ACCEPTANCE OF CLIMATE-ORIENTED HOUSING POLICIES – A COMPARISON BETWEEN HOMEOWNERS AND TENANTS IN GERMANY

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Overview

This study assesses the acceptance of eight climate-oriented housing policies among a sample of more than 2,100 households in Germany, focusing on differences in acceptance between homeowners and tenants. The policies were grouped into policy types, and the results indicate that tenants are more likely to accept coercive policies and those with a social dimension compared to homeowners. Homeowners are found to be less likely to accept policies with highly visible costs, and this effect is also present for tenants who rent out properties. We also find that the largest difference in acceptance between homeowners and tenants is for mandatory solar panels for new residential buildings, with tenants showing higher acceptance. Furthermore, using the Attitude-Behavior-Context theory developed by Stern (2000) to examine individual determinants of policy acceptance, we find that left-green-leaning attitudes, social norms, and socioeconomic variables explain the acceptance of climate-oriented housing policies. Overall, the study highlights the importance of taking into account differences in acceptance between homeowners and tenants when designing climate-oriented housing policies.

Method

The acceptance of several climate-oriented housing policies was elicited on a 5-item scale type question, ranging from "not at all" to "completely", resulting in an ordinal variable that takes the values 1 to 5. Following relevant literature, the variable was recoded by combining the lower and upper two categories, resulting in eight ordinal dependent variables that can take 3 categories: (1) rejection, (2) indifference, and (3) acceptance. Ordered probit regression was used to account for the ordinal scale of the dependent variables and correlation in the acceptance of the proposed policies. Several control variables were included in the model, following relevant literature (e.g., Rhodes et al. 2017; Ziegler 2019; Drews and van den Bergh 2016) and using the Attitude-Behavior-Context model to categorize the variables (Stern 2000; Guagnano et al. 1995). Among others, these included variables that are likely to explain some differences between homeowners and tenants in Germany, such as the type of dwelling and ownership of rental properties. A dummy variable indicating whether a respondent is a tenant was included in the model to analyze differences in policy acceptance. Several interaction terms with this dummy variable were added to the model to compare the effect sizes of control variables between homeowners and tenants. Average marginal effects were computed to interpret the size of these effects (Ai and Norton 2003; Karaca-Mandic et al. 2012; Mize 2019).

Results

We find differences in the acceptance of several climate-oriented housing policies of homeowners and tenants. Compared to homeowners, tenants are more likely to accept policies that include a social dimension, such as a ban on empty apartments (+10.6 percentage points) or a ban on renting out non-energy-efficient apartments (+4.5 percentage points). The largest difference between homeowners and tenants is found in the acceptance of a policy that would mandate solar panels for new residential buildings, with tenants being more in favor (+13.4 percentage points). Regarding the effect of property ownership, we find that tenants differ in their acceptance of several policies, depending on whether they are also a landlord or not. No such effect is found for homeowners, whose acceptance of some policies depends on the type of dwelling they live in.

Regarding the determinants of acceptance, we support some findings from previous studies. For example, left-green-leaning attitudes, measured by the NEP score or identification with ecological policy explain the higher

acceptance of many policies. Our results also support earlier results that trust in politics increases policy acceptance, especially for policies that include enforcement, such as bans on certain technologies. Additionally, we find that peer pressure has a positive effect on the acceptance of all the proposed policies.

Conclusions

The goal of the present study was to answer whether tenants and homeowners have different perceptions and therefore different acceptance levels for specific climate-oriented housing policies. The results indicate that there are several differences between the two groups, with homeowners being less accepting of most regulatory policies compared to tenants. Not only do tenants and homeowners differ in their acceptance of specific policies, but we also find differences within these two groups. These differences depend on contextual factors, such as being a landlord or living in a multi- or single-family home. In conclusion, our results indicate that research on climate-oriented housing policies needs to account for differences in policy types as well as differences between tenants and homeowners when studying the acceptance of climate-oriented housing policies. Furthermore, policies that aim to decarbonize residential buildings need to account for both homeowners' and tenants' needs to achieve broad acceptance.

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