

Publication

Does international pooling of authority affect the perceived legitimacy of global governance?

JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

ID 4493194

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Year 2018

Title Does international pooling of authority affect the perceived legitimacy of global governance?

Journal The Review of International Organizations

Pages / Article-Number 1-23

Recent instances of political backlash against global governance efforts as well as conventional wisdom suggest that there is a link between shifting decision-making authority from the domestic to the global level, on the one hand, and the legitimacy of global governance institutions as perceived by citizens and other stakeholders on the other. We use a population-based survey experiment in Germany and the United States (N = 1600 each) to investigate whether increasing the authority of a global governance institution negatively affects citizens' legitimacy perceptions. The empirical focus is on climate change, a costly and paradigmatic global governance effort. The results show that shifts of political authority, notably changes towards majority decision making at the international level and automatic implementation of international decisions domestically, do not, on average, significantly affect citizens' legitimacy perceptions of global governance institutions. Interestingly, the absence of the presumed negative effect is not due to citizens' incapacity to understand the implications of increasing international authority in the sense that increasing international authority results in a loss of control over climate policy in Germany and the United States. Rather, legitimacy perceptions appear to be shaped by citizens' perceptions of procedural and performance quality of such efforts in more general terms, and not by authority levels per se. Overall, these findings suggest that there could be more room for increasing the authority of global governance institutions, provided this can be done in ways that ascertain high procedural and output performance quality.

Publisher Springer

ISSN/ISBN 1559-744X

edoc-URL <https://edoc.unibas.ch/67967/>

Full Text on edoc Restricted;

Digital Object Identifier DOI 10.1007/s11558-018-9341-4