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Title: The Production of Adaptive Capacity: Power and Climate Adaptation in the Rural Pacific Northwest



Climate change is the defining socio-ecological issue of our era, with impacts defined by not just their biophysical scope, but also by the sociopolitical context of the communities that they effect. In rural contexts, adaptation to these impacts is a complex endeavor that requires an analysis of the intricate relationships among institutions and entities involved in resource management; an analysis of the power dynamics defining these relationships is thus critical to designing just and equitable adaptation policies. Morrison et al (2017), in their analysis of adaptation in polycentric governance systems, describe three types of power that shape adaptation efforts: power by design, pragmatic power, and framing power. My study will examine the role of framing power, the power to interpret knowledge and set norms, in defining adaptation policy in the fire-prone forests of central Oregon. I will employ a mixed methods approach, pairing an analysis of adaptation and forest management policy documents with a set of interviews with key stakeholders in forest management to address the following questions: What entities hold framing power in this context? How is framing power derived, and what mediates this power? And lastly, what are the implications for less powerful actors, such as indigenous tribes, whose values may be sidelined in adaptation processes? This study will shed light on the ways in which informal modes of power shape climate change adaptation in rural, polycentric resource governance contexts. Though polycentricity has been championed in recent years as a more flexible and adaptable alternative to traditional hierarchical modes of governance in managing climate change impacts, too little attention has been paid to the inequitable distribution of power that define polycentric systems, and the ways that less powerful actors, often indigenous communities, may be harmed by adaptation efforts. For adaptation to proceed justly and equitably, understanding the power dynamics that define this policy context is critical.