

Cover Memo: Volume 22, Issue 2, Special Issue on Development Policy and Global Change Science

Marcos Regis Da Silva¹, Kim Portmess²

¹Executive Director, Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research

²Science Technology and Policy Fellowship Program Consultant, Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research

<https://doi.org/10.38126/JSPG2202CM>

The Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI) is pleased to introduce this special issue (Vol 22, Issue 2) of the *Journal for Science Policy and Governance (JSPG)*, focused on international collaboration and the exchange of scientific information and knowledge relevant to **Development Policy and Global Change Science to Achieve the Vision of Sustainable Americas**.

The Americas is a unique region. When considering the scale of transboundary conflict and war in other parts of the world, the Americas region is relatively peaceful. Conflict is mostly internal and, when using comparisons of scale with other regions, there is far less destruction of societies and cultures. There is also a unique literary influence on politics and decision-making in the Americas. Poets and writers like Pablo Neruda, Gabriela Mistral, Julio Cortazar, Gabriel García Márquez, and Carlos Fuentes are examples of the influence of the arts and humanities on Latin American and Caribbean political processes. The cultural diversity of the region has been and should continue to be a powerful mechanism for dialogue and enhanced cooperation between the global north and the global south.

The need for coherence in international environmental governance is pressing as the traditional governance framework for science to policy is under tremendous strain. To date, there are over 900 multilateral and over 1500 bilateral treaties and other international agreements dealing with environmental issues (*The future of international environmental law* / edited by David Leary and Balakrishna Pisupati. United Nations University, 2010). This fragmentation creates conflicting decisions under different multilateral instruments, duplication of efforts and competition for limited financial resources. In the face of urgent global change issues there is a need to invest more in creating synergies among the many multilateral environmental agreements.

The interdisciplinary approach outlined in the [Agreement that created the IAI](#) 30 years ago is visionary. Over the decades, the focus on interdisciplinary research by the IAI evolved into transdisciplinary research, a reflective research process that brings together diverse perspectives from different academic disciplines and non-academic collaborators (e.g. practitioners, indigenous and local communities, resource managers, etc.) to co-create research goals for a holistic understanding of the issues and develop novel solutions. Moreover, transdisciplinary research as encompassed by the IAI is buttressed by the principles of open science and data thereby ensuring equitable participation by all those involved in or affected by the research.

Among the objectives outlined in the IAI Agreement, signed by 19 Parties (member states) of the Americas, is the mandate to “Pursue on a regional scale that research which cannot be pursued by any individual State or institution and dedicate itself to scientific issues of regional importance.” A regional transdisciplinary approach is designed to meet the challenges of complex multinational problems and build systems and institutions that encourage scientific excellence, open data, and the true, equitable, and inclusive participation of all stakeholders in the co-production of knowledge. The next generation of science and policy leaders have new ideas and need a global platform to amplify their voices and cultivate skills to support effective regional solutions for the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and the next global pandemic.

The IAI partnered with *JSPG* this year to work with Fellows from the [Science Technology and Policy Fellowship \(STeP\) Fellowship Program](#) and increase engagement with the early career researchers from Latin America and the Caribbean, offering training workshops and webinars in Spanish and English for the first time. In just 3 years, STeP has brought together an Inter-American network of more than 60 science policy fellows from 13 countries each working on issues of national importance. These Fellows, some of them authors in this special issue, are already leaders working together to build connections globally and develop skills that result in more just, inclusive, diverse and evidence informed decision-making spaces.

This special issue addresses a variety of science policy topics from a transboundary perspective including pesticide regulations, plastic pollution, environmental justice in lithium mining, increased youth involvement in climate negotiations, and how universities can work together with local governments and communities to meet sustainable development goals. We would like to thank the experts on transdisciplinary science and policy from both the global north and global south for sharing their experience and wisdom in the writing workshop and webinars for prospective authors. Our gratitude extends to the *JSPG* volunteer staff and editorial board for their incredible efficiency, dedication, and high standard of excellence.

We hope this special issue highlights the brand of inclusive and collaborative leadership being nurtured in Latin America and the Caribbean that will help articulate a vision of how our hemisphere can assume greater leadership in the international decision-making space and more forcefully articulate its priorities and needs. The recommendations and insights from the early-career authors published in this issue should be shared with local, national and international organizations as positive examples of how to achieve a vision of a sustainable Americas.

Marcos Regis da Silva, Executive Director, Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research
Kim Portmess, Science Technology and Policy Fellowship Program Consultant, Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research

Dr. Marcos Regis da Silva is Executive Director of the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI). He is responsible for the provision of strategic advice to high level policy makers on issues related to global change and their socio-economic impacts. He also provides advice on linkages between the IAI’s scientific agenda and global governance environmental frameworks, especially the Sustainable Development Goals. He is responsible for the long-range strategic planning and financial oversight of the IAI Directorate to ensure the implementation of the IAI’s programme of work.

Previously he held the post of Chief, Knowledge Management and Outreach Services with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). He was responsible for issues

related to the use of new information and communication technologies, including those to conduct international trade in specimens of CITES-listed species that are legal, sustainable and traceable. He was previously with the Convention on Biological Diversity where he was responsible for the implementation of the Clearing-House Mechanism and for the technical implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Before joining the United Nations, Marcos was a Programme Officer with the NAFTA Commission on Environmental Cooperation where his duties included the development of the North American Biodiversity Information Network. He holds a PhD from McGill University and was an Adjunct Professor with the Department of Distance Education and a Computer and Networks Librarian.

Kim Portmess leads the Science, Technology and Policy (STeP) Fellowship Program of the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI). STeP is an innovative landmark program of the IAI to enhance human and institutional capacities in IAI member countries and to support the provision of expert scientific advice to policy makers for the development of public policy relevant to global environmental change. Kim manages the professional development program for fellows from across 13 countries, focused on building skills in communication, transdisciplinary leadership and science diplomacy for early-career researchers, passionate about working at the interface between science and policy with a unique focus on Latin American and Caribbean context and culture.

She previously worked at the Institute for Scientific Research and High Technology Services (INDICASAT AIP) in the Center for Academic Affairs and Collaboration.

Kim graduated from Cornell University in plant science and natural resource management and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in disaster risk management and climate governance. She has lived and worked for more than 15 years in Latin America and the United States, building bridges between local communities, decision makers, and academics to strengthen sustainable and equitable development.