

Climate rationalisation processes and regional sustainable development. Appraising, communicating and learning from multiple frames of action.

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Abstract:

The penetration of climate change discourses into regional policies on sustainable development is rarely the result of orchestrated rational strategies that explicitly articulate existing human capacities towards a coordinated set of policy goals. Rather, diverse *climate rationalities* emerge from different practices and domains as a consequence of multiple and often non-related *rationalisation processes*. It is only at a later stage which many originally unrelated interests and values make sense under a common framework which probably would not have found the newly acquired public resonance otherwise. Climate change now serves as a perfect lever and justification to bring into the policy arena an array of what were previously considered disparate issues regarding biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, human rights, and economic or technological innovation. Different climate rationalities and rationalisation processes express the many worldviews and attitudes that the media, researchers and practitioners hold about how to approach human-environmental interactions, about the role of science, and about the role of the public. In this guise, different models, tools and appraisal and communication methods have embedded different rationalities and respond to peculiar imaginaries about how the human-climate system has to be managed.

From the work within the EU project ADAM (www.adamproject.eu) we look at how climate rationalisation processes occur and how different climate rationalities emerge in a selection of regions of the world, mainly in China, Hungary and Spain. In particular, I attempt to draw lessons from the science, policy appraising and communication of 'climate-proof' sustainable development policies and measures at the regional level. In particular, and to illustrate how rationalisation processes on climate change occur in the communication domain we carry out a content analysis of a database of 2,601 newspaper articles published in Catalonia, North-East Spain, between 1990 and 2006. During this period, new climate frameworks appeared and consolidated, while others became less 'threatening' or incompatible with other frameworks -as was the case of economic development versus climate conservation. The 'success' of climate change discourses in science, the economy and politics depends on the extent different rationalities and rationalisation processes are made compatible and can transform their potential threats into synergies as well as to consolidate the different power structures that operate in each domain. This climate framing-and-reframing can be understood as part of a larger social learning process about climate change insofar as they create and bring in –not without conflict- new climate rationalities into the policy discourses and eventually change practices and institutions which would have not changed otherwise.