



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Global Environmental Change

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/gloenvcha

Addressing climate services in South American Chaco region through a knowledge coproduction process

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Knowledge coproduction framework
Interdisciplinary
Intersectoral
Climate Services
Family farming

ABSTRACT

When engaging in an interdisciplinary and intersectoral knowledge coproduction process, what premises should (academic and non-academic) participants consider to prevent power dynamics and divergent interests from becoming epistemological obstacles (Bachelard, 1974)? What methodological devices should be adopted to enable a productive dialogue between heterogeneous actors and knowledge? Despite the plethora of literature on the relevance of participatory approaches and the promotion of open science to produce socially meaningful knowledge, most works neglect central challenges present in any coproduction experience. Namely, how to deal with power dynamics, how to challenge the identity anchors of the participants and how to ensure the epistemological conditions for initiating long-term collaboration. Hence, based on these concerns, this paper puts forth the theoretical-methodological basis of a knowledge coproduction approach for the development of climate services for family farming. In addition, we present two major results achieved in the framework of a coproduction process involving academic and non-academic participants: the development of a community-based rainfall monitoring network in the eastern region of the South American Gran Chaco and the codesign of a smartphone application.

1. Introduction:

Research about regional climate variability in terms of weeks, months and years, as well as on the possibility of predicting it (at least in part), has progressed considerably in the past decades, especially in South America (e.g. Vera et al., 2013; Osman and Vera, 2018; Coelho et al., 2018). However, the existing literature points out an important gap between the scientific knowledge achieved and its potential for social appropriation (Fazey et al., 2010; Lemos et al., 2012; Hafines, 2019). Given the limits of the transfer approaches –for which climate knowledge is produced in the scientific sphere and then transferred to “users”, located in different sectors of social life– the scientific community stressed the need to go beyond normal science (Kuhn, 1962) in

order to provide answers to the complex problems of modern societies (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1993; Gfieri, 1999; Nowotny et al., 2001). In this endeavour, researchers developed specific studies that brought into play innovative methodologies focused on transsectoral interaction (Jasanoff, 2003; Lemos and Morehouse, 2004; Meadow et al., 2015; Mach et al., 2020). Within this context, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO, 2009) promoted programmes and initiatives for climate services at regional and global scales, focusing on key sectors (agriculture, energy, health, etc.). Moreover, as part of this transsectoral shift within the framework of interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaborations, the notion of knowledge coproduction caught the attention of many researchers giving rise to profuse literature both in favour and critical of this approach. On the one hand, coproduction approaches are

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encouraged as enablers of participatory research (O'Brien, 2011; Mauser et al., 2013; Van der Hefl, 2016) but without analysing in depth the cognitive, social, and political conditions in which such participation or interaction between academic and non-academic actors takes place (Pohl et al., 2010; Lang et al., 2012; Schoflz and Stefiner, 2015). Moreover, this coproduction notion does not integrate the power structure factor that organises the relationship between the actors that produce/demand/share (or not) their knowledge (Hafines, 2019; Taddefi, 2013; Hernandez et al., 2015). On the other hand, in many cases, the choice for this kind of approach responds to the desire of intervening reality through public policies based on scientific knowledge (Drfiesen et al., 2010; Rocfle, 2015; Moser, 2016). However, this instrumental vision of coproduction can become a hurdle when we intend to dialogue with non-academic actors, who are consigned to a secondary role (Latuffippe & Kflenk 2020; Turnhout et al., 2020).

Considering these observations, we sustain that in order to achieve a socially relevant knowledge coproduction process, it is necessary to establish a dialogue between heterogeneous types of knowledge that mutually acknowledge each other's legitimacy and are critical of the epistemological criterion of positivist demarcation that places science as the dominant system of knowledge (Jasanoff, 2003; Hafines, 2019). In the following sections, we describe first the theoretical and methodological basis of our knowledge coproduction approach (Section 2) and then the experience of coproducing climate services for the smallholder agricultural sector in the South American Gran Chaco (Section 3). Specifically, we present two major results: the development of a community rainfall monitoring network and the codesign of a smartphone application. Finally, we conclude with a series of reflections on the challenges and lessons learned from this knowledge coproduction experience with a view to enabling the adoption of the proposed approach in the framework of new coproduction processes.

2. Analytical framework and method

2.1. Openness and symmetric valuation

Following hermeneutical philosophy (Gadamer, 1975), our first premise is that an understanding between different traditions requires a willingness to open up to a non-instrumental conversation dynamic. In other words, this means that communication is not about providing arguments to enforce them over others, merely to be right or to win a discussion. Instead, it seeks to identify the convergences, parallels, and inconsistencies between the various arguments about a phenomenon. The aim, therefore, is not to assert one's point of view by annihilating or dismissing others; rather, it is to understand the differences between the respective points of view and agree on the interpretative process that identifies encounters and discrepancies between judgements about the world. This premise is especially relevant when engaging in a dialogue on climate between actors who base their views and expertise of these phenomena on scientific methods on one side, and local and indigenous knowledge systems on the other. As we will examine in Section 3, this premise proved extremely productive when faced with disagreement between producers and climatologists over an extreme rainfall event.

The second premise of our coproduction approach is the symmetrical valuation of the diverse knowledge systems involved. This principle is essential to bring together actors with different cognitive skills (scientific, institutional, territorial, etc.) and social experiences (community, disciplinary, academic, operational climate agencies, agricultural production, public relations). Furthermore, it implies acknowledging the will to truth (Foucault, 1979) of the different viewpoints on the world involved in the coproduction process. Recognising the validity and symmetry of the various points of view allows for mutual exchange and common research practice. Nevertheless, this principle of symmetry also means that everyone must be open to let others say something against one's own beliefs (Gadamer, 1975); scientific knowledge regarding its discipline, farmers concerning their know-how, politicians about their

authority, technical experts on their bureaucratic-operational expertise. Accordingly, the knowledge and practices of each group are subject to debate and discussion, allowing the collective to coproduce new knowledge and common experiences.

The aforementioned premises assume that disciplinary expertise (both scientific and non-scientific) provides necessary but insufficient knowledge. Hence, two additional dimensions join the disciplinary one: the *interdisciplinary* and the *intersectoral*. Based on Nfcoflescu (2002) and García (2006), we define *interdisciplinary* as an approach that seeks to account for the complexity of a phenomenon by bringing the theoretical and methodological frameworks of different disciplinary knowledge into dialogue. The *interdisciplinary* procedure is, as Nfcoflescu (2002:37) points out, one of the four arrows of the arc of knowledge (the other three being *discipline*, *pluridiscipline* and *transdiscipline*). Thus, we do not depart from the dominant definition of "trans-discipline" (Arnott et al., 2020; Schmidt, 2020) which advocates for an integration of all knowledge but which, as Meehan et al. (2018) points out, generally leads to the emptying of the socio-spatial and political specificities of the knowledge involved. The "sector" notion is defined here in a relational and contextual manner, following the anthropological tradition: belonging to a sector is determined by the perception of the actors themselves, who self-ascribe to one or another sector according to the social relations of power that affect them and the identity dynamics in which they participate (Barth, 1998; Haffl, 2003). We will return to this concept in Section #2.3. From this perspective, coproduction focuses on the complementary nature of different types of knowledge and the ability to engage them in dialogue as a fundamental challenge compared to classical procedures of transferring scientific knowledge to society, and it is the way to elaborate socially meaningful knowledge. Thus, our framework addresses coproduction knowledge demands considering, on one side, the context and settings of the social relationships in the territories involved (situated knowledge, Haraway, 1991), and on the other side, that its results are meaningful to the community engaged in the process (socially relevant knowledge, Lemos et al., 2018; Mach et al., 2020). Consequently, throughout the dialogue process, a new collective horizon of meaning is developed, which is neither the sum of each group's views nor the combination of their parts. Since the dialogue sought is transformative, all participants expand their *critical* horizon.

2.2. Social asymmetry and power structure in the coproduction process

The coproduction dialogue between heterogeneous actors and knowledge occurs within societies with increasing inequalities in access to cultural, material, and natural assets. At territorial level, the imbalances manifest themselves in dynamics of alliances, conflicts, convergences, and antagonisms between groups affecting diverse sectors, activities, and institutions. These dynamics constitute a privileged subject of analysis for social sciences, whose research into power and resistance is particularly relevant to knowledge coproduction projects. Therefore, when pursuing a coproduction approach, we must always consider how stakeholder interests/powers are potentially related. Given the social sciences' expertise in power and resistance dynamics, their inclusion in this process is especially significant.

Furthermore, a reflexive attitude is needed regarding the simplifications of the participatory process on the social structure and its power/resistance dynamics (Alfithabe et al., 1996; Alfithabe and Hernandez, 2004).

As Foucault (1979) pointed out, the dialectic of power/knowledge arranges relations in a society so that some types of knowledge become visible while others remain hidden. Thereby, the coproduction framework adopted in the international project under consideration assumes that the premise of power asymmetry is constitutive of all social fields. Therefore, in coproduction practice, we must identify the social meaning of research (Mode 2, Gibbons 1994; Bojovcic et al., 2021) but also, from a critical perspective of power absent in the mode 2 approach, it is necessary to elucidate the stakeholders' conditions of participation: who

is involved and who is not; what is agreed to be coproduced and what is left out of the interaction. It should also account for actors who were not involved in the coproduction process, whether voluntarily or not. Furthermore, this entails considering not only the diversity of interests regarding the subject/product to be coproduced but also each group's capacity to make their voices heard (or not) in the coproduction process. Thus, this premise assumes that such processes are not free of conflict and dispute over the legitimacy of the objectives and about the interpretations that collaborative research will produce on socially relevant issues.

In this context, coproduction of socially meaningful knowledge and consented through a dialogue dynamic poses not merely epistemological and cognitive challenges, but also communicative, symbolic, and political ones. Therefore, a complex and non-reductionist interpretation of the social field is needed to understand the various interests at stake (including those of scientists), and to account for the (unequal) social structure, the conflict issues and the systems of alliances shaping the process. As we will show in Section 3, during the project, the conflictive situation between the business profiles of the local agricultural sector and small farmers led to a coproduction space that only integrated the latter type of producers and institutions linked to the world of family farming.

2.3. Building a case study: Bermejo, the Gran Chaco wetlands region

The selection of the region for the coproduction of climate services was based on climatic and socio-cultural criteria. First, considering the regional climate predictability levels, a region in north-eastern Argentina was favoured. Second, anthropologists opted for a specific study area with diverse socio-productive profiles (business, family farming and peasants of indigenous origin) in order to analyse the processes of appropriation of climate knowledge and its relationship with the social and productive structure. Third, assuming the premises of openness and symmetric valuation, we met with state agencies and farmers' organisations to present the project proposal for knowledge coproduction and identify converging interests. As a result of this process, we started a dialogue with the actors and institutions that identify themselves as part of the agricultural sector and with the political

authorities of the Bermejo Department (located in the east of the province of Chaco, Fig. 1).

The knowledge coproduction process resulted from territorial interactions sustained through a collective ethnography conducted in Bermejo between 2016 and 2017 (Hernández, 2019). This strong territorial presence enabled the organisation and coordination of intersectoral and interdisciplinary workshops amongst all actors involved in the coproduction of climate services (Fig. 2). The continued presence in the territory (ethnographic device, Althabe and Hernández, 2004) was central to survey the social, institutional, and productive dynamics that characterise the Bermejo Department. We documented it through field records, interviews and a parcel survey of land use and tenure. Specifically, we produced a corpus of ethnographic material consisting of 108 individual interviews with farmers, 30 interviews with rural development agents (from public and private organisations) and policymakers, 577 ethnographic records including a total of 7 participatory workshops whose themes and activities were defined together with local stakeholders.

The ethnographic device also allowed us to characterise the agricultural production profiles of the area: *Criollos* (the creoles, descendants of the first Spaniards colonisers) and indigenous smallholder farmers in a transition towards agroecology; medium-sized farmers generally specialised in extensive livestock grazing; large agribusiness farmers devoted to rice growing, fish farming, and intensive livestock production. Besides, we surveyed the agricultural calendar, identified the impacts of the most significant climate events on production systems along with mitigation and adaptation strategies of each socio-productive profile in the face of these events. On this basis, we verified the relevance of the climate factor and its relationship with the Bermejo wetland hydrological regime, especially its impacts due to floods (Hernández et al., 2017; Spinoso et al., 2019).

The analysis of ethnographic records was crucial to examine the power structure present in the Bermejo territory and to account for this dimension when assessing the participation (or not) of the actors involved in this knowledge coproduction process. It allowed us to identify conflicts between family farmers and large agribusiness producers on the use of natural resources (mainly on lands and water access from the Paraguay River). The dispute was particularly tense amongst

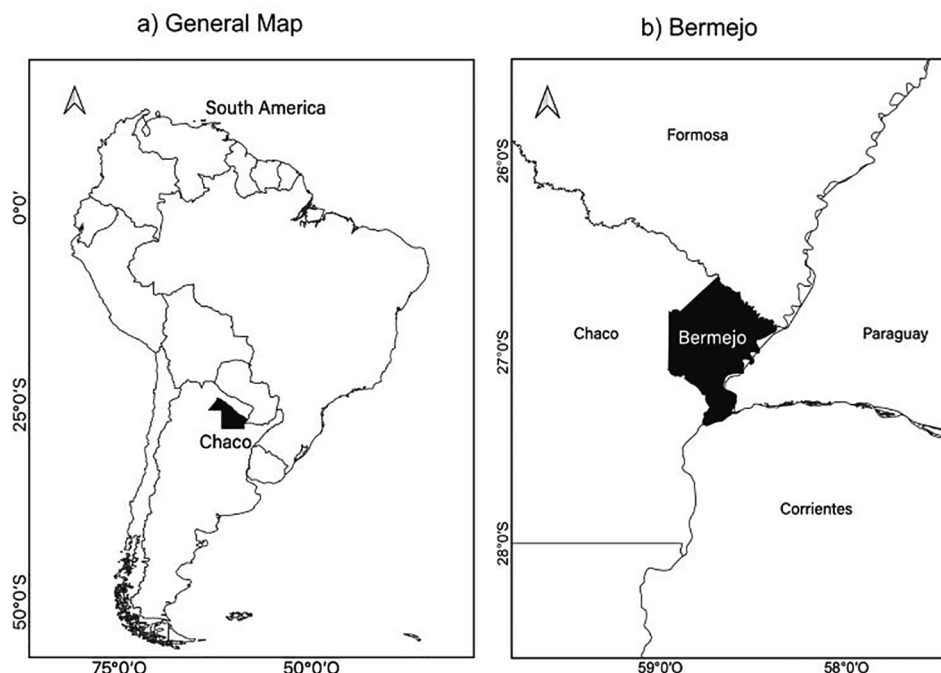


Fig. 1. Map of Bermejo Department, Chaco Province, Argentina (Source: Compilation based on data from Argentina's National Geographic Institute).

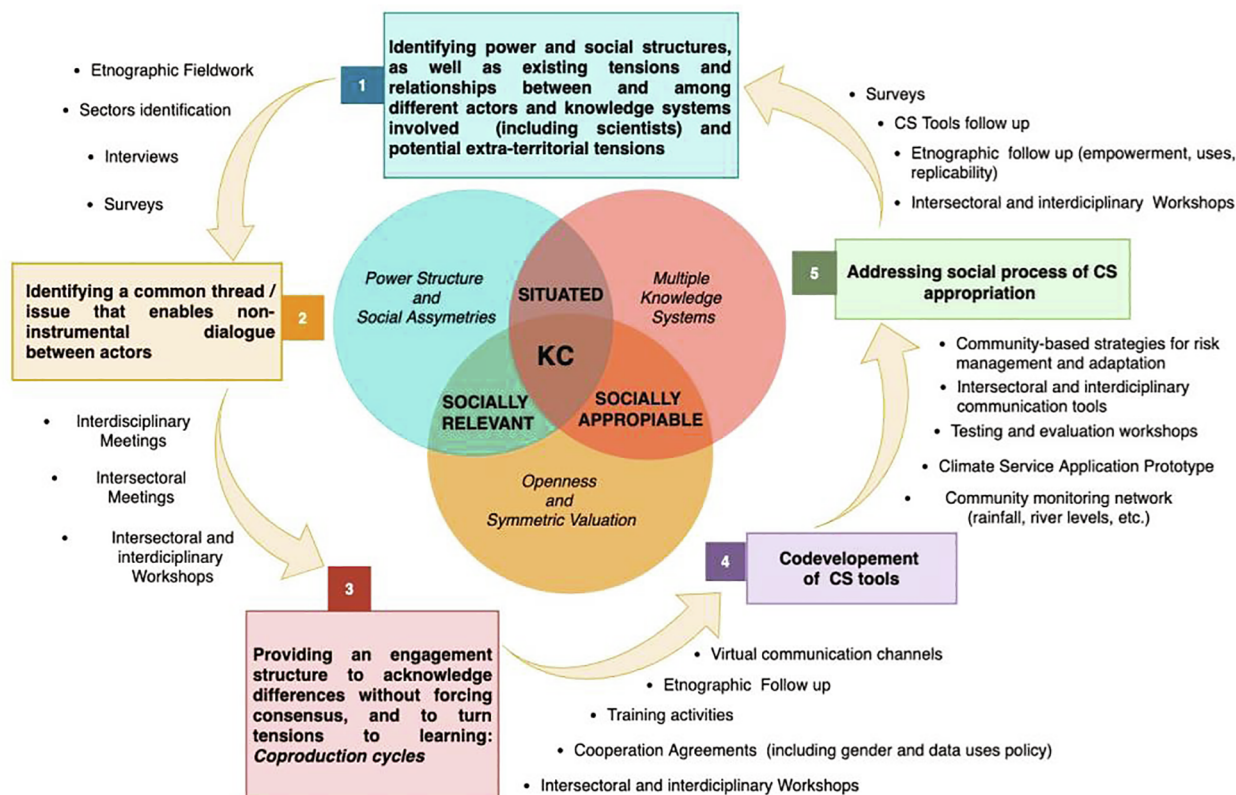


Fig. 2. Knowledge coproduction (KC) framework for climate services (CS).

the urban population adjacent to a rice plantation due to the polluting effects of the agrochemicals employed on this crop and its consequences on human health and biodiversity (Hernandez et al., 2019). Drawing from the anthropological analysis of alliances and conflicts among Bermejo territory social groups, educational and training trajectories, and the type of knowledge and technology used in the farming systems, we set out to initiate the coproduction process with smallholders and medium-sized diversified farmers (agriculture and livestock farming). This decision implied we would leave the work with agrifusiness-type profiles and their organisations for a later stage. Accordingly, we launched the coproduction process joined by family farming actors and related institutions: development agents of the National Agrifultural Technology Institute (INTA) and teachers and students from three local teaching institutions (Agrifultural Family School, Agroecology Technical School and Geography Teaching Institute).

Furthermore, the ethnographic fieldwork revealed a tension arising from the significant presence of various projects, programmes, initiatives, and networks (at a national, regional, and transnational level) on the climate issue and its impacts. Consequently, our project coproduction proposal had to position itself in this scenario, explicitly stating the specificities and continuities regarding other initiatives, particularly by showing the willingness to establish a space for coproduction based on a non-instrumental dialogue between heterogeneous types of knowledge and actors. Finally, during these early stages of the project, we also identified tensions linked to the specific social asymmetries involved such as fear/distrust due to the extraterritorial origin of the project scientists, and the socio-economic distance perceived by the territorial actors concerning researchers (i.e. between European and South American participants; urban/rural provenance; class manners, linguistic diversity, etc.).

To turn these tensions into a learning source, we relied on premise #1 (Section 2.1) of our framework, acknowledging differences without forcing consensus. Based on premise #2 (Section 2.2), we sought to produce a “hybrid” space and a “pidgin” language (Gaffison, 1997;

Hernandez, 2020) that would allow communication between actors belonging to heterogeneous sectors but who shared a common will to work together. The severe impact of the climate factor on this wetland area was decisive in finding a receptive audience for our coproduction proposal and thus initiating a non-instrumental dialogue (Fig. 2).

In order to launch the coproduction process on this general issue, the project organised iterative cycles related to the different themes that emerged from the interaction (as we will show in Section 3). The characterisation of work in “cycles” has only a methodological and organisational function within the coproduction flow since, strictly speaking, it is not possible to separate one cycle from another empirically and in a clear-cut manner (Fig. 2). Likewise, sustained interaction over time makes it increasingly difficult to identify purely disciplinary, interdisciplinary or intersectoral moments, which, however, does not imply the dissolution of disciplinary and sectoral specificities. Indeed, during the coproduction process, we were able to observe that the previous anchorages (disciplinary and sectoral) of the parties involved did not dilute or merge to create a new “cross-sectoral” identity. Moreover, whenever there was a discussion about which institutional logos should appear on a poster or public communication, sectoral affiliation emerged strongly, since this was a way of building symbolic recognition, reassuring their identity. For example, the educators from the Agrifultural Family School stated that it was important for them that students’ families knew about their collaboration with “the scientists”; the producers who traded at the local farmers’ fair were interested in showing their customers that they had a good monitoring of the territory since they linked it to improvements in production strategies and, therefore, in the quality of their products; we as academics needed our logos to be displayed to show scientific bodies and funding agencies that we were doing our work, etc. Sectoral identity was also reaffirmed when it came to defining who was responsible for the various activities organised as part of the project. In these situations, the participants demanded the involvement of someone from the “agrifultural”, “education”, “scientific” sectors, etc. remarking explicitly: “It is better if [we] farmers do it”,

"We [the Agrifcultural Family School teachers] want to present the activities we carry out on the community rainfall monitoring network and show the role of student participation"; "We [development agents from the National Agrifcultural Technology Institute] want to coordinate this section of the workshop from INTA". Taking these tensions into account as a source of learning, we revisited the "cross-sectoral" concept, which is widely promoted in the literature (Schmidt et al., 2020). Consequently, we formulated a new working hypothesis: the sectoral dimension plays an identifying role for the actors engaged that hinders the constitution of a cross-sectoral practice in a strong sense. However, this does not become an obstacle to building an intersectoral working space (Fig. 2), based on the commitment to address a common issue of interest (in this case, understanding the climate of Bermejo and developing climate services according to the needs of family farmers), and to acknowledge the identity belonging claimed by the participants. In other words, the differences (social, institutional, educational trajectories) did not constitute symbolic distances that prevented a fruitful dialogue but rather contributed to the heterogeneity of points of view, strengthening the products to be developed.

Considering the dynamics involved in the framework of the overall issue, we must stress that the coproduction cycles are not necessarily chronologically consecutive. Instead, the identity of each cycle is based on the specific theme that dominates the dialogue between the actors involved while addressing it. Therefore, coproduction cycles may run synchronically, each pursuing its own objective but always linked to the dynamic of the collective space, challenging, complementing and dynamising each other. Fig. 2 summarizes the coproduction framework, with its theoretical premises, the procedures used to achieve the collaborative dynamics described above and the key moments in the process (indicated by the numbers 1 to 5).

3. Results and discussion

In order to illustrate the cognitive and social productivity of inter-disciplinary and intersectoral dialogue for coproducing socially meaningful knowledge, we present two coproduction cycles. In the first case, the cycle led to climatic event monitoring strategies that allow for a better organisation in the community usage of the farming equipment. In the second case, the cocreation of a free and open smartphone application allowed the knowledge generated to reach out to the entire community and fostered collective practices for production management. Finally, the involvement of local institutions in the knowledge coproduction process empowered them and resulted in new inter-institutional partnerships on the climate issue and its impacts. It also led to concrete actions that had a transformative effect on local dynamics: the creation of a radio programme on the climate issue, a change in the Agrifcultural Family School curriculum, and the willingness of the government of Chaco to "scale up" the "Bermejo Dialogue" experience to the provincial level, among others.

3.1. Coproduction of a community rainfall monitoring network (RCB)

This coproduction cycle resulted from a "mismatch" between scientific knowledge and the farmers' knowledge regarding rainfall in Bermejo. The discrepancy arose during an intersectoral workshop in Bermejo for the family farming sector attended by 60 people, including scientific researchers, producers, INTA development agents and students and teachers from educational institutions. With the purpose of presenting an initial prototype of weekly predictions developed by the climatological component of the project, one of the workshop activities was oriented to discussing the concepts of climate variability and uncertainty (Rafihaní and Afiken, 2011) associated to the prediction.

With the purpose of "opening the black box" of predicting to non-scientific actors, the climatologist who animated this debate presented the data that climate scientists typically use to produce rainfall forecasts and how they interpret them. Thus, using the month of April of the then-

current year (2017) as a reference, he projected a bar graph on the blackboard showing the daily rainfall recorded by the National Weather Service (SMN) from the weather station closest to Bermejo, located 70 km away. He explained that each bar corresponded to a day, while the height of the bars represented the rainfall in millimetres recorded (Fig. 3. a). Besides, he pointed out that the maximum was 125 mm recorded on 08/04/2017. Then, he asked the participants to identify the "rainiest weeks" based on a larger data set (including SMN rainfall records for all the months of April from 1982 to 2017), which would help them to visualise the variability of rainfall within the reference month. Through this exercise, our colleague explained to the audience that, by using these data series, climatologists calculate "normal" rainfall, and by analysing the meteorological situation in the area, they can predict the probability of more or less "normal" rain for the reference month (Fig. 3. b).

When the climatologist's presentation ended, a producer intervened: "Is that graph of the rain in April 2017 real? Because the rain here was much heavier! On the 8th, I registered 185 mm". This remark triggered the involvement of other participants in the same direction (Fig. 3.c): farmers, teachers from the Agrifcultural Family School, firemen from Bermejo and the owner of the local radio station, a weather enthusiast, among others. Hence, on the one hand, this confrontation evidenced that recording rainfall is a well-established practice among the participants. On the other hand, thanks to premises #1 and #2 of our coproduction approach, we opened a space for dialogue on rainfall data and the forms of monitoring used by territorial actors. The anthropologist team also intervened to inquire about the methods employed by the local participants to estimate rainfall, which included the identification of landscape landmarks (trees, fence posts, water wells, etc.) to monitor the flooding of rivers, streams and lagoons; the development of homemade rain gauges and micro-wells to measure groundwater layer height to estimate soil moisture; the observation of the behaviour of fauna (ants, birds, frogs), flora (flowering of a specific tree that announces the beginning of the rainy season) and other elements of the environment (colour and shape of clouds, wind orientation and time of wind intensification/absence), among others.

The theoretical primacy given to active listening (premise #2.1) made it possible to reflect on the respective experiences, so that this diversity of points of view and knowledge became a learning space (premise #2.2). Thus, as a result of this exchange and adding the records that the anthropologists had made during the in-situ fieldwork on monitoring practices, climate information needs, and management strategies of family farmers (Spinoso and Hernández, 2019), we were able to confirm as a first topic of common interest the importance of the spatial variability of rainfall in the Bermejo region and the relevance assigned by farmers to having accurate information on this variability. Moreover, we found that it was very important for the farmers to have precise information on this variability beyond "their plot", in other words, to be able to have a territorial vision of the phenomenon. This territorial dimension, coupled with the dynamics of collective work, would enable the constitution of a common view of the climate issue and open up the possibility of thinking about collective management strategies, as we will see next. In this way, local stakeholders saw the added value of coproducing knowledge about this climate phenomenon for their daily practices (production management, transportation, etc.). Although the issue of "monitoring" was not part of the initial interests of the scientific component (climate prediction specialists and anthropologists), the non-instrumental dialogue allowed farmers, actors from the Bermejo education sector, and rural development agents involved in the coproduction process to engage their interests in this issue, and also helped the collective space to consider monitoring as the main line of action.

In the context of this dialogue, farmers proposed to the academic component (climatologists and anthropologists) that a "Bermejo Community Rainfall Monitoring Network" (RCB by its initials in Spanish) should be set up. Thus, between June and November 2017, we held a

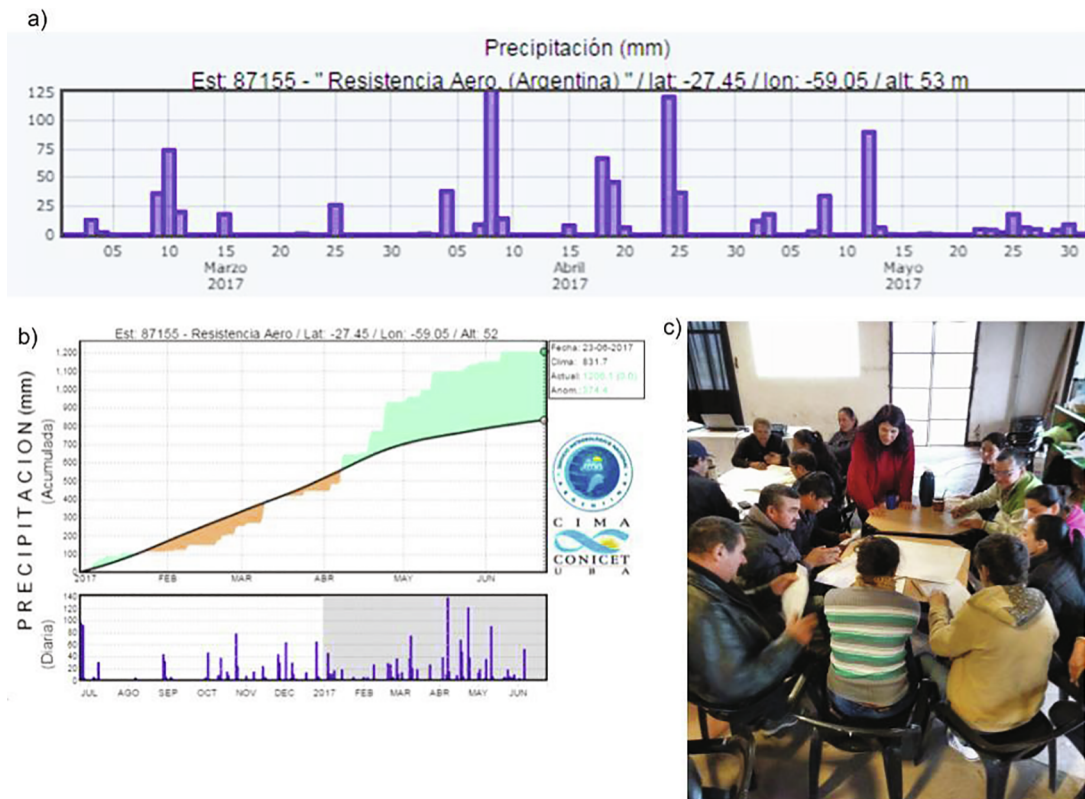


Fig. 3. Mismatch between climate scientists' and Bermejo stakeholders' rainfall knowledge.

series of interdisciplinary and intersectoral workshops aimed at building a territorial logic for rainfall monitoring with teachers and students of the Agrifamiliar Family School, INTA development agents (agronomists and veterinarians), and producers (horticulturists, livestock farmers). Local actors emphasized the importance of covering all districts in Bermejo with the network. In turn, climatologists, based on learnings from previous projects (Vera et al., 2006), explained the rain gauges installation and measurement criteria they required (WMO standards) so that they could use those records in their climatological analyses. The Bermejo community actors regarded this as a possibility to participate in the production of scientific knowledge about the territory. In order to guarantee these various aspects, the intersectoral collective also agreed to implement a training session during which the climatologists would inform those responsible for the rain gauges (producers, teachers, students) of the recording criteria (Fig. 4). Furthermore, anthropologists proposed to reflect on the data status (common or private good) and on the way to guarantee access (open, closed) to the records kept by the RCB (Hernandez and Fossa Riglos, 2019). As a result of this dialogue, RCB participants agreed that the coproduced knowledge should be a common good and have open access. In addition, considering the long-term sustainability of this initiative, an explanatory booklet was written for future RCB observers. The anthropological team also proposed to open a collective record on how the RCB network would dialogue with the traditional monitoring procedures used by farmers. These records, associated with the results of a survey planned for 2022 on the territorial impact of coproduced climate services, will make possible to analyse in the future the dynamics of complementarity/disruption that may develop between these monitoring strategies based on alternative knowledge systems.

Moreover, to ensure that the rainfall data reached out to the entire Bermejo community, a specific working group was organized, focusing on the communication/dissemination of the climate services coproduced by and for the Bermejo community. The RCB implementation process, in turn, gave rise to initiatives that culminated in the



Fig. 4. Bermejo community rainfall monitoring network (RCB).

transformation of the local institutions involved and in the creation of community-based strategies for risk management and adaptation to extreme weather events. For example, the identification of uplands that fled farmers located in flood-prone fields to move livestock to those areas; and the development of a report on the impacts of the extreme rainfall event of December 2016/January 2017. This report was targeted to the provincial and national authorities for subsidies and for the maintenance/adaptation of existing infrastructure or the construction of new one. Another example is that the Agrifamiliar Family School

modified the school curriculum to integrate the practice of river monitoring as a skill to be taught and evaluated, and the scientific component of the project (climatologists and anthropologists) carried out pedagogical updates with the teachers in charge of mathematics, geography, agricultural production, computer science and literature classes to incorporate activities based on the data generated by the RCB.

During the RCB coproduction cycle, new dialogues emerged on the link identified by the farmers between rainfall and the behaviour of the small rivers that cross Bermejo, as well as the large Paraguay and Paraná rivers. The interest in understanding this relationship led to launching a new coproduction cycle in 2020 (still under development) to build a river monitoring network. This network involves both traditional knowledge methods (behaviour of animals, natural indicators of watercourse height, presence of certain aquatic plant species) and scientific knowledge methods (elaboration and installation of hydrological rufles). We also identified the need to address a new interdisciplinary and intersectoral work topic: the development of a smartphone application that, in addition to allowing access to the recorded rainfall data, would also be the vector for making available to producers prediction products developed within the framework of the project (Fig. 5).

3.2. “Diálogo Bermejo” App

The subject guiding the second coproduction cycle introduced a

novel consideration on the use of technologies in rural communities. Based on the anthropological team’s survey, we verified that farming families had access to at least one smartphone and a wifi network (either at their residence or in the village). *Disciplinary, interdisciplinary and intersectoral* instances of knowledge coproduction were also complementary in this cycle (Table 1).

The content and format in which the hydroclimatic information (projects predictions, SMN forecasts/alerts, height measurements of the main rivers in the area, etc.) is presented in the “Diálogo Bermejo” application, was co-defined in the intersectoral workshops. Based on these criteria, computer scientists and climatologists developed application prototypes. Each prototype was co-designed in inter-sectoral workshops and discussed in meetings organized by each component (academic and non-academic) (Table 1). As a result of three years of joint work, the collective reflection on the impacts of extreme weather events on production systems, farmers’ agriculture management strategies, and the role of climate information coproduced showed the need to go beyond the individual perspective regarding the use of climate information (a common practice among Bermejo actors) to design collective adaptation strategies in the face of extreme events (see Section 3.1).

To date, we have developed three prototypes with different options for each function of the cell phone application (hereafter called APP - BERMEJO), integrating the dialogue between the various viewpoints of

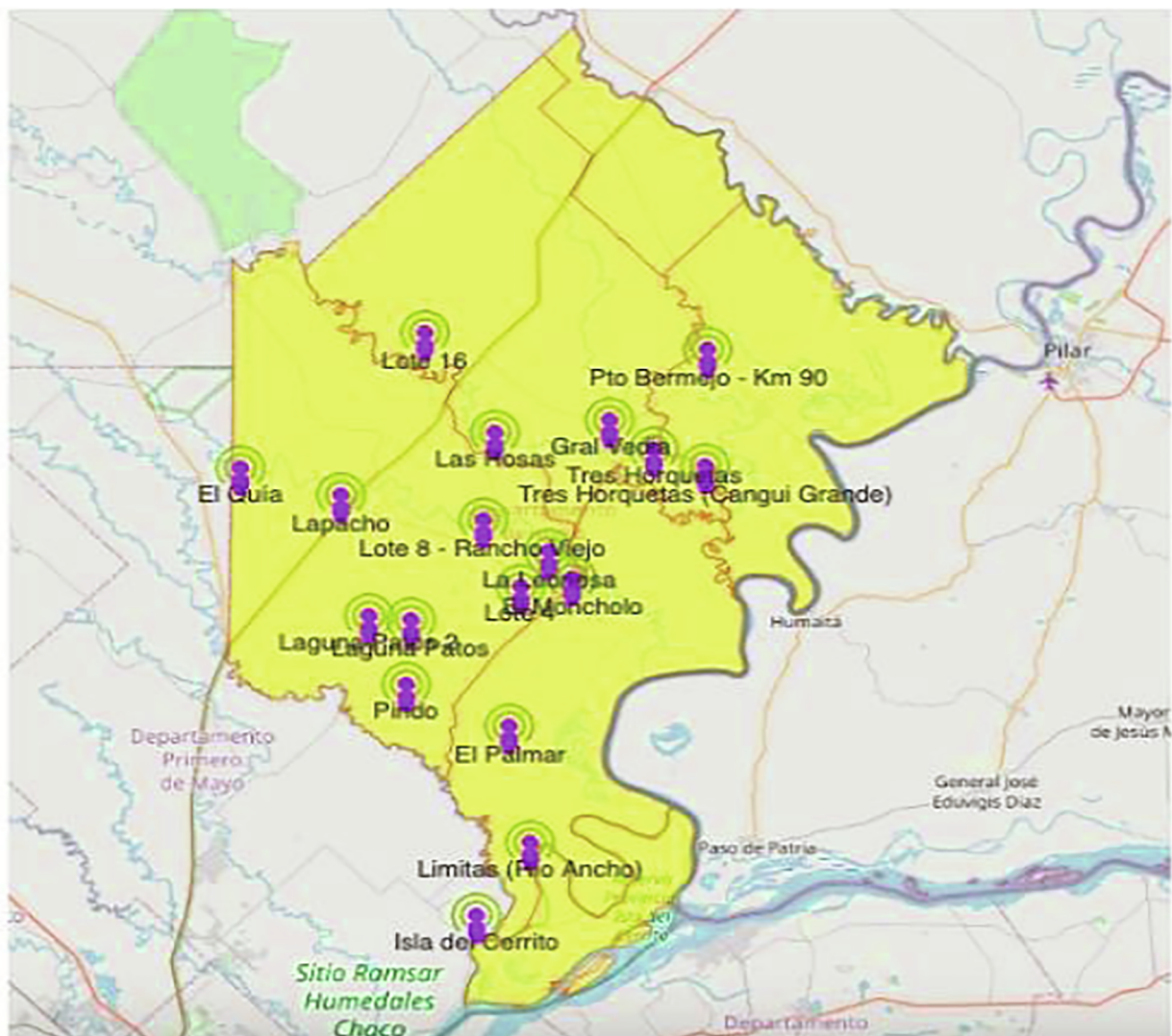


Fig. 5. “Diálogo Bermejo” Application.

Table 1
“Diálogo Bermejo” App coproduction process.

Actors	Disciplinary knowledge	Interdisciplinary/ Intersectoral dialogue
Computer scientists and climatologists	Software development and climate information content (RCB data and other products) on the application (open access scripting to allow captures and visualisation of the RCB data)	Application content definition and format
Anthropologists	Users' perception of the application, users' climate information comprehension processes, appropriation modes and uses	Development of crops and livestock management strategies based on RCB information
Agricultural sector (farmers and institutions)	Rainfall data production, community network management and implementation of new social and institutional dynamics around these activities and their dissemination	Recording rainfall data in spreadsheets and numbering of information. Elaboration of weather bulletins and agricultural emergency reports. Development of a local radio programme on climate and its impact on productive activities

the actors engaged in the coproduction process (premises #2.1 and #2.2). These prototypes (Ortiz de Zarate et al., 2018) were successively improved by including stakeholder observations, such as the use of specific icons to mark the location of RCB rain gauges, ways of accessing RCB data and of displaying the projects monitoring/prediction products; hydrometeorological data from different provincial and national public institutions (such as the network of meteorological stations of the province of Chaco, Argentina's National Weather Service and the Paraguayan Weather Service).

In sum, the two coproduction cycles mentioned are methodological delimitations aimed at providing a detailed analysis of the process of codesigning and coproducing disciplinary, interdisciplinary and intersectoral knowledge. These cycles resulted in specific cognitive products (the community rainfall monitoring network and the application of climate services) and in transformations in the territories and sectors/institutions involved, which were recognised as milestones by the actors engaged (farmers, teachers, political decision-makers, researchers, development agents). These include the change in the Agricultural Family School curriculum, the implementation of monitoring instruments (rulers on riverbanks, marks on bridges over streams, RCB rain gauges and additional gauges handmade by producers, etc.), and the creation of a radio programme dedicated to the climate-agriculture relationship in Bermejo, among others. Finally, the social dynamics created around the project was also a dimension analysed considering the premise of social asymmetry. On the one hand, the presence of a project promoted by an international scientific consortium generated instances of recognition and empowerment of those involved and strengthened networks of influence (including researchers, as explained by Vera, 2018). On the other hand, the introduction of new issues (or a new way of approaching them) in the Bermejo territory prompted collective reflections on the distribution/communication of local knowledge, the consequences of digitising data and making it available to global actors, and the impact of coproduced technological innovations on local links and modes of communication. Overall, these various aspects have increased social awareness on the climate issue and its impacts.

4. Conclusions

The coproduction process presented in this work reveals that, in order to obtain socially relevant cognitive products, we need conceptual

frameworks going beyond the mere management and integration of diversities (i.e., sectoral and disciplinary interests, languages, and practices). Instead, they should allow us to preserve those diversities since, on one side, they ensure that the implicated actors see themselves reflected on the codesigned products and, on the other side, they enrich the final products and broaden the social horizon.

The willingness to participate in a non-instrumental dialogue allowed divergent interests (e.g., monitoring versus climate prediction or sectoral anchoring versus collective workspace) to converge and transform the final viewpoint. Thus, strongly disciplinary and sectoral languages, practices and interests engaged in dialogue and generated novel and unexpected articulations. For instance, at the beginning of the project, the scientific component focused on regional climate predictions (weeks 2 and 3) whilst the agricultural producers centred on daily and local-scale forecasts. However, thanks to the development of the coproduction process, it was possible to bridge (not reduce/subordinate one to the other) both interests. On the one hand, a community rainfall monitoring network was set up, whose data are disseminated to the whole community via a free online application; on the other hand, this application provides short-term weather information (including alerts) and weekly forecasts. Therefore, this knowledge coproduction approach assumes the impossibility of determining a priori the paths that will lead to the production of socially relevant innovations. In this sense, the *outputs* (often emphasised both in the academic literature and in climate governance bodies) are as important as *the process itself*. In other words, coproduction is not only relevant for its “measurable” results in terms of climate services, like in this case, but also in terms of the social transformations unforeseen in the initial project plan. In the Bermejo case, we described the new local dynamics that took place in the process of interdisciplinary and intersectoral coproduction (detailed in Section 3). One of the major outcomes of this process has been the willingness expressed by the government of the province of Chaco to “scale up” the Bermejo experience and extend it to the entire provincial territory. Currently, a new cycle of coproduction is beginning to unfold as we write these lines.

The incomplete and provisional nature of the results achieved in any knowledge production process requires rethinking the instrumental and efficiency-based will that animates a large part of current science (Mayne 2015; Moser et al., 2019; Scoones et al., 2020) and leads to prioritising the search for results applicable to any context and time (Taddei, 2013; Fossa Riglos and Hernández, 2015; Vera, 2018). Conversely, the kind of coproduction process we claim here argues that knowledge has a local and historically defined relevance. It implies a permanent disposition to review disciplinary certainties and to consider consensus as provisional. From a methodological point of view, it is possible to identify critical points that challenge any coproduction process based on the premises detailed in this article (Sections 2.1 and 2.2).

The first challenge refers to the construction of “strong” bonds and the establishment of working devices that ensure the long-term nature of these social and cognitive processes (i.e. that participation is not limited to a couple of workshops or focus groups). For instance, the coproduction experience we have illustrated here required sustained interaction over four years and is still ongoing. These two features should be considered by the academic community and governance bodies (international, national and local) when coordinating research efforts for adaptation to global change.

The second challenge concerns the relevance of addressing the social structure of power (conflict/affiliation dynamics, inclusion/exclusion, etc.) in the coproduction process. The disposition to engage in non-instrumental dialogue and reflective involvement must be at the service of promoting communication between interlocutors with heterogeneous interests and knowledge. Therefore, participation cannot be limited to a couple of workshops or focus groups, but through reflective involvement, the workspace becomes an instance of learning. This critical reflexivity on the coproduction dynamics is based on an

engagement structure (Bovafird & Loeffler, 2012) that values both convergences and differences. To achieve this disposition, multiple ethnographic devices (Section 2.3) are needed to cast light on the power dynamics and establish a space for collaborative interaction where a common thread or common issue may be co-defined to develop non-instrumental dialogue. In the case presented in Section 3, this process entailed the acknowledgement by all actors that climate is a socially relevant problem and that it is possible to develop community-based monitoring and adaptation strategies. During this process, listening should include agreements and disagreements, the former generally being the most useful for expanding prior knowledge.

The last challenge we identified relates to the multi-situated nature of the process of coproduction of socially relevant knowledge. On the one hand, the complexity of the problems addressed in these processes requires a wide variety of expertise, distributed across different territories, sectors and disciplines. Methodologically, this implies combining face-to-face collaboration with remote interaction modalities, supported by new communication and information technologies and the collaborative dynamics of virtual platforms (such as Slack, Whatsapp, Zoom, Skype, etc.). The introduction of these technologies opens up a new line of reflection on their material and symbolic conditions and their usage implications for the different categories of actors who participate (or could participate) in the coproduction process. On the other hand, to foster collective products and knowledge inscription into the local and extra-local thread requires identifying extra-territorial actors and institutions of relevance to the project and analysing synergies and tensions within the actors involved in coproduction.

For all these reasons, the limited logic of “project-based” science is not the most appropriate for deploying the social and cognitive potential that a knowledge coproduction process such as the one proposed above can unfold. According to this logic, projects are funded for two to four years; their plans must indicate the “deliverables” and “milestones” to be achieved and should specify the project stages. Therefore, the international science system management institutions should reconsider their instruments for assessing and funding research, especially if they expect to collaborate to tackle global warming and help societies adapt to the complex and hostile future climate. Lastly, we would like to highlight the importance of sustaining the critical and reflexive capacity of science to shed light on the conditions of engagement in collaborative work and on the role of social asymmetries as an obstacle to establishing a productive dialogue between heterogeneous actors and knowledge.

Author contributions

Valeria Hernández developed the conceptualization of the theoretical and methodological bases of the presented coproduction framework. Carlolina Vera, Valeria Hernández and María Florencia Fossa Ríggos were part of the investigation and data analysis. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript. Valeria Hernández and María Florencia Fossa Ríggos wrote the final document draft, and Carlolina Vera supervised it. Valeria Hernández and María Florencia Fossa Ríggos curated the material and elaborated the tables and figures. María Florencia Fossa Ríggos translated the original draft in Spanish to English.

Declaration of Competing 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.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by Belmont Forum/ANR-15-495 JCL/-0002-01 “CLIMAX” Project. We would like to thank CCC farmers and institutions (INTA AER Las Pálmás, EFA U.E.G.P. N°68, Consorcios de

Servicios Rurales Departamento Bermejo, Mercado Campesino La Leonesa, Instituto Terciario de formación en Agroecología), INTA Centro Regional Chaco-Formosa, Servicio Meteorológico Nacional Argentino as well as colleagues from DIVAR (Dynamics of Atmospheric Variability over South America) and PERYG (Rural Studies and Globalisation Programme). Our tanks also go to the reviewers for suggestions and change recommendations, which were very enriching and stimulating for our reflection. In particular, the request to incorporate a summary of the proposed framework so that other interdisciplinary and intersectoral co-productive collectives could appropriate and update it according to their experience.

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