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## The Expert Touch: How Expert Involvement Shapes Citizens' Perceptions of Legitimacy in Democratic Policymaking

Discussion

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# Summary

- ▶ **RQ:** How does the inclusion of independent academic experts in the decision-making process affect the perceived legitimacy of policy decisions, and under what conditions are these legitimacy gains most pronounced?
- ▶ **Method:** Survey experiment
- ▶ **Case:** Flanders

# Strength

- ▶ Very well-structured argument
- ▶ The research gap is convincing
- ▶ Experimental approach straightforward

# Feedback (1)

- ▶ H1: PL of the decision-making process higher when after expert involvement compared to no expert involvement.
  - Definition of legitimacy: you refer to competence, neutrality, or effectiveness, democratic legitimacy and fairness perceptions may result in different hypotheses.
  - Differential treatment effects based on trust in institutions, trust in science, and satisfaction with democracy.
- ▶ H2: Effect of expert involvement on PL stronger for decisions in line with personal views than against personal views.
  - Normatively: expert involvement should increase legitimacy perceptions of previously non-favorable outcomes?
  - Differentiate between legitimacy perceptions and decision acceptance (theoretically)
  - Acceptance non-favorable decision more likely if perceived as “competent, effective, neutral”? Or, in contrary: compromise the trust in experts?

# Feedback (2)

- ▶ Focus on minimalist technocratization
  - Practical relevance: widely applied already, what is the new layer to policymaking here?
    - Are respondents aware of the state of the art?
    - Is this in the end an issue of communication?
  - Empirical design: vagueness of expert roles - respondents imagine varying degrees of influence
  - Include manipulation checks afterwards about what people think the expert advice was, whether politicians followed it, etc.
    - Whether citizens perceive expert advice as meaningful or effective might moderate treatment.

## Feedback (3)

- ▶ Expert type limited to 'independent academic experts': overlooks other crucial forms of technocratization
  - Are findings generalizable to other forms of expertise, and if not, why this specific focus is most relevant for this study?
- ▶ Measure of trust in science, trust in industry experts, etc.:
  - trust in political processes and trust in science highly correlated: Inclusion of these experts may actually not yield acceptance gains, because this is exactly the group that is already satisfied with democracy.
- ▶ Legitimacy Scale:
  - Do you have different expectations concerning the different types of legitimacy? (input, throughput, and output legitimacy)

Thank you!