

# **Citizen-Elite Congruence? Attitudes towards Local Governance Reforms in Switzerland and Germany**

\*\*\*

Michael A. Strebel\* and Oliver Dlabac\*

\*Department of Political Science, University of Zurich

*Paper presented at the Swiss Political Science Association's Annual Congress in St. Gallen, January 11-12, 2017*

*Work in progress. Please do not cite or circulate without the authors' permission.*

## **Abstract**

Substantive representation, i.e. congruence between citizens' and representatives' issue positions, has become an important topic in scholarly debates and is seen as a normatively desirable feature of representative democracy. Existing empirical research on substantive representation has mostly focused on the quality of national issue representation and scholars investigated the ideological and issue congruence between party electorates and representatives in national parliaments.

For other government levels, however, we have little knowledge about issue congruence between citizens and elites. For example, do citizens differ from their representatives in their assessment of local issues? We contribute to an answer of this question by analyzing on a highly relevant and contentious issue in the local context: metropolitan governance reforms.

To do so, we rely on two different survey data sources. For measuring citizen attitudes towards different local governance reforms, we rely on a survey that was conducted for selected metropolitan areas, amongst others in Germany and Switzerland. For the measurement of elite attitudes, we use data from a survey among European mayors in cities with more than 10'000 inhabitants.

In general, the results suggest that congruence in attitudes on local governance reforms between citizens and mayors is rather scarce. Living in a particular local context, e.g. a poor suburb, does not seem to affect citizens and elites positions in the same way. More importantly, not even citizens and mayors living in the same municipality are generally more congruent in their views than mayors and citizens living in different municipalities. Nonetheless, we find evidence for a cue-effect from local political elites to local citizens with regard to one particular reform: amalgamation. These findings raise important questions with regard to local democratic representation.

## 1. Introduction

An important debate in political theory is on what grounds a representative can or should represent a citizen. The representation of substantive interests and preferences is one possible way by which representatives can represent their constituencies (Pitkin 1968). In order to be successful, this form of representation requires that citizens and representatives are congruent in their preferences – or rather that representatives have knowledge about citizens' interests and can act upon them.

This paper is concerned with this congruence between citizens and political elites from an empirical perspective. Many studies have dealt with the question of the consequences of citizen-elite congruence. An important finding in this respect is, for example, that citizens' satisfaction with democracy is higher when their ideological position is closer to the position of their representative (Ezrow 2011; Reher 2014). Other studies have dealt with the question of how this citizen-elite congruence comes about. They assess whether it is the representatives updating their positions based on available information from the citizenry – as normative theory would have it – or whether citizens rely on the cues offered by elites to form their opinion on political issues (Sanders and Tóka 2013).

What all these studies have in common is that they either analyze the congruence between citizens and representatives at the national – or less frequently the European – level. However, only few studies so far have systematically assessed citizen-elite congruence at the local level, usually limited to single case studies. This is a significant lacuna. A frequently issued claim in research on local democracy states that a major advantage of addressing issues at the local level is that it brings politics closer to the people (Vetter 2007). The “effectiveness of representation” is higher at the local level than at the regional or national one (Dahl and Tufte 1973). Due to the fact that local politics takes place on a smaller scale than a region or nation, the interests of citizens are more homogeneous and it is easier to adequately represent them (Oliver 2000). Based on these claims, we would thus expect a strong congruence between citizens' and elites' attitudes when it comes to local issues.

We assess the validity of these claims by analyzing the congruence between citizens' and representatives' attitudes towards local issues. More specifically, we investigate citizens' and mayors' positions with regard to four local governance reforms in metropolitan areas: amalgamation, inter-municipal cooperation, transfer of tasks to a metropolitan government and upper-tier involvement. Whether to opt for an amalgamation, for the delegation of competences to a metropolitan government or whether to rely on inter-municipal cooperation or upper-tier involvement, has important consequences for the basic organization of local

communities. Depending on the reform, inherited municipal borders disappear, public services and amenities are delivered in different ways, and decision-making is shared with other municipalities or delegated to higher layers of the state.

In other words, these reforms touch the foundations of local government. Therefore, such reforms can be seen as a “most-likely” issue to find congruence: When citizens and elites do not agree on such basic questions of local democracy, there is little reason to believe that they have congruent views on less pivotal issues.

## **2. Citizen-Elite Congruence – Theoretical Expectations**

In this section we posit two different theoretical expectations of what might be the factors determining the congruence of citizens' and elites' attitudes towards metropolitan governance reforms. The first one is based on the idea that congruence simply reflects the conditions and functional needs of a particular locality. Attitudes of both citizens and elites are thus shaped independently from each other by their local context. The second one assumes a direct relationship between citizens and elites. It is assumed that local elites – and political elites in particular – serve as cue-givers to the ordinary citizens. We develop both of these ideas in what follows.

### **Local Context**

A well-established finding in the literature on local democracy and political attitudes is that local context and place matters (Agnew 1987; Gainsborough 2001; Dreier et al. 2014). Citizens residing in distinct local contexts differ in their party choice (Rydgren and Ruth 2011; Sellers et al. 2013) and in their political ideology (Williamson 2008). The most prominent distinction between local contexts that has been frequently analyzed is the one between cities and suburbs. Very roughly speaking, individuals living in cities tend to be more liberal and tend to support parties on the political left, while suburban residents tend to be more conservative and vote for parties on the political right (Gainsborough 2005, Walks 2006, Ströbele 2012, Van Gent et al. 2013).

Whether these differences in political attitudes and ideology are due to compositional or contextual reasons is an issue of intense debate (Walks 2006, Williamson 2008). On the one hand, it is possible that individuals with certain personality traits self-select into certain local contexts. On the other hand, however, the local context itself could be responsible for this clustering of similar political attitudes and ideologies: The local context could have a transformative potential on individuals' political and social orientations.

Gainsborough (2005) offers some evidence that points in this direction. She shows that not only political ideology differs between city and suburban residents, but also the perception of what issues are important, i.e. citizens' problem perception. While suburbanians are more concerned with fiscal and security issues, residents of the centre city indicate social issues as the most important problem. Gainsborough (2005) argues that this is due to citizens day-to-day experiences at their place of residence. In a similar vein, Cutler (2007) argues that the perception of local interests plays an important role in attitude formation. He, for example, finds that individuals residing in a municipality that has a lot of farmers are more supportive

of agrarian policies – even if they themselves in their personal life do not have any connection to farming whatsoever.

These examples show that local context matters for political attitudes more generally. However, we are interested in very specific attitudes, namely attitudes towards local governance reforms. Does local context matter for these attitudes as well? While only a few studies assess the conjunction between local context and citizens' attitudes towards local governance reforms, the answer from this study is a "Yes". In an early study of citizens' support for regionalization in an American county, Kaufman and Greer (1960) find that support for a metropolitan sewer district is higher among citizens residing in more urbanized municipalities. Again for the U.S. case, Steinacker (2004) finds that more urban constituencies vote more favorably on regional policy coordination proposals. But also for Europe cases, significant links between local context conditions and local governance reforms are found. Kübler (2016) finds that institutional reforms – such as amalgamation or the introduction of a metropolitan government – are more favored among Swiss citizens that live in city centre than in the suburbs. Similarly, Eklund (2016) shows that residents of Swedish suburbs are less advocative of local governance reforms than residents in the city centre.

Taken together, these findings suggest that local context also matters for citizens' orientations towards local governance reforms. But does it also matter for the perception of political elites? Here, the evidence is even more scant. In a book chapter on European mayors, Egner and Heinelt (2006) find that the size and the urbanization of a municipality has an impact on mayors' perceptions of local governance reforms and Kübler and Michel (2006) find that these two factors matter for mayors attitudes towards certain aspects of vertical power relations with higher government tiers.

Since we only have scarce empirical results on citizens and elites attitudes towards local governance reforms and local context conditions we can reflect whether it makes sense theoretically to posit such a relationship. Can we for example think of certain types of municipalities for which an amalgamation might make more sense than for others? Indeed. From a functional perspective, amalgamation is seen as a particularly useful reform strategy for small and poor municipalities (cf. Strebel 2016). Citizens and political elites in more wealthy municipalities might, however, be reluctant to merge with a poor municipality, because they fear that they will lose out. In a similar vein, citizens and elites in smaller municipalities might fear mergers because they believe that they lose their decision-making power to their bigger "partner" (Jakobsen and Kjaer 2015). Following the same rationale, citizens and elites in bigger municipalities that form the centre of an agglomeration might just

be indifferent towards whether their municipality merges or not, since they will just incorporate a “junior partner” and will not have to fear that their local community changes considerably. Similar arguments can be made for other local governance reforms. For the same reasons, citizens and elites in certain local contexts might be more reluctant to become part of a more integrated metropolitan area and transfer power to a joint majoritarian institution composed of the municipalities of a certain region. Finally, citizens and elites that live in localities that have lots of resources and/or a substantial leeway over a number of local issues (as typically urban concentrations do) might be more reluctant to accept upper-tier involvement in local political decisions. Based on both previous empirical findings as well as on theoretical considerations, we thus expect that citizens and elites in similar local contexts come to similar conclusion about the desirability of local governance reforms. Our first hypothesis reads as follows:

H1: Elites and citizens that live in similar local contexts have similar problem perceptions and prefer similar solutions with regard to local governance reforms.

### **Elite Cues**

In the previous section we have discussed why we expect that citizens and elites assess the desirability of local government reforms in similar ways when they are exposed to similar local conditions. In this section, we hypothesize a possible direct link between citizens and elites, assuming that local elites, and political elites in particular, can give citizens cues about the extent to which different reforms of local government are desirable.

In normative theories on representation, one possible (and desirable) relationship between citizens and their representatives looks as follows: Representatives should have the best possible knowledge of the interests of their constituencies and should then transform these interests into policies in the best possible way. In other words, they should act on behalf of citizens’ interests and in that way serve as their extended arm (Pitkin 1967). Empirical research has taken up this proposition and numerous studies have tested in how far and under which conditions representatives of a political party or of a certain geographical area share the ideological and issue positions of the citizens who support them (for an overview of this research see Powell 2004, 282-289). One possible reason for finding a correspondence between citizens’ and representatives’ attitudes is, thus, due to representatives adopting the policy preferences of their constituencies.

A second way through which correspondence of preferences between citizens and representatives can come about – and which we argue is at work here – is posited by social psychology scholars. The starting point for these scholars is the question of how citizens’

form their opinion on an issue and how stable these opinions are. In his seminal book *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, Zaller (1992, 6-7) argues that citizens' opinions are a mix of their value predispositions and incoming information (from political actors and journalists) on an issue: When they succeed in connecting (part of) the incoming issue information to their value predispositions, they form more or less stable opinions on the issue. Whether citizens' form clear opinions on an issue that are linked to their value predispositions depends on two important factors. First of all, the extent to which citizens pay attention to this information matters a great deal: Those who pay very close attention are also those who are most influenced by the incoming information in their opinion formation on an issue (Zaller 1992). Second, when there's conflicting information coming in on an issue, the information source is evaluated (for example the political party of the sender) in order to decide whether a piece of information is accepted or rejected for forming an opinion (Zaller 1992, 9).

This model of opinion formation, thus, assumes that citizens basically adopt positions offered to them by elites in general - when an issue is non-controversial - or that they adopt the position of their political party when an issue is controversial: They rely on cues (Arceneaux 2008). Cueing explanations figure prominently in studies dealing with issues and topics that are not very salient to the public or which are abstract and difficult to grasp. The prime example probably is European integration (Hooghe and Marks 2005). Until recently, European integration was not a very salient and politicized topic among mass publics and citizens, thus, have to heavily rely on cues or heuristic short-cuts – in the form of party political positions or their evaluation of their national government, the latter serving as a proxy for the European political system. In general citizens evaluate European integration or European institutions more favorably, when their evaluation of the national government is more favorable or when “their” political party takes a positive stance towards it (cf. Anderson 1998; Steenbergen and Jones 2002).

However, such cueing effects are not only found for topics that are not salient to citizens. In a recent field experiment conducted in a U.S. state, Broockman and Butler (2015) find that citizens adopt the position of legislators on issues such as marijuana legalization, minimum wage or policies towards undocumented immigrants. Even if citizens take a different position on an issue than their legislator (at time  $t-1$ ), they update their position in direction of their legislator (at time  $t$ ), once they learn about his position – even if they didn't know their legislator beforehand. However, in another recent study, Bullock (2011) finds that citizens do not *only* rely on partisan cues for forming an opinion – provided they have access to

information on an issue. If they do, citizens can arrive at views “that are independent of and even contrary to the views of their party leaders” (Bullock 2011, 512).

What does this mean for our question on the correspondence between citizens and elites attitudes on local government reforms? If citizens and elites’ attitudes from the same municipality correlate, independently of other factors, this can mean two things: (i.) elites representing the views of their constituencies or (ii.) citizens following elites’ cues. We posit that here the latter mechanism is at work.

The reason for this expectation is based on the fact that local government, and local politics in general, are usually not very salient for citizens. If citizens are politically attentive at all, their focus normally is on salient national political issues, but less so on local ones. In most places and times, local politics is not very salient in citizens’ minds. For the case of the United States, Oliver (2012, 185) states that most local governments across the country are “managerial democracies”: They have no clear political cleavage structure and electoral competition is (sometimes) scarce. This means that – frequently – local politics is a non-issue. On the flipside, it is rather difficult to predict when and under which circumstances local politics become salient, since the saliency and politicization of topics is strongly dependent on specific local conditions. Consequently, unlike for national politics, it is more difficult to obtain a steady flow of information on local politics that can be connected to one’s belief system in a systematic way.<sup>1</sup> Local politics can, thus, be seen as a case where informational cues are rather scarce and non-informational cues face little competition (cf. Bullock 2011). One such non-informational cue can be the stance of local incumbents on a local issue. Such cues can be transferred through face-to-face interaction, at local events or through interviews and official communication that is spread by the local media.

The local government reforms that we assess in this paper touch the foundations of local governments. Amalgamation is the most fundamental reform, leading to the dissolution of at least one local government, but also the other three reform types (metropolitan government, inter-municipal cooperation, upper-tier involvement) fundamentally reshuffle the distribution of decision-making competences and formal political power among local governments and beyond. At the same time, however, these issues are rather technical and not always easy to comprehend. This mix of significance and complexity renders the use of elite cues even more likely. Our second hypothesis, thus, reads as follows:

---

<sup>1</sup> Yet, see the study of Christmann et al. (2015) on metropolitan governance and citizens’ legitimacy perceptions for a counter-example. If information on local politics and local government performance is available, it can have a strong influence on citizens’ opinion formation, as demonstrated by James (2011).

H2: Citizens' support for a certain local governance reform is higher when local elites are favorably oriented towards this reform.

### 3. Research Design

In this section, we present the data that we use in this study as well as the operationalization of our core concepts and the methods we use to analyze our hypotheses.

#### Data

For our empirical analysis, we essentially rely on two different data sources, the POLLEADER II-survey and the DemGovCit-survey. Both of these surveys were conducted in the course of the years 2014-2016.

The DemGovCit-Survey is a survey among residents of metropolitan areas in Western Europe. More precisely, in fall 2015, around 5000 citizens in eight metropolitan areas<sup>2</sup> in Switzerland, Germany, France and the UK participated in an online-survey. The survey's aim was to assess citizens' attitudes towards local and metropolitan governance in particular and their views and evaluations of democratic governance more generally. Citizens were sampled from municipalities that belong to the respective metropolitan area (according to Eurostat's definition). Furthermore, the citizens were stratified in order to represent the distribution between the centre city and the surrounding municipalities of each metropolitan area.

The POLLEADER II-survey was conducted within the period of 2014-2016, addressing all mayors of cities with more than 10'000 inhabitants. The average return rate was 39 percent and the questionnaire asked questions about perceptions and attitudes of city mayors with regard to transformations of political representation at the local and subnational level.

These two surveys both contain questions on the desirability of local or metropolitan governance reforms. Combining these two surveys, thus, allows us to assess our hypotheses. We add data on the local context citizens and mayors reside in to the survey data. More precisely, we add a variable that distinguishes municipalities into different types, based on their social and economic conditions. This data comes from the International Metropolitan Observatory (IMO) – a research project devoted to the study of various aspects of metropolitan areas (cf. Sellers et al. 2013, Sellers et al. 2017). Five types of municipalities are identified across all metropolitan areas that are studied by the IMO: (i.) urban concentrations, (ii.) affluent enclaves, (iii.) middle class suburbs, (iv.) low-density suburbs and (v.) poor suburbs. Due to the fact that the target population of the two surveys was quite different (metropolitan areas in one case, municipalities with more than 10'000 inhabitants in the other)

---

<sup>2</sup> Bern, Zurich, Stuttgart, Berlin, Lyon, Paris, London and Birmingham.

and due to low response rates for England and France in the POLLEADER II survey, we can only analyze citizen-mayor congruence for the municipalities of metropolitan areas located in Germany and Switzerland.

For the first hypothesis on the role of the municipal context, we can compare the patterns we find in each of the surveys separately. Yet for the second hypothesis, regarding mayoral cue-effects, we need to match the attitudes of mayors and citizens by city.

### **Operationalization**

To measure congruence in citizens' and mayors' attitudes, we rely on survey items that assess the desirability of local governance reforms. We have data on citizen and mayor attitudes towards four different types of reforms: (i.) amalgamation, (ii.) inter-municipal cooperation, (iii.) metropolitan government, (iv.) upper-tier involvement.

These four types of reforms cover an important part of the institutional "toolbox" that is available for reforms of local and subnational government. Some of these tools are used very frequently – for example inter-municipal cooperation (Hulst and Van Montfort 2007) – while others are less widespread, such as metropolitan government. A reform like amalgamation has a fundamental impact on local government – it leads to the dissolution of at least one autonomous jurisdiction – while introducing another cooperative arrangement is not a very far-reaching reform. We thus have a variety of different reform types that potentially vary in their saliency for the different municipalities.

In the DemGovCit-survey, citizens were asked to assess these four different reforms as potential solutions to problems "that go beyond the boundaries of a single local authority" (see table A.1). They had to rate each of these reforms on a scale from 0 to 10.

In the POLLEADER II-survey, mayors could assign various dimensions of effectiveness to either amalgamation or inter-municipal cooperation – or to none of them (see table A.2). Moreover, they were asked to rate the desirability of creating metropolitan governments and of decentralization on a scale from "highly undesirable" (1) to "highly desirable" (5). To obtain a measure for the desirability of amalgamation and cooperation, we construct an additive index by using the items E30\_SQ001-4. For example, when a mayor indicates that all four dimensions of effectiveness are enhanced when a municipality merges, s/he is assigned the highest value for the desirability of amalgamation, when none of the dimensions is perceived to be enhanced, s/he obtains the lowest value (see table 1). Furthermore, we inverted the "decentralization" item in the POLLEADER-II survey to obtain a measure for the desirability of upper-tier involvement.

**Table 1: Operationalization and Measurement**

Concept	Survey		Transformation
	DemGovCit	POLLEADER II	
Amalgamation	Q21_a (0-10)	E30_SQ001- E30_SQ004 (1, 2, 3)	DGC: Normalized (0-1 scale) POLLEADER II: Additive index (1-4) of transformed four items (0=not ticked amalgamation; 1=ticked amalgamation), normalized (0-1 scale) and dummy variable (3/4 vs. 1/2)
Inter-Municipal Cooperation	Q21_b (0-10)	E30_SQ001- E30_SQ004 (1, 2, 3)	DGC: Normalized (0-1 scale) POLLEADER II: Additive index (1-4) of transformed four items (0=not ticked cooperation; 1=ticked cooperation), normalized (0-1 scale) and dummy variable (3/4 vs. 1/2)
Metropolitan Governments	Q21_c (0-10)	E29_SQ004 (1-5)	DGC: Normalized (0-1 scale); POLLEADER II: Normalized (0-1 scale) and dummy variable (4/5 vs. 1/2/3)
Upper-Tier Involvement	Q21_d (0-10)	E29_SQ001 (1-5)	DGC: Normalized (0-1 scale); POLLEADER II: E29_SQ001*-1+6 (Inverted), normalized (0-1 scale) and dummy variable (4/5 vs. 1/2/3)

Note. ()=Scaling of original item.

## Analysis Strategy

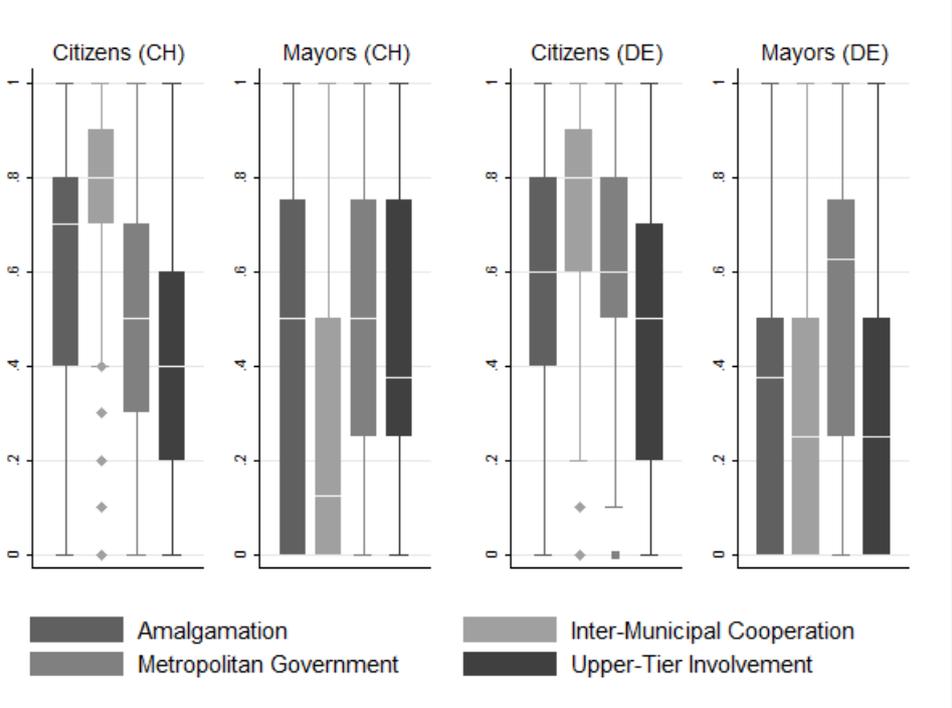
To test our hypotheses, we proceed in two steps with our analysis. In a first step that corresponds to the test of our first hypothesis, we descriptively assess the congruence between citizens and mayors attitudes across different municipality types. Since our first hypotheses is contingent on living in a similar context but not on living in the *same* municipality, this is a viable way to proceed. Admittedly, this analysis strategy does not allow us to indicate levels of uncertainty concerning our conclusions. However, for a first more global assessment of the question, we believe this strategy is sufficient.

For the test of our second hypothesis, we match citizens and mayors from the same municipality. In doing so, we can test whether citizens' support for different local governance reforms is a function of the mayors' attitude towards the same reform. To analyze this claim, we estimate a multi-level linear regression model with citizens as the basic units of analysis that are nested in municipalities (cf. Steenbergen and Jones 2002; Hox 2010). Mayors attitudes are then incorporated in the model as a municipality-level predictor. The data we use to test this relationship comes from different metropolitan areas in Switzerland and Germany. More precisely, we use municipalities from the Bern, Zurich and Stuttgart metropolitan areas in our analysis. This means that we have potential heterogeneity in our data that needs to be accounted for at the metropolitan level. Since it is not feasible to estimate a 3-level multi-level model with only three observations at the highest level, we include dummy variables for these three metropolitan areas and thereby obtain a fixed effects measure for the variation of the dependent variables across metropolitan areas.

### 4. Results

Before we assess our hypotheses in more detail, we assess the congruence between citizens’ and mayors’ attitudes towards local governance reforms more generally. Figure 1 displays boxplots for citizens in the four metropolitan regions Bern, Zurich, Stuttgart and Berlin and for mayors across Switzerland and Germany (the basis for this figure is the data from table 1 below). The overall support among citizens in the two countries looks rather similar: Inter-municipal cooperation is clearly the most favoured local governance reform among citizens in both countries, while upper-tier involvement is the least favoured. Amalgamation and metropolitan government lie somewhere in between. However, metropolitan government is less and amalgamation more favoured among Swiss citizens than among German ones.

**Figure 1: Citizen-Mayor Congruence Overall**



When we look at the mayors’ attitudes, we see a different picture. Here, inter-municipal cooperation figures among the least favoured local governance reforms, together with upper-tier involvement. Swiss mayors consider amalgamation and metropolitan government to be equally favourable, but the variance is much bigger when it comes to amalgamation. This is different for German mayors. They are generally more favourable towards metropolitan government and less favourable when it comes to amalgamation and upper-tier involvement. The overall congruence among citizens and mayors attitudes seems to be rather low. The most striking difference between citizens’ and mayors’ preferences in both countries exists for inter-municipal cooperation. Among mayors, this reform is among the least desirable, while among citizens it clearly is the most desirable one. We should be careful, however, with such

straightforward comparisons due to the different construction of the items. In the case of the mayors, inter-municipal cooperation had to compete with amalgamation, which in average was clearly more preferred among the mayors. For both mayors and citizens, upper-tier involvement is among the less favoured local governance reforms in both countries. Furthermore, both citizens and mayors in Switzerland seem to be rather ambivalent towards the introduction of metropolitan government institutions. This is not the case in Germany, here it is the preferred reform type for mayors, while citizens again seem to be a bit more ambivalent about it.

In sum, judging on the basis of this general descriptive figure, it doesn't seem that there's much congruence between citizens and mayors attitudes concerning local governance reforms. In what follows, we assess whether this still holds when we look at these reform attitudes in different local contexts and when we link mayors' attitudes to individual citizens' attitudes.

### Municipality Types and Congruence

Recall our first hypothesis from section 2. It states that the congruence between mayors and citizens concerning local governance reforms is higher when they are exposed to a similar local context. In this subsection, we thus assess whether citizens and mayors living in the same type of municipality have similar attitudes towards local governance reforms. Table 1 presents an overview of the number of cases by municipality type in each country and for each of the two surveys separately.

**Table 4: DemGovCit and POLLEADER II: Number of Observations by Municipality Type**

Municipality Type	Switzerland		Germany	
	DemGovCit	POLLEADER II <sup>a</sup>	DemGovCit	POLLEADER II <sup>a</sup>
Urban Concentration	376 (35.3)	7 (13.5)	667 (54.5)	11 (9.1)
Affluent Enclaves <sup>b</sup>	141 (13.2)	1 (1.9)	103 (8.4)	19 (15.7)
Middle Class Suburbs	246 (23.1)	15 (28.9)	352 (28.8)	54 (44.6)
Low Density Suburbs	66 (6.2)	2 (3.9)	16 (1.3)	8 (6.6)
Poor Suburbs	236 (22.2)	27 (51.9)	85 (7.0)	29 (24.0)
Total	1065 (100.0)	52 (100.0)	1223 (100.0)	121 (100.0)

*Note.* Column percentages in parentheses. <sup>a</sup>Since there's one observation per municipality for the POLLEADER II-survey, the numbers there indicate the numbers of municipalities. <sup>b</sup>Excluded from analysis in Switzerland.

A look at the column percentages (in parentheses) suggests that some of the municipality types are well-covered in both surveys (middle-class and poor suburbs), some are only well-

covered by one of them (affluent enclaves, urban concentrations to a certain extent), and some are covered only to a marginal extent (low-density suburbs) in both surveys.

Figure 4 and figure 5 display citizen and mayor attitudes by municipality type. The general picture confirms what we have seen in the general assessment above: Citizens and mayors do not seem to have more similar attitudes when they live in the same type of municipality than when they are living in a different one.

This is mainly due to the fact that citizens' attitudes towards local governance reforms do not vary much across different types of municipalities. The hierarchy in the support for the different local governance reform types remains constant across municipality types and countries.<sup>3</sup> What varies sometimes, however, is the extent of support for particular reforms across municipality types. For example, in the Swiss case, upper-tier involvement is most popular in urban concentrations and least popular in low-density suburbs, amalgamation is slightly more popular in urban concentrations and middle-class suburbs, than in low-density and poor suburbs. In the German case, most variation exists with respect to inter-municipal cooperation, which is slightly lower in affluent enclaves, low-density and poor suburbs. However, citizens' support for the other reform types remains more or less constant across municipality types.

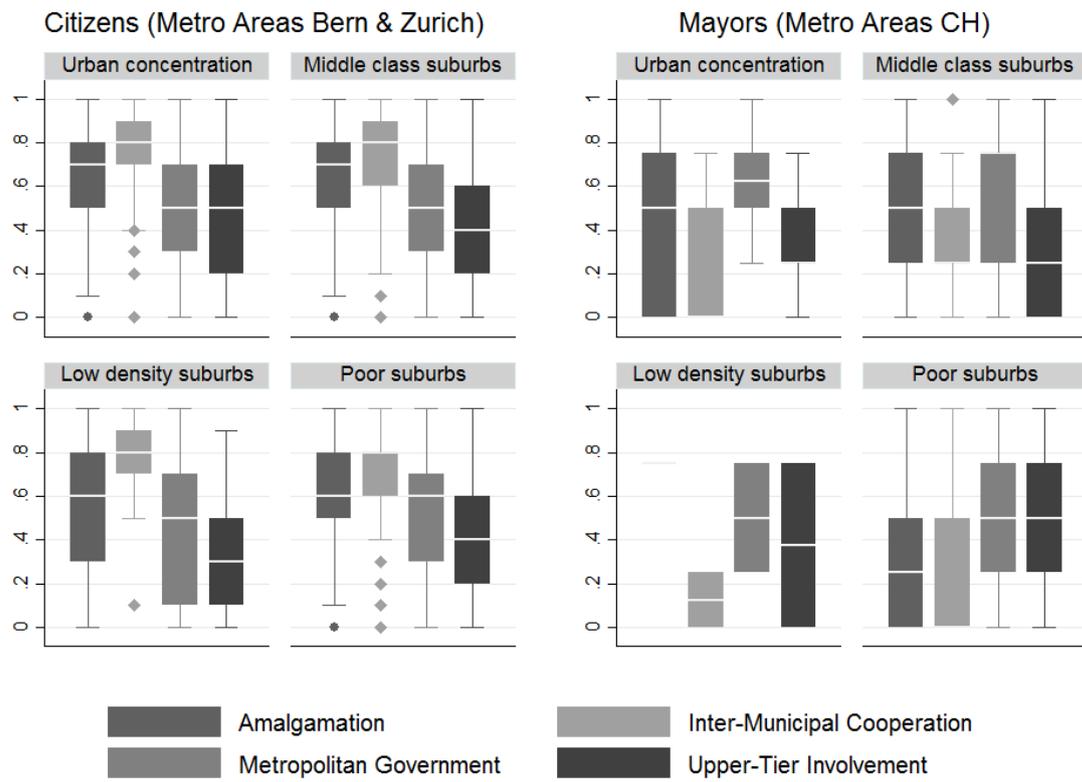
The picture for the mayors looks different. Here we find differences across municipality types both in terms of the hierarchy of preferences as well as in terms of the extent to which particular reforms are supported. While for all municipality types in the Swiss case, inter-municipal cooperation is among the least, and metropolitan government is among the most favoured reform, the assessment of amalgamation differs across municipality types. For urban concentrations, middle-class and low-density suburbs it seems to be feasible, in poor suburbs it seems to be less desirable.

For mayors in four of the five German municipality types, upper-tier involvement is clearly the least favoured reform type – the exception being middle class suburbs, where amalgamation and inter-municipal cooperation are even less desired than upper-tier involvement. Like Swiss mayors in different municipality types, German mayors also differ in terms of their support for amalgamation. But in contrast to the Swiss case, these reforms are perceived to be less desirable in urban concentrations and middle-class suburbs than in affluent enclaves, low-density and poor suburbs.

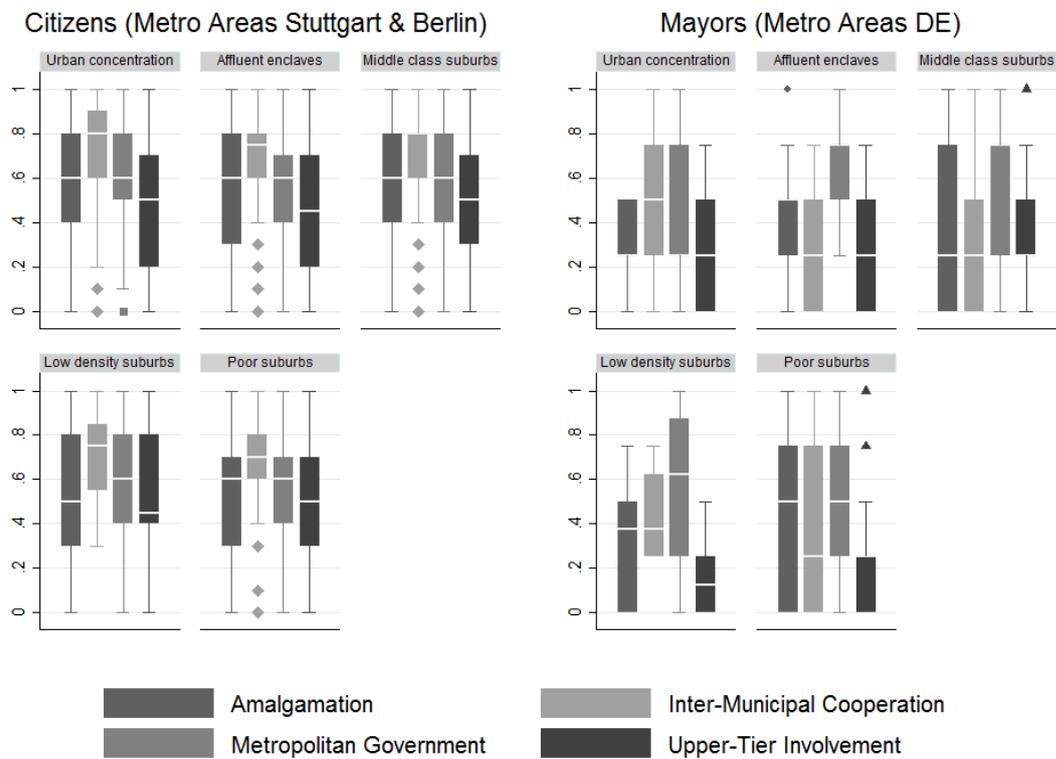
---

<sup>3</sup> Even if in urban concentrations in Switzerland, metropolitan government and upper-tier involvement have the same mean value.

**Figure 4: Citizen-Mayor Congruence by Municipality Type (CH)**



**Figure 5: Citizen-Mayor Congruence by Municipality Type (DE)**



Finally, German mayors across different municipality types seem to agree that local governance reforms that are linked to metropolitan government are more desirable than other reform types.

Congruence between citizens and mayors is not higher when distinguishing different local contexts. However, the degree of *incongruence* is more pronounced for some types of local contexts. Poor suburbs in Switzerland and middle class suburbs in Germany display the lowest congruence between citizens' and mayors' attitudes. In Swiss middle-class suburbs and in German urban concentrations, the divergence is less pronounced. The biggest difference across all municipality types and in both countries exists with respect to inter-municipal cooperation. For citizens, this is seen as the most desirable of all potential reforms, while for mayors, this local governance reform often figures among the less or least desirable reforms.

### Citizens' Attitudes and Mayoral Cues

To test our second hypothesis, that mayoral cues on local governance reforms guide citizens' attitudes, we rely on multi-level linear regression models. Individual citizens constitute the level-1 for the analysis, while the municipalities they live in constitute the level-2. Table 5 presents the number of merged observations by municipality type as in table 4. As one can see, only a fraction of citizens could be matched to a mayor. In total we have mayor and citizen data for 731 observations in 43 municipalities. However, for some of these municipalities, we only have one or two observations at the citizen level. We thus decided to exclude municipalities with less than 5 observations. This leaves us with 698 observations in 30 municipalities. In order to account for inter-regional variation, we incorporate dummy variables for the three regions in our analysis.

**Table 5: Matched Municipalities: Number of Observations by Municipality Type**

Municipality Type	Bern	Zurich	Stuttgart	Total
Urban Concentration	184 (58.6)	167 (54.75)	--	351 (48.0)
Affluent Enclaves <sup>a</sup>	--	7 (2.3)	7 (6.3)	14 (1.9)
Middle Class Suburbs	85 (26.4)	40 (13.1)	99 (88.4)	224 (30.64)
Poor Suburbs	45 (14.2)	91 (29.74)	6 (5.4)	142 (19.4)
Total	314 (100.0)	305 (100.0)	112 (100.0)	731 (100.0)

Note. Column percentages in parentheses. <sup>a</sup>Excluded from analysis.

Before we discuss the results of the regression models, we assess the amount of variance on the three levels. In table 6, the reader finds an overview of the respective numbers.

**Table 6: Variances of Citizen Attitudes on Different Levels**

Dependent Variable	Level		
	Individual	Municipal	Metropolitan
Amalgamation	93.4%	3.3%	3.3%
Inter-municipal Cooperation	96.1%	3.9%	0%
Metropolitan Government	95.7%	3.0%	1.3%
Upper-Tier Involvement	98.0%	2.0%	0%

*Note.* Variances estimated through a random effects ANOVA using the `–mixed–` command in Stata.

For all four local governance reforms, the vast amount of the variance in the dependent variable occurs at the individual level. Only between two and four percent of the variation in the dependent variables occurs at the municipal level. Most probably, this is due to the fact that two of the municipalities in the dataset – the cities of Bern and Zurich – contain almost half of the observations and the numerous citizens in these municipalities spread across the whole range of the scales of the dependent variables. However, the goal of this paper is not to explain as much variance in the dependent variables as possible but to assess the congruence between citizens and mayors attitudes. This aim is not obstructed by the small proportion of variation at the municipal level.

In our multi-level linear models, we include socio-demographic controls for gender, age, education and income, as well as indicators for the net interest in local politics of an individual<sup>4</sup> and for left-right self-placement. We then estimate two different regression models for each of the four dependent variables. The first one only contains the mayors' attitude towards the respective local governance reform as a level-2 predictor. In the second one, we also include the municipality type to assess whether a potential relationship between citizens' and mayors' attitudes still holds, once we control for local context.

Table 7 includes the results for the models without municipality types. Generally, we find very few substantial and significant coefficients. The most important factor seems to be the region an individual resides in. Especially when it comes to attitudes towards amalgamation, living in the Zurich or Stuttgart metropolitan area is associated with significantly lower support for this reform. The effect amounts to a 10 and a 20 percentage point change, respectively.

When we turn to our main variable of interest, we can see that, generally, mayors' attitudes are not associated with citizens' attitudes towards local governance reforms. The coefficients are rather small and insignificant. However, for one local governance reform – amalgamation – things look different.

---

<sup>4</sup> This variable is constructed by subtracting the mean level of political interest for other levels (regional, national and European) from an individual's interest in local politics. This yields a relative measure of interest in local politics.

**Table 7: Multi-level Model I**

	Amalgamation	Inter-Municipal Cooperation	Metropolitan Government	Upper-Tier Involvement
	$\beta$ (p> z )	$\beta$ (p> z )	$\beta$ (p> z )	$\beta$ (p> z )
Female (=1)	<b>-0.090</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	-0.045 (0.051)	-0.008 (0.664)	-0.051 (0.063)
<i>Age (Baseline ≤25)</i>				
26-35	0.018 (0.547)	0.039 (0.560)	-0.025 (0.480)	-0.034 (0.545)
36-45	<b>0.061</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.034)	0.056 (0.377)	-0.023 (0.527)	-0.023 (0.694)
46-55	0.025 (0.569)	0.057 (0.433)	-0.063 (0.052)	-0.085 (0.125)
56-65	0.057 (0.198)	0.056 (0.364)	-0.043 (0.261)	-0.044 (0.480)
>=66	0.062 (0.189)	0.076 (0.210)	-0.111 (0.083)	-0.103 (0.229)
<i>Education (Baseline=Low)</i>				
Medium Education	0.093 (0.181)	0.056 (0.309)	0.007 (0.909)	-0.099 (0.175)
High Education	0.084 (0.199)	0.097 (0.108)	-0.014 (0.828)	-0.124 (0.076)
<i>Income (Baseline=Low)</i>				
Medium Income	<b>0.054</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.041)	<b>0.044</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.015)	-0.004 (0.908)	<b>0.067</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.015)
High Income	<b>0.109</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>0.059</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.013)	0.026 (0.451)	0.025 (0.485)
Net Local Pol. Interest (Std.)	0.001 (0.913)	-0.011 (0.310)	-0.009 (0.164)	<b>-0.044</b> <sup>**</sup> (0.006)
L-R placement (Std.)	0.002 (0.826)	-0.018 (0.169)	-0.021 (0.075)	-0.024 (0.171)
<i>Region (Baseline=Bern)</i>				
Zurich	<b>-0.113</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>-0.057</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.035)	<b>-0.130</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>-0.079</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.016)
Stuttgart	<b>-0.201</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>-0.074</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.030)	-0.018 (0.755)	0.050 (0.403)
<i>Mayor Attitudes</i>				
Amalgamation (=1)	<b>0.055</b> <sup>**</sup> (0.003)			
Cooperation (=1)		-0.035 (0.121)		
Metro Gov. (=1)			0.037 (0.384)	
Upper-Tier Involvement (=1)				0.064 (0.114)
Constant	<b>0.542</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>0.641</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>0.640</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>0.573</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)
Individuals	578	592	435	431
Municipalities	26	26	25	24
Wald-Chi2	561.308	161.497	266.303	144.794
p>Chi2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Log-Lik.	-11.913	171.766	-29.154	-23.974

Note. \* p<.05 \*\* p<.01 \*\*\* p<.001, **Bold**=significant coefficients, Multi-level linear regression models estimated with -mixed- command in Stata.

**Table 8: Multi-level Model II**

	Amalgamation	Inter-Municipal Cooperation	Metropolitan Government	Upper-Tier Involvement
	$\beta$ (p> z )	$\beta$ (p> z )	$\beta$ (p> z )	$\beta$ (p> z )
Female (=1)	<b>-0.091</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>-0.047</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.046)	-0.007 (0.691)	-0.051 (0.066)
<i>Age (Baseline ≤25)</i>				
26-35	0.017 (0.564)	0.038 (0.565)	-0.023 (0.490)	-0.033 (0.556)
36-45	<b>0.060</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.031)	0.051 (0.400)	-0.022 (0.531)	-0.020 (0.723)
46-55	0.023 (0.600)	0.054 (0.448)	-0.060 (0.057)	-0.083 (0.136)
56-65	0.056 (0.207)	0.054 (0.373)	-0.041 (0.265)	-0.043 (0.489)
>=66	0.061 (0.193)	0.074 (0.219)	-0.109 (0.088)	-0.102 (0.232)
<i>Education (Baseline=Low)</i>				
Medium Education	0.091 (0.184)	0.060 (0.281)	0.008 (0.893)	-0.095 (0.201)
High Education	0.083 (0.198)	0.097 (0.109)	-0.012 (0.852)	-0.119 (0.100)
<i>Income (Baseline=Low)</i>				
Medium Income	<b>0.054</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.042)	<b>0.046</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.017)	-0.004 (0.901)	<b>0.066</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.021)
High Income	<b>0.109</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>0.061</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.011)	0.026 (0.448)	0.023 (0.526)
Net Local Pol. Interest (Std.)	0.000 (0.952)	-0.012 (0.280)	-0.008 (0.190)	<b>-0.043</b> <sup>**</sup> (0.007)
L-R placement (Std.)	0.002 (0.842)	-0.015 (0.273)	-0.020 (0.084)	-0.025 (0.172)
<i>Municipality Type (Baseline= Middle-Class Suburbs)</i>				
Urban concentration	-0.007 (0.633)	0.001 (0.945)	0.021 (0.715)	-0.012 (0.649)
Poor suburbs	-0.021 (0.464)	<b>-0.073</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.012)	0.025 (0.539)	0.011 (0.759)
<i>Region (Baseline=Bern)</i>				
Zurich	<b>-0.106</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>-0.033</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>-0.137</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.001)	<b>-0.090</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.020)
Stuttgart	<b>-0.207</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>-0.096</b> <sup>**</sup> (0.003)	-0.007 (0.905)	0.045 (0.443)
<i>Mayor Attitudes</i>				
Amalgamation (=1)	<b>0.048</b> <sup>*</sup> (0.031)			
Cooperation (=1)		-0.010 (0.696)		
Metro Gov. (=1)			0.034 (0.486)	
Upper-Tier Involvement (=1)				0.061 (0.139)
Constant	<b>0.552</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>0.655</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>0.628</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)	<b>0.575</b> <sup>***</sup> (0.000)
Individuals	578	592	435	431
Municipalities	26	26	25	24
Wald-Chi2	1023.227	340.127	252.097	242.658
p>Chi2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

**Table 8: Multi-level Model II**

	Amalgamation	Inter-Municipal Cooperation	Metropolitan Government	Upper-Tier Involvement
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
	(p> z )	(p> z )	(p> z )	(p> z )
Log-Lik.	-11.760	174.819	-29.019	-23.838

Note. \*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001, **Bold**=significant coefficient, Multi-level linear regression models estimated with -mixed- command in Stata.

When a mayor supports this reform a citizen's support for amalgamation increases by 5.5 percentage points, holding everything else constant. This is not a large effect, but it gives some evidence for the possibility of elite cue-effects taking place, serving to increase elite-citizen congruence at least with regard to this one reform.

Does this relationship still hold when we control for the local context that mayors and citizens reside in? Or is this evidence for congruence an artefact of similar local context conditions? Table 8 provides answers to this question. It contains a control for three different types of municipalities.<sup>5</sup> As one can see, none of these municipality types significantly correlates with attitudes towards local governance reforms, with one exception: Compared to citizens in middle-class suburbs, citizens in poor suburbs are 7 percentage points less likely to support inter-municipal cooperation. More importantly, however, the inclusion of the local context indicator does not alter the relationship between mayors' and citizens' attitudes towards amalgamation. Still, citizens living in a municipality where the mayor supports amalgamation reforms are significantly more supportive of this reform as well.

<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, affluent enclaves and low-density suburbs had to be excluded from the analysis, because there were either too little level-1 or level-2 observations or both.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper we assess the congruence in citizens and mayors' attitudes towards local governance reforms. We posit two different hypotheses. First, we expect that both citizens and mayors attitudes are influenced by the local context they reside in and that this influence is similar for both groups. Accordingly, we expect that citizens and elites living in similar local contexts have more congruent views on local governance reforms. Second, we propose that this congruence between citizens' and elites' attitudes comes about because elites give citizens cues about the desirability of different local governance reforms.

Generally, we find very little congruence between citizens' and elites' attitudes towards local governance reforms and our results support neither of the two hypotheses. While the first hypothesis has to be completely discarded, the second one has to be qualified substantively. We find evidence for stronger congruence between citizens' and mayors' residing in the same municipality with respect to amalgamation reforms but not for the other three reforms under scrutiny. This finding makes sense against the backdrop of the idea that amalgamation is the reform that most fundamentally changes local communities and its consequences are probably more easily intelligible for citizens than for the other three reforms.

What does this mean for local democracy? Clearly, our findings contradict the idea that small government is more responsive government and that preference homogeneity among citizens and elites at the local level is stronger than at the national one. But is this also a problem? Not necessarily. This depends on one's understanding of the relationship between representatives and citizens. If one is an advocate of a delegate function of representatives, which should know citizens' interests and act upon them, the answer is yes. However, if one adopts a trustee view of representatives, this incongruence is less problematic. Indeed, it can mean that local representatives take responsibility and act in what they think is in the best interest of their local community – and can get voted out of office if they are wrong (Pitkin 1967).

Our analysis has several limitations. First of all, the question wording of our measures of citizens' and mayors' attitudes is not the same and it is thus questionable if we're really measuring the same constructs. Second, the limited number of municipalities for which we have both observations on the citizen and the elite level raise questions about the robustness of our findings. Finally, we also need to further substantiate the causal mechanism that we posit.

In a next step, we will try to address some of these limitations. First of all, we will test other means of constructing our dependent variables. Since for the mayors the desirability of amalgamation has an inverse relationship with the desirability of inter-municipal cooperation,

one could construct an indicator for both citizens and elites that indicates the net desirability of one or the other reform. Similarly, one can think of creating a measure that assesses the overall status quo orientation of both citizens and elites. While these transformations do not solve the problem of the different questions wording, they represent additional checks that can be used to substantiate our findings. Second, we will discuss the different reforms in more detail. Why do we find evidence for a cueing relationship for amalgamation reforms but not for the other three reform types? One can think of two different explanations. First, this finding could have to do with the reform type itself, i.e. amalgamation reforms might have certain features make cueing effects more likely. Second, this might also be due to the municipalities that we analyze. Was amalgamation a topic of intense public debates in the municipalities that we analyze and the other three reforms weren't? Do we find higher levels of congruence for municipalities where a certain reform was an issue of public debates?

## 6. References

- Agnew, J.A. (1987). *Place and Politics. The Geographical Mediation of State and Society*. Boston: Allen and Unwin.
- Anderson, C.J. (1998). When In Doubt Use Proxies. Attitudes Towards Domestic Politics and Support for European Integration. *Comparative Political Studies*, 31 (5), 569-601.
- Arceneaux, K. (2008). Can Partisan Cues Diminish Democratic Accountability?. *Political Behavior*, 30 (2), 139-160.
- Broockman, D.E., & Butler, D.M. (2015). The Causal Effect of Elite Position-Taking on Voter Attitudes: Field Experiments with Elite Communication. *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Bullock, J.G. (2011). Elite Influence on Public Opinion in an Informed Electorate. *American Political Science Review*, 105 (3), 496-515.
- Christmann, A., Kübler, D., & Marcinkowski, F., Hasler, K., Schemer, C. (2015). New Regionalism - Not Too Complex for the Media Watchdog: Media Reporting and Citizens' Perception of Democratic Legitimacy in Four Metropolitan Areas. *Urban Affairs Review*, 51 (5), 676-707.
- Cutler, F. (2007). Context and Attitude Formation: Social Interaction, Default Information, or Local Interest. *Political Geography*, 26, 575-600.
- Dahl, R.A., & Tufte, E.R. (1974). *Size and Democracy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Dreier, P., Swanstrom, T., & Mollenkopf, J. (2014). *Place Matters. Metropolitcs for the Twenty-First Century*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- Egner, B., & Heinelt, H. (2006). European Mayors and Administrative Reforms. In H. Bäck (Ed.), *The European Mayor. Political Leaders in the Changing Context of Local Democracy* (pp. 335-352), Wiesbaden: VS.
- Eklund, N. (2016). Citizens' Views on Governance in Two Swedish City-Regions. *Journal of Urban Affairs*.
- Ezrow, L., & Xezonakis, G. (2011). Citizen Satisfaction with Democracy and Parties' Policy Offerings. *Comparative Political Studies*, 44 (9), 1152-1178.
- Gainsborough, J.F. (2001). *Fenced Off: The Suburbanization of American Politics*. Washington: Georgetown University Press.
- Gainsborough, J.F. (2005). Voters in Context: Cities, Suburbs and Presidential Vote. *American Politics Research*, 33 (3), 435-461.
- Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2005). Calculation, Community and Cues. *European Union Politics*, 6 (4), 419-443.
- Hox, J.J. (2010). *Multilevel Analysis. Techniques and Applications*. New York: Routledge.
- Hulst, R., & Van Montfort, A. (2007). *Inter-Municipal Cooperation in Europe*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Jakobsen, M., & Kjaer, U. (2015). Political Representation and Geographical Bias in Amalgamated Local Governments. *Local Government Studies*.
- James, O. (2011). Performance Measures and Democracy: Information Effects on Citizens in Field and Laboratory Experiments. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 21, 399-418.
- Kaufman, W.C., & Greer, S. (1960). Voting in a Metropolitan Community: An Application of Social Area Analysis. *Social Forces*, 38 (3), 196-204.
- Kübler, D., & Michel, P. (2006). Mayors in Vertical Power Relations. In H. Bäck (Ed.), *The European Mayor. Political Leaders in the Changing Context of Local Democracy* (pp. 221-244), Wiesbaden: VS.
- Kübler, D. (2016). Citizenship in the Fragmented Metropolis: An Individual-Level Analysis from Switzerland. *Journal of Urban Affairs*.
- Oliver, J.E. (2012). *Local Elections and the Politics of Small-Scale Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pitkin, H.F. (1967). *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Powell, Jr., G.B. (2004). Political Representation in Comparative Perspective. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 7, 273-296.
- Reher, S. (2015). Explaining cross-national variation in the relationship between priority congruence and satisfaction with democracy. *European Journal of Political Research*, 54, 160-181.

- Rydgren, J., & Ruth, P. (2011). Voting for the Radical Right in Swedish Municipalities: Social Marginality and Ethnic Competition?. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 34 (3), 202-225.
- Sanders, D., & Tóka, G. (2013). Is Anyone Listening? Mass and Elite Opinion Cueing in the EU. *Electoral Studies*, 32, 13-25.
- Sellers, J.M., Kübler, D., & Walks, A.R., Walter-Rogg, M. (2013). *The Political Ecology of the Metropolis*. Colchester: ECPR.
- Sellers, J.M., Kübler, D., & Razin, E., Arretche, M. (2017). *Inequality and Governance in the Metropolis. Place Equality Regimes and Fiscal Choices in Eleven Countries*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Steinacker, A. (2004). Metropolitan Governance: Voter Support and State Legislative Prospects. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 34 (2), 69-93.
- Strebel, M.A. (2016). Incented Voluntary Municipal Mergers as a Two-Stage Process: Evidence from the Swiss Canton of Fribourg. *Urban Affairs Review*.
- Ströbele, M.F. (2012). How Do People Vote in Suburbia? Political Preference and Suburbanisation in Europe. *Urban Research & Practice*, 5 (1), 93-115.
- Van Gent, W.P., Jansen, E.F., & Smits, J.H. (2013). Right-wing Radical Populism in City and Suburbs: An Electoral Geography of the Partij Voor de Vrijheid in the Netherlands. *Urban Studies*, 51 (9), 1775-1794.
- Vetter, A. (2007). *Local Politics: A Resource for Democracy in Western Europe? Local Autonomy, Local Integrative Capacity and Citizens' Attitudes towards Politics*. Plymouth: Lexington.
- Walks, A.R. (2006). The Causes of City-Suburban Political Polarization? A Canadian Case Study. *Annals of the Association of the American Geographers*, 96 (2), 390-414.
- Williamson, T. (2008). Sprawl, Spatial Location and Politics. How Ideological Identification Tracks the Built Environment. *American Politics Research*, 36 (6), 903-933.
- Zimmerbauer, K., & Paasi, A. (2013). When Old and New Regionalism Collide: Deinstitutionalization of Regions and Resistance Identity in Municipality Amalgamations. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 30, 31-40.

## 7. Appendix

**Table A.1: Local Governance Reform Proposals: DemGovCit-Survey Question Wording**

Concept	Item
	“In the [X] region, there are problems in certain realms that go beyond the boundaries of a single local authority. There are several options to deal with these problems. Please indicate to what extent you would support the following possible solutions”
Amalgamation	Q21_a: the merger of several local authorities into larger local authority areas.
Inter-Municipal Cooperation	Q21_b: the cooperation of several local authorities in the corresponding problem areas.
Metropolitan Government	Q21_c: handing over the corresponding tasks to [a new political authority] <sup>a</sup> to develop uniform solutions for the whole [X] region.
Upper-Tier Involvement	Q21_d: handing over the corresponding tasks to the [next higher government tier].

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>In regions with existing metropolitan governments, respondents were asked about that specific institution and not about a new one.

**Table A.2: Local Governance Proposals: POLLEADER II-Survey Question Wording**

Concept	Item
Amalgamation vs. Inter-Municipal Cooperation	<p>“Intermunicipal cooperation and amalgamation of municipalities are alternative solutions for rationalizing local government. Which of them are more effective under the following profiles?”</p> <p>[Third option for each profile: There is no real utility in cooperation or amalgamation]</p> <p>E30_SQ001: Professionalization of administrative staff            E30_SQ002: Service quality            E30_SQ003: Cost saving            E30_SQ004: Political participation</p>
Metropolitan Government Decentralisation	<p>“How desirable or undesirable do you consider the following reforms, irrespective of whether they have been introduced in your context?”</p> <p>E29_SQ004: Creating metropolitan government(s)            E29_SQ001: Decentralization of tasks to the municipalities</p>