

Research Proposal: Do emissions affect life satisfaction?

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March 21, 2016

Introduction

Climate change is undoubtedly a global problem, but this fact means it is also, in a way, a classic tragedy of the commons. No country wants to put itself at an economic disadvantage by restricting the use of cheap fossil fuels, deteriorating the “commons” of the Earth’s protective atmosphere. This can make it difficult to get citizens to identify with the problem and take responsibility; people will more likely act when something affects them individually. In this paper we want to explore this aspect: how much do people feel, consciously or unconsciously, the effects of green house gas emissions? More specifically, do emissions affect their reported health, well-being, or life satisfaction? This leads to our general hypothesis:

To examine this question, we will look at data from Germany. Germany is a leader in protecting the environment while also having a long history as an industrial power and coal producer. Its *Energiewende* (energy transition) is considered one of the most ambitious climate policy projects in the world. On the other hand, it has struggled with appropriate incentives, a drop in oil prices (not to mention coal’s continued role as a cheap and reliable fuel) and how to transform the transportation sector. Germany therefore still does emit large amounts of green house gases. We will look at green house gas emissions data by *Bundesland* (federal state) and compare that with life satisfaction data to examine our first hypothesis:

H1: Bundeslaender with higher emissions will have lower reported levels of health, well-being, or life satisfaction.

We will also investigate whether there is a time component to perceptions of life satisfaction and well-being. Using data going back to 1990, and again using emissions as the independent variable of primary interest, our second hypothesis is:

H2: Do emissions play a role in how reported levels of health, well-being, or life satisfaction have changed over time?

Literature Review

Bibliography