

Quant/Qual research possibilities

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1 Project possibilities

1.1 Automated mapping of legislative history

Project goals:

1. Provide a method for algorithmic mapping of final legislation to the initial bill + amendments, based on text similarity measures.
2. Provide easy access to methods to model the content of what is taken out or added to legislation during the political process
3. (Potentially) provide some “importance” measure for various pieces of the text
4. (Potentially) provide a categorization mechanism for breaking out legislation between its “substantive” and “administrative” (that is, what the legislation does, and how it does it) components

This project would require some experimentation with text modeling in R as an input to the design process. We would probably use EU legislation that is easily available online in HTML format.

1.2 Analysis of US public opinion on global warming based on local economic factors

Background: I'd looked at this a few years ago, to little effect. One hypothesis on public opinion and global warming is that it's a function of a locality's dependence on energy or fossil fuels. The crude version of this states that West Virginians (a big coal state) won't vote for emissions reduction, because that would (obviously) cut the market for coal.

There's some work (see Matt Kahn @ UCLA) on linking emissions themselves to public opinion. But that's confounded by various things, like opportunities for efficiency improvements. I'd be interested to see whether we could get enough data on local patterns of energy use and industrial output that we could look at the direct correlation of economic factors with local attitudes on climate change.

See Craig & Kahn, NBER Working Paper no 14963, and here: <http://goo.gl/gwPMr>

Alternative, we may wish to try this out in the EU instead, but the data issues there may be more substantial.

1.3 Analysis of the role of sectoral positioning on climate policy action

Background: Georg Zachmann and I have used Hidalgo's concept of the product space to do some econometric analysis of the origins and evolution of comparative advantage in green energy goods. There's a related question, as to whether people see their interests connected with actual or potential green energy industries and are OK with climate change policy as a result.

I've not thought this through at all, so there are no guarantees that this has any legs to it.