Dear editors,

The study that we submit to the British Journal of Political Science investigates to what extent policy sequencing can be an effective strategy for building support for ambitious climate policy among voters. Public support is an important factor for the introduction of ambitious climate policy in accordance with international greenhouse gas reduction targets set in the Paris Agreement. Policy sequencing theory suggests that the strategic ordering of policies into sequences that first generate benefits through supportive policies, such as renewable energy subsidies, subsequently increase support for more ambitious carbon pricing policies. Prior studies on policy sequencing emphasized that economic benefits for low-carbon technologies reduce can create new coalitions in favour of decarbonisation with a focus on elite actors in conceptually and qualitatively dominated research but with little large-scale quantitative theory-testing.

Using survey-experimental methods and with geo-spatial data, we take this literature one step further and investigate public opinion for ambitious climate policy in a Swiss popular vote around the CO2 Act in 2021. Our results confirm our argument that besides economic opportunity structures, such as electric vehicle charging stations in the vicinity of voters operationalized, cognitive perceptions of prior policies shape public support. Specifically, our robust evidence indicates that the perceived effectiveness of prior benefit-inducing policies increases support for more ambitious climate policy packages in a conjoint survey experiment, particularly among segments in society with typically low support, such as right-leaning voter that ascribe low salience to climate change.

Our study thus provides important results that are not only relevant for theories of policy change, but also for policy makers and the public by showing that policy sequencing can be an effective strategy to build support. We believe that our theoretical extensions to the policy sequencing literature, combined with our rigorous and robust survey-experimental evidence present an original contribution, which should be of interest to the wider readership of your journal. We thank you very much for considering it for publication and look forward to your feedback and comments in due course.

Best,

Simon Montfort, Lukas Fesenfeld, Isabelle Stadelmann, and Karin Ingold