



# The effects of transportation priority congruence for political legitimacy

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## ABSTRACT

Congruence, defined as how closely the opinions of politicians match the policy preferences of voters, is a crucial aspect with respect to political legitimacy since a fundamental objective of democracy is to provide citizens with the policies they want. Yet there are not many studies that have analyzed the extent citizens and politicians are congruent when it comes to the field of transport. By studying transportation policy priorities of politicians and citizens concerning the use of (i) restrictive instruments and (ii) public transport instruments, this article contributes to the literature in at least three ways. First, the results illustrate how the priority of transportation policies varies between politicians and citizens. Politicians tend to prioritize restrictive measures more so than citizens whereas citizens tend to prioritize a reduction of public transport fares higher than politicians. Second, the article shows how the priority given transportation policy instruments is highly dependent on political ideology. Politicians representing parties to the center or left tend to prioritize the use of restrictive measures higher than politicians representing conservative parties. Third, the article explores whether there is a relationship between transportation policy congruence and political legitimacy. The article shows that lack of congruence is associated with a reduced level of trust towards local politicians and citizens being less likely to support local regime principles. These are important findings inasmuch as the literature suggests that lack of political support potentially make citizens more likely to call for radical changes, demonstrate and even abstain from the political process altogether.

## 1. Introduction

The role of public and political support is important when studying transportation policy. When it comes to public support, most research has focused on support for various forms of restrictive instruments (Albalade and Bel, 2009; Börjesson et al., 2016; Dill and Weinstein, 2007; Eliasson, 2014; Eliasson and Jonsson, 2011; Hansla et al., 2017; Hårsman and Quigley, 2010; Hysing and Isaksson, 2015; Nixon and Agrawal, 2019; Schuitema and Steg, 2008; Tørnblad et al., 2013), although recently the focus has been expanded by also analyzing public support for various improvements within public transport (Agrawal et al., 2010; Manville and Cummins, 2015; Manville and Levine, 2018; Palm and Handy, 2018). There is also a considerable literature examining the political realm of transportation decision-making, literature varying from how politics influence planning processes (Siemiatycki, 2005; Taylor et al., 2009) to specific studies of institutional, organizational and governance aspects within transportation policy making (Edwards and Mackett, 1996; Hatzopoulou and Miller, 2008; Hull, 2008; Tønnesen et al., 2019). But significantly less research has been carried out with regard to political support. This is especially the case for articles on the norms, values and preferences that affect politicians when it comes to their transportation priorities. Some articles do focus on the role of planners in decision-making (Battista and Manaugh,

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2017) and investigate the relationship between administrators and politicians (Wellman, 2016). Others have studied politicians through qualitative interviews (Linovski et al., 2018). And while there are examples of articles that specifically study politicians' viewpoints on transportation issues (Hay and Trinder, 1991), questions regarding how, and to what extent, transportation policies in general align with citizens wishes, and whether lack of congruence has political implications, have remained unanswered.

This article thereby contributes to filling this knowledge gap by studying the priorities of politicians and citizens respectively in three Norwegian cities with regard to two different kinds of transportation instruments: (i) restrictive instruments and (ii) public transport instruments.<sup>1</sup> It also examines the possible political implications of whether or not lack of congruence is associated with reduced political legitimacy. Congruence is here defined as how closely the opinions of politicians match the policy preferences of voters. This article therefore asks the following straightforward research questions: *To what degree do transportation policies reflect the wishes of the public? And is a possible lack of transportation policy congruence between voters and the elected representatives linked to political legitimacy?* This article consequently answers the call from Marsden and Reardon (2017, p. 249) who argue that fundamental questions regarding for instance political legitimacy have been ignored within transportation research.

Restrictive policy instruments are regarded as particularly relevant when considering that transport is pivotal for reaching goals connected to climate, environment and congestion. Restrictive and often unpopular instruments are commonly seen as a necessity for reducing car use (Deakin et al., 1996; Steinsland et al., 2018) and such instruments are increasingly used in Norwegian cities. It is thus important to study whether implementation of such key instruments might reduce congruence between politicians and citizens. The same applies to public transport instruments. It is often assumed that the combination of both positive and restrictive policy instruments are necessary for increasing both effectiveness and acceptance of public policies (Givoni et al., 2013; May et al., 2006). But few studies have looked specifically at which public transport instruments citizens or politicians would prioritize. This is particularly important in a Norwegian political context since public transport instruments play a key role in both reducing car-use and contributing to increased acceptance of restrictive instruments.

We also have insufficient knowledge regarding how politicians and citizens prioritize restrictive and public transport instruments. Collaboration is often regarded as a necessary and effective strategy. Especially considering that policies increasingly deal with wicked problems that often require a combined effort from different levels of government. The Norwegian government, for instance, has introduced so-called "City-growth agreements" that commit local and regional authorities to a zero-growth target for personal car use. This means that different levels of government are in principle required to pursue certain policies and goals regardless of changes in government after elections. This article therefore analyzes the potential for such arrangements by studying how transportation policy congruence might be dependent on which political parties are in office at the local level. Such an aspect is arguably important as we lack a deeper understanding on how congruence varies between different political ideologies.

The research questions posed are crucial inasmuch as a fundamental objective of democracy is, arguably, to provide the public with the policies they want. Pertinent literature suggests that support for the political system may erode if politicians fail to deliver policies according to citizen expectations. Lack of congruence, it is suggested, may make citizens resentful and feel powerless (Pitkin, 2004) and consequently make it more likely for citizens to call for radical changes or abstain from the political process altogether (Adams et al., 2006; Bernauer and Vatter, 2012; Reher, 2014). The topic of this article is therefore highly relevant in considering why a new political party – 'The peoples' movement against more tolls' – has been established in Norway. The party is expected to win seats in some of the larger cities with tolls in the coming local election. Decisions to increase the level of tolls, moreover, has spurred both demonstrations and in some instances damages of toll installations in several cities.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of the literature on congruence and political legitimacy. Section 3 describes the data, how the variables are operationalized, and the methods used. Section 4 presents the results on congruence and its possible influence on political legitimacy. The last section summarizes and discusses the findings.

## 2. Literature

This section is divided into three different parts. The first part deals with the literature on political legitimacy which constitutes the dependent variables considered. Three dimensions of political legitimacy are highlighted and provides information regarding common operationalizations of these factors. The second part takes up the literature on political representation and congruence. Congruence constitutes the main independent variables and different hypotheses are developed in order to capture the various aspects within the literature. The third part then offers a literature review on how congruence within the transportation sector may vary between political ideologies. The literature in this part is specifically linked to a Norwegian political context.

<sup>1</sup> This article categorizes transportation policy instruments into two categories; restrictive instruments and public transport instruments. Restrictive instruments are defined as instruments intending at reducing car use through charges or by limiting the possibility for using cars. This includes parking charges, tolls and reduction in the number of available parking spaces. These transportation policy instruments can be regarded as coercive since they have consequences for actual behavior as opposed to merely discouraging it (Salamon, 2000). Public transport instruments, on the other hand, are instruments that encourage increased use of public transport either through the use of positive payoffs (reduced fares) or through improved services (higher frequencies or new infrastructure). These alternatives provide positive incentives for the public to choose public transport and thereby (presumably) reduce the number of trips made by car.

	Object of support	Definition	Common operationalization
Most diffuse support ↑ ↓ Most specific support	Political community (5)	Often refers to attachment to the political community being either the nation or community	Feelings of belonging to the community, feelings of pride or identity
	Regime principles (4)	Refer to the democratic values and basic democratic principles for the political system	Agreements on specific values or question about democracy being the preferred form of governance
	Regime performance (3)	Support for how the political system functions in practice	Usually satisfaction with how democracy works in practice
	Regime institutions (2)	Attitudes towards e.g. political parties, government, parliament, police, the legal system	Questions tapping satisfaction with the various institutions
	Political actors (1)	Specific support for politicians or political actors	Evaluations of particular leaders, politicians, governments or presidents

Fig. 1. Conceptualization of political support (based on Norris, 1999:10).

### 2.1. Political legitimacy

Political legitimacy is a multi-dimensional concept (Beetham, 2013). Dalton (1999), for instance, distinguishes between five forms of political support: support for the political community, regime principles, regime performance, regime institutions, and political actors respectively. These dimensions vary on a scale from what is often referred to as specific and diffuse support (Easton, 1965). The various levels and common operationalizations are illustrated in Fig. 1.

This article analyzes the relationship between transportation policy congruence and political legitimacy along three of these dimensions: political actors, regime performance and regime principles.<sup>2</sup> ‘Political actors’ and ‘regime institutions’ represent satisfaction with specific aspects of the political system. These dimensions are typically measured by asking specific questions regarding support for particular leaders, politicians or governments. Theoretically it is argued that experiencing a reduced level of public support for political actors is less critical since elections may provide citizens the opportunity to change who is governing. This, however, assumes that the political system provides citizens with political alternatives making it possible to “throw the rascals out”. ‘Regime performance’ represents something of a middle orientation and is meant to measure how citizens evaluate the way democracy performs (Linde and Ekman, 2003). ‘Satisfaction with democracy’ is commonly used for analyzing regime performance (Aarts and Thomassen, 2008; Curini et al., 2012; Hobolt, 2012; Leiter and Clark, 2015; Norris, 1999; Sanders et al., 2014). Yet despite its popularity, this measure has also received criticism for being highly sensitive to differences across countries and individuals (Canache et al., 2001). ‘Regime principles’ and ‘political community’, by comparison, are conceptualized as more diffuse factors and are meant to capture the support for more general democratic values and principles. Experiencing a loss in these diffuse dimensions is potentially serious since a decline in support on these dimensions might lead the public be more inclined to require constitutional reforms or call for new forms of government (Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2014).

### 2.2. Political representation and policy congruence

A fundamental element of a democratic system is to represent citizens through elected politicians (Dahl, 1989; Pitkin, 1967; Urbinati and Warren, 2008). In its perhaps most straightforward form, political representation means to have citizens perspectives present in the policy process (Dovi, 2006). Citizens who stand “close” to their elected representatives in terms of policy priorities are assumed to have their views better represented (Pitkin 2004). It is consequently also more likely that the implemented policies will align with their wishes. Representation, and thereby policy congruence, is therefore thought to be important for political legitimacy. Many studies have therefore analyzed congruence in different political systems for different policy areas (Andeweg, 2011; Bafumi and Herron, 2010; Belchior, 2010; Costello et al., 2012; Eliasson, 2014; Holmberg, 2011; Lax and Phillips, 2012; Önnudóttir, 2014; Spoon and Klüver, 2014). Few, however, have studied congruence when it comes to transportation policies at the local level.

But representation is a concept that encompasses many different dimensions (Mansbridge, 2003). Politicians are traditionally regarded as the people’s representatives (Downs, 1957; Enelow and Hinich, 1984). From such a perspective it is important to assess the extent to which different segments of society are represented at the political level. This is often referred to as *descriptive representation* (Brandenburg and Johns, 2014). Which segments to focus on, and to what extent they are represented, very much depends on context. According to a normative perspective emphasizing descriptive representation, a representative democracy should ensure that segments based on, for instance, considerations of gender, geographical background or education are all sufficiently present in the political system by being represented in the city council, the government or within particular committees. Thus, within transportation policies, Fiva and Halse (2016) have shown that geographical representation influences regional transportation policies. Such findings illustrate the importance of such a perspective for policy output. Arnesen and Peters (2018) also argue that people are more willing to accept a decision made by a member of a group like themselves, thereby illustrating how descriptive representation potentially influences input legitimacy.

It is also possible to assess various *dyadic relationships* when analyzing representation and congruence. Such studies often investigate how preferences align between either political representatives and their constituencies (Doherty, 2013; Gerber and Lewis,

<sup>2</sup> The two dimensions of ‘political community’ (5) and ‘regime institutions’ (2) are thus not analyzed in this article. This is not, however, highly problematic inasmuch as dimension 1, 3 and 4 are expected to offer a sufficient perspective on political support.

2004; Miller and Stokes, 1963) or preferences between voters and their closest political party (Costello et al., 2012; Spoon and Klüver, 2014; Önnudóttir, 2014). Policies or policy positions are based on within groups comparisons. Reher (2016), however, documents that it is not sufficient that politicians and citizens just align on various policy positions. It is also crucial that they match on the priority of policies. Priority congruence may therefore be argued to be an important aspect when it comes to satisfaction with democracy (ibid).

Politicians are from such a perspective regarded as “delegates” that should act as the constituents’ desire (Pitkin, 1967). But the politician’s concerns are commonly more limited to the good of a part rather than good of all (Rehfeld, 2009) in the sense that politicians are expected to represent the perspectives and priorities of the people voting for them. This means that politicians may mainly adopt and implement restrictive and unpopular instruments so long as their preferences and decisions align with a majority of their voters’ wishes. The same logic applies for citizens voting for parties on the losing side in elections. Hence Kim (2009) among others suggests that satisfaction with democracy increases with higher policy congruence. In a similar manner, those with larger ideological distance to the policy preferences of the nearest major party tend to be less satisfied with how democracy functions (Brandenburg and Johns, 2014).

From a structural perspective, the political system has also been argued to influence political legitimacy. Especially proportional representation systems tend to have higher levels of satisfaction (Lijphart, 1999). It has in Norway been argued in this regard that new parties are able to offer people better representation and channel dissatisfied citizens back to the ballot (Miller and Listhaug, 1990). The possible negative effects on political legitimacy might therefore be offset if they feel their views are represented by the opposition’s parties. Moreover, studies have shown that citizens are more likely to vote when politicians and parties address their concerns. Citizens are less likely to vote if they feel alienated or are indifferent regarding the candidates (Adams et al., 2006; Brody and Page, 1973; Reher, 2014).

*Collective congruence*, also coined *Proportionate Influence vision*, offers a broader perspective (Huber and Powell, 1994). In this case the focus is on how politicians or a government represents the ideology or policy preferences for all citizens. The normative aim is to promote policies that represent the good for all and not just the good of a part. This perspective stresses the importance of taking all citizens’ viewpoints into account in policy making. For this purpose, the median or average voter is often used as reference point for measuring policy congruence since it can be argued to be the policy position being most preferred by citizens.

A contrasting view is to highlight the independent role for politicians. Elected officials might regard themselves as possessing some expertise making them more suited to take decisions on behalf of the citizens. If so, politicians should focus less on public opinion in general and instead function as ‘trustees’ (Canes-Wrone et al., 2001; Pitkin, 1967; Rehfeld, 2009). This perspective is arguably becoming more relevant with the rise of wicked problems and increased interdependence. The relationship between policies and problems is increasingly complex, often demanding multilevel coordination and cooperation. For citizens it is arguably becoming harder to assess roadmaps for future policies. Under these conditions, it can be suggested, politicians should be regarded as more autonomous from their voters and instead rely on their own judgment. This is clearly a relevant perspective within the transportation sector. Most larger urban areas face challenges connected to congestion, emissions and pollution, for example, and these challenges are argued to have severe impact on people’s daily life and health (Seaton et al., 1995). Politicians may therefore face the challenge of implementing policies that are effective in amending such problems, but simultaneously have low public support. From a ‘delegate’ perspective, politicians should only implement policies that have sufficient support, whereas from a ‘trustee’ perspective, politicians should act as an expert in the field and promote policies they see fit regardless of whether or not they match the preferences of (their) voters. According to the latter perspective, lack of congruence is less serious if citizens share the view of politicians as ‘trustees’.

### 2.3. Transportation policy congruence and political ideology

International experiences concerning transportation policies suggest contextual, ideological and political differences when it comes to support for congestion pricing or specific transportation taxes (Eliasson, 2014; Eliasson and Jonsson, 2011; Hårsman and Quigley, 2010; Nixon and Agrawal, 2019). In the Norwegian political context, political parties to the center and left tend to be more positive towards *restrictive instruments* compared to political parties to the right. Previous studies have also showed that public support for restrictive instruments varies by political ideology, beliefs about the effects of restrictive instruments, and how affected individuals are by the restrictive instruments in question (Eliasson and Jonsson, 2011).

*Public transport priorities* can likewise be highly political (Taylor and Morris, 2015), and there are competing political reasons for preferring public transport improvements (Mackett and Edwards, 1998). New infrastructure projects like metro or light rail can for instance be of major symbolic importance for politicians (Enright, 2013; Siemiatycki, 2005) and hence lead to higher prioritization of new metro or light rail lines compared to less prestigious investments in public transport frequencies. Politicians can also prioritize various instruments for improving public transport differently. In Norway, for instance, political parties farther to the right have tended to favor road investments higher as compared to investments in public transport.

Previous research has similarly shown that from a citizens perspective arguments about how public transport may reduce congestion or have positive environmental impacts make citizens more likely to support increased investments in public transport (Manville and Levine, 2018). This is line with the findings from Palm and Handy (2018) and Manville and Cummins (2015) who show that beliefs about the impact of the policies is an important determinant for predicting support for sustainable transport measures. From such a perspective the priorities between politicians and citizens may differ. In principle politicians possess detailed knowledge about the likely effects of various transportation measures, especially when taking into account that each city has produced lengthy assessments regarding possible strategies for reaching a zero-growth target. Politicians thereby may diverge from citizens priorities

since they hold more ‘informed’ knowledge about the effects of each measure.<sup>3</sup> Citizens may for instance on average be less inclined to believe that congestion pricing has the intended effects on traffic or queues (Börjesson et al., 2016). But politicians may also diverge from citizens priorities if they prefer highly symbolic projects compared to, for instance, reducing fares. In general citizens may also benefit more personally from higher frequencies and lower fares which may lead to higher prioritization of these measures.

## 2.4. Hypotheses

Taken together, the literature review leads to the following hypotheses:

*H1: Politicians and citizens to the center or left prioritize restrictive instruments higher than conservative representatives and conservative citizens*

*H2: Politicians and citizens to the center or left prioritize public transport instruments higher than conservative representatives and conservative citizens*

*H3: Lack of policy congruence between the average politician and voter reduces citizens satisfaction with political actors, satisfaction with regime performance and support for regime principles*

*H4: Lack of policy congruence with the nearest party reduces citizens satisfaction with political actors, satisfaction with regime performance and support for regime principles*

*H5: Transportation policy congruence has minimal, if any, impact on any aspects on perceived political legitimacy*

## 3. Policy context

Norway has three levels of government, all having different responsibilities essential for traffic development. Local authorities are responsible for local roads, land-use and parking policies. Regional authorities are responsible for regional roads, public transport and regional planning, while national authorities are responsible for national roads, rail infrastructure and rail services, as well as localization of state enterprises. The state level can in addition overrun local land-use decisions if some of the actors’ object to a certain development. Each level of government is elected every fourth year. Although the same parties are represented at all three levels, the political constellation of governing bodies often differs between local, regional and national levels. Transportation policies are also important for people when casting a vote and transport is a key element for each party while campaigning.

As part of a cross-party agreement regarding climate policies, the Norwegian Parliament has decided that personal car use should not grow. The goal is referred to as the zero-growth goal (ZGG) and is meant to acknowledge that increased transport demand cannot be met by increased car use. In order to reach this goal, a coordinated effort among all levels of government is needed. The national level consequently introduced “City-growth agreements”. These agreements are regarded as one of the most important national strategies within the climate policy domain. It is a voluntary long-term agreement (currently at least six years) based on negotiations between the involved actors. Before starting the negotiations, the national government has required a detailed review regarding likely scenarios for traffic development in the respective urban areas within the next 12 years. The assessment also includes detailed analyses on how to reach the zero-growth goal and the effects of various policy packages. All cities expect significant growth in populations, which consequently requires a combination of policies varying from improving public transport services to implementing restrictive instruments through changes in parking policies and/or increased toll levels for reaching the zero-growth goal.

In order to influence policies at lower levels of government, the national government offers to fund up to 50 percent of infrastructure costs for new public transport investments. In Oslo, the authorities are therefore planning for a new metro line, Bergen is constructing a new light-rail line and Trondheim is introducing a new bus-rapid-transit system. In 2013–14 the modal share for public transport was 26 percent in Oslo, 12 percent in Trondheim and 16 percent in Bergen. The national government is also committed to prioritize funds for national infrastructure projects in a way that promotes the ZGG objectives. In return, the regional and local levels are also expected to follow policies that contribute to reaching the zero-growth goal. The collaboration thus aims at changing policies at all levels of government without formally altering the balance between ministerial and regional/local responsibilities.

The collaboration agreements set clear boundaries for what the actors should prioritize. It is therefore important to analyze whether there are differences in policy congruence related to political ideology since policy congruence is theoretically linked to political legitimacy. It is likely that such arrangements influence local political legitimacy if the collaboration requires local actors to implement policies that are in stark contrast to their own interests. This is a clear possibility inasmuch as the arrangement does not consider changes in governments after elections. An important aspect is therefore to analyze how such arrangements might favor certain political ideologies more than others. The stability of collaboration, moreover, is likely to be reduced if it requires local actors to implement policies that do not represent their preferences.

## 4. Data and measurement

The article combines two datasets for analyzing transportation policy priority congruence between citizens and politicians in the three largest cities in Norway. Citizens in Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim were recruited through a representative web panel during March 2017. A total of 6443 aged 18 years or older were invited to participate. 48% completed the whole survey. The survey was

<sup>3</sup> It is not possible, however, in this article to explain the possible direct or indirect role on how professional expertise may influence transportation priorities.

constructed in two main parts. The first part consisted of general political questions and attitudes, as well as including questions regarding satisfaction with various municipal services. The second part asked specific questions regarding transportation measures. In this manner the questionnaire aimed at minimizing any possible effects of priming. The sample was later weighted for age, gender and geography. Politicians from the same cities were directly targeted to complete a survey with similar questions during March 2018. The response rate for politicians was on average 30 percent. In general, the survey includes representatives from almost all parties represented in the city councils. An approximately equal share of respondents from the Conservative party and the Labor party completed the survey. These two parties constitute the two main blocks in Norwegian politics. But the share of smaller parties is somewhat higher compared to their representation in the city councils.<sup>4</sup> In general, moreover, the parties operate with strong party discipline making it more likely that politicians represent quite adequately the viewpoints from their respective political parties. All-in-all, therefore, the political respondents offer a representative picture of political priorities within transportation policies at the local level.

#### 4.1. Policy priority congruence

As intimated in the literature above, different scholarly traditions have adopted diverse means for operationalizing congruence (Broockman, 2016; Wlezién, 2017). There have therefore been debates regarding how to measure congruence and discussions regarding the implications of the various ways for operationalizing the concept (Jennings and Wlezién, 2015; Wlezién, 2017). In evaluating congruence, researchers need to measure what citizens wants within different policy areas and compare these wishes to preferences on adopted measures. A predominant way of doing this has been to measure the absolute difference in opinion on various issues between the median citizen and that of the relevant level of government or to measure the ideological difference on a left-right scale to the nearest party. Others compare public opinion and party platforms or compare the average positions for the public and politicians. Studies on opinion representation often use questions about the “most important problem” ((Jones and Baumgartner, 2004). Some also analyze respondents’ preferred level of policy through public spending (Jennings and Wlezién, 2015).

This article, however, follows the argument from Reher (2016) and studies how policy priorities align between politicians and citizens. Arguably this is a relevant topic within the transportation sector. It is for instance uncontroversial for both voters and politicians to be positive towards instruments improving the transport system, in particular if they are associated with low costs and do not have any significant negative consequences. But even though they both agree on the positive aspects, they might prioritize them in a different way. Thus, politicians and the public might agree on the direction for certain policies but might order them differently. This is of crucial importance, especially considering that transportation policies in Norway are - to a large degree - decided through multi-level collaborative arrangements. In principle these arrangements set clear restrictions for local and regional policies. How politicians rank policy measures are from such a perspective important.

This article specifically measures priority congruence within transportation by posing the following question to both politicians and citizens:

“Imagine that you can choose freely between different instruments within transportation policies. Please state how you would prioritize (on a four-point scale) the following instruments: reducing the number of parking spaces, increase parking charges, increase level of tolls, increase number of public transport departures, investing in new public transport infrastructure and reducing fares on public transport”.<sup>5</sup>

For measuring how priority congruence influences evaluation of regime performance, respondents were asked

‘How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way in which local democracy works in your municipality’.

In order to analyze support for politicians, respondents answered the following three statements:

“Politicians take into account the inhabitants’ viewpoints”, “Politicians are competent people knowing what they are doing” and “Politicians in my municipality set aside their personal interests when taking political decisions”.

Factor analysis of these three items produced a unidimensional component explaining 80% of the variance in the set of items (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.80).

The last political legitimacy dimension used in this article is based on two questions meant to capture viewpoints on regime principles:

‘The Norwegian democracy could function just as well without local self-government’ and ‘Local self-government is not that important as long as the level of public services is maintained’.

Reliability analysis of these two items yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.73.

## 5. Results

Two different kinds of empirical results are presented. First, in Section 5.1, descriptive data regarding transport priority

<sup>4</sup> See appendix A for an overview of response rates according to party distribution.

<sup>5</sup> This means that it is possible to give same rank to multiple measures.

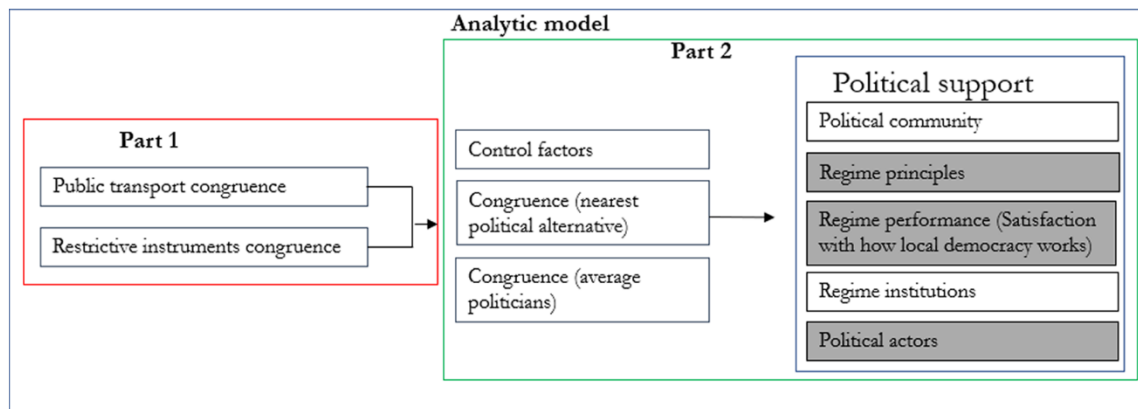


Fig. 2. Analytic model.

congruence are presented. The analyses focuses on hypothesis H1 and H2. In the second part (Section 5.2) analyses using ordinary least square regression focus on the effects of congruence on political legitimacy (hypothesis H3, H4 and H5). Fig. 2 illustrates the analytic models used and the relationship between the different parts.

### 5.1. Descriptive overview of policy priority congruence for restrictive instruments

Fig. 3 shows the average prioritization of *restrictive policy instruments* for both the public and politicians in the three cities.<sup>6</sup> The figure also differentiates the priority of restrictive instruments by comparing those who support a party in power with those supporting the main political alternative. In Oslo the Labour party governs in a coalition with the Socialist Left Party and the Green Party. Bergen is governed by a coalition consisting of the Labour party, the Christian Democratic Party and the Liberal Party. Trondheim includes the same parties as above but also includes the Centre Party. In short, the Labour party governs in coalition with other parties in all three cities. The Conservative Party, but also the Progressive Party, are the two main opposition parties in all three cities. These two parties therefore represent the main plausible political alternative and are consequently the most natural parties for comparing congruence.

The figure illustrates several aspects. First, when it comes to political and regional differences, politicians representing the parties in power tend to prioritize restrictive instruments significantly higher than political representatives from the Conservative and Progress parties. The pattern is the same for all three cities although there are some regional differences. This provides support for hypothesis H1 which posits that politicians representing political parties to the center or left prioritize restrictive instruments higher than conservative representatives.

Moreover, politicians in Oslo – regardless of political party – prioritize restrictive instruments higher than politicians in the other cities. This can be related to Oslo's experience of being significantly larger than Bergen and Trondheim. Oslo faces more severe challenges connected to congestion, population growth, and a need for funding for larger infrastructure projects compared to the other cities. From such a perspective restrictive instruments such as tolls are arguably necessary, especially considering that tolls are pivotal for funding new infrastructure projects. Regional differences between politicians on the winning side of the political spectrum can partly be explained by the different political coalitions. Context is therefore an important factor, and the results may also suggest that possibilities for reaching zero-growth through increased use of restrictive instruments are highly dependent on the political coalition governing at the local level.

Second, citizens attitudes display the same pattern as politicians. Citizens favoring parties in power tend to prioritize restrictive instruments higher than citizens favoring the Conservative or Progress parties. This illustrates at least some congruence between politicians and citizens. But citizens to the center and left nevertheless prioritize restrictive instruments significantly lower than politicians representing the same political side. Priority congruence is from such a perspective lower for parties on the winning side. Fig. 4 illustrates such a point by showing the absolute differences in policy priority between politicians and citizens. The black line represents the median value, while the colored area shows the upper and lower quartile. The black circles show outliers.

Restrictive policy congruence is lowest between politicians and citizens representing winners in Oslo and Trondheim. The median absolute difference between politicians and citizens is over 1 in these two cities, but below 1 in Bergen<sup>7</sup>. Politicians and citizens representing Conservatives or the Progress Party, however, have smaller differences in opinion regarding the priority of restrictive instruments. The median values in Bergen and Trondheim suggest that most of those voters are relatively congruent with politicians. Citizens supporting the Conservatives or Progress Party in Oslo are relatively least congruent among the three cities.

All things considered, the results thereby illustrate the importance of both political ideology and context when it comes to priorities for restrictive instruments. The results may therefore be highly relevant when considering the stability of collaborative governance arrangements requiring implementation of such instruments.

<sup>6</sup> T-tests show whether the differences between the citizens and politicians are significant.

<sup>7</sup> Maximum variance is 3 and minimum variance is 0.

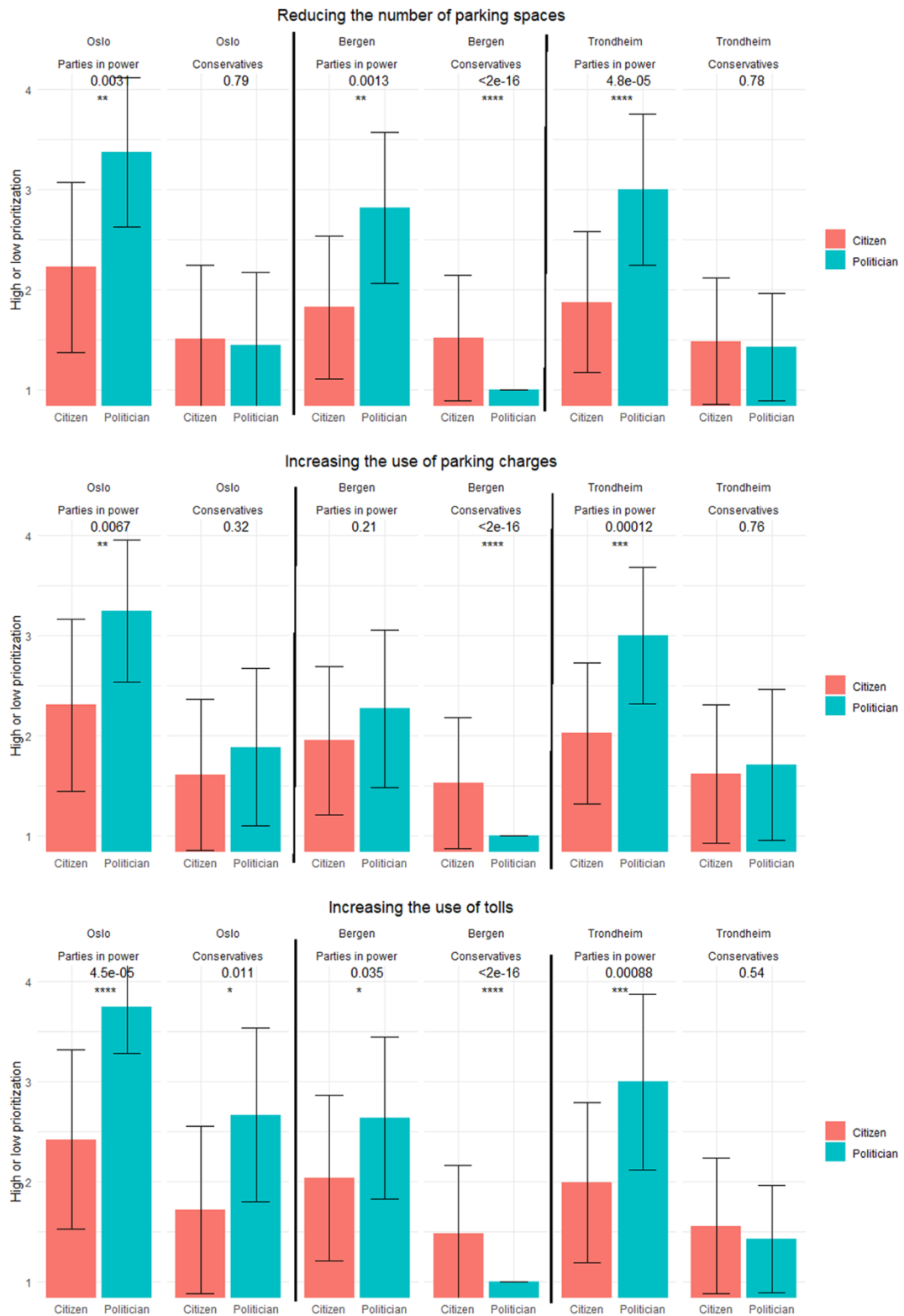


Fig. 3. Prioritization of restrictive instruments (4 = very high priority, 1 = very low priority).



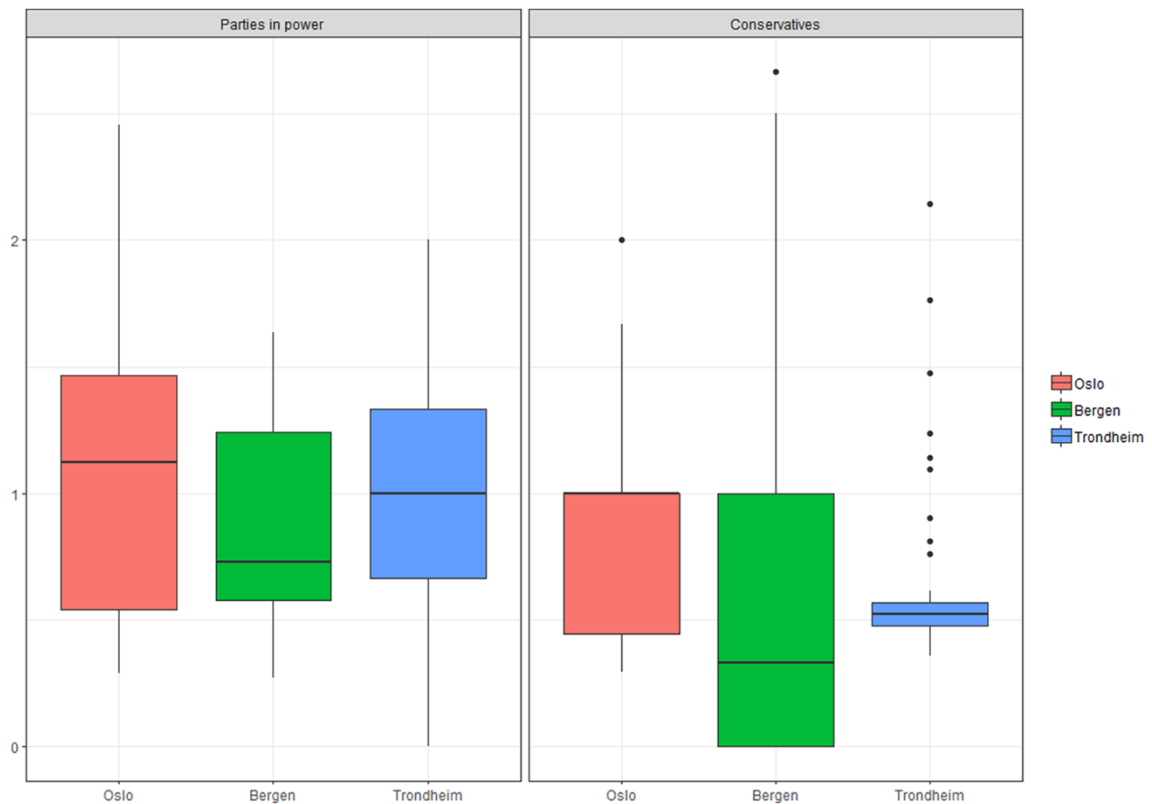


Fig. 4. Boxplot average absolute differences in priority of restrictive instruments.

5.2. Descriptive overview of policy priority congruence for public transport instruments

Fig. 5 shows the average prioritization of public transport instruments for both the public and politicians in the three cities (H2). The figure also differentiates the priority of public transport instruments by comparing those who support a party in power with those supporting the main political alternative.

Fig. 5 shows priority congruence for three public transport policy instruments. The figure illustrates a more mixed picture compared to the results for restrictive instruments. First, both politicians and citizens tend to prioritize public transport measures. For citizens, the median values for all public transport instruments are close to 3.5. This is close to the political median on 3.4. Politicians and citizens are from such a perspective relatively congruent when it comes to public transport instruments.

Second, there are, however, differences when it comes to how these instruments are prioritized. Increased frequencies and reduced public transport fares are the two instruments that are given highest priority by citizens. Politicians, on the other hand, prioritize on average increased frequencies and investments in public transport infrastructure highest. The only exception is politicians representing the Conservatives and Progress Party in Bergen. Citizens prioritize reduced public transport fares on average higher than politicians. Such a finding can be highly relevant when considering that reduced fares have not been a particular priority in Oslo for instance.

Third, there are also regional differences. Citizens supporting Conservatives or the Progress party in Bergen and Trondheim prioritize infrastructure investments for public transport lower than those supporting the parties in power. This can be linked to the various types of infrastructure projects that are being promoted. Locally there has been much debate regarding the effects and needs for investments in a new light rail line in Bergen and a new bus rapid transit system in Trondheim. The construction of a new metro line in Oslo, by comparison, has been quite uncontroversial.

Fourth, when looking at politicians, there are some political differences when it comes to the priority of public transport measures. Politicians representing the parties in power – and thereby representing the center and left – tend to prioritize investments and reduced fares higher than politicians representing the opposition.

All things considered, the results provide support for H2. Politicians and citizens representing the political parties to the center or left tend to prioritize public transport instruments higher than conservative representatives. There are, however, some differences when it comes to the priority of investments in public transport and reduced fares. Fig. 6 illustrates such an aspect by showing the average absolute differences in policy prioritization between citizens and politicians’ prioritizations for all public transport instruments.

Citizens and politicians are significantly more congruent when it comes to the priority of public transport instruments compared

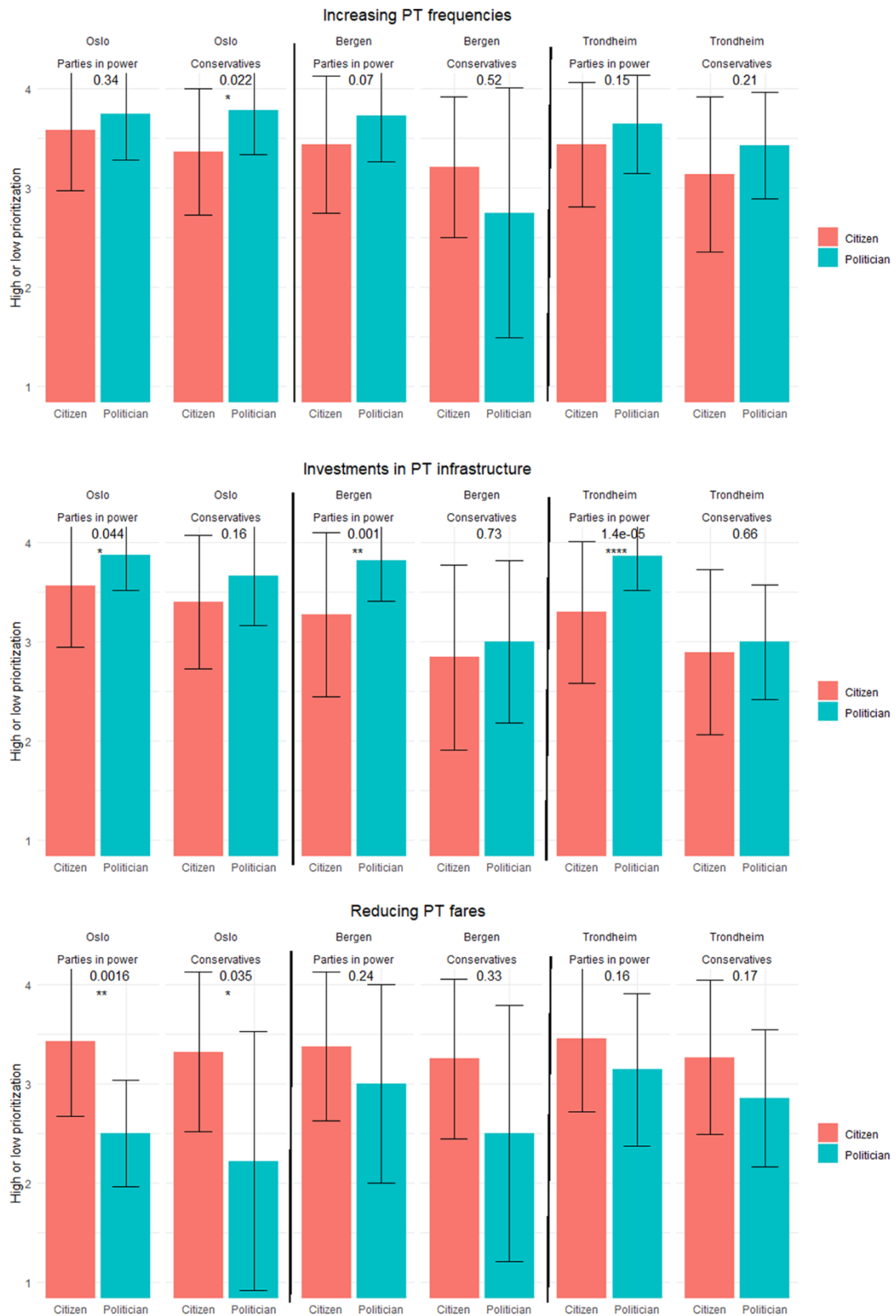


Fig. 5. Prioritization of public transport instruments (4 = very high priority, 1 = very low priority).

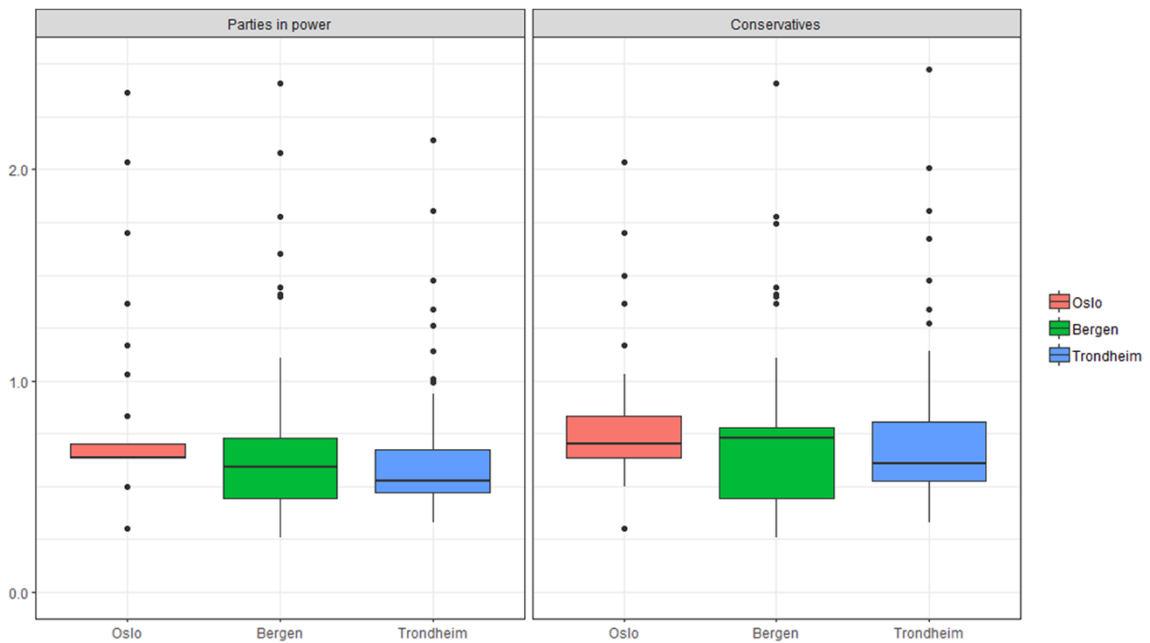


Fig. 6. Boxplot average absolute differences in priority of public transport instruments.

to restrictive instruments. The results therefore illustrate that the stability of collaborative governance arrangements may be stronger when it comes to public transport. Both citizens and politicians tend to prioritize public transport instruments relatively highly. There are also small differences when looking at congruence between parties in power and conservatives between the three cities. But the results also suggest that there are differences between citizens and politicians since the median difference varies between 0.5 and 0.75 for all cities. As explained previously, these differences are in particular related to investments in public transport infrastructure and reduced fares.

### 5.3. Transportation priority congruence and political legitimacy

The previous part illustrated how policy prioritization varies between citizens and politicians for different types of instruments. In this part the focus shifts to whether lack of congruence has any political implications. How the different perspectives for understanding congruence influences political legitimacy (H3, H4, H5) is investigated. Two different indexes of congruence serve as independent variables (congruence with the political average and congruence with the nearest political party). The first variable is an index based on measuring the average absolute difference in transport priority compared to the political average (H3).<sup>8</sup> The second index measures the average absolute difference in transport priority compared to the nearest political alternative (H4).<sup>9</sup> The indexes include all transport instruments thereby considering both restrictive and public transport instruments. Three dimensions of political legitimacy (politicians, satisfaction with local democracy and regime principles) serve as dependent variables. The analysis is carried out by means of ordinary least square regression. See Figs. 1 and 2 for an overview of the conceptualization of political support and the analytic model.

Table 1 presents the empirical analyses of how variations in policy congruence influence the three different aspects of political legitimacy. The analysis also includes an interaction term since it is plausible that the effect of congruence is dependent on whether citizens feel an attachment to the political parties governing the municipality. Previous research has shown that citizens favoring the ‘winning’ side of a political context are more satisfied with how democracy functions. The models control for other factors identified in the literature as being important for influencing political legitimacy (Christiansen, 2018). By means of simplification the model only presents the results for the variables measuring congruence. Appendix B presents the full results for the analytical models including all variables. Although there are some small variations between the models when it comes to significance levels and effect size for the independent variables in appendix B, it is beyond the limits of this article to explain these results in detail.

Looking first at results for model 1 in Table 1, the analysis suggests a (negative) relationship between congruence in transportation policy priorities (for the political average) and satisfaction with politicians. The results suggest, in other words, a pattern where

<sup>8</sup> That is:  $\frac{\sum_{t=1}^T (X_t - \bar{Y}_t)}{T}$  where Y is the political average for prioritization of measure t.

<sup>9</sup> In this respect the article aims at accommodating differences in public opinion. On the one hand, the political average can be understood as a power dimension since parties holding political power locally will typically have more representatives. On the other hand, the second index is meant to capture differences in public opinion by analyzing congruence with the nearest political party.

**Table 1**

Direct standardized effects of congruence on three dimensions of political legitimacy. OLS.

Congruence variables	Model 1 Satisfaction with politicians	Model 2 Satisfaction with local democracy	Model 3 Measures of regime principles
Congruence average politician (H3)	-0.05***	-0.02	-0.15***
Congruence average politician* 'Winner'	0.03	0.05	0.05
Congruence nearest political alternative (H4)	0.00	-0.01	0.03
R <sup>2</sup>	0.54	0.45	0.19
N	2198	2044	1839

increased distance to the political average tends to reduce trust in politicians. This gives support to the idea that with opinions that are less congruent with the political average are less likely to regard politicians as competent and being sensitive for citizens' viewpoints (H3). Although not statistically significant, the results also indicate, however, that the effect of congruence is dependent on whether citizens feel attachment to the political parties governing the municipality. Lack of congruence with the nearest political alternative, on the other hand, does not have an impact upon citizens' evaluations of politicians. Such a finding therefore provides more support for H5 and less support for H4. From this perspective, citizens might tend to regard politicians being close to their viewpoints as 'trustees' while increased political distance to the opposition tends to reduce satisfaction with politicians.

In model 2, the dependent variable is 'satisfaction with local democracy'. The results show a similar pattern although there are some differences compared to model 1. Lack of congruence with the political average reduces satisfaction with (local) democracy by a smaller margin (-0.02) than it does for citizen evaluations of politicians (-0.05). The result, moreover, is not statistically significant. The results, in short, provide only weak support at best for H3 when it comes to the relationship between satisfaction with democracy and congruence. The effect of congruence also tends to be dependent on whether citizens feel an attachment to the political parties governing the municipality (0.05). There is also a weak and negative – but not statistically significant relationship – between lack of congruence to the nearest political alternative and satisfaction with democracy (H4). Taken together, the findings provide more support for H5 since the effect sizes are on average quite small.

Model 3 analyses whether lack of congruence makes citizens more likely to support a political system without local government. The results illustrate a significant and much stronger relationship between transportation priority congruence and support for regime principles than is found for the two other dependent variables (-0.15). Citizens being less aligned with the political average are on average more inclined to agree with statements regarding how the political system could function just as well without local government and that local self-government is not that important. The results thereby give strong support for H3. Even though the coefficient is not significant, model 3 suggests a similar pattern as the other models with respect to supporting parties in power. Lack of congruence with the nearest political alternative does not have an impact upon citizens' evaluations of regime principles.

## 6. Conclusion

This article contributes to our knowledge regarding transportation policies by analyzing the level of congruence between politicians and citizens based on evidence from three Norwegian cities. It thereby offers input for understanding how prioritizations for two different kinds of transportation policies may depend on political ideology. This is particularly relevant considering that various forms of multi-layered collaborative governance arrangements have bloomed in recent years (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). The article also contributes to the literature on political legitimacy and transportation policies by specifically analyzing how transportation policies can influence citizens evaluation of politicians, satisfaction with democracy and regime support.

To summarize, the results first suggest that transportation policy priority congruence influences the legitimacy governments may enjoy. The article thereby highlights both the importance of tool choice (Salamon, 2000) and more specifically the role of transportation policies for political legitimacy. Lack of congruence with the average priorities of (local) politician tends to have the largest effect on citizens' evaluations of politicians and regime principles. But previous analyses have shown that evaluation of politicians also influences citizens' satisfaction with democracy (Christiansen, 2018). The results therefore suggest that congruence may well influence satisfaction with (local) democracy indirectly. These results thus indicate how transportation policies possible play an important role when it comes to political legitimacy at the local level.

The importance of congruence in policy preferences is likely to be particularly important inasmuch as all three cities investigated have planned to increase the level of road tolls and increase the use of restrictive parking policies. This is also relevant when taking into account the political implications of reduced legitimacy. Citizens may well abstain from voting when they feel alienated from the political candidates (Adams et al., 2006; Brody and Page, 1973) or they may push for radical changes in the political system (Bernauer and Vatter, 2012). The findings in this article are in this way central when considering how new parties are emerging ('The peoples' movement against more tolls') at the local level or observing increased levels of demonstrations when it comes to the use of restrictive policy instruments.

It is, however, necessary to offer a nuance to some of the results. For one thing, the findings show how support for regime principles is reduced when citizens feel less congruent with the political average. This may imply that citizens have less confidence in the political system and therefore be more inclined to support radical changes. This does not, however, necessarily mean that citizens will support non-democratic reforms of governance. It is arguably more likely that the results suggest increased support for changes

making the regional or national level more powerful. The analysis, moreover, indicate that the relationship between congruence and political legitimacy is weak. On the one hand this illustrates how transportation is only one of several key policy areas at the local level. On the other hand, it is important to remember how just smaller changes in voter abstention or support for various political parties can potentially have large impact on governmental constellations and policies.

Second, the results show that the political system offers political alternatives supporting both low and high prioritization of both restrictive instruments and public transport instruments. The results furthermore suggest that lack of congruence with the nearest political alternative has little influence on political legitimacy. This might be related to the fact that citizens and politicians agree on whether restrictive or public transport measures should be prioritized high or low. They are consequently arguably ‘on the same side’. If so, then the lack of congruence mainly represents differences in whether politicians and citizens prioritize various instruments very high/low or quite high/low. This is highly relevant when taking into account how the national government has introduced binding agreements with the local and regional level. The agreements require zero-growth in personal car use which consequently makes the use of restrictive instruments a necessary strategy. The findings in this article therefore suggest that the stability of such agreements may be highly dependent on political constellations at the local level. Both citizens and politicians supporting or representing the Conservative and Progress parties tend to have low prioritization of restrictive instruments. This shows the importance of political ideology and can arguably indicate that local elections can be highly important for both the stability of these agreements and for the possibility for reaching the zero-growth goal. A strategy in which local governments governed by Conservatives are ‘forced’ to implement restrictive measures would in this case be likely to have a greater impact on political legitimacy since it would reduce the level of congruence to the nearest political alternative.

Third, within the literature on policy packaging and acceptance, the combination of both positive and restrictive policy instruments are regarded as necessary for increasing effectiveness and acceptance of public policies (Givoni et al., 2013; Justen et al., 2014; May et al., 2006). Politicians thus often combine different forms of positive instruments when introducing congestion pricing or implementing more restrictive parking policies. Some of the most relevant public transport instruments are usually a combination of either increased frequency on public transport, improved public transport services by constructing new infrastructure, or reduced fares. But the literature has not specifically studied how the priorities for such instruments might differ between politicians and citizens. This article shows that citizens and politicians differ in the prioritization of these instruments and the results therefore indicate that it is not irrelevant what kind of positive measures politicians choose to implement in a policy package.

Lastly, this article serves to highlight the importance for planners and decision-makers of taking into account citizens perspectives in policymaking. Arguably designing arenas that allow for informed dialogue between politicians and citizens can contribute both to policy innovation (Sørensen and Torfing, 2019) as well as increased issue knowledge and public support for decisions (Michels, 2011). Such processes may be especially important when citizens and politicians differ in their respective priorities and perceived effects of alternative policy instruments. Including citizens perspectives can therefore potentially be relevant in terms of both producing ‘better’ and more acceptable policies, but also be a strategy that has positive democratic effects in terms of reducing the perception that politicians do not care about what people think.

Further research on these issues are needed. It would be particularly interesting to analyze the preferred level of policies for various transportation instruments. Although this article has made a first contribution in this aspect, further knowledge is needed. Citizens might in general be in favor of having road tolls, for instance, but at the same time think that the existing toll levels are too high or low. It might also be important to study how citizens perceive and are able to evaluate governmental policies. To what extent are citizens able to detect changes in policies and hold politicians accountable for these changes in policies? Another issue to be analyzed further is how congruence may change over time and consider how support for various policies might depend on not only how it is framed, but also who is advocating it. It is also relevant to study how including citizens in policymaking could influence policies and satisfaction with democracy. Lastly, further research could do well in analyzing how congruence on a wide selection of policies may influence political behavior in terms voting and support for various political parties.

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## Appendix A

Response rate and number of political representatives for political parties in Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim.

	Oslo		Bergen		Trondheim	
	Survey	City Council	Survey	City Council	Survey	City Council
Red Party	0%	5%	0%	3%	11%	3%
Socialist Left Party	10%	5%	14%	14%	11%	6%
Labor	20%	34%	33%	38%	19%	41%
Centre Party	0%	0%	5%	1%	4%	3%
Liberals	15%	7%	10%	6%	4%	6%
Greens	10%	8%	10%	3%	15%	7%
Christian People's Party	0%	2%	10%	4%	4%	3%
Conservatives	40%	32%	14%	22%	19%	20%
Progress Party	5%	7%	5%	8%	8%	6%
Other	0%	0%	0%	1%	4%	5%
N	20	67	21	74	26	67
Response rate	30%		28%		39%	

Response rate and party allegiance of residents in Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim

	Oslo	Bergen	Trondheim
	Survey	Survey	Survey
Red Party	10%	5%	3%
Socialist Left Party	8%	8%	13%
Labor	24%	28%	30%
Centre Party	2%	4%	4%
Liberals	6%	4%	5%
Greens	7%	5%	5%
Christian People's Party	2%	3%	2%
Conservatives	27%	25%	22%
Progress Party	6%	7%	4%
Other/none	8%	12%	11%
N	985	1037	796
Response rate for all cities*	48%		

\*6443 were invited to participate in the survey. In the end a total of 3072 answered the whole survey. Response rate is 48 percent.

**Appendix B. . Direct standardized effects on three models for political legitimacy**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
(Intercept)	Politicians 3.37*** (0.04)	SWD 2.74*** (0.04)	Regime principles 2.87*** (0.06)
Age	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.00 (0.02)
Male	-0.04 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.10** (0.03)
Education	0.09*** (0.02)	-0.00 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Bergen	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.07* (0.03)	0.10* (0.04)
Trondheim	-0.11*** (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.06 (0.04)
Reading local newspapers	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.09 * (0.04)
Politically informed (subjectively)	0.05* (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)	0.09** (0.03)
Winner	0.13*** (0.02)	0.10*** (0.03)	0.08* (0.04)
Politicians		0.19*** (0.02)	0.15*** (0.02)
City council represents well	0.27*** (0.02)	0.15*** (0.03)	0.05 (0.04)
What people think			
Satisfied with handling of local challenges	0.26*** (0.01)	0.15*** (0.02)	0.06** (0.02)
Dissatisfied with municipal services	-0.20*** (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.06 (0.04)
Dissatisfied "city-development"	-0.12*** (0.02)	-0.20*** (0.03)	0.14*** (0.04)
Dissatisfied with car accessibility	-0.18*** (0.03)	-0.11*** (0.03)	-0.02 (0.04)

Congruence average politicians	−0.05*** (0.01)	−0.02 (0.02)	−0.15*** (0.02)
Congruence average politician* 'Winner'	0.03 (0.02)	0.05 (0.03)	0.05 (0.04)
Congruence nearest political alternative	0.00 (0.01)	−0.01 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
N	2198	2044	1839
R2	0.54	0.45	0.19

\*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05.

## Appendix C. Supplementary material

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2019.11.005>.

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