

How (In)Visible Are the Health Risks of Climate Change?

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We scrutinize the assertion that knowledge gaps around climate-health risks are unjust, and must be addressed, because they hinder evidence-led interventions to protect vulnerable populations. First, we propose a taxonomy of six forms of invisibility which underlie systematic biases in current understanding of these risks in Latin America. These invisibilities should be understood as outcomes of structural imbalances in power and resources, rather than haphazard blind-spots in scientific and state knowledge. Our thesis is that a context-dependent and socially-constructed tension shapes whether the benefits of making vulnerable populations and their risks legible to the state outweigh the costs. To be seen is to be politically counted and receive rights, yet theory and empirical evidence demonstrate the perils of visibility to people at the margins. Finally, we conceptualize climate change as an 'open moment' of political rupture, and propose strategies to enable the marginalized to reach for greater power.