Öko-Institut e.V.
Institut für angewandte Ökologie
Institute for Applied Ecology

ETH *zürich*

Institute for Spatial and Landscape Development

Keynote

Research needs around politically influenceable factors of climate policy acceptability

Presentation by Dirk Arne Heyen (Öko-Institut), based on a Working Paper with Michael Wicki (ETH Zurich)

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1) Background & motivation

- Climate goals need more ambitious policies incl. push measures

  - Push measures = pricing instruments & regulations

- Proposals for push measures often meet with low public acceptability

  - Acceptability = an affirmative attitude towards a policy proposal

- Public acceptability is important for political action

→ We need to know how to increase the public acceptability of necessary / reasonable push measures

- Current knowledge is insufficient

2) Focus & shortcomings of existing research

- Many studies…

    – investigate factors (e.g., socio-demographics, personal values & beliefs) that explain relatively stable differences in climate policy support between different groups of people (and countries) → hardly politically influenceable

    – compare acceptability of different instruments → does not help much for improving acceptability of a specific instrument

    – investigate people's perceptions of instrument effectiveness and fairness but not what determines these beliefs → unclear lessons for policy-making

- Less research on politically influenceable factors like policy-design or other government-action options, and if so often investigating…

    – multiple factors within a single case → limiting generalization

    – or one kind of factor (and its different manifestations) across cases → leaving its relative importance compared to other factors unclear

3) Research needs on politically influenceable factors

→ more & better research needed on politically influenceable factors:

- Policy instrument: design & packaging

- Temporal aspects: timing, sequencing, and trial runs

- Actor involvement: participation & coalition-building

- Communication: information & framing

3) Research needs on politically influenceable factors

a) Policy instrument: design & packaging

Researching the acceptability effect of…

- different **instrument design** features

  – good knowledge on carbon pricing but little knowledge on other measures

- **ancillary measures** & different **policy packages**

  – some knowledge

- different **justice principles** applied in policy design

  – little knowledge

- **policy learning and diffusion**

  – little knowledge

3) Research needs on politically influenceable factors

b) Time: timing, sequencing, and trial runs

Researching the acceptability effect of…

- the **temporal context (timing)** of the policy proposal

    – limited (empirical) knowledge

- **policy sequencing** (increasing stringency over time)

    – little (no?) knowledge

- announcement and/or execution of **trial runs (policy experiments)**

    – limited (empirical) knowledge

3) Research needs on politically influenceable factors

c) Actor involvement: participation & coalition-building

Researching the acceptability effect of…

- **citizen participation in political decision-making** (acceptability effect among the general public and among those participating)

  – some knowledge (little compared to participation in infrastructure planning)

- **inclusion of experts, stakeholders, social movements, and/or opposition parties** in political decision-making

  – little (empirical) knowledge

- **building advocacy coalitions** in favor of a policy instrument

  – little (empirical) knowledge

3) Research needs on politically influenceable factors

d) Communication: information & framing

Researching the acceptability effect of…

- additional **information** on the policy problem or on the policy measure and its effects

  – mixed evidence

- different **frames** of a policy instrument, and their effect compared to counter-frames

  – mixed evidence on positive (co-benefit) frames

  – little knowledge on counter-frames / argumentative competition

4) How can we (better) study these factors?

- Survey experiments, systematically varying (polit. influenceable) items

- Longitudinal panel surveys (experiments) to study temporal effects

- Mixed method approaches including qualitative case-studies, focus groups and transdisciplinary approaches

- Multi-factor analysis focusing on the causal relation between different factors, their interlinkages as well as their relative importance

- Comparative multi-case & meta studies with different spatial, sectoral or temporal contexts to better understand the contextual boundaries

- Appropriate methods (simulation games perhaps?) to better account for real-world discourses with competing arguments!?

5) Conclusion & discussion

- Concluding remarks:

  - Evidence that governments can positively influence the acceptability of climate policy instruments (to a certain degree), including push measures

  - But we need a more robust evidence base, empirically & methodologically

- Questions for discussion:

  - Do you agree with our assessment of the research status quo?

  - Have we overseen relevant research (strands)?

  - Do you see other/further research needs (issues & methods)?

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