



The structure of environmental governance: How public policies connect and partition California's oil and gas policy landscape

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This paper uses oil and gas policies in the state of California to explore how public policies shape the structure of an environmental governance system. The authors apply two analytical approaches. They use the Institutional Grammar to code 22 state oil and gas policies adopted in California between 2007 and 2017. This allows them to identify the actors, issues, and rules associated with oil and gas policymaking during this period. They then organize the 22 policies into groups using the concept of the action situation from the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework.

KEY FINDINGS

- Oil and gas policymaking in California can be understood as a constellation of targeted action situations.
- Policies have the effect of connecting and partitioning different actors, issues, and rules.
- Governance systems that appear coercive are responsive to non-governmental actors.

Targeted Action Situations

Under the IAD framework, *action situations* describe arenas in which different actors are interacting in relation to a particular topic. Using the Institutional Grammar, the authors identify the various actors, issues, and rules that are referenced throughout the 22 state oil and gas policies. They then use this information to sort the policies into five targeted action situations (TAS): Safety Standards, Oil and Gas Development Oversight, General Resource Management, Mineral Rights, and Air and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Regulations. The five targeted action situations correspond to different facets of oil and gas governance in California, and differ in their constituent actors, their focal issue areas, and the kinds of rules that are present.

Connecting and Partitioning Actors, Issues, Rules

The targeted action situations illustrate how policymaking has both a connecting and partitioning effect. California oil and gas policies link together a diverse set of actors, including private companies and experts, alongside government agencies. Accordingly, though coercive at first glance, regulatory systems incorporate non-state actors who play a role in shaping how policies are enacted. At the same time, the existence of the targeted action situations illustrates how policies divide a governance system into discrete domains, each with their own set of actors, issues, and rules.

For more information, please see Heikkila, T., Weible, C. M., Olofsson, K. L., Kagan, J. A., You, J., & Yordy, J. (2021). The structure of environmental governance: How public policies connect and partition California's oil and gas policy landscape. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 284: 112069. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2021.112069>.

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