



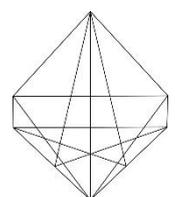
UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

PATTERNS OF LEGITIMACY ON THE FAR RIGHT

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Patterns of Legitimacy on the Far Right

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Abstract

This paper examines variations in the legitimacy of far right initiatives from the point of view of ordinary citizens using survey experimental data. The experiments were fielded in Norway in 2015. Current scholarship assumes substantial and politically consequential variation in the legitimacy of far right political initiatives. Our study contributes new empirical evidence to show that this is indeed the case and advances knowledge about the causes of this variation. Some common arguments are contradicted by our experimental results. We find that legitimacy does *not* depend on whether or not the political party is associated with opposition to immigration and/or Muslims; that legitimacy does *not* depend on whether the far right initiative is ideologically speaking new or old; and that the legitimacy of far right organizations *cannot* be predicted in any straight-forward manner from their size or geographic scope. The experimental results do however strongly support the argument that legitimacy on the far right depends on whether or not the initiative is single-issue, or associated with a larger policy portfolio.

Keywords: far right, legitimacy, voters, survey experiments, Europe, Norway, anti-Islamic, populist radical right.

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Intro

After a period of belonging to the fringes of European politics in the decades following the Second World War, the far right has once again emerged as a vital political force. Far right parties, advancing nativist policies often in populist terms, have been fixtures in the halls of most West European parliaments for some time (Mudde 2007). More recently, there has also been a surge in far right activism, both online and in the streets. Anti-Islamic groups like the English Defence League (EDL) (Goodwin 2013; Busher 2013) in Britain and PEGIDA (*Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident*) in Germany (Geiges, Marg and Walter 2015; Patzelt and Eichardt 2015) have by now cropped up in most European countries (Berntzen and Weisskircher 2016).

These far right initiatives are perceived and treated in a wide variety of ways. Some far right initiatives are shunned and ostracized (e.g., the British National Party) whereas others are included in government (e.g., *Fremskrittspartiet*, the Norwegian Progress Party) or given policy influence (e.g., *Dansk Folkeparti*, the Danish People's Party). On May 23rd 2016 presidential elections in Austria, pitted the far right FPÖ Norbert Hofer against the Greens' Alexander Van der Bellen. In one of the closest run-off elections noted, the far right only lost by 31, 000 votes¹ (Connolly, Oltermann and Henley, 2016). The vote sent tremors through the established political system, with the president of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker warning that "there will be no debate or dialogue with the far-right" (Lamparski, 2016). Such stated refusal to deal with political initiatives on the far right, seen as dangerous by many, is nothing new. We have seen non-cooperation pacts, so-called *cordon sanitaire*, enacted against, e.g.,

¹ The Austrian High Court later ruled that the result was so close that the election needed to be held again. The FPÖ-candidate also lost this election.

Vlaams Belang and the Sweden Democrats and European Union sanctions against Austria when FPÖ was included in government in 1999.

The various negative reactions and sanctions suggest that the «ghost of the Weimar past» haunts liberal democracies in Europe. Since the end of WWII, politicians in Western European democracies have repeatedly expressed concern that the far right is dangerous, warning that democracies can experience ruin from within through elections (Capoccia 2005; Art 2005; Givens and Case 2014). Yet sanctions against the radical right and anti-Islamic groups are controversial and raises concerns about a populist backlash from citizens (Bob 2012). Thus, the views of ordinary citizens on these questions are paramount. Where do they draw the line between legitimate and illegitimate far right initiatives? And to what extent and why do they view certain far right initiatives as more legitimate than others?

Although the scholarship on the contemporary far right assumes that the legitimacy of far right political initiatives varies in the eyes of voters, this has not been examined empirically in a stringent way. To turn the assumption of variation in far right legitimacy into an empirical question, we have devised a novel survey experimental strategy. Our results show that far right legitimacy varies even more than the current literature assumes, and furthermore they show that the variation is not consistent with several of the hypotheses advanced in the literature.

Firstly, we find that citizens perception of far right legitimacy does not depend on whether or not the far right initiative seeks to ideologically brand themselves as the “new” or “old” far right, despite the new anti-Islamic actors’ partial and strategic embrace of certain elements of liberal democracy like women’s rights (Tönberg and Tönberg 2016) and gay rights (Berntzen and Sandberg 2014). Furthermore, citizens’ evaluations of the legitimacy of far right

initiatives does not depend on the size or geographic scope of their organization, at least not in any straight-forward manner.

We do, however, find support for the far right legitimacy hypothesis that assigns causal power to the breadth of the policy portfolio of the far right. Previous research has argued that even though far right initiatives with a more comprehensive platform mobilize most strongly on anti-immigrant sentiments (Ivarsflaten 2008) using similar rhetoric as single-issue initiatives, they use the rest of their portfolio, and often also their more varied legacies, as “reputational shields” against accusations of racism or extremism (e.g., Ivarsflaten 2006b, 1). Stated differently, this hypothesis holds that reputational shields increase the legitimacy of anti-immigrant organizations. Our results are in line with this hypothesis in that they demonstrate that single-issue far right initiatives tend to be perceived by ordinary citizens as less legitimate than far right political initiatives with a comprehensive platform.

The article proceeds as follows. We first discuss major variations among far right initiatives and how this variation is thought to relate to legitimacy, distinguishing between various aspects of ideology and organizational characteristics. This is followed by a discussion of our study design and a brief on our data and survey experimental strategy. We then lay out the main results from the experiments. Finally, we move on to the concluding discussion about the broader implications of our findings.

Explaining citizens’ views on far right political legitimacy

The far right consists of a rich variety of initiatives with different ideologies, histories, and organizations. Any number of these various characteristics of far right could potentially be related to their perceived legitimacy. We begin by addressing the issue of ideology. It has become common in the literature on the far right, to distinguish between the old extreme right

and newer populist radical right ideology (e.g., Ignazi 1992, 2003; Rydgren 2005, 2007; Carter 2005; Golder 2003). Whereas the traditional, or “old” right-wing extremism of the fascists and Nazis was explicitly anti-democratic in combination with a virulent anti-Semitism and racism, the populist radical right ideology which took form during the 1970’s is anti-establishment and favors a “separate but equal” approach to cultures and groups (Rydgren 2005). As a third strand, a newer anti-Islamic ideology stands out in its’ explicit emphasis on Muslims and Islam and ideas of how they threaten national self-determination and democracy. These latter groups often explicitly self-identify as different from the traditional extreme right arguing for example that they are not anti-Semitic (Berntzen and Sandberg, 2014).

It is possible, and indeed often explicitly argued in the literature, that an organization’s placement within these different ideological strands of the far right could affect legitimacy. Previous literature has shown that parties rejecting the democratic system are less successful than those that advocate working within the system (Carter 2005). Several studies also show that there are substantial differences between different types of radical and extreme right parties when it comes to their ability to mobilize voter support for the similar anti-immigration policies (Blinder, Ford and Ivarsflaten 2013; Ivarsflaten, Blinder and Ford 2010; Ivarsflaten 2006a; Ivarsflaten 2006b). Particularly, the literature has reached some agreement that ideological, organizational, personnel, or symbolic affinities with Nazism, biological racism, or anti-Semitism is negatively associated with legitimacy (Ignazi 1992; Art 2011; Ivarsflaten 2006a). A case in point is the comparison between the BNP and UKIP in the UK. Survey experimental work found that in the UK, a policy position associated with UKIP received substantively larger support than one associated with the BNP (Blinder, Ford and Ivarsflaten 2013; see also Ford and Goodwin 2014).

The literature is less conclusive about how an anti-Islamic ideological position influences legitimacy on the far right. On the one hand, studies have found that citizens are against specific Islamic practices like wearing the veil, halal butchering or sharia law (e.g., Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2009). A large share of European citizens are also negative to Muslim immigration more generally (Helbling 2012). Third, there has been an ongoing and polarizing debate about Islam and freedom of speech starting with the fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie and his book *Satanic verses*, followed by the killing of the Dutch film maker Theo van Gogh in 2004 (Eyerman 2008) which escalated with the Muhammed Cartoon crisis in 2006 (Sniderman, Petersen, Slothuus and Stubager 2014). This debate has become a focal point for anti-Islamic initiatives who claim to be defenders of freedom of speech. In other words, the anti-Islamic initiatives themselves argue that they are different from the old extreme right and represent a new ideological movement, but we do not know if the ideological self-placement impacts perceived legitimacy among ordinary citizens.

Another ideological characteristic that distinguishes far right initiatives from each other is whether they are single issue or mobilize on a broader platform. Previous literature has suggested that far right parties that run on an anti-immigrant platform tend to fail unless they have a reputational shield - a legacy or a broad policy portfolio that they can use to deflect accusations of racism or extremism. Among the electorally successful populist radical right in Western Europe such reputational shields are common (Ivarsflaten 2006b, 1). From this perspective, single-issue activist groups like PEGIDA should be seen as less legitimate than the populist right *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD). PEGIDA has a near single-minded focus on Islam and immigration whereas AfD started on an economic platform for reintroducing the German mark as a national currency unit, only to pick up the issue of opposition to immigration and Islam later on.

Beyond ideology, organizational characteristics can also affect legitimacy. There are three main carriers of far right ideologies, political parties, social movement organizations (SMOs) and online communities. Common to all of them is that they vary greatly in size, be it the number of members, votes or followers. The relationship between organizational size and legitimacy can be thought of in different ways. One plausible hypothesis is that organizational size impacts the perceived legitimacy of the far right positively: The bigger the organization or the number of supporters, the more likely it is that the initiative be perceived as legitimate. However, a causal pattern conditional on the ideology of the far right initiative is also possible. If a far right initiative is perceived as an ideological threat to the very foundations of democracy, then legitimacy could decrease the more adherents they get, as humans consistently equal bigger numbers with power (Thomsen, Frankenhuis, Ingold-Smith and Carey 2011), and in the case of an adversary this would suggest a more potent threat.

To summarize, existing research lead us to expect that initiatives that pose as ideologically distanced from the old extreme right will be perceived as more legitimate than traditional extreme right initiatives; that single issue initiatives should be perceived as less legitimate than initiatives with a broader agenda; and that organizational size could be positively related to legitimacy.

Measuring legitimacy

Legitimacy is a difficult concept to measure. In studies of the far right, the main strategy for gauging the legitimacy of the far right empirically has been to equate election outcomes or the willingness to vote for far right parties with legitimacy (see e.g., Bos and Brug, 2010; Art 2011; Spanje and Vreese 2015). One limitation of this strategy is that it leaves us unable to say anything about the legitimacy of far right initiatives outside of party politics. Another limitation

of this indirect measure of legitimacy is that a party can be perceived as legitimate and still receive few votes. Although nothing suggests that the Liberal Party in Norway, Venstre, is illegitimate (Bergh and Christensen 2013, 210; Karlsen and Aardal 2011, 152), they consistently receive below six percent of the national vote.

In this study, we operationalize legitimacy as the citizens' willingness to grant democratic privileges to a political initiative. Our intuition is that citizens should be more likely to extend everyday democratic privileges to initiatives that they perceive as legitimate; and less likely to extend these same privileges to initiatives they perceive as illegitimate. In line with this reasoning, we use as experimental frames situations that commonly occur, and where ordinary citizens often can and do play a role in applying the rules of democracy. More specifically, we ask whether a political initiative should be allowed to have a stand in the local mall, whether an initiative should be allowed to rent a local community house, and whether an initiative should be allowed to demonstrate.

Some experiments include a large number of groups and thereby allow us to test several of the causal hypotheses about the variations in and causes of far right legitimacy all at once, others are more focused on a specific hypothesis. The evidence we present is based on three separate survey experiments conducted at two different points in time. All three experiments rely on between-subject designs, where the respondents were randomly assigned to different groups, and were only asked to consider one of the treatments.

Study design: the legitimacy of the far right beyond electoral support

The first and second of the three experiments were fielded in wave 4 of the Norwegian Citizen Panel (NCP). The third experiment was fielded in wave 5. The three experiments all ask about

willingness to extend political rights, but the specifics vary. To ensure that we selected relevant situations, we used a series of online searches to identify situations where there had been controversy about far right initiatives in Norway. One experiment asks about support for using a privately owned space for political campaigning (setting up a stand at a local shopping center), the other is about the right to assemble (renting a local community house), and a third experiment asks about the right to demonstrate in a public space. This experimental strategy allows us to examine the legitimacy of political parties and social movement organizations in the same study. To our knowledge this has not been done before in a study of far right legitimacy.

Experiment 1: Campaigning at local shopping center

In our online search for relevant situations, we found evidence of repeated local controversies about political stands in supermarkets. It turns out that the owners of supermarkets in Norway sometimes refuse to let certain initiatives place a stand on their property. The Norwegian Union of Commerce and Office Employees (HK) published a report claiming that shopping centers hindered election campaigns by refusing political parties to hold stands at these locations. The managers of the shopping centers argued that the political parties made too much mess when holding stands and that their refusals had nothing to do with the political message. If shopping centers refuse established political parties running for election to hold a stand, one can also expect that they would refuse social movement organizations to do the same. We chose to situate our first experiment in this way, because it is an instance of the everyday enforcement of democratic boundaries, where it is plausible that ordinary citizens have an opinion. Our conjecture is that citizens should broadly agree that legitimate initiatives should be allowed to

hold a stand and spread their message at their local shopping center, whereas they should be less willing to extend that privilege to illegitimate political initiatives.

The main focus of experiment 1 was to test the ideology hypotheses. In addition to the ideology hypotheses normally considered in the research literature on the far right, we also designed the experiment to check for the obvious possibility that any ideological association with the contemporary far right reduces legitimacy. Since the main ideological characteristic of the electorally successful populist radical right parties is their nativism (Mudde 2007) or opposition to immigration (Ivarsflaten 2008), we include in the experiment a pro-immigration (non-far right) political initiative in addition to the several anti-immigration (far-right) initiatives. As pro-immigration initiative, we chose the Liberal Party, which is a center-right party receiving about 6 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections. As anti-immigration political party, we chose the main anti-immigrant Progress Party that typically receives around 15 per cent of the vote in parliamentary elections. If being associated with the far right through anti-immigration policies reduces legitimacy, then we should expect the Progress Party to be treated as less legitimate than the Liberal Party.

Secondly, to test the hypothesis that ideological distance from the old extreme right influences perceived legitimacy we also included initiatives that varied along this dimension. To designate an ideologically old far right initiative we used the description “a right-wing extremist group;” to designate an ideologically new far right initiative, we used the description “an anti-Islamic group.” If the legitimacy of the far right hinges on the distinction between old

and new far right ideologies, then we would expect the anti-Islamic group to be treated as more legitimate than the right-wing extremist group.²

Thirdly including all these four political initiatives into the same experiment enables a test of the policy portfolio hypothesis. If the broader policy agenda of the nativist Progress Party, including its anti-tax legacy, made this initiative more legitimate, then respondents should make a sharp distinction between this far right initiative and the single-issue far right initiatives.

The full wording of the survey experiment was as follows:

“Imagine that [the Liberal Party/the Progress Party/an anti-Islamic group/a right-wing extremist group] have asked permission to hold a stand in order to spread their message at your local shopping center. How much do you agree or disagree that [the Liberal Party/the Progress Party/the anti-Islamic group/the right-wing extremist group] should be allowed to do so?”

Experiment 2: Renting a local community center

For experiment 2 we chose the setting in a similar way as for experiment 1. We identified several cases in Norway, and Scandinavia more generally, where various far right initiatives have been denied the fundamental democratic right of assembly by ordinary citizens or the civil society organizations that own the houses. One well-known example is the Sweden Democrats that had such trouble finding a location for their election night gathering (in the 2014 general election where they became the third largest party in Sweden) that they in the end lied about the purpose of the gathering and suffered a black-out once the owners found out. Another less known example in Norway was when a public library in the Norwegian municipality of

² We decided against using the names of real groups in these cases, because we were concerned that respondents would not recognize the labels of such fringe organizations.

Kristiansand, refused the anti-Islamic organization Stop the Islamization of Norway (SIAN) to rent the library for an event. The library argued that SIAN's ideology was in conflict with the views of the public library (Sivilombudsmannen 2016). The decision caused much debate.

We designed experiment 2 as a second test of the ideology hypotheses. This second test is important for two reasons. Firstly, it functions as a robustness check. If similar results are replicated across different situations, we can be more confident that we have discovered distinctions that matter to ordinary citizens. Secondly, in this experiment we included a specific named far right new-ideology initiative, namely the anti-Islamic organization Stop the Islamization of Norway (SIAN) instead of a generic "anti-Islamic organization". As in the prior experiment, the pro-immigration Liberal Party and the anti-immigration Progress Party were also included. Note that this experiment did not include an example of an extreme right organization, so it is not designed to test the old versus new ideology hypothesis.

The second study was implemented in the same wave of the Norwegian Citizen Panel. We thus did not know the outcome of experiment 1, when we designed experiment 2 and vice versa.

Specifically, the wording of the experiment was as follows:

"Imagine that [the Liberal Party /the Progress Party/Stop Islamization of Norway (SIAN)] has asked to rent a community center to host a meeting for its members and sympathizers. How much do you agree or disagree that [the Liberal Party /the Progress Party/Stop Islamization of Norway (SIAN)] should be allowed to rent the center for this purpose?"

Experiment 3: Is legitimacy influenced by organizational size and scope?

In our third experiment we investigate if the variations in legitimacy are affected by organizational size and scope. This third experiment was fielded in the 5th round of the Norwegian Citizen Panel (2015) and so we knew the results of the two first studies before we designed this experiment. In the third study, we again selected a common situation where everyday decisions about democratic privileges are made. In our online searches we found several examples of controversies about the demonstrations of the anti-Islamic social movement organization, PEGIDA, across several European countries. We therefore chose support for the right to demonstrate as the setting of our third experiment.

Unlike in the previous two experiments we kept the ideology dimension of the far right initiatives as constant as possible, while varying the organizational characteristics. To improve external validity, we sought as much realism as possible. We therefore asked about real existing organizations, and not hypothetical organizations or generic labels. In the end we chose two single-issue anti-Islamic organizations, one very small and local (“No Mosque in Larvik”); the other large and international (PEGIDA Norway). Furthermore, since we did not know if respondents knew about these organizations beforehand, our experiment introduced information about the number of supporters and the geographic scope of the organizations in a controlled fashion.

Respondents were randomly assigned into one of six groups. Two groups received only the name of the organization – PEGIDA or “No Mosque in Larvik”. Two groups were also told about the number of followers the organization had on Facebook; at the time 4 500 Facebook-followers in the case of PEGIDA Norway, and 28 Facebook-followers for “No Mosque in Larvik”. The remaining two groups were told about geographic scope, either that PEGIDA Norway is part of a closely connected international PEGIDA-network or that “No Mosque in

Larvik” is a local group without close connections to others. Table 2 summarizes these conditions.

Organization	Pre-treatment	Info treatment 1: #Facebook followers	Info treatment 2: Geographic scope
PEGIDA	Many supporters; international	4,500	Part of international network
No Mosque in Larvik	Few supporters: Local	28	Local organization

If larger size makes an organization more legitimate in the eyes of citizens, we would expect the PEGIDA conditions to generate more support for the right to demonstrate than the “No Mosque in Larvik” conditions. If respondents were not aware of the differences in the size and scope of these far right organizations (or did not guess correctly based on names), we should only expect these differences to appear only after the information treatments.

The exact wording of the experiment was as follows:

“The group [PEGIDA/”No Mosque in Larvik”] occasionally want to demonstrate. [NOTHING/#followers/geographic scope]. Some think that [PEGIDA/”No Mosque in Larvik”] should not be allowed to demonstrate because they spread hatred towards Muslims. Others think they should be allowed to do so, because freedom of speech is important. How much do you agree or disagree that they should be allowed to demonstrate?”

Data and methods

The data for our experiments was collected in waves 4 (spring 2015) and 5 (fall 2015) of the Norwegian Citizen Panel (NCP). The NCP is a research-purpose internet panel owned by the University of Bergen. Respondents are randomly recruited from the Norwegian population

register to take part in (at the time) two annual surveys that lasted for 20 minutes each. The documentation of the field method used, response rates, and representativity are reported for each wave in the online Methodology reports (Skjervheim and Høgestøl 2015a; 2015b). Data and codebooks are freely available for research purposes from the Norwegian Scientific Data Archive (NSD).³ The data collection for this project was funded by the Bergen Research Foundation and the University of Bergen.

Results

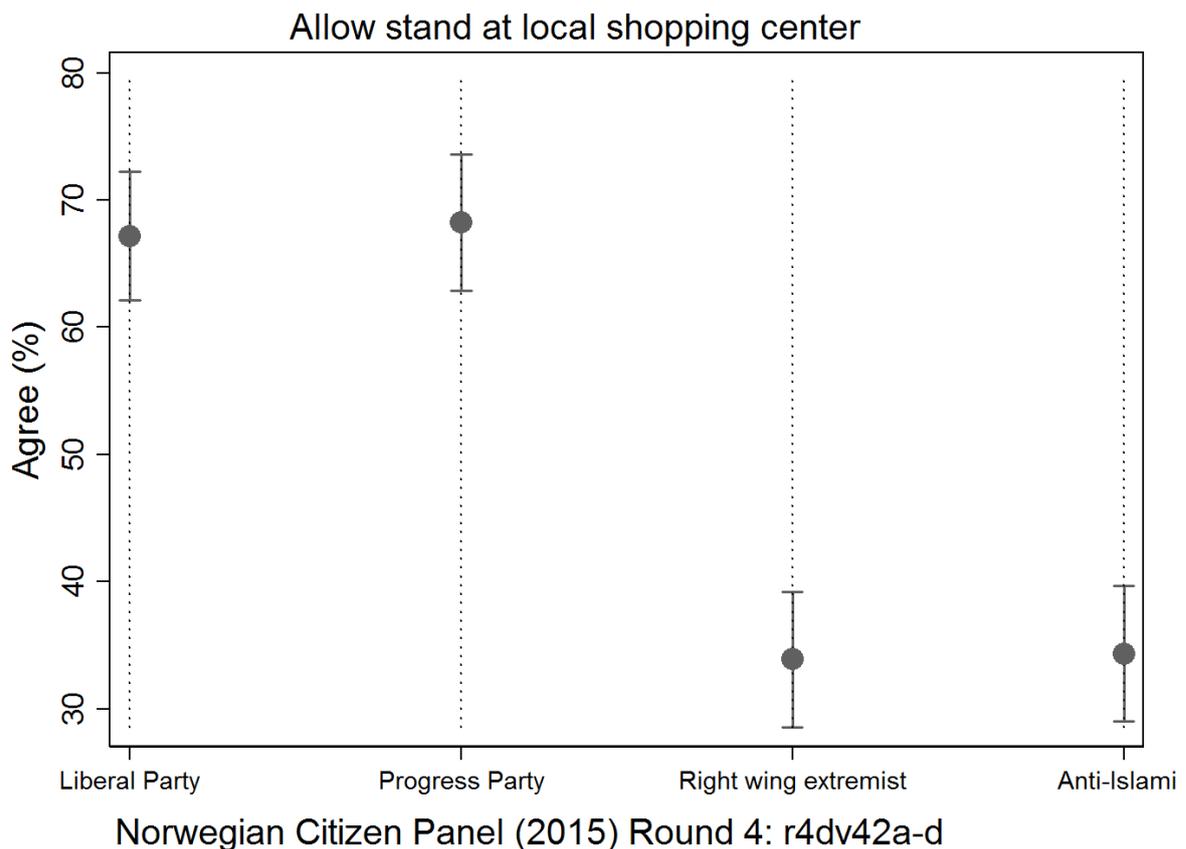
Experiment 1

The main results of the first experiment are displayed in figure 1. They speak clearly to the ideology hypotheses. When asked about willingness to grant permission to set up a stand at a local shopping center the respondents make one, and only one, clear distinction among the four initiatives. The respondents make no distinction between the legitimacy of the pro- and anti-immigration political parties. In other words, we find no reduction in legitimacy from being associated with an anti-immigration agenda compared to being associated with a pro-immigration agenda. Furthermore, we find that respondents make no distinction between the supposed new ideology anti-Islamic group and the supposed old ideology extreme right. By contrast, the results demonstrate a clear difference between initiatives that are single-issue oriented and those with a comprehensive platform. Even though initiatives like the Progress Party with a more comprehensive platform mobilize on anti-Islamic and anti-immigrant sentiments using similar rhetoric as the single-issue initiatives, they are able to do so without loss of legitimacy. This is consistent with research that suggesting that electorally successful populist radical right parties benefit from being able to use their broader policy portfolio and/or

³ Data and documentation can be downloaded here: <http://digsscore.uib.no/download-data-and-documentation>

their more varied legacies as “reputational shields” against de-legitimizing accusations of racism or extremism (e.g., Ivarsflaten 2006b, 1).⁴

Figure 1. Main results of experiment 1: Far right legitimacy and ideology.



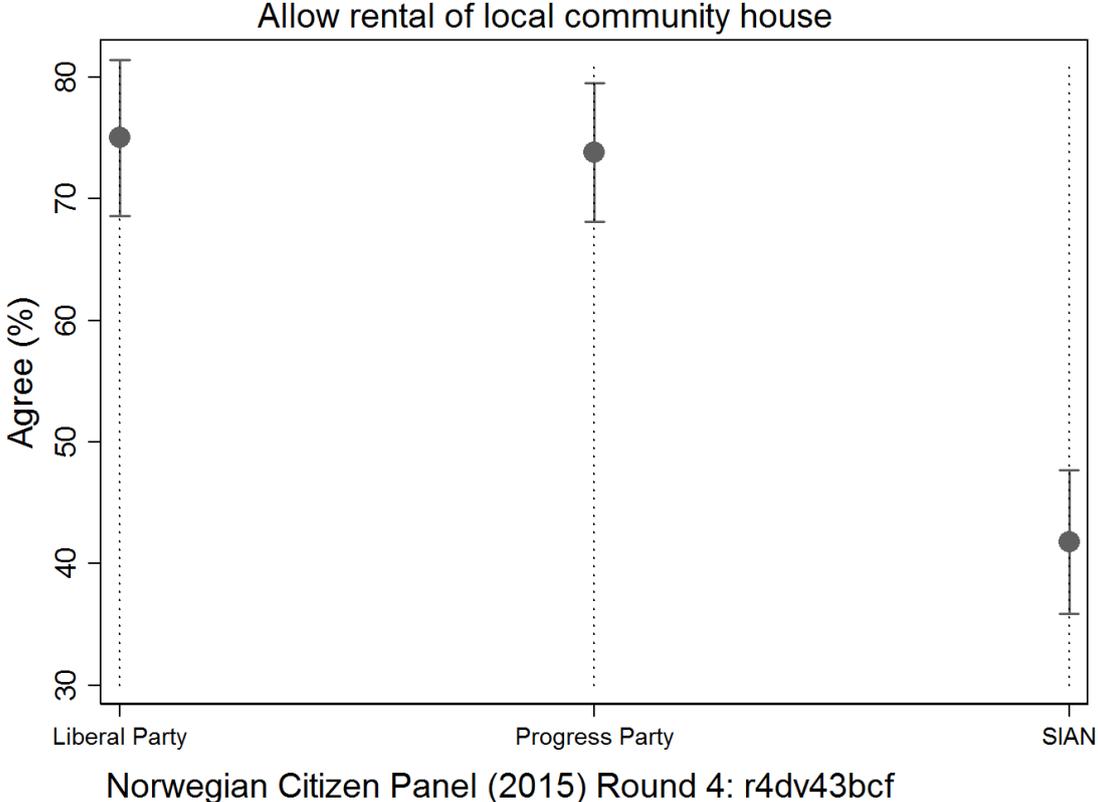
Experiment 2

Figure 2 shows the results of the second experiment concerning willingness to grant the right to rent a local community center. It shows that respondents make precisely the same main distinction as in experiment 1. The mean respondent is much less likely to want to permit the anti-Islamic group SIAN to rent the community house than the Progress Party or the Liberal

⁴ When running this experiment we chose to include a fifth group that received the exact same question but with all four political initiatives. The results for this question can be found in the appendix and shows the exact same pattern as Figure 1.

Party. At the same time, we see that no distinction is made at all between the legitimacy of the pro-immigration Liberal Party and the anti-immigration Progress Party. Experiment 2 thus strengthens our confidence in the findings of experiment 1: respondents make a clear distinction between the anti-Islamic SIAN and the populist radical right Progress Party, two initiatives that both claim to advocate a new far right-ideology that is distinct from old-school right-wing extremism. These results again suggest that a broad policy platform and/or a reputational shield is causally related to legitimacy on the far right.

Figure 2. Main results of experiment 2: Far right legitimacy and ideology.

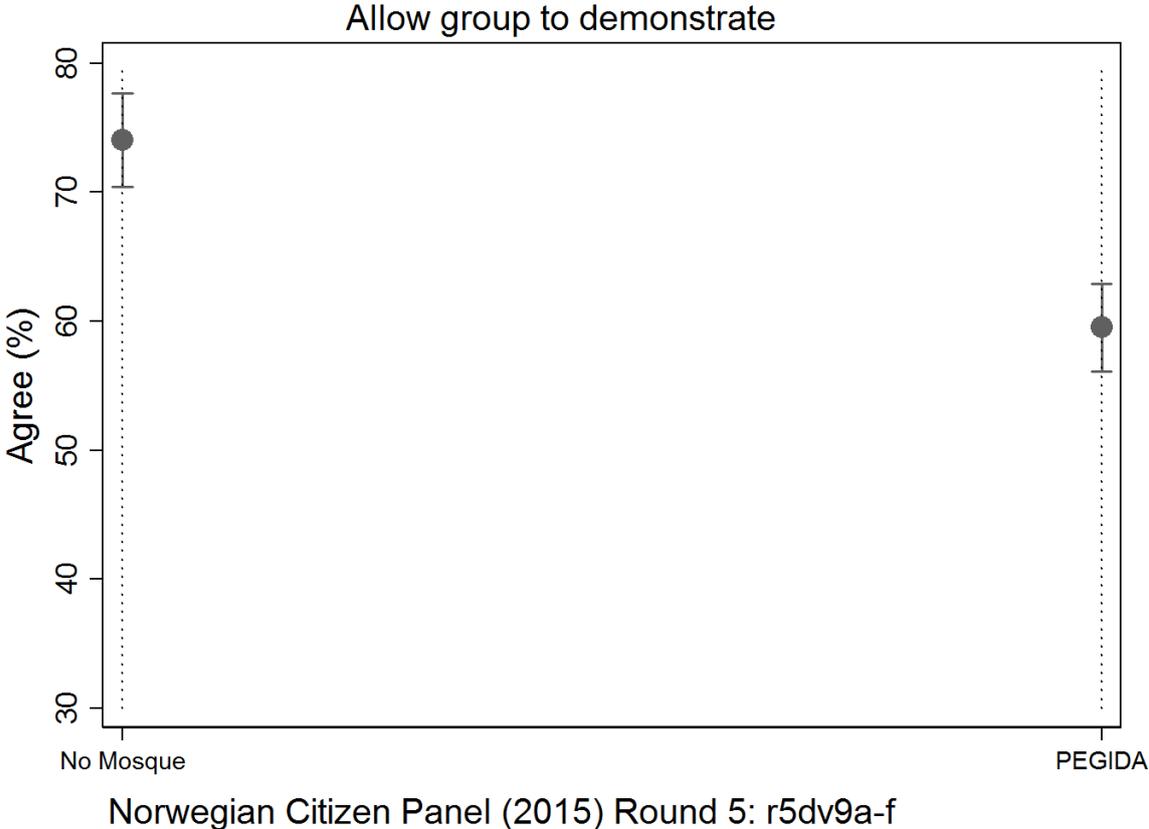


Experiment 3

Upon analyzing experiment 1 and experiment 2, we were surprised at the weak support for the old versus new ideology distinction. Experiment 1 showed clearly that in terms of legitimacy,

voters viewed the anti-Islamic and extreme right as equally illegitimate. Essentially the two labels were not seen as different. From the perspective of the literature on anti-Islamic far right ideology this is surprising, especially since the anti-Islamic organizations generally are very careful to pose as new and more moderate than the old far right extremists. We wondered if the difference in far right legitimacy found in experiment 1 and 2 could be caused not by ideology, but by organizational size and scope. This was the intuition behind our third and last experiment, where we tried to examine the effects on legitimacy of organizational size and scope of the far right.

Figure 3. Main results of experiment 3: Far right legitimacy and organizational size and scope.



The main results of experiment 3⁵, as displayed in figure 3, do not confirm the hypothesized positive relationship between organizational size and legitimacy. To the contrary, the smaller far right anti-Islamic organization has easier access to the democratic right to demonstrate than the larger one. Respondents are on average somewhat more willing to grant the “No Mosque in Larvik” initiative the right to demonstrate than they are to do so to the much larger PEGIDA organization. The information treatments have no impact beyond the pre-treatment. It is fairly easy to guess that one organization is substantial and the other is very limited just based on the names, and this could explain the absence of information treatment effects. These results of study 3 suggest that there is no simple relationship between size and legitimacy on the far right.

We would not go as far as to suggest that our results mean that organizational size or capacity does not have an impact, but for far right actors the relationship is likely more complex. In fact, the combination of our findings in all three studies point us in the direction of a conditional relationship. They are consistent with the interpretation that legitimacy correlates negatively with the far right initiatives’ size if they are perceived as ideologically extreme (i.e. if they are old or new single-issue social movement organizations on the far right). Our experiments already established that people do not differentiate between anti-Islamic and extreme right initiatives. When combined with this insight from study 1 and study 2, the logical conclusion would be that to voters the more members an extreme initiative has, the more dangerous it becomes to democracy and therefore their perceived legitimacy decreases. In other words, organizations that for ideological reasons are judged as extreme are not more likely to be seen as legitimate when they are larger. By contrast, small organizations with such ideological profiles are perceived as somewhat more legitimate.

⁵ All experimental groups can be found in the appendix. The six experimental groups were merged into the two groups, which are displayed in Figure 3.

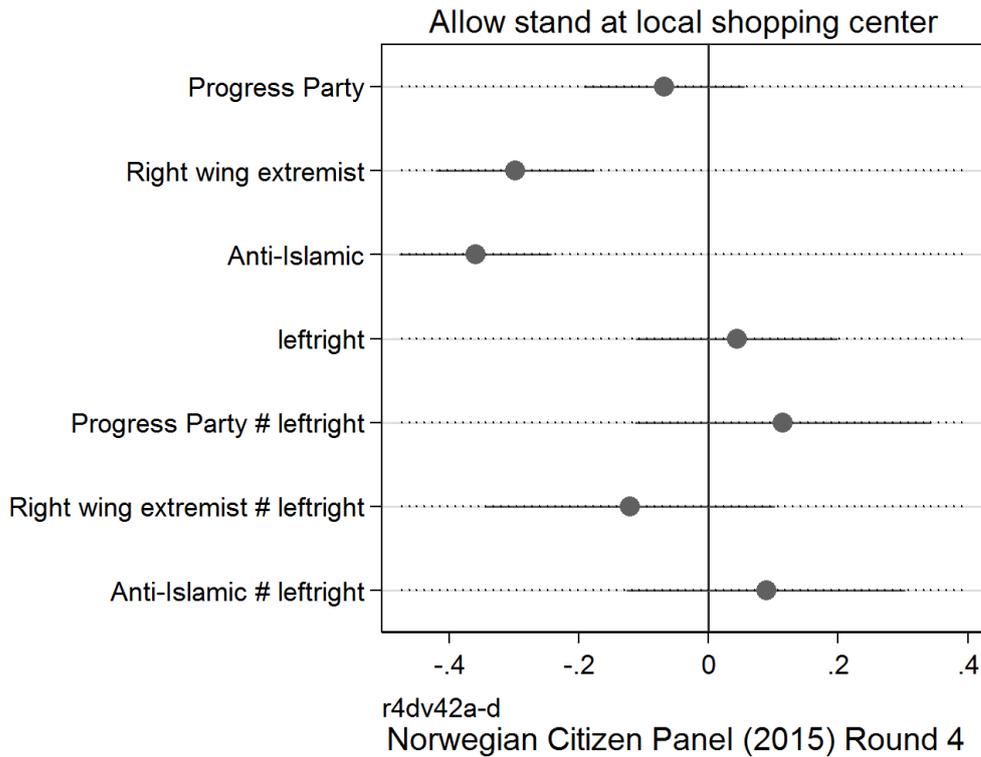
Effects of respondents' ideology

The main pattern of our experiments show that legitimacy on the far right varies substantially. Citizens differentiate between initiatives that should be granted democratic privileges and initiatives that should not be so. But are these judgments based on a political consensus on the left and right of the political spectrum, or do left-wing and right-wing voters make different judgments? To test for ideology effects we ran a series of regression analyses testing if responses to treatments in the three experiments were contingent on the respondents' ideological self-placement.⁶

Figure 4 answers this question in the negative. It shows that the results shown previously are robust to controlling for respondents' self-placement on the left-right scale. The plot shows the direct effects of the experimental treatments and ideological self-placement, and interaction effects between ideological self-placement and the experimental treatments. It shows that respondents make the same main distinction between the single issue organizations and the organizations with broader policy portfolios, and that they share judgment on the legitimacy of the pro- and anti-immigration parties. It therefore appears safe to conclude that the variations in legitimacy documented in this experiment are mainly based on an ideological consensus.

⁶ Coefficient plots and regression models for the regression analyses can be found in the appendix.

Figure 4: Main results of ideology effects: Experiment 1.



We also tested for ideology effects in the 2nd and 3rd experiments by running a series of regression analyses based on the respondents' left-right self-placement. The results from these analyses shows the same main pattern as seen in Figure 4. The anti-Islamic organization SIAN is considered as far less legitimate than the anti-immigration Progress Party. Voters across the board are less willing to grant the anti-Islamic organization SIAN the same rights (in this case the right to rent a community house) as the Progress Party. Furthermore, voters do not distinguish between the anti-immigration and the pro-immigration parties in this experiment either. The same main pattern is found for the 3rd experiment. Voters across the entire spectrum are more willing to grant the "No to mosque in Larvik" the right to demonstrate than the anti-Islamic organization PEGIDA.

Discussion and conclusion

In summary, the main pattern is clear: ideology matters to a far right initiative's legitimacy but not in all the ways suggested by previous scholarly work. In the three experiments, the anti-immigrant Progress Party is considered equally legitimate as the pro-immigrant Liberal party, and the new-ideology anti-Islamic organization is considered equally illegitimate as the old-ideology extreme-right organization. Legitimacy is thus not automatically undermined for political parties that adopt a nativist policy position.

Furthermore, the attempts by anti-Islamic groups and organizations to argue that they represent a new far right ideology has no positive impact on their legitimacy as measured in our experiments. These initiatives are seen as equally illegitimate as the old extreme right organizations, and far less legitimate than the nativist Progress Party. The substantial difference in legitimacy is found between the single-issue social movement organizations on the one hand and the broader-based political parties on the other. Finally, we found that the relationship between political ideology, organizational size and legitimacy is far from simple.

The literature on the far right in contemporary Europe has repeatedly documented that legitimacy is a key factor determining whether a far right political initiative can receive a large share of the vote and become influential. Still, we knew very little about the variation in far right legitimacy and what causes it. This paper has improved our knowledge about some of the key dynamics. We came up with an experimental strategy that decoupled the concept of legitimacy from electoral outcomes in a way that facilitated comparisons of political parties and social movements. In one way, the results we show are reassuring to existing research. They confirm the main pattern assumed in current scholarship: The legitimacy of various far right political initiatives varies substantially. Our study showed, we think for the first time in a

European setting, that voters distinguish between far right initiatives that should be granted democratic rights and privileges and far right initiatives that should not be so.

In another way, the results we have presented are surprising, because they do not support several of the prominent hypotheses about what makes a far right initiative legitimate to voters. We find that, legitimacy does *not* depend on whether a far right initiative is “new” or “old,” as voters view “new” anti-Islamic organizations as equally illegitimate as old extreme right organizations. We find that legitimacy does *not* depend on whether a political party is pro-immigration or anti-immigration, as both types of parties are viewed as equally legitimate. Furthermore, our study shows that the legitimacy of far right organizations cannot be predicted in any straight-forward manner from their organizational size or geographic scope. In other words, our study demonstrates that single-issue far right organizations with narrow focus on restricting the rights and privileges of migrants and minorities are viewed as illegitimate regardless of whether they pose as ideologically new or not. By contrast, far right organizations that advocate a nativist agenda as part of a larger political program, but that also address other policy areas are viewed as legitimate, even when their specific migration and integration policy proposals are very controversial.

Above all, the three studies presented here suggest that an empirical turn in the study of far right legitimacy is possible and potentially rewarding. If our initial findings documented for the first time in this paper are confirmed by future studies in other countries, they could make a difference to how European democracies engage with the various contemporary far right initiatives.

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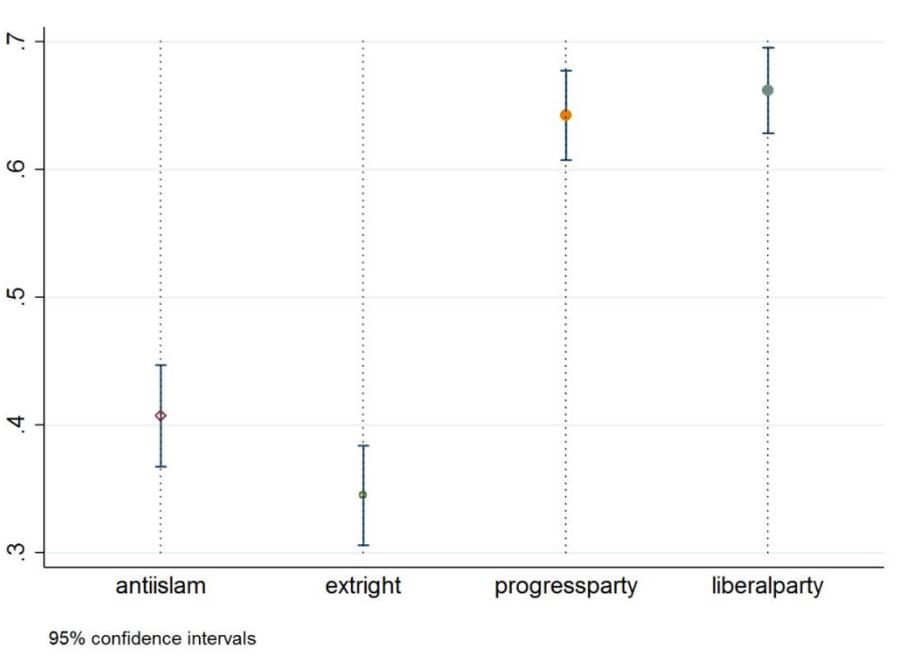
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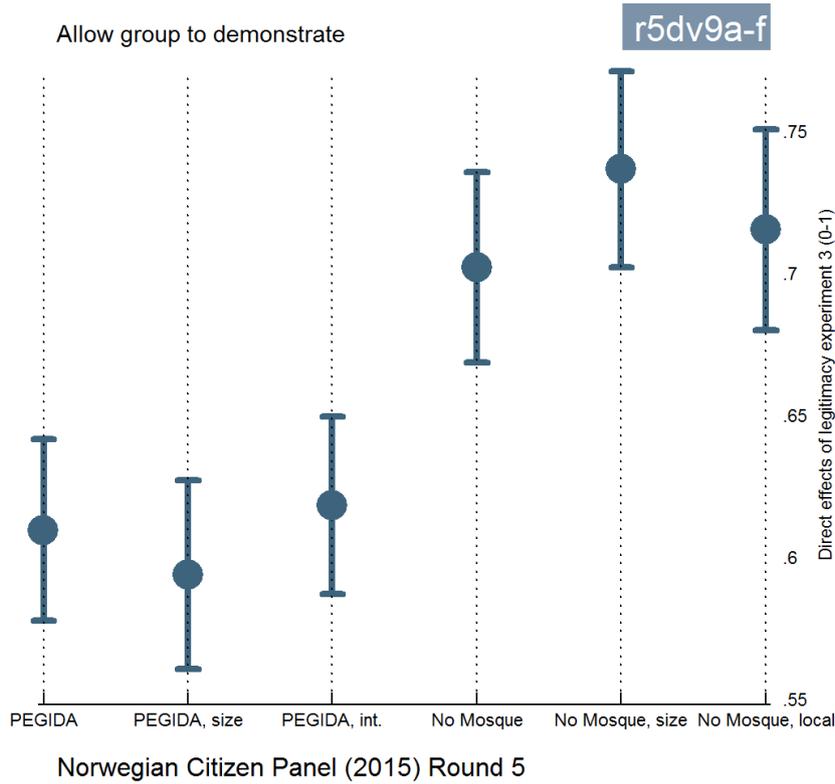
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Appendix:

Figur 4: Results from battery question of experiment 1.





Direct effects: experiment 1	Coefficient	Std. error
Group		
Liberal party (ref)	--	--
Progress party	.000	.024
Right wing extremist	-.350***	.024
Anti-Islamic	-.309***	.024
_Cons		
Ajusted R-squared	.717***	.016
N= 1,235	0.224	

Direct effects: experiment 2	Coefficient	Std. error
Group		
Liberal party (ref)	--	--
Progress party	-.025	.022
Anti-Islamic SIAN	-.283***	.023
_Cons		
Ajusted R-squared	.805***	.016
N= 778	0.192	

Direct effects: experiment 3	Coefficient	Std. error
Group		
PEGIDA (ref)	--	--
PEGIDA, size	-.015	.023
PEGIDA, int.	.008	.022
No Mosque	.092***	.023
No Mosque, size	.127***	.023
No Mosque, local	.105***	.024
_Cons	.609	.016
Ajusted R-squared	0.042	
N= 1376		

Table 1: Ideological self-placement, experiment 1

	Self placement: Far left		Self placement: Far right	
Model 5: experiment 1	Coefficient	Std. error	Coefficient	Std. error
Group				
Liberal party (ref)	--	--	--	--
Progress party	-.112	.070	.052	.052
Right wing extremist	-.288***	.070	-.351***	.055
Anti-Islamic	-.376***	.066	-.270***	.052
_Cons	.731	.047	.718	.037
Ajusted R-squared	0.184		0.226	
N=	156		276	

Dependent variable: allow [group] to rent local community house (scale: 0-1).

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Table 2: Ideological self-placement, experiment 2

	Self placement: Far left		Self placement: Far right	
Model 7: experiment 2	Coefficient	Std. error	Coefficient	Std. error
Group				
Liberal party (ref)	--	--	--	--
Progress party	-.029	.070	.055	.046
Anti-Islamic SIAN	-.213**	.077	-.167***	.046
_Cons	.773***	.056	.738***	.032
Ajusted R-squared	0.076			
N= 96				

Dependent variable: allow [group] to rent local community house (scale: 0-1).

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Table 3: Ideological self-placement, experiment 3

Model 9: experiment 3	Self placement: Far left		Self placement: Far right	
	Coefficient	Std. error	Coefficient	Std. error
Group				
PEGIDA (ref)	--	--	--	--
PEGIDA, size	.053	.064	.016	.047
PEGIDA, int.	-.055	.059	.054	.047
No Mosque	.138*	.062	.14**	.049
No Mosque, size	.164**	.062	.204***	.048
No Mosque, local	.146*	.069	.11*	.050
_Cons	.559	.045	.623	.034
Ajusted R-squared	0.088		0.065	
N=	179		321	

Dependent variable: allow [group] to demonstrate (scale: 0-1).

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

