

**FALLING  
WALLS  
FOUNDATION**

**PLANETARY HEALTH AT THE  
FALLING WALLS ENGAGE HUB MEXICO**

# FOCUS ON PLANETARY HEALTH

On 30 June 2022, in partnership with the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM), Hub participants explored innovative research and practice in Planetary Health at the intersection with Science Engagement. Fourteen **Mexican experts and researchers on Planetary Health** were invited to **share and exchange insights and best practices in their respective fields** through input talks and workgroups.

The objective was to identify gaps and **generate recommendations** on how to reach more impactful engagement both with communities and policy makers.

## 3 keynote talks & 3 thematic workgroups on Planetary Health

- (1) Outreach Experiences
- (2) Public Policies
- (3) Communities



# REGIONAL INSIGHTS ON PLANETARY HEALTH (I)

**Dr. Carlos Faerron**, Associate Director at the Planetary Health Alliance, USA & Director of the InterAmerican Center for Global Health (CISG) in Costa Rica, delivered a keynote on health in the Anthropocene, including:

- The impact of global environmental changes on global health outcomes and diseases and in particular the relevance of eco-social determinants to assess health outcomes within the Planetary Health paradigm.
- The actions of the Planetary Health Alliance in Latin America to foster communication and engagement and empower stakeholders and communities to create convergent action.

You can watch the full talk [here](#).



# REGIONAL INSIGHTS ON PLANETARY HEALTH (II)

**Dr. Sandra Gallo**, Director of Education and Culture for Sustainability in the Secretariat of Environment and Territorial Development of the Government of Jalisco presented the state's climate change strategy:

- Jalisco is the only Mexican state with a multilevel governance based on intermunicipal entities who follow an “ecosystem” approach;
- Policies created at the state, subregional and metropolitan levels and in line with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Actions: Mainstreaming of environmental policies in multiple sectors, stakeholder engagement and capacity-building programmes for governmental actor and municipalities, communication towards the public.
- Example: to address wildfires in Jalisco, the government successfully trained the first brigade of women firefighters in 2019.

You can watch the full talk [here](#).





# (1) PLANETARY HEALTH & OUTREACH EXPERIENCES

with

- **Dr. Ana Carolina Robles Salvador**, Coordinator of Studies for the Bachelor's Degree in Digital Art and Communication, UAM Lerma
- **Dr. Abigail Martínez Mendoza**, Research Professor in Public Policy in the Department of Social Processes, UAM Lerma
- **Dr. Jazmín Deneb Ortigosa Gutiérrez**, Social Communication Coordinator at the National Laboratory for Coastal Resilience

## Discussion results

- From the prevention of natural disasters to the management of natural resources and ocean protection, **a key question is: How to build a relationship between science and society?**
- The concept of “hydro-social cycle” captures the connection between communities and how **environmental cycles are always co-constructed by the social;**
- Every research and project relating to Planetary Health has to be **transdisciplinary;**
- Planetary Health cannot be achieved without addressing **social inequalities** in Mexico and on a global level;
- The Mexican education system needs to become **more open and transdisciplinary** to allow people to better grasp complex and systemic challenges;
- **Corruption remains one the main barriers** to sustainable development and the reduction of inequalities in Mexico and on the continent.

## (2) PLANETARY HEALTH & PUBLIC POLICIES

with

- **Dr. Rodrigo Rosales González**, Research Professor in Sociocomplexity in the Division of Social Sciences and Humanities, UAM Lerma
- **Dr. Alejandra García Franco**, Coordinator of the Bachelor's Degree in Biological Engineering in the Division of Natural Sciences and Engineering, UAM Cuajimalpa
- **Dr. Ignacio López Moreno**, Professor in the Department of Social Processes, UAM Lerma
- **Dr. María del Rocío López Vargas**, Research Assistant in the Department of Educational Mathematics at the Centre of Research and Advanced Studies at the National Polytechnical Institute (CINVESTAV-IPN)

### Discussion results

- Initial question: Is it possible to plan public policies on Planetary Health? Public policies are based **on the principle of contingency** and have to deal with **uncertainty of the outcomes**;
- To achieve this, there is an urgent need to incorporate **flexible methods in policy-making** which take into account different communities, contexts and realities;
- **Responsibility should be taken at every level**, from academics, to educators, policy makers, enterprises and science communicators;
- **Academia needs to become the bridge between communities and policy-makers**, and existing successful examples need to be replicated elsewhere;
- Involving teachers and schools with academic programs that allow **critical thinking** and develop programs around **local problematics**;
- Science has historically served to legitimize colonial dominion in Mexico. There needs to be **a strong connection between science and culture**. Science education and policies need to account for **cultural diversity as well as indigenous communities, cultural practices and knowledge** (Dr. Alejandra García Franco).
- Students and aspiring Science Engagers need **to be equipped with the right tools in universities**;
- **Learning from disagreement** between different groups and actors is the only way to create better public policies.

# (2\*) PLANETARY HEALTH & PUBLIC POLICIES

**Case study: “Atoyac River Museum: A communication and education strategy for socio-environmental conflicts”, Dr. Maria del Rocio Lopez**

- The Atoyac River, **the 3<sup>rd</sup> most polluted river** in Mexico due to industrial activities, particularly in Tlaxcala & Puebla. For years, the blame was put on communities and authorities denied the issue, despite scientific evidence;
- **Communities were unaware of the river pollution** and the seriousness of problem. They were in need of education to help them understand the issue and support researchers and leaders in pushing for a change;
- Work started in 2019 before the pandemic hit. How to do it? **Communities started to collaborate with researchers. The school curriculum was adapted to include subjects around the river** without major modifications so it could still be taught;
- The team inaugurated **a memorial museum – the Atoyac River Museum** – to bring a historical view on the river and highlight the violations of human rights caused by the pollution;
- The materials created by kids were used and brought to the communities;
- The **Commission of Human Rights** was involved which created a strong pressure on authorities.

More information on the project:

- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14794802.2022.2062781>

# (3) PLANETARY HEALTH & COMMUNITIES

with

- **Dr. Marlene Brito-Millán**, Postdoctoral Researcher at the Ford Foundation based at Northwestern University, USA & at the Autonomous University of Guerrero, Mexico
- **Dr. Ruth Cerezo Mota**, Oceanologist and Climatologist, Researcher at the Institute of Engineering, UNAM, Mexico
- **Dr. Juan López Saucedá**, Researcher in the Department of Informational Systems and Communications, UAM, Mexico
- **Dr. Iván Jalil Antón Carreño Márquez**, Researcher at the Center of Research in Advanced Materials, Autonomous University of Chihuahua, Mexico

## Discussion results

- **Science needs to collaborate with and involve communities**; scientists need to acknowledge their position of power and recognise the right to **autonomy & self-government of communities** and their natural resources;
- The example of the project “**Solidarity Science: Community-Based Management of Water in the State of Guerrero**” from **Dr. Marlene Brito-Millán** provided a great example of a justice approach and participatory action research – or **how science can centre the agency of communities** through horizontal partnerships;
- Communities need to be informed about the natural resources in their territories before engagement can take place, they have the right to take **informed decisions based on scientific information**, without simplification;
- Along with scientific positivism **other knowledge traditions need to be recognised and valued** (incl. pre-Hispanic knowledge, artistic practices, etc) + need to encourage inter & multidisciplinary work;
- Different models of Science Engagement can cohabit together, and different academics can engage in different ways. The key is for **researchers to generate models relevant for the collective** (not for individual agents).





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