

Heike Schroeder:

Implementation without ratification: Vertical interplay and the case of California's climate change policy

Institutions are clusters of rights, rules, and decision-making procedures that give rise to social practices, assign roles to participants in these practices, and govern interactions among players of those roles. Institutions operate at all levels of social organization, and interact both horizontally, i.e., at the same level of social organization, and vertically, i.e., across levels of social organization. Interdependence between institutions can be either functional or political in nature. The former occurs when a problem addressed by multiple institutions is linked in biophysical or socioeconomic terms, while the latter arises when actors seek to link institutions deliberately in the interests of pursuing individual or collective goals, often to enhance institutional effectiveness.

The objective of this paper is to examine the nature of interplay between international and regional level institutions. The Bush administration's withdrawal of the United States from the Kyoto Protocol has created a situation where arrangements for reducing greenhouse gas emissions are being developed at both international and regional levels despite reluctance to do so at the national level. Hence, although the United States is unwilling to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, several US states have declared their resolve to meet the country's seven percent unratified reduction commitment individually. The state of California serves as the focus of this research project. While already leading nationally in wind power capacity, the state has recently proposed not only to promote solar energy, but also to build a hydrogen highway along its major freeways.

The paper explores the decision-making competence of state-level governance to implement commitments made at the international level. It investigates the compatibility of the provisions set up under international agreements with the social practices prevailing at the regional level. Finally, it evaluates to what extent the regional level capacity and material resources are sufficient to meet commitments made at the international level.