that the rationalities at play convey multilevel political positions. The discourses articulating disaster risk management with climate change adaptation adhere to a discursive field constructed at the global scale but evolving locally. They can be understood as technologies of power, shaping decisions, behaviors, and initiatives according to social scales and positions. A second hypothesis is the colonial dimension in the materialization of these rationalities, their circulation, and their hegemony at the expense of others. From Latin America, this can be understood as the “eclipse of the other” (Dussel, 1994), due to the disqualification of alternative representations and rationalities different from the dominant global frameworks pertaining to environmental management, strongly attuned to climate change concerns.

This study includes a review of regulatory frameworks, public policies, and national plans on climate change, risk management, and development planning in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, adopted between 2015 and December 2024. It seeks to highlight convergences, conflicts, and potential synergies between the rationalities underlying these instruments. This period is particularly important for understanding these rationalities, as it synthesizes the transformation and convergence between these two public policy sectors. Debates on CCA have evolved to reflect advances in scientific knowledge and social priorities in the face of global warming, which is increasingly present and demonstrable, with a greater sense of urgency in climate action. DRM regulations denote a shift from reactive approaches to extreme events toward a proactive management for risk reduction. Additionally, to understand the transmission of public policy across levels of government, the research includes methodological guides and guidelines for integrating DRM and CCA into subnational territorial planning and land-use management. The study draws on participant observation and pedagogical materials for training local leaders, enabling reflection on the resources and limitations local governments face in complying with national regulations.

3. TECHNOLOGIES OF GOVERNMENT: REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS, PUBLIC POLICIES, AND PLANNING GUIDELINES

The global commitments established in the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement, signed in 2015, motivated transformations in regulatory frameworks, public policies, and planning guidelines. The objective was to create governance mechanisms in a rapidly developing sector (see Table 1). Initially, DRM and CCA developed independently, with few connections. However, the recognition of the systemic nature of risk and the growing evidence of climate event impacts have driven greater

articulation between disaster risk management (DRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA), as highlighted by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), as cross-cutting issues in public management (Field et al., 2012; UNDRR, 2024a).

At the regional level, the Andean Community (2017) enacted the Andean Strategy for Disaster Risk Management (EAGRD), an instrument aimed at contributing to sustainable development by promoting and implementing policies, instruments, and measures to reduce vulnerability and improve resilience. These advances are supported by institutional innovations following major events such as El Niño, which spurred voluntary state action through programs like PREANDINO and PREDECAN. Concurrently, national disaster risk management laws were enacted in Peru (2011), Colombia (2012), Bolivia (2014), and Ecuador (2024). Regarding climate change, there is no regional regulatory framework. Countries independently formulated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) to meet international commitments and timelines (Comisión Europea, 2019; Montero & Veramatus, 2023).

Such transformation has two relevant contextual characteristics for this analysis. First, extreme events as La Niña in 2010 in Colombia, the 2016 earthquake in Ecuador, and the 2017 Coastal El Niño phenomenon reactivated public and legislative debates on the need for specific regulations and public policies for comprehensive disaster risk management, considering their impact on the domestic economy and highlighting the need to promote citizen participation, macroeconomic stability, and accountability mechanisms. However, risk management has limited resources to implement a programmatic agenda. Meanwhile, multilateral cooperation prioritizes humanitarian response to emergencies or funds associated with climate commitments.

According to the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), political reforms — both neoliberal and progressive — have promoted decentralization as a key principle for risk management and climate change adaptation (Almeida et al., 2022; GFDRR, 2022). Historically, DRM has been governed hierarchically by high national or local authorities. CCA, on the other hand, falls under environmental authorities but requires political leadership to strengthen existing capacities and explore inter-institutional synergies. However, the inclusion of DRM and CCA in the public policy agenda does not always translate into strengthened structures, capacities, and resources to effectively integrate these two programmatic agendas at the national or local level. Thus, institutional reforms face political priorities of the moment, with limited capacities to address structural problems. This is compounded by an unequal epistemic struggle associated with the advance of extractivism, local environmental degradation, and the global organization of environmental governance, which does not recognize environmental injustices at the territorial scale. In other words, the functional challenge is inconsistent with the scope of responsibilities, and the dilemma becomes evident as overlapping rationalities.

TABLE 1 DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION TECHNOLOGIES OF GOVERNMENT

Country	Technologies of Government	Disaster Risk Management	Climate Change Adaptation
Bolivia	Institutional Framework:	- National Council for Risk Reduction and Disaster/ Emergency Response – CONARADE - National System for Risk Reduction and Disaster/ Emergency Response – SISRADE - Ministry of Defense, Vice Ministry of Civil Defense – VIDECI	- Plurinational Authority of Mother Earth - Ministry of Environment and Water
	Regulatory Frameworks, Public Policies, and Guidelines on Territorial Planning	- Risk Management Law (Law 602, 2014) - National Disaster Risk Management Program of Bolivia (2017) - Basic Guidelines and Tools for the Development of Municipal Emergency Plans (2016)	- Framework Law of Mother Earth and Integral Development for Living Well (Law 300, 2012) - Plurinational Climate Change Policy (2023); Nationally Determined Contribution 2021-2030 (2022) - Methodological Guidelines for the Formulation of Community Territorial Management Plans for Living Well (2016)
Colombia	Institutional Framework:	- National Council for Disaster Risk Management - National System for Disaster Risk Management - National Office for Disaster Risk Management	- Intersectoral Commission on Climate Change (CICC) - National Climate Change System (SISCLIMA) - National Authority: Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development
	Regulatory Frameworks, Public Policies, and Guidelines on Territorial Planning	- National Disaster Risk Management Policy and Law of the National Risk Management System (Law 1523, 2012) - National Disaster Risk Management Plan 2015-2030 (updated 2023) - Guide for the Integration of Disaster Risk Management in Territorial Development Plans 2020–2023; Guide for the Integration of Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation in Territorial Development Plans (2024)	- Guidelines for Climate Change Management (Law 1931, 2018); Climate Action Law (Law 2169, 2021) - Nationally Determined Contribution (2020), National Adaptation Plan (2016) - Guide for the Formulation and Implementation of Territorial Climate Change Management Plans (2022); Technical Guide for the Integration of Climate Variability with Disaster Risk Management at the Territorial Level (2018); Guide for the Integration of Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation in Territorial Development Plans (2024)

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Country	Technologies of Government	Disaster Risk Management	Climate Change Adaptation
Ecuador	Institutional Framework:	- National Committee for Risk Reduction; Emergency Operations Committee - National Decentralized System for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management - National Secretariat for Risk Management	- Interinstitutional Committee on Climate Change - National Authority: Ministry of Environment, Water, and Ecological Transition (MAATE)
	Regulatory Frameworks, Public Policies, and Guidelines on Territorial Planning	- Organic Law for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management (ROS 488, 2024) - National Comprehensive Security Plan – Specific Risk Management Plan 2019-2030 (2019) - Guidelines for the Inclusion of Disaster Risk Management in Development and Land Use Plans (PDOT) (2019)	- Organic Environmental Code (2017) - National Climate Change Strategy 2012-2025 (2013); Nationally Determined Contribution (2019), National Adaptation Plan 2023-2027 (2023) - Guidelines for Climate Change Plans in Autonomous Governments (MAATE, 2014); Toolkit for the Integration of Climate Change Criteria in Development and Land Use Plans (MAATE, 2019)
Peru	Institutional Framework:	- National Council for Disaster Risk Management - National Disaster Risk Management System (SINAGERD) - Secretariat for Disaster Risk Management (SGRD)	- High Level Commission on Climate Change - Ministry of the Environment of Peru (MINAM)
	Regulatory Frameworks, Public Policies, and Guidelines on Territorial Planning	- Law of the National Disaster Risk Management System (SINAGERD) (Law 29664, 2011) - National Disaster Risk Management Policy – 2050 (2021); National Disaster Risk Management Plan (PLANAGERD) (2022) - Methodological Guide for Developing Disaster Prevention and Risk Reduction Plans at the Three Levels of Government (2016)	- Framework Law on Climate Change (Law 30754, 2018) - National Climate Change Strategy (2015), Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) (2020), National Climate Change Adaptation Plan of Peru (PNA) (2020) - Methodological Guidelines for the Formulation and Update of Local Climate Change Plans (2022)

Note: The table includes the institutional frameworks providing strategic guidance, as well as national regulations, public policies, and guidelines for integrating DRM and CCA in subnational government planning, in force as of 2024.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

4. POLITICAL RATIONALITIES: DISCURSIVE FIELDS FOR CLIMATE RISK MANAGEMENT

The rationalities articulating disaster risk management and climate change adaptation have evolved into discursive fields through four dominant discourses: 1) The need for scientific knowledge to assess, understand, and manage risks according to future climate scenarios; 2) The climate emergency as the greatest economic, social, and environmental threat to the planet and humanity; 3) The common but differentiated responsibilities for the adverse effects of global warming; 4) The compensation for loss and damage as a moral imperative to ensure that “no one is left behind” in the climate crisis. The evolution of these rationalities includes technologies of government to reorient governmental efforts but also confronts strategic fields of action, which sometimes connect with epistemic disputes pertaining to the development model (see Table 2).

TABLE 2 POLITICAL RATIONALITIES, DISCURSIVE FIELDS, TECHNOLOGIES OF GOVERNMENT, AND STRATEGIC FIELDS OF ACTION IN CLIMATE RISK MANAGEMENT

Political Rationalities	Discursive Fields (reflections, objectives, and aspirations, including moral justifications for appropriate political conduct).	Government Technologies (programs, calculations, techniques, apparatuses, documents, and procedures)	Multilevel Strategic Action Fields (including epistemic disputes at the local level, not visible in normative instruments)
Evidence-Based Decision-Making	Scientific knowledge is necessary to assess, understand, and manage risks in accordance with future climate scenarios.	- Information systems for prospective modeling - Medium- and long-term planning instruments - Monitoring, reporting, and verification of climate commitments	- Collaborative approaches to improve the science-policy interface - Ontological disputes and languages that revalue the rights of nature and Mother Earth (Pachamama)
Urgency of Climate Action	Climate emergency is the greatest economic, social, and environmental threat facing the planet and humanity. Urgent commitment is required to increase climate ambition to ensure a habitable future.	- Global commitments - National regulatory frameworks - Local capacity development "Act Now" campaigns	Pragmatic interventions focused on concrete environmental problems (e.g., nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based adaptation)

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Common but Differentiated Responsibilities	Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities come in place to address for the adverse effects and economic burden of global warming.	- Climate financing to support mitigation and adaptation - Risk transfer mechanisms	Socio-environmental conflicts to denounce green capitalism or extractivism associated with the energy transition
Compensation for Loss and Damage	Climate change increases the frequency and intensity of hazards, exposure, and vulnerability of communities and individuals, who require compensation for loss and damage.	- Early warning systems - Assessment of economic and non-economic losses - Loss and damage fund	- Social mobilization for environmental justice - Strategic climate litigation

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

4.1 EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING

The need for scientific knowledge — with technical expertise for the assessment, understanding, and management of risks and future climate scenarios — prevails as a discursive field in efforts to achieve evidence-based decision-making, as proposed by the Sendai Framework. The objective is to provide data, mapping, and prospective models to guide public management in terms of climate change adaptation. Analyzing climate risks involves understanding the probability of consequences associated with global warming and climate variability. Identifying vulnerable and exposed populations could facilitate the adoption of preventive measures for risk reduction. More and better science has become a purpose of the academic community. Thus, science acquires symbolic performativity to inform political practices and position certain localities as champions within global commitments. However, the scientific basis of climate rationality is not always viable or available at the necessary scale to inform local-level decisions. Moreover, it is not the only approach.

For example, Colombia positions scientific research, data recording, and knowledge management as a central requirement for territorial planning at all levels of government, subsequently guiding policies, strategies, and practices for risk reduction and climate action. The country has developed the Colombian Environmental Information System (SIAC), the most comprehensive platform in the Andean Community. However, the disaggregation of information, technical analysis, and knowledge transfer from national to local institutions remains a challenge. Also, the government has issued guidelines for integrating disaster risk management (DRM) and climate change adaptation (CCA) into territorial planning (UNGRD, 2024), as well as a strategy to support local governments in joining transnational municipal networks that facilitate capacity building, experience sharing, and the systematization of best practices.

At both national and local levels, there are two strategic fields of action. From an operational perspective, governments of intermediate and small cities cannot meet the demands of formulating climate action plans in accordance with national regulations. Alliances with transnational municipal networks and multilateral organizations help promote planning instruments (Carrión & Rebotier, 2025). In some cases, these plans take on a performative role to position localities within a discursive field, leverage visibility, and attract potential donors. Additionally, the procedural requirement to socialize action proposals and improve citizen participation opens opportunities for transformation. From a more radical perspective — though without truly transformative scope — collaborative approaches at the science-policy interface can encompass plural and ancestral knowledge, including non-academic perspectives based on ethical principles and valuation languages (UNDRR, 2022, 2024b).

4.2 Urgency of climate action

The certainty that climate change poses profound risks to the planet and that the pace of action is insufficient has gained traction amid the increase in disasters caused by extreme events over the past decade. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, stated: “Climate change is the defining issue of our time [...] every day we fail to act is a day we move closer to a fate none of us wants — a fate that will resonate through generations in the damage done to humanity and life on Earth” (UNDRR, 2024c). Mitigation efforts remain insufficient, and development without a risk perspective could create new vulnerabilities or lead to maladaptation. Consequently, political rationalities shift toward the most pressing, achievable, and tangible impacts of climate events. While the “climatization” of disasters may be seen as a burden in conceptual debates, it also presents an opportunity for pragmatic interventions.

Language plays a crucial role in mobilizing climate action. The social construction of risks and the anthropogenic dimensions of climate change are discourses that do not necessarily permeate public management (Hrabanski & Montouroy, 2022). Scientific knowledge is not always available, and technical terms are difficult to understand. Rather than seeking coherence in policy frameworks, there is a selective and strategic approach to policy formulation. Government technologies thus favor instruments capable of raising public awareness, mobilizing political support, and coordinating interventions. Identifying specific programs or projects can highlight the connections between sustainable development, risk management, and climate adaptation. The design of environmental projects thereby becomes a mechanism for institutional coordination across levels of government, in collaboration with academia and environmental activists, to address issues related to informal settlements, conservation strategies, and land-use zoning in sensitive and risk-prone areas.

At the local level, the environmental dimension continues to prevail as an explanatory cause of disasters. From a capitalist perspective, efforts lean toward market-based public management instruments for risk transfer and macroeconomic stability. From a modernist stance, risk-based planning, the construction of resilient infrastructure, and structural reinforcement for risk reduction are prioritized. However, in vulnerable communities, daily priorities focus on habitability conditions and livelihoods. Therefore, undertaking comprehensive risk management programs that consider long-term scenarios becomes complex. Nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation have

gained popularity as preventive approaches to counter the socio-environmental crisis. While this may not seem like a radical epistemic dispute, recognizing opportunities for climate action remains necessary. In this context, small-scale projects become more attractive and feasible considering the capacities and resources of local governments, despite potential unexpected effects.

4.3 Common but differentiated responsibilities

The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities has become a central element of climate negotiations. This principle acknowledges that those who contribute the least to global emissions are suffering the worst impacts of the climate emergency. Additionally, developing countries have limited fiscal capacity to address the climate crisis. Consequently, the economic burden of disasters is expected to increase due to prevailing vulnerability, continuous exposure, and cumulative risks associated with global warming and climate variability. Under these circumstances, solidarity from the international community — particularly from developed countries and multilateral banks — is sought to finance mitigation and adaptation actions. International commitments require developed countries to take the lead in addressing climate impact,s but do not question historical responsibilities or internal inequalities at the national level.

For example, Bolivia has emphatically called for greater commitment and cooperation from developed countries to provide financing, technology transfer, and capacity building to address climate adaptation and risk management. However, at the national level, the claim for differentiated responsibilities clashes with the extractivist dynamics promoted in the resource-based sector by the state itself (Gudynas, 2012). Faced with the need to respond to major development challenges and the challenges of a changing climate, pragmatic options conflict with the promotion of alternative principles that advocate for “living well in harmony with Mother Earth,” “protecting the rights of Mother Earth,” or demanding “payment of the historical climate debt” from Northern countries (Autoridad Plurinacional de la Madre Tierra, 2023).

This case highlights the scalar dimension of both power relations and responsibilities. Levels of government are never homogeneous, and at each scale, power relations rooted in the social construction of risks and their management intervene (Blaikie et al., 2014; García-Acosta, 2005). The current climate perspective is no exception; it connects scales from the local to the global, often highlighting tensions and contradictions. Assuming development perspectives in a changing climate without fundamentally incorporating risks and their root causes can only reproduce — and even consolidate — inequitable relations and vulnerabilities in the social world and space (Lavell & Maskrey, 2014). For instance, considering responsibilities based on identified or anticipated losses and damages is limited, as it does not account for other inequitable mechanisms involved in both the construction of risks and the structuring of the social world.

4.4 Compensation for loss and damage

The increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events are causing extensive losses and damages to human and natural systems (IPCC, 2023). Beyond disasters, political discourse is based on the perception of the limits of adaptation. The IPCC (2022) notes that there is a “soft limit” when

options are currently unavailable to avoid intolerable risks through adaptation measures, while a “hard limit” refers to the impossibility of adopting adaptation measures to avoid intolerable risks. This is where policies for risk management, disaster response, and compensation for loss and damage come into play.

For example, Peru defines climate change adaptation measures as “planned interventions by state and non-state actors, consisting of actions, practices, technologies, and services necessary to reduce or avoid severe disruptions, losses, and damages triggered by climate-related hazards affecting populations, livelihoods, ecosystems, watersheds, territories, infrastructure, goods, and services, among others; as well as to seize opportunities arising from climate change” (Ministerio del Ambiente del Perú, 2018). This leads to the definition of indicators aimed at reducing damage, potential disruptions, and current and future losses generated by climate-related hazards. Consequently, technologies of government emerge oriented toward disaster risk reduction (e.g., monitoring and early warning systems), the assessment and transfer of economic losses (e.g., insurance and financial protection mechanisms), and support for affected communities (e.g., funds for humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation, and reconstruction).

However, the detection and attribution of causality remain uncertain; moreover, a focus on impacts can obscure other underlying factors of vulnerability. From a critical perspective, an epistemic dispute proposes to decolonize the relationships between humans and nature, as an ethical, political, territorial, and reciprocal action with non-humans (Santamaría, 2019). Therefore, demands for environmental justice and strategic litigation have become tactics to pressure governments to enact adaptation policies, remedy the negative effects of environmental degradation, or provide compensation to victims of climate-induced disasters (Tigre et al., 2023).

5. CONCLUSION

The political rationalities articulating disaster risk management and climate change adaptation invoke the utopia of a space that can be observed, modeled, planned, and controlled. This implies a dual process. First, the creation of “governable spaces”: landscapes must be studied, calculated, analyzed, categorized, divided, and normalized to understand their dynamics in variable scenarios. Technical knowledge constitutes a basic requirement for risk assessment and adaptation mechanisms to a changing climate. Second, “technologies of government” are required to reduce the construction of new risks, protect livelihoods, and respond to potential disasters. This perspective emphasizes territorial planning processes but also prevention and regulation mechanisms in sensitive, vulnerable, or hazardous places to “manage” risks, as well as compensation mechanisms for quantifiable loss and damage. Hence, a set of discourses, institutions, regulations, and instruments is configured through which attention to disasters and emergencies acquires prevalence as a management field for climate change adaptation.

The dominant discursive fields introduce technologies of government that draw their narrative strength from global commitments but confront national and local practices. The way these discourses are structured and function, through state commitments, gives rise to a form of epistemic coloniality in public policy instruments. It becomes difficult to think and act outside these frameworks to

formulate alternative agendas based on situated experiences and freed from the limits imposed by the international environmental discourse.

A critical understanding of disaster risk governmentality in a changing climate must transcend the prospective dimension of future climate impact assessments or the modeling of economic costs of climate phenomena to encompass a more robust questioning of the structural causes of vulnerability. Meanwhile, subaltern disputes blend with what is possible, disturbing language and redefining the meaning of climate adaptation discourses.

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Julien Rebotier: Conceptualization (Equal); Data curation (Supporting); Formal Analysis (Support); Investigation (Supporting); Methodology (Equal); Supervision (Supporting); Validation (Equal); Visualization (Supporting); Writing – original draft (Supporting); Writing – review & editing (Equal).

DATA AVAILABILITY

The dataset supporting the findings of this study is included within the article.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USAGE

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APPENDIX

REFERENCES TO REGULATIONS AND PUBLIC POLICIES

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