

Collective Action as Participatory Tools for Fostering Inclusive Climate Adaptation in Medellín, Colombia

Speaker: Dr. Ricardo Castro-Díaz¹

1. Escuela de Planeación Urbano-Regional, Facultad de Arquitectura, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Sede Medellín. ircastrod@unal.edu.co

Collective action refers to the coordinated efforts of a group of people to achieve a common goal related to climate change. In the context of community-based adaptation to climate change, collective action implies the inclusive organization of various local actors to actively participate in decision-making and implementation of measures to reduce climate risks and improve the resilience of the territory. encourages legitimate and effective solutions by incorporating local knowledge together with a sense of shared ownership over climate strategies (Uehleke and Sturm (2017). Positive outcomes of collective action include increased adaptive capacity, community empowerment, and transformation of power relationships in favor of those most vulnerable to the climate (Castro-Díaz, 2013; Kreitmair and Bower-Bir, 2021).

Local community-based adaptation to climate change impacts has gained attention as a critical governance challenge requiring the inclusion of diverse territorial stakeholders in decision-making processes (Castro-Díaz et al., 2022). However, in growing peri-urban areas facing heightened disaster risks coupled with poverty, cultural marginalization, and rising social vulnerability indicators (Castro-Díaz et al., 2019), stimulating collective action emerges as an urgent priority.

The community of Comuna 8 in Medellín, led by the Local Management Committee, Social Organizations and the Housing and Habitat Board, has ratified a Local Agreement to adopt inclusive strategies for climate action titled “8 por la Ocho”. These collective actions were fundamental in motivating the Municipal Government’s Declaration of a Climate Emergency as part of a Comuna 8 Climate Task Force.

The eight strategic lines address recurring issues in disaster risk management, environment and biodiversity, food sovereignty, territorial planning, climate-resilient housing and services, resilient infrastructure, and community organization and climate governance. The agreement also outlines eight priority measures: rainwater harvesting and runoff management; permanent creek, ditch and sink clearing; maintenance of mitigation infrastructure; household rainwater collection systems; crack sealing and terrain monitoring; slope protection and drainage; erosion control through nature-based solutions; and watershed reforestation.

These recent achievements also surface multiple challenges requiring foundational scientific research to support local climate adaptation efforts. The objective of this conference is to highlight the evolution of community self-governance, the inclusion of participatory planning, and the power of collective action in pursuing robust adaptation in Medellín's peri-urban areas. We consider the documentation and sharing of local climate strategies as vital to enhancing spatial planning for social well-being.

We recognize the Comuna 8 Climate Task Force, including the Corporación Jurídica Libertad, Movimiento Laderas de Medellín and the Mesa de Vivienda y Hábitat, as the principal organizations supporting and guiding collective actions. As observers, the National University of Colombia aims to serve as facilitators in this planning process moving forward.

References

Castro-Díaz, R. (2013). Implicancias del despoblamiento y la fragmentación social en el aumento de la vulnerabilidad comunitaria de poblaciones altoandinas de Colombia ante eventos extremos climáticos del Niño y la Niña. Secretaría Ejecutiva de CLACSO, 29.

Castro-Díaz, R., & CE, N. (2018). The social vulnerability and ecosystem services feedback: approaching social-ecological analysis in water supply for Andean communities. In world social science forum “security and equality for sustainable futures”, Fukuoka.

Castro-Díaz, R., Perevochtchikova, M., Roulier, C., & Anderson, C. B. (2019). Studying social-ecological systems from the perspective of social sciences in Latin America. Social-ecological Systems of Latin America: Complexities and Challenges, 73-93.

Castro-Díaz, R., Delgado, L. E., Langle-Flores, A., Perevochtchikova, M., & Marin, V. H. (2022). A systematic review of social participation in ecosystem services studies in Latin America from a transdisciplinary perspective, 1996–2020. Science of The Total Environment, 828, 154523.

JAL – Junta Administradora Local Comuna 8. Distrito de Medellín (2020-2023) (2023). Acuerdo Local 008 “Por medio del cual se adoptan las estrategias para la Acción Climática Incluyente en la Comuna 8 -Villa Hermosa- del Distrito de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación de Medellín.

Kreitmair, U., & Bower-Bir, J. (2021). Too different to solve climate change? Experimental evidence on the effects of production and benefit heterogeneity on collective action. Ecological Economics, 184, 106998.

Uehleke, R., & Sturm, B. (2017). The influence of collective action on the demand for voluntary climate change mitigation in hypothetical and real situations. Environmental and Resource Economics, 67, 429-454.