Contestation, Expertise, and Time: An Ethnographic Case Study of the Swiss Citizens' Assembly on Food Policy

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Contestation, Expertise, and Time: An Ethnographic Case Study of the Swiss Citizens' Assembly on Food Policy

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Abstract

For food system transformation, there is growing interest in deliberative participatory processes at the governance level, following good examples for other controversial issues such as climate policy. However, it is contested whether such citizens' assemblies in their currently most implemented form can contribute to a profound sustainability transformation. In 2022, 85 citizens gathered to deliberate the Swiss food system transformation. The Swiss Citizens' Assembly on Food Policy (BEP) was unique in that it was the first national assembly and applied Scharmer's Theory U approach, which generates new collective intentions in a non-agonistic way. I focus on the question of whether the process' framing was capable of realizing its transformational and democratic potential. Combining ethnographic approaches (participant observation, autoethnography, and semi-structured interviews) and constructivist grounded theory, I gained insights into how facilitators and citizens experienced the deliberative process and what emerged from these different experiences. I placed these emergences in the context of contestation, expertise, and time, drawing on critiques related to sustainability transformation by both deliberative and agonistic scholars. My results indicate that the BEP could empower collective action and make a more citizen-led democracy imaginable. However, proactive measures are needed to address structural problems and societal ideas that impede a truly democratic and transformative deliberative process. This includes (1) enhancing contestatory forms of communication next to harmonic ones in consensus-seeking cultures, (2) challenging the dominance of rational argumentation in Western policy-making processes and empowering citizens' ways of knowing, and, especially in polarized contexts, (3) recognizing plurality within a narrow consensus-oriented framework. These insights have been echoed in numerous studies of participatory and deliberative processes, but are rarely applied in citizens' assemblies in Western democracies. By proactively experimenting with the above, food democracy can be envisioned.

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Glossary and list of abbreviations

BEP	Swiss Citizens' Assembly for Food Policy
Conservative	An attitude that opposes social change.
COP26	UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow 2021
FAOG	Federal Office for Agriculture
Feu sacré	An enthusiasm or passion that enables one to continue a difficult activity that requires high personal commitment or even sacrifice
FOEN	Federal Office for the Environment
BEP framework	The basic conceptual structure of the BEP, such as the choice of guiding question, experts, or learning journeys.
FSVO	Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAR	Participatory Action Research
Progressive	An attitude that favors social change in line with sustainability and justice concerns
SBV	Swiss Farmers' Union
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
Q&A	Question and Answer
Wutbürger	Citizen who is disappointed in politics and expresses this fiercely in an angry or rude way

1.Introduction

We are currently experiencing a variety of crises linked to the dominant food system. The food system is extremely vulnerable to the anthropogenic climate crisis as droughts and extreme weather events increase (Altieri et al., 2015; Clapp et al., 2018), and its adaptation depends heavily on maintaining global biodiversity and functioning ecosystems (Jackson et al., 2007). The sad irony is that food production is a major driver of the climate and biodiversity crisis: It accounts for approximately a third of global greenhouse gas emissions (Braimoh, 2013; Campbell et al., 2017; Vermeulen et al., 2012). Monocultures predominate on arable land (Altieri & Nicholls, 2020), which causes, among others, freshwater depletion (Braimoh, 2013; Willett et al., 2019), chemical pollution (Dinabandhu, 2000), and deforestation (Smith et al. 2007). Global health crises are also intertwined with food systems: Pandemics have appeared as a result of how we farm and hold animals (Weis, 2013), and at the same time threaten the sector because of its global interlinkages and -dependencies, as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic (Altieri & Nicholls, 2020). Ultimately, a large portion of the livelihoods of the world's population is based on the food sector (Clapp et al., 2018). These livelihoods are threatened by at least all of the aforementioned crises, as well as an unequal and exploitative distribution of power within food chains (Clapp, 2021; McMichael, 2000; M. P. Pimbert, 2008; van der Ploeg et al., 2022). In sum, the dominant food system is both a major contributor to many crises and simultaneously highly vulnerable to them (Clapp et al., 2018).

As the globalized food system is characterized by both, environmental and social crises, and fails to reach the United Nations (UN) (2015) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the need to transform it is acknowledged by science and politics (Altieri & Nicholls, 2020; Clapp et al., 2018; de Molina, 2016; Gliessman et al., 2018; Independent Evaluation Group, 2010; UNCTAD, 2013). The call for a transformation indicates that the currently prevailing system can no longer be sustained. Thus, in contrast to, for example, environmental problems, which are treated as individual problems that can be solved inside the current system, a sustainability transformation requires a more holistic and deep change (Hammond, 2020a). How radical this change should be, however, is controversial: Some argue that the transformation from an unsustainable to a sustainable food system means moving away from the growth-dependent socioeconomic model of liberal-capitalist societies (Altieri & Nicholls, 2020; McGreevy et al., 2022). Food system transformation then goes hand-in-hand with a profound, systemic shift in societal values, beliefs, and developmental patterns (Hammond, 2020b; Olsson et al., 2014). However, less radical interpretations continue to dominate the political agenda today, as illustrated by the SDGs that aim at improving, not replacing, the Western developmental model (United Nations, 2015). Consequently, the term "transformation", although it points towards profound systemic change, has become a buzzword by which different people mean different things.

The question remains as to who decides how – and how radically - the food system should be sustainably transformed. A sustainability transformation responding to ecological crises is directly linked to normative concerns, such as addressing inequalities or redefining what genuine welfare is (Hammond, 2020b). Thus, a renegotiation of the balance between environmental, economic, and social concerns is needed (Allen et al., 1991; Durand et al., 2023).

Deciding where that equitable balance rests is a question of values. This clash of values cannot be *meaningfully* settled by an independent authority such as science or religion in a pluralistic society - especially as circumstances are constantly changing and the uncertain outcomes affect everyone; Food goes through all of our bodies (Durand et al., 2023; Hassanein, 2003). Accordingly, the food system transformation should be brought forward democratically (Morrison, 1995; Prugh et al., 2000). At the core of *food democracy* is the notion that people can and should be actively participating in shaping the food system, rather than remaining passive consumers (Hassanein, 2003). It is a *method* for making pragmatic decisions, but also a *remedy* that empowers citizens to shape their relationships with food and agriculture (Hassanein, 2003; M. P. Pimbert, 2008). In summary, the necessary transformation of the food system must be advanced democratically.

Democracy without citizen participation and deliberation is a hollow concept (Scudder, 2021a). More citizen participation is advocated as part of a larger sociopolitical shift, for example, to scrutinize institutional interests or increase public acceptance of new policies (Ezrahi, 1990; Leach et al., 2005). This went hand-in-hand with a *deliberative turn* in normative democratic theory in the late 1980s, resulting from the realization that formal liberal Western democracies prevent genuine citizen participation as citizens have a *vote* but no *voice* (Bäckstrand et al., 2010). Citizen deliberation is based on citizen participation but makes more normative statements about the ideal forms of political participation (Böker & Elstub, 2015), for example, that it should be based on reason, reciprocity, and inclusion and targeted at the common good (Bächtiger & Wyss, 2013; Dryzek, 2000). The demands for more citizen deliberation have been taken up in national and international governance, also specifically for the transformation of food systems: For example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) promotes innovative citizen participation and has published recommendations for better policies for food systems involving citizen deliberation (OECD, 2020, 2021). In addition to this more instrumental orientation of citizen deliberation, which helps policymakers make legitimate and better decisions, there is also a more critical orientation (Hammond, 2020a). Greater citizen deliberation is a core demand of the food sovereignty movement (M. P. Pimbert, 2008), but also other movements such as the degrowth (Durand et al., 2023) and climate justice movements (Extinction Rebellion US, 2023). These movements call for more citizen deliberation in traditional policymaking, as the latter lacks transparency and fails to address current crises (Durand et al., 2023; Extinction Rebellion US, 2023; M. P. Pimbert, 2008). In the Western case, they do not attack democracy itself, but *liberal* democratic regimes (Machin, 2022). These regimes appear to reinforce capitalism and its social and environmental consequences, blocking true social transformation, as privileged elites and short-term thinking dominate decision-making (Chomsky, 1998; Goodman & Morton, 2014; Hammond, 2020a; Machin, 2013; Müller & Walk, 2014; Plumwood, 1995). Accordingly, initiatives that create new experimental spaces for citizens to directly influence policy decisions are strongly emerging worldwide in different forms (M. Pimbert & Wakeford, 2001).

As a form of citizen deliberation, citizens' assemblies are being tested around the world for controversial topics (see, e.g., Doherty et al., 2020; Farrell & Suiter, 2019; Giraudet et al., 2021; Luskin et al., 2002; M. P. Pimbert & Boukary, 2021; Setälä et al., 2010; Snider, 2007). This also applies to Switzerland, where multiple citizens' assemblies on the local governance level were already organized (e.g., *Bürgerpanel Winterthur für mehr Klimaschutz, Bürgerpanel für mehr Klimaschutz* in Uster*, Forum Citoyen* in Geneva), and more are being planned on a local and

national level (e.g., *Zukunftsrat U24*). Such assemblies are processes in which citizens, selected at random from a representative panel of society, make policy decisions about public issues in a temporary decision-making body at the governance level. In doing so, the citizens first learn from various experts, stakeholders, and each other, and form their opinion through discussion (Böker & Elstub, 2015). Thereby, assemblies usually lead to decisions that are more oriented toward the long-term and common good than conventional policy-making (Dryzek et al., 2019; Fishkin, 2018; Landemore, 2012; Stevenson & Dryzek, 2012). First, they bring people with diverse perspectives and problem-solving styles together, which is fundamental to finding answers to complex problems that work in practice (Dryzek et al., 2019; Landemore, 2012). Then, the focus is not on individual interests but on public values (Dryzek et al., 2019; Niemeyer, 2011). Citizens connect in a constructive way that prevents division and makes decisions based on factual information. This allows for solutions to be sought collectively (Dryzek et al., 2019; Richards, 2018), and makes unfair power relations less decisive as, among others, elite framing influence is decreased (Druckman & Nelson, 2003; Dryzek et al., 2019; Niemeyer, 2011; Nugus et al., 2019; Richards, 2018). Finally, citizen assemblies negotiate a new position of citizens in our society, as they can gain a voice over politicians and interest groups (Clapp, 2021; Niessen, 2019; Richards, 2018). In summary, citizen assemblies can deepen democracy by informing policies based on people's realities and values, and creating citizenship for it (Niessen, 2019; Wironen et al., 2019).

Although the potential of citizens' assemblies is widely recognized, this does not mean that it has been fully realized. For example, there is a discussion about the extent to which social inequalities are reproduced: While citizens' assemblies seem to formally empower everyone to take part in deliberation, some argue that hidden social or power dynamics between citizens remain (Dryzek, 2000; Gerber, 2015; Gerber et al., 2018; Karpowitz et al., 2012; Schäfer & Merkel, 2023; Young, 2002). Also, citizens' assemblies do not automatically lead to progressive outcomes but are influenced by the existing values and self-understandings of the citizens present (Maier & Bächtiger, 2023) and agenda-setting by organizers or experts (Lang, 2008). Further, some argue that while citizens' assemblies can support sustainability governance, they might fail to push for a sustainability *transformation* (Hammond, 2020a). The main critics who follow this line are agonistic democrats (Mouffe, 1999). They argue that assemblies often remain hegemonic despite their efforts to be inclusive as the prevailing worldview is not questioned: Because they focus on harmonically finding a consensus rather than seeking more radical social change, they have a depoliticizing tendency (Machin, 2023; Mouffe, 1999, 2005; Schäfer & Merkel, 2023), legitimizing the ends of liberal governments (Machin, 2022) and/or pushing minorities to assimilate into the mainstream worldview (Banerjee, 2022). This criticism is now partly being echoed by deliberation scientists (Bächtiger & Gerber, 2014; Curato et al., 2013) as well as the social movements, who advocate for contestatory and critical citizens' assemblies (Durand et al., 2023; Extinction Rebellion US, 2023; M. P. Pimbert, 2008). Consequently, it is contested if citizens' assemblies, in their currently most implemented form on the governance level, are capable of contributing to a profound sustainability transformation.

In any way, citizens' assemblies are on the rise (Dryzek et al., 2019). There is - quite pragmatically – a research need to help ensure that they are best able to live up to their democratic and transformative potential. The question is not *if* citizens' assemblies should be implemented, but *how*. Thereby, there is a gap between academic visions of deliberative

processes, which focus on the characteristics of the process and its quality, and the perspective of the people who are part of or affected by the process (see, e.g., Mutz, 2008; Rangoni et al., 2021; Sprain & Black, 2018). Many studies have concentrated on the anticipated advantages and results of deliberation, such as altered attitudes (e.g., Barabas, 2004; Luskin et al., 2002; Niemeyer, 2011) or greater civic engagement (e.g., Gastil et al., 2010). This perspective can only partly inform deliberative practices, as the *how* of citizens' assemblies has to be meaningful for citizens and related to real-world experiences. How citizens can best empower themselves to bring about the sustainability changes they want to see are questions we cannot answer in the ivory tower of the academy (Egmose, 2015). If the potential of processes that involve *people* wants to be understood, we have to consider their experiences. What is it, that moves, engages, and satisfies them about citizens' assemblies? And, in contrast, what makes them reluctant, tired, and angry? And, how is this connected to the local context? Accordingly, the literature aimed at understanding the experiences and behavior of people who engage in deliberative processes is strongly growing (see, e.g., Boswell, 2021; Curato et al., 2013; Doherty et al., 2020; Farrell & Suiter, 2019; Gerber, 2015; Gerber et al., 2014; Gerber et al., 2018; Giraudet et al., 2022; Lang, 2008; Pearse, 2008; M. P. Pimbert & Boukary, 2021; Snider, 2007).

The Swiss food system is currently at a turning point where a democratic decision must be made on the path to be taken. Switzerland is lagging in its sustainability goals. So far, Switzerland has only been able to achieve its national environmental goals ("Umweltziele 2008"), whereby many are concerned with the food sector, such as the goals to promote native biodiversity that depends on agricultural use and to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions (BAFU, 2016). To achieve these goals as well as to meet its international commitments (e.g., the SDGs and the 1.5° target of the Paris Agreement), major changes in the Swiss food system are needed. The importance of transforming the agricultural sector is amplified by the fact that climate change is accelerated in Switzerland (Beniston et al., 1994), posing serious challenges to it[1]. Next to ecological demands, the Swiss food system struggles to meet social demands and is characterized by, among others, power inequalities along the supply chain and poor working conditions for farmers (Huber, 2022). Despite the great need for a transformation of the Swiss food system, the political actors are unable to agree on a common vision that reconciles ecological, economic, and social demands (Huber, 2022). Polarization in politics and society about agricultural matters already existed in the 1990s but has intensified in recent years, including two heated referendum campaigns on ecological demands in 2021 (B. Lehmann, personal communication, November 4, 2022). They led to a clash of values between the *Swiss Farmers' Union (SBV)* and political actors who support the ecological aspects demanded in the initiatives (Huber, 2022). This manifested itself, for example, in the suspension of the further development of the Swiss agricultural policy (BLW, 2021). It is in this context that the Swiss Federal Council decided to accompany the food system transformation through dialogues with society (Federal Council, 2020), following the recommendations of the OECD (OECD, 2021).

One of these societal dialogues was the Swiss Citizens' Assembly for Food Policy (BEP), which was supported by the Federal Council and initiated by civil society organizations together with academics (BEP, 2022). We look at the case study of the BEP to make a grounded contribution

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[1] This could be seen, among others, during the Swiss heat summers 2018, 2019 and 2022. In 2022, due to the heat and lack of precipitation, the livestock in the Alps could no longer be cared for (see, e.g., Reichen, 2022).

as to how we can best make use of assemblies' potential for sustainability transformations. The BEP was the first national citizens' assembly in Switzerland and took place from June to November 2022 on a national level with 80 randomly assigned citizens, giving them a say in the current clash of values concerning the sustainability transformation of the Swiss food system. Deliberative processes are widely regarded as essential to the development of sustainable environmental policies (Baber & Bartlett, 2005; Bäckstrand et al., 2010; Smith, 2003), but this has typically stayed within the confines of the dominant liberal system; The relevance of citizens' assemblies in the context of sustainability transformations has received little attention up to this point (Hammond, 2020a). Thereby, the experiences of the people participating in such processes matter. These experiences can be understood using ethnographic methods that allow for context-specific and intensive research (see, e.g., Boswell, 2021; Lang, 2008; Pearse, 2008; M. P. Pimbert & Boukary, 2021). I was part of the scientific board that accompanied the BEP and participated in it as an assistant facilitator. This provided an opportunity to use an ethnographic approach to gain insights into how citizens' assemblies can best drive a sustainable food system transformation, addressing the following questions: (1) How did the deliberative process in the BEP topic group "Environment A" evolve? (2) How was it experienced by the citizens and the facilitators, and what emerged from these contrasting experiences (hereafter, "emergences")? And (3) How can these emergences be explained (hereafter, "explanatory angles")?

First, I outline the conceptual framing and the context of the study. I focus on explaining my understanding of how deliberation and democracy are interlinked, and outlining different experiences with citizens' assemblies. Also, I describe the key features of the BEP and provide an overview of the current state of Swiss food policy. Second, in the methodology chapter, I describe my positionality and role in the study, as well as how I merged ethnography and Charmaz' (2014) constructivist grounded theory throughout data collection and analysis to gain my emergences and explanatory angles. Third, I address my research questions by delving into how the citizens and facilitators experienced the journey and what emerged from these contrasting experiences. To explain these emergences, I concentrate on contestation, expertise, and time as the main angles. Of course, these are not the only topics that were raised, but they seemed to have significantly influenced the BEP's potential to contribute to a sustainability transformation. Accordingly, their impact on citizens' assemblies is not entirely new (e.g., Bächtiger & Gerber, 2014; Böker & Elstub, 2015; Curato et al., 2013; Schäfer & Merkel, 2023), but has become even more obvious and urgent in the context of sustainability transformations (e.g., Hammond, 2020a; Machin, 2019; Ward et al., 2003). Next, I go on to contextualize my findings with current literature and other experiences with citizens' assemblies. I ask what can be concluded from the BEP's experiences concerning its democratic and transformative potential, and then apply my insights to the overarching question of how we can enhance citizens' assemblies' potential for a sustainability transformation of the Swiss food system.

2. Context, concepts, and definitions

Deliberation is a contested concept; There is disagreement about what it is and how it works (Bächtiger et al., 2018) and widespread skepticism about the usefulness of deliberation in real-world politics (Achen & Bartels, 2017; Brennan, 2017; Mansbridge et al., 2022; Shapiro, 2017). Also, the link between deliberation and democracy is not clear and widely discussed (see, e.g. Scudder (2021a)). The aim of this chapter is not to dive into the broad academic discussion on deliberation, but rather to briefly outline the history of deliberation in Western democracies and to clarify on which concepts my understanding of deliberation is based.

Next, I outline current experiences with citizens' assemblies. Last, I focus on the case study of the BEP. In doing so, I first outline the current developments in Swiss food policy to illustrate how the BEP is embedded in a wider social and political environment. Second, I explain the key characteristics of the BEP.

2.1 Democracy, deliberation, and citizens' assemblies

2.1.1 Deliberation and democracy

Deliberation as public reason and democracy is a universal concept; The practice of deliberation is old and many Confucian, Islamic, or indigenous cultures make use of deliberative processes (M. P. Pimbert & Boukary, 2021). For example, the African *palaver* is based on consensus-building and dialogues to resolve disputes (M. P. Pimbert & Boukary, 2021). As the BEP took place in Switzerland, I concentrate on deliberation in the context of Western democracies in the following. There, the study of democracy was largely dominated by realpolitik approaches in the 1960s (e.g., Schumpeter, 1974). These approaches are based on the assumption that because the masses are politically disinterested and apathetic, only a restricted form of democracy is feasible, and elites should rule (Böker & Elstub, 2015). As a radical normative counter-vision to these realpolitik theories, participatory and then deliberative democratic theories arose in the late 1980s (Böker & Elstub, 2015). Deliberative democracy focuses on the ideal of *deliberative legitimacy* resting on equal access, reasoned justification, and exclusion of coercion (Böker & Elstub, 2015). Early advocates of it argued that there is a public sphere (Habermas, 1992). Citizens may freely converse with one another in this public sphere in a morally justified and equal way to come to a rational consensus on decisions that would affect their lives (Habermas, 1984, 1996). As a consensus and common good-oriented point of view are taken, political legitimacy is created by the *power of the better argument* (Habermas, 1996). In this context, the *better argument* involves not only purely rational considerations but also questions of value or other forms of communication (e.g. storytelling, humor) (Habermas, 1996). During these free conversations among citizens, new ways of thinking and communicating that can challenge the dominant liberal political and economic systems might emerge, emancipating citizens to criticize institutions that do not live up to their normative standards (Hammond, 2020a). In sum, deliberation theory was routed in critical theory, as deliberation was thought to be able to counteract the prevalent liberal and elitist discourses in Western democracies (Dryzek, 1990, 2000). In doing so, the core of deliberation is not in reaching the objectively right outcome, but in going through a valid

societal process that leads to a consensus on a socially good and acceptable outcome that is *legitimate* (Lafont, 2019). Habermas understood this so-called *truth-tracing* process (Niesen, 2021) as a subjectless, decentered, and long-term process that takes place in a diffuse, albeit inclusive, way in the public sphere (Habermas, 2005, 2020).

In the 2010s, attempts were made to reform the deliberative ideal toward a more realistic and democratic form: Among other things, the scope of deliberative research was broadened to include factors other than rational arguments for the common good, such as self-interest, and the aim of consensus was loosened (Maier & Bächtiger, 2023). On this basis, deliberative tools such as citizens' assemblies emerged, translating the Habermasian approach into concrete, observable practices (Böker & Elstub, 2015). The assumption was that we can create ideal institutional governance innovation for deliberation that generate political outcomes that are legitimate (Williams, 2000). In doing so, the Habermasian *truth-tracing* process is realized face-to-face within a fixed governance setting in a short time frame. For some concerns, such as the clarification of citizens' preferences or the critical assessment of policy outcomes, this is helpful (see, e.g., Fishkin, 2018). However, we cannot expect such tools to be able to conclusively rethink and realign fundamental values and positions. As Lafont (2019) puts it, the "long, participatory road that is taken when citizens forge a collective will by changing one another's hearts and minds" cannot be cut short by deliberative tools, but at best supported. By acknowledging the deviation of citizens' assemblies from the original Habermasian approach, we can be clear about what we can and cannot expect from them.

Deliberative tools such as citizens' assemblies follow certain standards so that their quality can be assessed (Maier & Bächtiger, 2023). One example is the concept of deliberative capacity by Dryzek (2009). Deliberative capacity measures "the extent to which a political system possesses structures to host deliberation that is authentic, inclusive and consequential" (Dryzek, 2009, p. 1382), and can be applied to citizens' assemblies (see, e.g., Felicetti et al., 2016). Thereby, authenticity is understood as, among others, exhibiting reciprocity (Dryzek, 2009). At the core of reciprocity is the recognition of the values and perspectives of others, which means that the other side is perceived as offering an alternative viewpoint on the prevalent issues rather than making false claims (Dryzek, 2009). In practical terms, among others, this implies that the arguments of others are listened to respectfully and taken up (Scudder, 2021b). Reciprocity is therefore fundamental to deliberation, as it lays the groundwork for common solutions (Schonhardt-Bailey et al., 2022). The concept of inclusivity is about the diversity that can be found in a political setting (Dryzek, 2009): If the Swiss population, respectively its demographics, or its discourses are represented at the BEP, one can assume that the resulting outcomes are politically legitimate (Dryzek, 2009). Consequentiality means that citizens' assemblies must have an impact, which can range from concrete policy decisions to more latent or indirect effects (e.g. the empowerment of citizens) (Dryzek, 2009). If citizens' assemblies follow these qualities, they are assumed to generate legitimate outcomes.

Even though Habermas' decentered approach has been translated into concrete and assessable tools such as citizens' assemblies, they do not exist in a vacuum. This is reflected in the systemic approach to deliberation (Parkinson & Mansbridge, eds. 2013). According to this approach, deliberation is not only a discrete practice but also a communicative activity that occurs across multiple, interlinked sites, following the original Habermasian approach. For example, public deliberation on the Swiss food system is encouraged by, but not limited to,

the BEP. Innovations like citizens' assemblies are thus embedded in a wider public deliberation around food policy. This embeddedness raises the question of the role of deliberative practices *within* democratic systems (Scudder, 2021a). Habermas assumes that deliberation *per se* leads to legitimate political outcomes (Habermas, 2005). One possible conclusion is that democracy should always follow deliberative ideals (Scudder, 2021a). However, while consensual moments, where actors come together and reconcile differences, are considered important by deliberative scholars, there are other important moments as well (Saward, 2021; Warren, 2012). Civil disobedience, to give an example, is not a deliberative practice but can draw attention to democratic failures and is fundamental to achieving democratic goals such as justice (Saward, 2021). A well-functioning democratic system requires different practices and institutions to fulfill its functions and goals (Saward, 2021; Warren, 2012). In tune with this approach, the problem-oriented approach to deliberation (Saward, 2021; Warren, 2012) points out that the potential and form of, for example, citizens' assemblies depends on the local context as well as the goals that should be achieved (Saward, 2021; Warren, 2012).

2.1.2 Citizens' assemblies

Since the advent of the sustainable development paradigm, democratic participation in sustainability governance has become increasingly important (Hammond, 2020a). Accordingly, new forms of citizen participation have received attention at the local, regional, national and international governance levels (Hammond, 2020a). For example, the UN stressed public participation in decision-making in their *Agenda 21* on sustainable development (United Nations, 1992). In this regard, deliberation was seen as a promising tool that can meet the need for greater citizen participation while increasing the legitimacy of government in difficult, complex areas and informing decision-making (Bäckstrand et al., 2010). In combination with the deliberative turn that normative democratic theory took around the same time as the sustainable development paradigm emerged, the practical implementation of deliberation became increasingly interesting (Bäckstrand et al., 2010). Citizens' assemblies are one of these possible forms of practical implementation (Dryzek et al., 2019).

Citizens' assemblies are intended to strengthen and promote representative and direct democracy rather than to replace it (Farrell & Suiter, 2019). There are many old deliberative institutions such as the state-mandated village assemblies (gram sabhas) in India (Dryzek et al., 2019), the first assemblies were implemented in North American and European countries in the 2000s: A number of citizen assemblies have then proven to be effective examples of citizen deliberation, including the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly in 2004 on the revision of the voting system (Snider, 2007). Another example is Ireland's first national citizens' assembly that started in 2011 and layed the groundwork for deliberation on constitutional issues such as marriage equality and voting age. Since then, citizens' assemblies have been implemented at the local, national, and global levels. An example of the latter is the *Global Assembly* (Global Assembly, 2023), which developed recommendations for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in 2021. These and similar assemblies all involved bringing together a group of randomly selected ordinary citizens, representative of the broader population, to deliberate civilly and make recommendations about a particular issue. Thereby, citizens were supported by facilitators and involved expert inputs, public hearings, and other forms of information gathering. In doing so, they promoted democratic participation by empowering ordinary citizens to have a direct say in policymaking (see, e.g., Doherty et al.,

2020; Farrell & Suiter, 2019; Giraudet et al., 2021; Luskin et al., 2002; M. P. Pimbert & Boukary, 2021; Setälä et al., 2010; Snider, 2007). Hence, especially concerning their potential for citizen emancipation, citizens' assemblies are generally regarded as a superior form of deliberative tool (Böker & Elstub, 2015). In contrast to other examples of deliberation such as citizens' juries or deliberative polls, citizens' assemblies often have a higher degree of decision-making impact as, among others, they decide on final recommendations, take place during a longer time period and include a large number of citizens (Elstub, 2014).

In addition, citizens' assemblies are based on normative claims that inclusive participation, reciprocal justification, listening, respect, reflection, and openness to persuasion lead to legitimate democratic decisions (Dryzek et al., 2019). These main claims of deliberative theory are supported by empirical research on citizens' assemblies and other deliberative tools (Dryzek et al., 2019). For instance, in his analysis of group deliberation among university members, Neblo (2007) found evidence supporting several claims of deliberation theory – such as the hypothesis that deliberation alters group voting decisions. Moreover, experiences with the transnational Deliberative Poll (the "Europolis") have shown that, if the boundary conditions (e.g., professional facilitation) are set right, regular citizens are capable of engaging in high-quality deliberation and meeting their standards (Gerber et al., 2018). The researcher found that nearly 30% of participants were capable of providing sophisticated justification and engaging in respectful listening (Gerber et al., 2018). Although this ability varied across cultural backgrounds, they found no evidence that more skilled deliberators had a greater impact on how other people formed their opinions (Gerber et al., 2018). Another empirical study on a mini-public that focused on Vancouver's urban planning found that such tools can indeed supplement existing legacy institutions and practices: The assembly increased the democratic legitimacy of the city's planning process meaningfully (Beauvais & Warren, 2019). Other citizens' assemblies have in the past played a supportive role in environmental policy by bringing together a range of positions and mediating between them rather than negotiating them (see, e.g., Giraudet et al., 2021; Global Assembly, 2023; M. P. Pimbert & Boukary, 2021). In doing so, they have improved citizens' knowledge and awareness of the issue under discussion and demonstrated which policies enjoy public acceptance. However, as briefly outlined in the introduction, there are also critical voices about citizens' assemblies that question the extent to which the more critical roots of deliberation are reflected in citizens' assemblies (Böker & Elstub, 2015; Machin, 2023; Mouffe, 1999, 2005; Schäfer & Merkel, 2023), and whether they can truly contribute to a systemic sustainability transformation (Hammond, 2020a; Machin, 2022).

2.2 Swiss Citizens' Assembly for Food Policy (BEP)

2.2.1 Swiss food policy

The Swiss landscape is characterized by small-scale, livestock-based agriculture (Huber, 2022). Accordingly, three-quarters of Swiss agriculture produce animal products. One associates Switzerland with the typical idyll depicted on postcards, where cows and individual farmhouses can be seen in front of vast mountain landscapes. While the "farming family" is still deeply rooted in Swiss identity and culture, this timeless image gives little idea of how much agricultural policy has evolved over the past decades. After World War II, agricultural policy focused on increasing production, but with it, other issues such as the decline in the number of mainly small farms and environmental pollution increasingly became the focus of public discourse (Huber, 2022). In the late 1990s, the Swiss population voted on a decisive constitutional article that gave agriculture a multifunctional orientation, separating price and income policies (Huber, 2022). From then on, farmers received direct payments from the state that are tied to food security, but also to ecological and landscape conservation goals (hence the term "multifunctional") (Huber, 2022). Thus, the Swiss farmer not only feeds Switzerland today but has, for example, the societal task to maintain Switzerland's cultural landscape (Huber, 2022).

With the anchoring of agricultural policy in the Swiss constitution, the Federal Council became a central actor in the development of the sector: Every four years, the Federal Council decides on the next agricultural reform and thus on the future direction of the Swiss agriculture (Huber, 2022). The direct payments adopted in the first agricultural reform made Switzerland one of the countries that invest the most tax money in its highly regulated agriculture worldwide (OECD, 2015). Farmers are largely financed through these payments, which means they are theoretically no longer at the mercy of market powers, but of state policies (Huber, 2022). However, due to high market concentration along the supply chain, farmers in Switzerland are faced with low food prices and increasingly high input prices, so direct payments flow through them and provide profits to the agroindustry (B. Lehmann, personal communication, November 4, 2022; Huber, 2022). Accordingly, the SBV and - due to their co-dependence - the agroindustry have a unique position in politics, with a disproportionately high number of representatives in parliament and veto power, leading to unequal lobbying and exclusive, non-transparent ways of policy-making (B. Lehmann, personal communication, November 4, 2022; Huber, 2022). The policy-making sector is also largely dominated by men, which does not reflect the high level of responsibility that women take on in the field (R. Fuhrer-Wyss, personal communication, November 3, 2022). So the question is less whether Swiss agriculture should be supported, but how - and who has a say in that decision (Huber, 2022).

In recent years, agricultural policy has increasingly become a matter for the whole population: the number of referendums centered around agriculture has risen considerably since 2016, with ecological demands at their core (Huber, 2022). The most recent is the referendum for clean drinking water and the ban on synthetic pesticides in spring 2021 (Finger, 2021) and the abolition of mass factory farming in fall 2022 (Federal Council, 2022a). Although none of the referendums were accepted, they acted as a kind of agenda-setting, carrying environmental objectives into agricultural policy and emphasizing the need for a sustainability transformation of the food system (Huber, 2022). However, the latter is blocked from various sides on the

governance level. While parliamentary representatives of the SBV insist on reintroducing protectionist measures for the Swiss market and reducing the bureaucratic burden created by direct payments, others put a stronger focus on environmental aspects (Huber, 2022). The different actors cannot agree, which, for example, is why the next stage of agricultural reform (AP22+) was suspended in the spring of 2021 (Huber, 2022).

The suspension and subsequent weakening of the AP22+ is a symptom of a paralyzed democracy. Among others, the aforementioned referendums and their populist counter-campaigns have contributed to the polarization of society, creating an urban-rural dichotomy (Huber, 2022). This was further exacerbated by a politically and climatically hot year in 2022: A summer drought severely affected agriculture (see, e.g., Reichen, 2022), and the referendum on factory farming heated tempers. The latter was launched by an alliance of animal rights, agricultural and environmental organizations, and wanted to anchor the protection of farm animals' dignity in the constitution (Federal Council, 2022a). It was opposed by the SBV, who mobilized large parts of rural Switzerland (SBV, 2022). Also, the Ukraine-Russia war raised questions about Switzerland's dependence on the global food market and its self-sufficiency, as well as production costs due to soaring fertilizer and energy prices (Rabbi et al., 2023). In this context, the report "Future direction of agricultural policy" was published, which served as a starting point for the Federal Council to resume the political debate on the further development of the agricultural policy (Federal Council, 2022b). In the short term, measures to reduce the risks associated with the use of pesticides were already implemented through the parliament (Federal Council, 2023). In the medium and long term, the development of AP22+ is intended to broaden the agricultural policy to a more systematic food policy, including consumption (Huber, 2022). Thus, while the need for a *systemic* transformation was acknowledged, we are at the beginning of a longer policy debate on the future direction of Swiss food policy in a heated environment (R-sw).

The Federal Council's *2030 National Sustainable Development Strategy* foresees that the debate on the future direction of Swiss food policy is accompanied by dialogues with a representative group of affected people (Federal Council, 2020), following the recommendations of the OECD to make better policies for food systems (OECD, 2021). As one of these dialogues that integrate the voices of citizens in the turning point of food policy, the *Federal Office for Agriculture (FAOG), the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO),* and the *Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN)* have taken on the patronage of the BEP. The BEP was an initiative of civil society organizations together with academics and took place in Switzerland from June to November 2022 (BEP, 2022). As the first national but temporary citizens' assembly, it was contested. It was delegitimized from its very beginning by populist frames: The SBV and the right-wing party *Swiss People's Party (SVP)* described the BEP as a "shadow parliament" in the political (Swiss Parliament, 2022) and public discourse (Häne, 2022). This reflects an elitist view of citizens' assemblies: The competence of citizens to participate in the political process is questioned, arguing, among others, that current democratic institutions sufficiently enable citizen participation (Niessen, 2019; Rangoni et al., 2021). Thus, not only the future of the food system is currently contested, but also the question of who should have how much direct say in the Swiss democracy.

2.2.2 Key characteristics of the BEP

In the following, I will describe the most important features of the BEP. Unless otherwise stated, the description is based on the knowledge I gained during my participation in the process as an assistant facilitator (e.g., briefing sessions, discussion with organizers, meetings with citizens), as well as the BEP's concept paper (BEP, 2022). The BEP aimed to contribute to the sustainability transformation of the Swiss food system by giving a representative sample of the Swiss population a voice in the current food policy debate. Its leading question was retrieved from the goals that the Federal Council set within its national sustainable development strategy (Federal Council, 2020), and was: "What should a food policy for Switzerland look like that will provide everyone with healthy, sustainable, animal-friendly and fairly produced food by 2030?" (BEP, 2022). 85 citizens deliberated on the question in ten groups that dealt with one of the topics of health, environment, economy, production, or social issue (based on Fanzo et al., 2021). Thereby, the BEP was part of the wider project *Food Future Switzerland* (Biovision, 2022). Next to the BEP, the project involved a panel of thirty scientific experts working on the Swiss food system that formulated a second set of recommendations on food policy independently from the BEP. Both sets of recommendations were jointly presented at a national *Food Summit* in February 2023 to inform the current food policy debate.

The **organizational structure** consisted of a consortium made up of the *Biovision Foundation*, the basic-democratic association *Landwirtschaft mit Zukunft* and the multistakeholder network for sustainability solutions *SDSN Switzerland* (Fig. 1). The latter is a UN initiative for the implementation of the SDGs in Switzerland with strong scientific roots (SDSN Switzerland, n.d.). The former two advocate for a social, peasant, and agroecological transformation of food systems (Biovision, n.d.; Landwirtschaft mit Zukunft, n.d.). The BEP's process design and implementation were outsourced to the organization *Collaboratio Helvetica*. The organization has a high level of facilitation competence and is committed to a Swiss social transformation in line with the SDGs (Collaboratio Helvetica, n.d.-a). The search and selection of participants was the responsibility of the independent market and research institute *DemoSCOPE* (see below). Additionally, a scientific board of trustees accompanied the BEP and conducted research on it together with researchers from *ETH Zurich*, the *Centre for Democracy Aarau (University of Zurich),* and the think tank for citizens' assemblies *Citizens' Democracy*. Finally, the FAOG, the FSVO, and the FOEN had the project's patronage. They invited the citizens to the process together with the consortium, giving the BEP additional legitimacy and reach. Also, they financed the BEP together with numerous foundations, namely *Minerva, Drittes Millenium, Fourfold, Mercator Schweiz,* and *Nachhaltige Landwirtschaft* (BEP, 2022).

The **process** was based on Otto Scharmer's (2009) *Theory U*, which seeks to enable collective transformation processes. Central to these processes is that the people involved connect to a deeper knowledge level within themselves and the collective to generate new intentions. The application of this theory was innovative in that it had not been applied to citizens' assemblies before. *Theory U* was adapted to the deliberative process and broadly structured in three phases (Fig. 2): The first phase, which we called "learning phase" at the BEP*,* involved listening to different perspectives on the issue with the aim to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the system. Instead of assuming that the problems and solutions of an issue are already known (what *Theory U* refers to as downloading past patterns (Scharmer, 2009, p.

39)), the emphasis was on putting aside preconceived notions about other opinions and ways of thinking by keeping an open mind to opposing arguments and contrary evidence. In doing so, *Theory U* recognizes that knowledge is connected to people's experiences, worldviews, and ways of thinking: It stresses the importance to engage in empathic listening, and to begin to see and feel the world from the perspective of another person or group (Scharmer, 2009). The second phase was about reflecting and exploring what can emerge from what has been learned (listening phase). According to *Theory U*, it is decisive to create an open-minded space in which something new can emerge from the holistic perspective gained on the issue (Scharmer, 2009). In the last phase, we became active: visions and intentions were crystallized based on the knowledge gained (deliberation phase). Thereby, dialogues were at the process' heart (Bohm & Weinberg, 2004). During the dialogues, citizens presented their different perspectives on an issue one by one, following three basic rules: Expressing themselves in the first person ("I"), speaking with intention, and listening with attention. This promoted learning by seeing an issue through someone else's eyes and getting a new sense of the broader ecosystem that the discussed issue is part of. Both, *Theory U* and the dialogues were tools that *Collaboratio Helvetica* regularly worked with. They were adapted for the process, as not all participants were familiar with the approaches and first had to learn them.

The **unbiased selection of participants** was ensured by *DemoSCOPE*. In total, a pool of 300 interested participants was recruited from March until June 2022 in a two-stage process. First, a pool of interested participants was recruited by contacting passers-by in front of grocery shops in randomly drawn locations, which were quota-based according to the language region and urban-rural typology of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (Federal Statistical Office, n.d.). All persons aged 16 and over living in Switzerland were eligible. A representative selection of the Swiss population was then drawn from the pool of interested people based on gender, age, language, and settlement type (BEP, 2022). Thus, descriptive (Mansbridge, 2000) as opposed to discursive (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2008) representation of the Swiss population was aimed for. During recruitment, people were asked about their political interests, political activity, closest political party, the highest level of education, and citizenship. These variables were not part of the quota-based random selection of citizens, but care was taken to avoid biased overhangs in the sample. Since it was difficult to recruit enough people in person, additional participants were recruited via the *DemoSCOPE's* community, which consists of approximately 60'000 offline and online recruited persons[2], to fill quota gaps. Finally, 85 participants agreed to come to the start weekend. Despite over-recruitment by *DemoSCOPE,* the goal to recruit 100 participants could not be achieved. Reasons were limited resources, several people not responding to the invitation to the start weekend, and the organizers prioritizing a balanced representation of the Swiss population over achieving the targeted number of participants. To minimize barriers to participation, costs for travel, childcare, and accommodation were covered, and a symbolic contribution of 500 Swiss Francs was paid. Finally, the participants were randomly assigned to the BEP's ten topic groups.

One **facilitator** and one to two assistants accompanied each of the ten topic groups. The former was a paid professional. The latter had no facilitation background and worked voluntarily, thus having an intrinsic motivation to learn more about the food system or deliberation. Facilitators led all meetings with citizens, while assistants were responsible for the protocol, technological

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[2] See https://demoscope-community.ch/ (Accessed on 21/03/2023)

matters, fact-checking, and learning journeys, in addition to providing general support to facilitators. The (assistant) facilitators' neutrality was central to the process, and stressed by the implementing organization *Collaboratio Helvetica* as well as the consortium during the training and briefings. This meant, among other things, that the facilitators were not to make any substantive contributions to the discussions, were to express themselves carefully and in a non-judgmental manner, and were to maintain strict neutrality also during breaks and informal discussions. Furthermore, the discussions in the working groups were confidential. The facilitators' main task in the learning phase was thus to instruct the dialogues inclusively. In the deliberation phase, they also helped citizens write the recommendations (e.g., time management, pointing out unprecise sentences, fact-checking by assistant facilitators). There was a briefing session for each meeting to ensure consistency of the process across all groups. In addition, a debriefing session allowed feedback from the citizens to be collected and integrated into the process.

The **expert panel** of the *Food Future Switzerland* project supported the citizens by providing expert input. Scientists were chosen for inputs in contrast to stakeholders to avoid anecdotal findings and give an overview of the systemic picture. The expert panel was composed of more than thirty scientists who are working on the Swiss food system. The panel constituted itself: Scientists could apply to participate, whereby *SDSN Switzerland* ensured that all Swiss universities were represented. **Stakeholders** were covered by learning journeys and panels during the start weekend. The speakers at the panels came from organizations and associations representing different parts of the supply chain, such as consumers, farmers, the food industry, and retailers, as well as different interests, such as the environment and health. Next to expert presentations, citizens were allowed to address questions to experts at any time during the process on a website set up specifically for this purpose.

Learning journeys allowed the citizens to gain practical experience from people who contribute to shaping a sustainable food system. All participants of the BEP visited one to three out of ten projects, farms, or companies of their choice during the summer break. The journeys were selected by *Biovision* in consultation with the Federal Council. The aim was to cover the greatest possible diversity of forms of production (e.g. conventional, organic, agroforestry), organization (e.g. solidarity, cooperative), and products (e.g. animal, plant) as well as regions. Not only food production but also processing and gastronomy were included. Only projects, farms, or companies with a pioneering and broadly defined sustainable character were considered for selection as the journeys should lead to something innovative and sustainable.

Finally, the **outcome** of the BEP was a set of non-binding recommendations. Their direct political implementation was not expected or sought, as the BEP had no official mandate or legal authority. The structure and number of recommendations were not determined in advance. The dissemination took place during a press conference, a meeting with parliamentarians during the winter session, and a public event of the *Food Future Switzerland* project with 300 actors along the supply chain in February 2023.
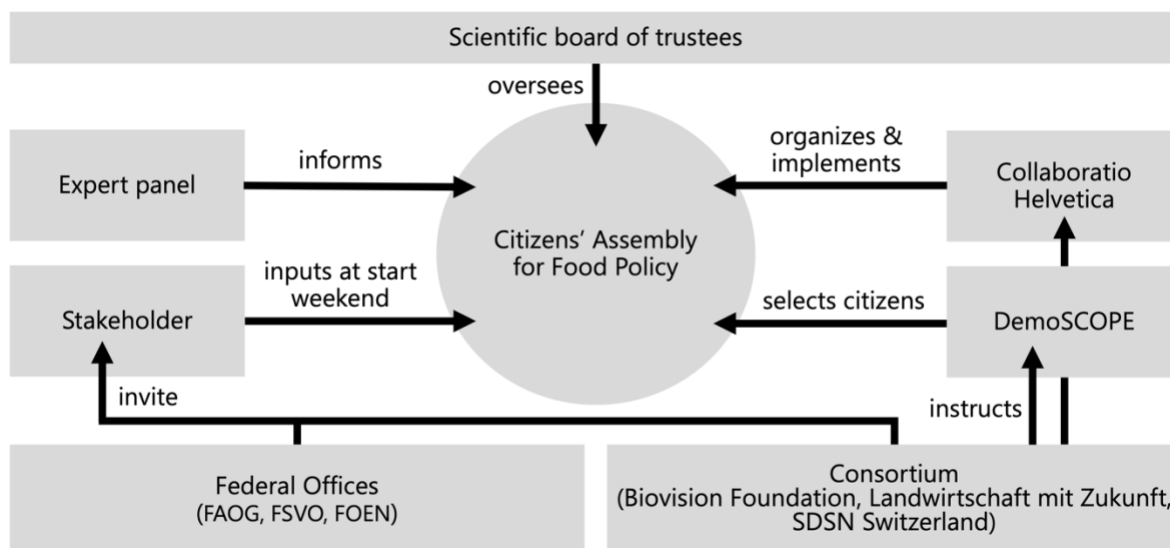
Figure 1. The organizational structure of the BEP (based on BEP (2022)).
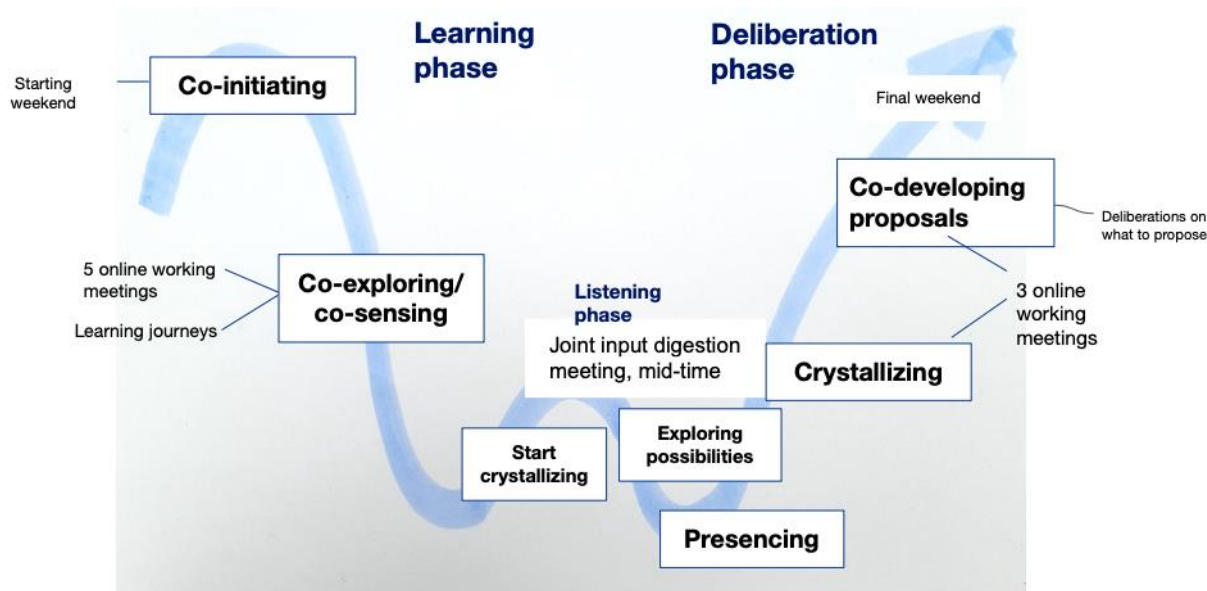
Figure 2. Application of Otto Scharmer's (2009) *Theory U* to the BEP process. The figure displays the three phases of the process: The learning, listening and deliberation phase. The blue process flow shows the different steps of *Theory U* and which meetings were part of it. *Co-Initiating* was about initiating the BEP together at the start weekend. *Co-exploring* and *sensing* meant gaining a holistic understanding of the Swiss food system by listening to and acknowledging other citizens' and experts' experiences, worldviews, and ways of thinking. *Crystallizing* described the elaboration of the BEP's main transformational needs and the subsequent development of initial ideas for recommendations during the fifth online meeting and the mid-term workshop. *Presencing* described connecting with the group's inner source of knowledge and recognizing what can emerge from what was learned. Finally, *co-developing proposals* meant the elaboration of recommendations (WS-ft).

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Table 1. Overview of the BEP process and the goals of the individual meetings (adapted from WS-ft to what happened in the group "Environment A").

Learning Phase (June – Sept., incl. summer break)	Starting Weekend	• Launch initiative. • Bring everyone on board, get to know each other. • Create a shared understanding of the BEP, of the process and of the Swiss food system in general.
	Online Meeting 1	• Explore each topic to create a shared understanding of the big picture and of the challenges associated with it.
	Online Meeting 2	• Explore and become more aware of the interconnections between the different topics the various working groups are working on.
	Online Meeting 3	• Look at some possible measures that could help address challenges/problems. • Identify which questions remain open. • Take an helicopter view/Look back at everything we have heard so far and see what are the most relevant issues for transformation of the topic/what needs to shift.
	Learning Journeys	• Gain practical experience. • Learn about the opportunities and obstacles that sustainable and pioneering projects/farms/companies encounter and incorporate them into the recommendations.
	Online Meeting 4	• Integrate the learning and insights from the Learning Journeys. • Explore further questions that have been identified: possibility to have an exchange with an external person to address the questions that the group has (bottom-up approach).
Listening Phase (Sept. – Oct.)	Online Meeting 5	• Exchange between both working groups working on the same topic. • Identify the main areas of convergence and areas of exploration that are potentially different between both groups. • Identify questions still to be asked to the stakeholders. • Prepare for the mid-way workshop.
	Mid-term Meeting	• Identify main needs for transformation. Cluster and prioritise them collectively in order to create a joint sense of ownership for the recommendations. • Generate/brainstorm on potential solutions & recommendations. • Identify synergies & tensions.
Deliberation phase (Oct. – Nov.)	Online Meeting 6	• Integrate the learnings & new perspectives from the mid-term workshop. • Continue to develop draft recommendations per theme.
	Online Meeting 7	• Experts on policy making come to the meeting and give their feedback, have a discussion with the group. • Refinement of the recommendations, also integrating the feedback from the other groups.
	Online Meeting 8	• Define the recommendations, with backing explanations, that the group will put forward to the citizens' assembly at the closing week-end
	Closing Weekend	• Fine-tuning of the recommendations. • Final voting on the recommendations. • Closing & celebration

3. Methodology

In this section, I provide a brief overview of my positionality as well as my role in this research. The goal of the former is to make clear what values and ideas are central to this work. The goal of the latter is to provide transparency about my background and how this influenced the research.

I then show how I combined ethnography and Charmaz' (2014) constructivist grounded theory during data collection and analysis to be in line with my positionality. I outline how and why I combined these two methodologies. Before explaining how these approaches manifested themselves in the data collection and analysis, I outline the subset of the larger BEP population I looked at. Last, I discuss the limitations of this approach.

3.1 Author's positionality and role

3.1.1 Author's positionality

My research was inspired by Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is „*Research for Action, Action for Research*" (Egmose, 2015, p. 12). Research should lead to action that addresses social issues, which requires that it is not done about, but with, for, and by the people concerned (Egmose, 2015). My thesis' overarching question is how citizens' assemblies can best contribute to a sustainability transformation of the Swiss food system. This question asks how we envision democracy and sustainability in the food system. It cannot be separated from the Swiss people, or its local context. Consequently, my research is grounded. The BEP was a living lab in which we could enact a democratic instrument for short-term and quick basic-democratic solutions and learn together. This makes my research neither objective nor generalizable (Geertz, 2008). The goal was not to achieve objective truth but to refine the debate by adding a thoughtful reflection on a citizens' assembly from multiple viewpoints. Thus, I might not have been able to create legitimacy through my proximity to the BEP, but credibility (Patton, 2014). In sum, my research is inherently people-centered and focused on learning from the concrete.

PAR means recognizing new forms of knowledge (Egmose, 2015). By actively participating in the BEP, by doing *action for research*, I gained access to other forms of knowledge than those that normally limit conventional research methods. I acknowledged different sources of intelligence, for example, intuition and bodily knowledge (Brack, 2011; Gardner, 2011; Machin, 2018). I created knowledge using my mind, but also my body (by bringing my body into the deliberative process; see, e.g., Lemozy (2019)) and feelings (by doing autoethnography and accessing my intuition; see Chapter 3.2.1 and, e.g., Cartron (2003)). In addition, I saw myself, the citizens, and (assistant) facilitators as co-producers of knowledge; My task was to puzzle together the different experiences to a greater whole (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). In doing so, I acknowledge that deliberation research needs to go beyond the situated and usual dominant head-based knowledge of mostly "white, old men" (as theorized by Haraway, 1988). I value a less reductionist and more humanized science in which the interpretive authority over what

counts as true is more broadly distributed in our society and not based solely on the analytical mind.

Valuing a less reductionist and more humanized science goes hand-in-hand with a reflection of scientific objectivity. The nature of my work is interpretative (Gibson-Graham, 2014) and depended on me, as my presence affected the people observed, and I was affected by them (Patton, 2014). My data is based on my own "staging" and my own two eyes and ears. Thus, my data are neither "pieces of reality" (positivist illusion) nor are they pure constructions of my own mind (subjectivist illusion), but "objectified traces of 'pieces of reality' as selected and perceived by the researcher" (Olivier de Sardan, 1995, p. 4). This is in line with multiple criticism to the idea of scientific objectivity, referring to, among others, the relativity of all viewpoints (Rosendahl et al., 2015). Especially feminist scientific traditions have given emphasis to researchers' roles and influences on the actors they interact with and their research in general (Rosendahl et al., 2015). For example, the feminist scholar Haraway (1988) argues for a new understanding of scientific objectivity. Situated knowledge is central to this, which means that knowledge is always produced and understood within a social context. The philosopher Harding (1991) agrees that scientific claims are always socially situated, but goes a step further by calling science "politics by other means" (p. 10). On the one hand, the creation and dissemination of knowledge are never neutral but infused with power dynamics (Gibson-Graham, 2014; Harding, 1991; Said, 1978). On the other hand, science influences public life (Harding, 1991). This raises the question of who is and should be shaping science. For science to take responsibility for its social embeddedness, its supposed objectivity should be critically reflected and maximized through more rigorous standards (Harding, 1992, 1995). On such standard is that scientists should transparently discuss their social situatedness and its implications, what Harding (Harding, 1992, 1995) calls "strong objectivity". In sum, the objectivity claims of science are not only limited, but also mask its political nature and power dynamics. Accordingly, I wanted to create "socially robust knowledge" (Rosendahl et al., 2015, p. 18) by reflecting critically on scientific objectivity and following principles of "strong objectivity".

3.1.2 Author's role

I held multiple roles: On the one hand, I was involved in the BEP's implementation as an assistant facilitator because I was intrinsically motivated to support the project. On the other hand, for my master's thesis, I was part of the scientific advisory board that accompanied the BEP. Thus, I acted as an assistant facilitator, but also as a participant and participatory observer and co-producer of knowledge. I took on these roles simultaneously but operated primarily as an assistant facilitator to the outside. In my supportive role, I was in the middle of the process without being dominant. This was a good starting point to conduct an ethnographic study. Accordingly, other researchers also participated in the participatory or deliberative process they were studying (see, e.g., Boswell, 2021; Egmose, 2015; M. P. Pimbert & Boukary, 2021). I could get to know people naturally, gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics in place, and create data by supporting the process rather than disrupting it. My social characteristics additionally helped me to conduct my research: I am a young, 25-year-old, female student. Therefore, I feel I was not intimidating and could easily build relationships with people (see, e.g., also Cartron, 2003). Ultimately, my role allowed me to explore not only the citizen perspective (although limited as I was not a citizen myself), but also the facilitator perspective,

which added another layer of depth to my analysis. Therefore, while it was challenging to bring these roles together, they allowed me to approach the BEP from different angles.

In line with the principles of strong objectivity (Harding, 1992, 1995) outlined in my positionality, I want to reflect my own social situatedness at the BEP and make it explicit. Besides my role and demographics, my activist standpoint was the most important position that influenced my research. I have a clear position on the Swiss food system, on which I speak out in an activist way: I am committed to the Swiss agroecology movement and have been active in the climate justice as well as anti-racist movement on various occasions. Sustainability and justice issues as well as a radical transformation of the food system are therefore important to me. I was not an external and distant observer of the BEP, but someone having a stake in the issue. However, I was asked to not express my critical thoughts on the food system during the BEP, as this would have been in conflict with my role as assistant facilitator. We were asked by the implementing organization *Collaboratio Helvetica* to maintain strict neutrality during the process in order to not influence or even manipulate it. I made great efforts to meet this concern and, as the interviews with citizens showed in retrospect, I also succeeded in doing so. Still, my activist position influenced my observations and feelings during the BEP. I acknowledged and valued this subjectivity while minimizing it where needed. Concerning the latter, I engaged in constant reflexivity during the data collection and took care to distinguish between the data collected directly from the interactions at the BEP and my own derivations from them. I also openly discussed my activist standpoint and role with citizens and facilitators *after* the BEP to reflect together on whether and how I might have influenced the process. Concerning the former, I incorporated my more radical and activist perspective into the analysis, adding a fresh, perhaps confrontational, but grounded perspective on the BEP and creating a more holistic picture of the people's diverse experiences. This is consistent with strong objectivity since it employs a logic of discovery that starts with the critical potential that, among others, activists display.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

3.2.1 Methodological and theoretical framework

The methodological framework builds on two pillars: Ethnography and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Ethnography is a qualitative research method in which researchers aim to understand a culture or process through the eyes of their study subjects by conducting extended fieldwork (Fetterman, 2010). Constructivist grounded theory is a method that helps researchers to gather and analyze qualitative data to construct theories based on the data themselves (Charmaz, 2014). Other studies have successfully integrated the two approaches (see, e.g., Bamkin et al., 2016; Beautyman & Shenton, 2009; Hoare et al., 2012; Pettigrew, 2000). While being different in many aspects, both approaches are constructivist, can be used to understand people's thoughts and behavior, and aim to find insights through experiences in an open-ended way instead of proving a pre-conceived theory (Bamkin et al., 2016; Williamson, 2006). Constructivism acknowledges that somebody's truth is a creation of the person's perception of the world (Charmaz, 2014; Williamson, 2006) – thus my analysis of the BEP is a construction of it. The constructivist approaches of both methods enabled me to be consistent with my understanding of scientific objectivity while providing guidelines for

methodlogcial rigor and ongoing reflection. In doing so, the two methods enrich each other: Simply put, grounded theorists can benefit from ethnography by helping them better understand the experiences of their subjects as they live it, while in the reverse grounded theory can help ethnographers streamline their fieldwork and produce insightful analysis (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). In my case, I conducted ethnographic participant and participatory observation while contributing to the BEP through my work and my presence. Ethnography was my method, while grounded theory helped me to streamline my data collection and served as a tool for data analysis and interpretation.

I modified the grounded theory approach so it would fit my research goal and context. I chose *constructivist* grounded theory because it fitted my positionality and goals best; it allowed me to work based solely on my data (in contrast to a predefined analytical framework) and focus on gaining a deeper understanding of the object of inquiry (Bücker, 2020; Kühlmeyer et al., 2020). The approach is multi-step and iterative, almost a research philosophy, to build a theory grounded in data. However, it can not always be implemented fully in reality. Accordingly, Charmaz and Mitchell (2001, p. 161) point out that "methods are only a means, not an end". Other studies have adopted the approach to fit their contexts (see, e.g., Franz, 2018; Gromala, 2019). My master's thesis had a limited scope and time and lacked iterations and data to form a theory. Thus, I used the approach to make a *grounded description* of the BEP rather than building a theory; It enabled me to gain my emergences and explanatory angles in an open process.

Weak theory (Gibson-Graham, 2014), thick description (Geertz, 2008), and autoethnography (Adams et al., 2017) were the theories underlying my thesis. Weak theory means remaining open to what can be observed and taking responsibility for the performative nature of science by acknowledging that strong theories shape the way we see the world (Gibson-Graham, 2014). For example, Gibson-Graham (2014) refers to capitalocentrism as a strong theory that leads us to view economic practices through the lens of capitalism, ignoring important nuance and diversity. Despite the overview research I had to do for my proposal, I accordingly dove into scientific theory only after collecting data so as not to limit myself to dominant theories from the outset. Thick description recognizes that ethnography and grounded theory is an interpretive act: My task was to disentangle the meaning of the experiences of the citizens and facilitators. Quantitative data or merely descriptive protocols cannot capture that meaning in all its complexity, as they fail to provide a holistic description of what happened. In contrast, I carefully thickly described everything I felt, saw, heard, and said during the BEP by writing thorough memory protocols. Last, what I see and feel is strongly dependent on how I am at the moment. To address this, I have combined autoethnography with a intuitive intelligence method (Brack, 2011; Gardner, 2011). Autoethnography is a blend of ethnography, which is the study of a cultural experience through observation and participation, and autobiography, which is writing about oneself (Adams et al., 2017). It fuses the personal and cultural: The goal was, among others, to interpret and think more broadly about how cultural aspects and my positionality might have influenced my experiences at the BEP (Adams et al., 2017). In doing so, Brack's (2011) method helped me to access intuitive information: When doing my memory protocol after a BEP session, I first applied a centering technique and then inquired into my heart (simly put: emotions), my head (analytical mind), and my hara (belly-feeling) to understand what I felt and thought about the respective session. This added another layer of depth and a further perspective to my analysis.

I chose this framework as it enabled my to stay open-minded and arrive at a comprehensive picture of the BEP. Also, it complemented the work of the other members of the scientific board of the BEP. I gained insider knowledge on the whole process which others were lacking. As an assistant facilitator, I accompanied the citizens through all the ups and downs of the process, living through the full range of emotions from curiosity to frustration and joy. This was valuable as compassionate participation can lead to additional insights (see, e.g., Cartron, 2003). It also enabled me to learn about sensitive topics that citizens might not talk about in interviews (Patton, 2014). More practically, it allowed me to make sense of different actions as I understood their context (Patton, 2014). For example, a citizen's act of recounting votes after a poll can be interpreted in several ways. It can mean that the citizen, being inclusive, ensures that all fellow citizens were able to successfully cast their votes. It may also mean that the citizen, driven by distrust, suspects that the vote was manipulated. Researchers working posteriorly with protocols will find it difficult to ascribe meaning to the exemplary act of recounting votes. In contrast, I had sensitive knowledge of the topic at hand via impregnation (Olivier de Sardan, 1995; Patton, 2014). Additionally, during interviews, I could explore new insights about our experience together with the citizens and facilitators, or make tacit knowledge explicit (Faulkner & Becker, 2008). Thus, being part of the BEP informed my whole research, from data collection to the interpretation of it, producing insights that are not open to outsiders (Cartron, 2003; Faulkner & Becker, 2008; Olivier de Sardan, 1995). My insider knowledge is not more truthful or accurate than outsider knowledge, but an important addition because it compassionately expresses the experience of those who have "lived through" deliberation in all its complexity (Adams et al., 2017).

3.2.2 The topic group "Environment A"

I was the assistant facilitator of the assembly's topic group "Environment A" - one of the two groups that dealt with this topic. My work focuses on this group and does not necessarily reflect others. I chose this group because I had the most prior knowledge on the topic "Environment". This helped me to put discussions among citizens into a broader context and to check peoples' statements for accuracy. Eight citizens were part of my group (see Tab. 2). Halfway through the BEP, my group was merged with the five citizens of the "Environment B" group. Thus, when I refer to "citizens", I am referring to the citizens of the two "Environment" topic groups. I assigned names to the citizens to personalize quotes and make the dynamics of my group easier to understand for the reader. To make the names easier to remember, I linked them to the person's profession or a character trait. However, it is important not to reduce the person to his or her name. All the citizens in my group were multi-faceted and rich in character. Next to the citizens, I worked with my co-facilitators from the two environmental groups, as well as the larger team of (assistant) facilitators. When I refer to "facilitators," I am referring to the entire facilitator team unless stated otherwise. I sometimes distinguish between the assistant facilitators versus the whole facilitation group, as these two groups differed in terms of their background and role in the process. In sum, the experiences on which this work is based are those of the citizens of the two topic groups "Environment", as well as the (assistant) facilitators.

The methods were approved by the Ethics Committee of ETH Zurich (EK 2022-N-125). At the start weekend, I asked my group for their approval of my research. They were informed that I

will analyze the common group process and will later ask them for interviews, but will prioritize my role as an assistant facilitator during the process. I referred to my research activities and their purpose but did not make a "big deal" out of it as requested by the organizers to prevent citizens from feeling that they are being observed (Patton, 2014). To be fair towards citizens, I agreed with my co-facilitator that I would not take notes during non-public group discussions unless they served the collaborative process and were communicated (e.g., meeting protocols, flip charts). No written consent was obtained from the citizens, as it could have influenced the sensitive process. The same applies to the interviews, where the citizens were informed about the use of the data for scientific purposes only and gave their verbal consent.

Table 2. Overview of citizens in the "Environment A" group, as well as the citizens of the "Environment B" group who joined our group starting from the listening phase (based on PO-sw,om1-8). The occupation and gender are indicated next to the name I assigned to the person. In addition, the academic background describes whether the person is currently studying respectively has completed an university degree. The age categories refer to adulthood and are divided into three levels: young (under 35 years old), middle-aged (35 to 50), and old (over 50). The citation number describes the number assigned to the individual's interview for citations (see Appendix A). Wulf and Levi left the assembly and were thus not interviewed.

Group	Name	Occupation	Gender	Academic background	Age category	Number
A	Tess the teacher	Teaching assistant and former hairdresser	Female	No	Old	1
A	Gabi the gardener	Mailwoman and home gardener	Female	No	Old	2
A	Reto the retailer	Retailer	Male	No	Young	3
A	Stuart the student	Student	Male	Yes	Young	4
A	Achim the academic	Retired from economic development	Male	Yes	Old	5
A	Enno the engineer	Machine engineer	Male	Yes	Old	6
A	Colin the cook	Food processor and former cook	Male	No	Middle-aged	7
A	Wulf the *Wutbürger*	Business owner	Male	No	Middle-aged	-
B	Amy the activist	Retired	Female	No	Old	8
B	Ingo the intellectual	Lawyer and consultant	Male	Yes	Old	9
B	Edy the economist	Consultant	Male	Yes	Middle-aged	10
B	Fanny the farmer	Farmer	Female	No	Young	11
B	Levi the lesser known	Unknown	Male	Unknown	Old	-

3.2.3 Data collection

During the first phase of the data collection, I did an ethnographic study. I entered the field as an assistant facilitator of the topic group "Environment A". As is usual for this work, I collected various overlapping forms of data (Olivier de Sardan, 1995; Patton, 2014): (1) Participant and participatory observation during the assemblies' four physical and eight two-hour online meetings (see Tab. 1). I was actively participating in the BEP while observing and conversing with other participants about what was going on. I documented my observations directly after the meetings - to not influence the BEP – in voice recordings. I reproduced what I observed before, during, and after the meeting keeping a broad focus, and using thick description and autoethnography. To be able to speak freely during the recordings, I only separated pure observations from my feelings and impressions during data analysis. I usually transcribed the records manually one to two days after the meeting, adding more digested thoughts but never deleting anything. During longer physical meetings, my observations were intertwined with informal interviews. Then, I collected data by writing in my field notebook in calm moments, which I expanded into proper field notes later. My observations amounted to over 150 pages of observations. I also collected (2) written sources, such as documents created in the role of facilitator. The latter include, among others, over 190 pages of protocols from the citizen meetings as well as facilitation debriefing sessions, which implicitly discussed and verbalized some of my experiences in a larger team. Additionally, I used (3) data provided by the BEP such as recordings of the expert presentations and summaries.

I cross-checked my observations via information triangulation (Faulkner & Becker, 2008; Olivier de Sardan, 1995). During this second phase, I reconstructed the deliberation process retrospectively by reflecting on it with the citizens and (assistant) facilitators. Other participant and participatory observation studies with similar time frames have used this approach: While the interviews, although plural, remain partial, they allow to add to and partially objectify the researcher's subjective experience (see, e.g., Lemozy, 2019). For this purpose, I took an interactive role and (4) conducted one-and-a-half to four-hour semi-structured interviews with the members of the two Environment topic groups (eleven citizens and two facilitators) using an interview outline (see Appendix B). I created the interview outline after the BEP, incorporating the initial findings from the process and iteratively adapted it across the different interviews. People could choose the interview location (four took place online and nine at presence). In addition, I organized (5) a two-hour face-to-face focus group with the assistant facilitator. I invited all, and nine out of fifteen came. The aim was to informally share our experiences. In doing so, we collectively collected topics on which there was a need for exchange and reflected them in an open conversation (see Appendix C). All meetings took place two to five weeks after the closing of the BEP and were voice recorded, resulting in approximately 1750 minutes of material that I manually transcribed.

Following the principles of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014), I gradually narrowed down my data collection. I focused my observations and interviews on themes that emerged from my observations. These were not based on my thinking alone, but the product of an implicit co-creation process. Although it was mostly not made explicit, citizens and (assistant) facilitators significantly influenced my research by sharing their reflections with me and pointing out themes that were important to them. With the citizens, for example, we looked back at our opinion formation and journey during the third online session. With the

facilitators, we had a debriefing after each session and additional extensive reflection meetings. Also, I asked citizens and (assistant) facilitators to co-produce knowledge through my open interview format. Along with numerous informal conversations, this process led to the themes on which my data collection ultimately focused. Thus, the data gathered for this work are the result of an iterative process in which I adapted my research focus to what emerged from the group.

The interviews contributed significantly to this process, as they helped me to check and add to the themes that emerged from my notes. During the interviews, both sides shared their experiences. Thus, they were a mutual exploration (Faulkner & Becker, 2008; Olivier de Sardan, 1995), a shared recapitulation of what we had experienced. Accordingly, I was not completely open-minded but had a theoretical orientation: The observations I found intriguing. I wanted to learn more about these (doing "member-checking," which is similar to theoretical sampling from Charmaz' (2014) constructivist grounded theory), but at the same time explore what questions and insights citizens formulate (which is close to Charmaz' (2014) intensive interviews). In doing so, I was not only open to what *I* had overlooked or under-analyzed but also confronted my interviewees with what *they* had overlooked, challenging both of our partial interpretations (see, e.g., Alasuutari, 1992). This approach was consistent with the emphasis on "strong objectivity" in my positionality (see Chapter 3.1.1 and 3.1.2). It triggered my self-reflexivity as well as that of my interviewees. Rather than hiding under the guise of scientific objectivity, it encouraged me to reconsider my opinions and values, and subject them to an open and rational debate. In doing so, I started the interviews with an open-ended question, giving the citizens and facilitators space to express their experiences with each stage of the process (see Appendix B). Depending on the response, I selectively incorporated my experiences and questions into the conversation. In doing so, I occasionally provided my own interpretation of events and pushed for a dialogue about it. This was possible since I had gotten to know the people I spoke with over the last six months, which promoted open and trustful talks. Also, I had solid data from which I could speak, grounding my sometimes provocative inquires (Charmaz, 2014). Last, I made the interviews as comfortable and close to an everyday situation of banal interaction as possible to reduce their artificiality and avoid a mining perspective (Olivier de Sardan, 1995).

3.2.4 Data analysis

The data analysis was based on constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). As a preliminary step, I coded all transcribed documents, protocols and written data provided by the BEP using MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2021). I quickly coded paragraphs inductively using topics and themes, as line-by-line coding is not a good strategy for very detailed and repetitive ethnographic field notes that already contain some level of interpretation (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). I then grouped my codes, which resulted in overarching themes. The overarching themes that were most frequent or that I thought had analytical value then informed the interview outline.

In a second step, I coded the interviews. I began by inductively coding the first quarter of the interviews line by line, resulting in 406 codes. I kept the initial codes as active, specific, and close to the data as possible, writing memos as I coded. The focus on specific actions helped me to focus on what was happening in the data. According to Charmaz (2014), this can limit

the tendency to adopt existing theories or not be open to one's own ideas that emerge while coding the data. Thus, the goal of initial coding is not to code the data as "correctly" as possible, but to code for possibilities suggested by the data. The codes crystallized what I learned from my data and what meaning I gave to it. Still, coding was an interactive exercise: I interacted with the citizens' perspectives not only during the BEP and interviews, but many times afterward as I transcribed and coded my data and kept reimagining what we experienced together from different perspectives. In doing so, my codes included, for example, how citizens felt, but also how they recalled their experience and how they explained it to themselves. For example, in the coded interview excerpt below (Fig. 3), a citizen explained to me why she lacked the knowledge to participate in the deliberation phase. The codes include her descriptions of her feelings ("blaming herself for not being able to participate"), what she experienced ("having no time to dive deeper into topic") and several codes capturing her explanations (e.g., "being generally slow in digesting information").

The initial coding gave me direction and preliminary ideas to explore. The next step was to identify focused codes to further develop my analysis and process the larger data set (Charmaz, 2014). This meant deciding which codes made the most analytical sense to fully categorize the data. To obtain focused codes, I compared and grouped the initial codes that occurred in the different interviews during the multiple stages of the BEP process, and again wrote memos. This resulted in overarching themes and/or codes that kept coming up or had analytical importance. For example, the codes from the interview excerpt below (Fig. 3) were replicated in other interviews, and I later assigned them to the overarching themes of how time and expertise affected the BEP process. In doing so, my focus emerged from my participation in the BEP, which brought some themes to my attention and gave them more weight in the data collection and analysis. For example, I became aware of the academic process framing during the BEP due to different events, which later became the explanatory angle "expertise". On the other hand, the statements of citizens and (assistant) facilitators underscored the analytic importance of some themes by repeatedly bringing them up in the interviews while discarding others. This included themes that I was not previously aware of, such as some citizens' perception that the process was too focused on progressive rather than conservative issues, which I coded as "Complying to a progressive framework". As a result of this interplay, I established fifteen focused codes that I used to code the remaining interviews per paragraph. Finally, I merged the relevant codes that emerged during the preparation of the interview outline with the focused codes.

My focused codes yielded the structure of my results. While doing the focused coding, I iteratively developed, merged, and regrouped my focused codes, which ultimately resulted in seven codes: "Becoming a social family", "Diluting the recommendations", "Approving unbalanced participation", "Complying to a progressive framework", "Focussing on harmony" (later renamed to agonsim), "Framing expertise" (expertise) and "Running against the machine" (time). I realized that the former four codes answered my second research question (What emerged from the contrasting experiences of the citizens and facilitators?), while the latter three addressed the third research question (How can these emergences be explained?). Thus, the emergences as well as my explanatory angles were derived inductively from the data and provided the sceleton of my results.

As suggested for ethnographic data (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Williamson, 2006), I created diagrams for my further analysis. I made a mind map with the programm Xmind (XMind, 2022) for each of my seven focused codes based on the information contained in the coded paragraphs and my interpretation of them, and interlinked information between mindmaps (see, e.g., Fig. 4). I made sure to include as much information as possible contained in the coded paragraphs in my mind map, noting where the information came from (e.g. interview, participant oberservation). I dedicated a subchapter to each mind map in my results by first putting the entire mind map into written form so as not to lose any information and later working out the most important points. If I included quotes, I translated them from German to English. I then compared my observation with the work of other researchers, iteratively reflecting on my results. Therefore, the final work is the result of my data and an iterative process.

For transparency and traceability, it was important to me that it is clear to the reader what information or idea I gained from what data (e.g., did an insight result from an interview or participant observation? How many citizens and (assistant) facilitators supported an insight in their interview?). For this reason, I worked out a coding scheme that I used for citations (see Appendix A). For example, if a statement is followed by "I-p2", this means that I obtained the insight from an interview ("I") with participant number two ("p2"). If, on the other hand, the source is "PO-om1", this means that I made the statement based on participant and participatory observation ("PO") in the first online meeting ("om1").
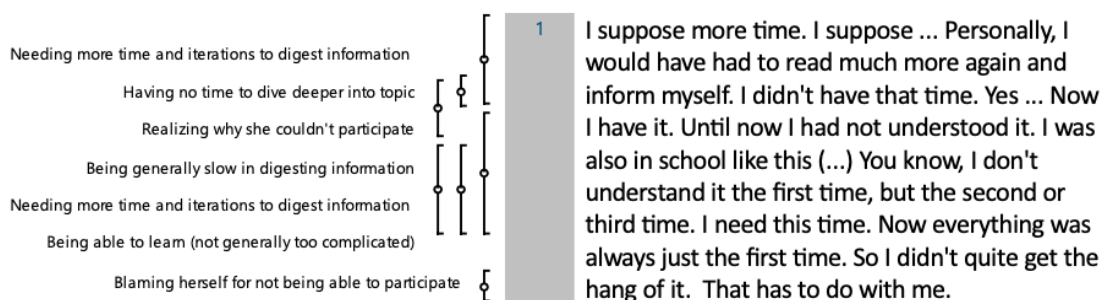
Figure 3. Example for initial line-by-line coding from the interview with Tess, in which she explains to me why she lacked the knowledge to participate in the deliberation phase (I-p1). Examples of codes are displayed, as well as the initial interview data to be coded.
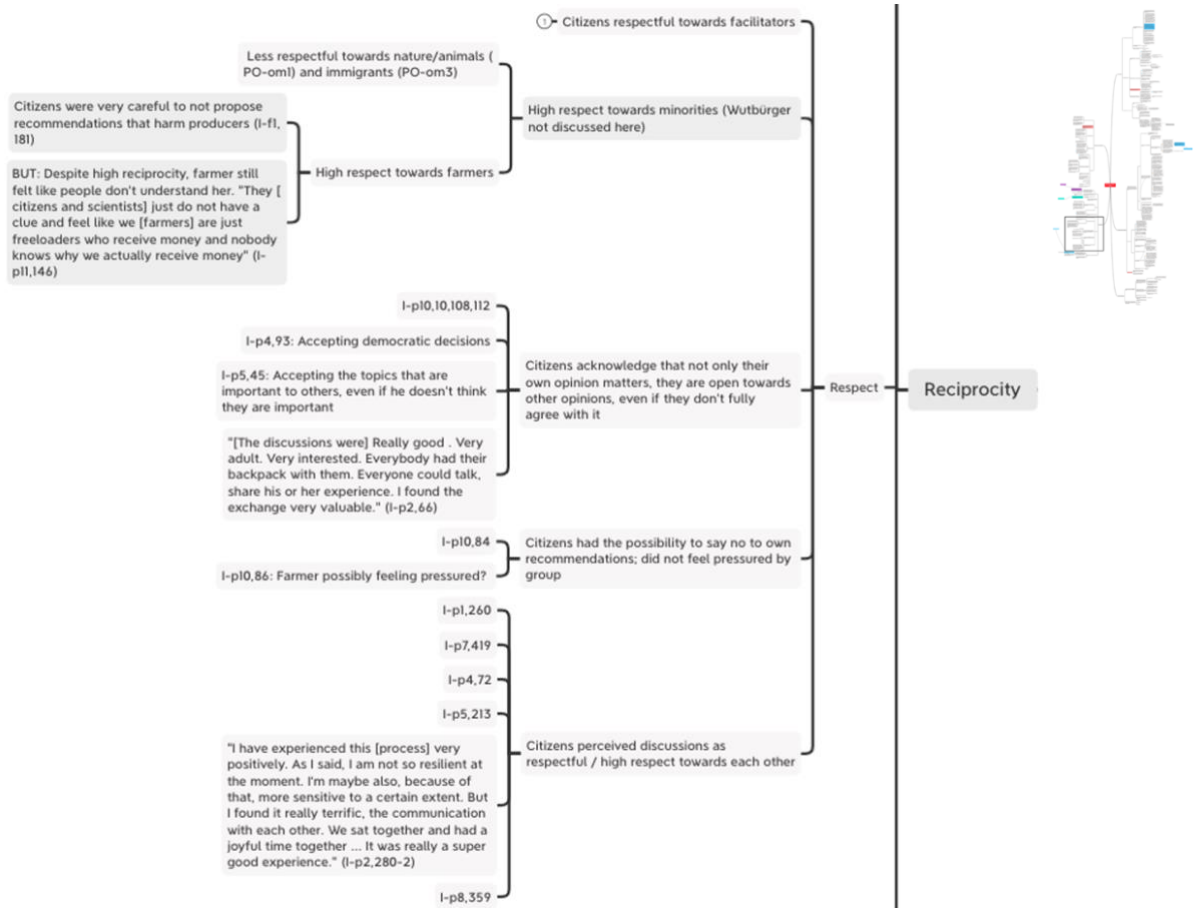
Figure 4. Example of a part of the mind map for the subchapter "Becoming a social family" (see Chapter 4.2.1). On the top right the whole mind map can be seen with the enlarged part marked with a black square. The mind map includes the information contained in the paragraphs that I coded with the respective focused code, and my interpretation of it. I have marked information that link to other focused codes with color.

4. Results

The first part of the result section is a brief description of the BEP's different process phases and how the discussions in my group have developed with regards to our recommendations. This should help the reader to set into context my findings. The second part is based on how the BEP was experienced by the citizens and the (assistant) facilitators. I focus on what emerged from these contrasting experiences. These "emergences" are four key topics that stimulated conversations, engaged the people involved, and made me curious. They were derived by applying constructivist grounded theory and inductive coding (see Chapter 3.2.4). Third, I ask how these emergences can be explained. I used three different explanatory angles - namely contestation, expertise, and time - to do justice to the process' complexity and create a more comprehensive picture. Again, I derived the explanatory angles from grounded and inductive coding.

This chapter is based on my observations during the deliberative process of the "Environment A" group, and the interviews I conducted with the (assistant) facilitators and the eleven citizens of the two "Environment" groups (see Chapter 3.2.3). Thus, when I talk about "citizens" I mean the eleven citizens that were part of these two groups and stayed until the end of the process. This included Tess the teacher, Gabi the gardener, Reto the retailer, Stuart the student, Achim the academic, Enno the engineer, Colin the cook, Wulf the Wutbürger, Amy the activist, Ingo the intellectual, Edy the economist, Fanny the farmer and Levi the lesser known (see Tab. 2). The interviews with the citizens were semi-structured, so I had a different discussion focus with each citizen. In the following text, I indicate by source ("I-p", followed by the identification number of citizen(s); see Appendix A) and/or in written form how many citizens supported a statement or idea in the interviews. However, if I write, for example, that two citizens made a certain statement, this does not mean that the other nine were against it. It is possible that the topic did not come up in the interview with the other nine or they had no clear opinion. If a citizen opposed a certain statement or had a different experience, I mention this in the results.

4.1 Deliberative process in the topic group «Environment A»

In the following, I briefly describe the various process phases that my group "Environment A" went through and how our discussions around our recommendations developed to make it easier for the reader to analyze and contextualize my insights (see Tab. 1 for an overview over the process). As noted at the end of each of the following paragraphs,, the chapter is based on my data collected through participant and participatory observation, as well as the protocols I wrote during my group's meetings and the (de)briefings with facilitators.

4.1.1   Start weekend

The **start weekend** took place in a formal setting in Olten, Switzerland, and brought together 85 citizens and 25 (assistant) facilitators (Fig. 5). The goal of the weekend was to launch the initiative, and create a shared understanding of the BEP's process and the Swiss food system. Also, longer breaks allowed the citizen to get to know each other and share initial thoughts. The first part of the program focused on the process. Its principles (e.g., dialogue principles) as well as its embeddedness and relevance to science, policy, and youth participation were briefly outlined by short presentations. Citizens had time to exchange within their group on the process and group work. The second half focused on the food system. First, citizens discussed within the group what is important to them in terms of their topic. Then, there were two rounds of 5-minute inputs from each of five stakeholders. They were followed by a longer panel with time to ask questions. Also, citizens did individual journaling to integrate the knowledge. In the end, citizens shared their main take-aways from the weekend within their group and the plenary during the synthesis (WS-sw).

A majority of citizens in the "Environment A" group expressed that they were looking forward to learning from each other and challenging their own opinions during the first exchange on the process. While four citizens said they wanted to assert their influence on policy boldly and ambitiously, the group's main talking point was the citizens' interest in the group process and in questioning their opinion and behavior. The first exchange on the topic "Environment" was very broad, ranging from food waste, health, education, and energy to meat consumption, crop diversity, genetic engineering, and incentives. While some topics, such as food waste or consumer education and awareness were core concerns for most citizens present, others were controversial. Most of the controversy was generated by a citizen who took a polemical stance. Due to his behavior, I named him Wulf the *Wutbürger*, which is German and expresses an often politically right-wing citizen who is disappointed in politics and expresses this fiercely in an angry or rude way (Duden, n.d.). During the stakeholder inputs, opposing perspectives were presented to the citizens. Accordingly, a citizen pointed out during the synthesis that he became aware of the challenge of finding existing solutions that would convince the population while reconciling the diverse needs of the stakeholders. At the synthesis and in three informal conversations, citizens of my group expressed that they feel overloaded by the complexity and controversy of the topic "Environment", as well as all the information they had received so far, needing time to digest them. We discussed that they learned a lot, but that their new knowledge is not yet tangible (PO-sw; H-sw).

Figure 5. The citizens' assembly at the start weekend in Olten, Zurich (CH). Citizens heard presentations from scientists, policy makers and practitioners on food policy. © Ernährungszukunft Schweiz, Photographer: Caroline Krajcir

4.1.2 Learning phase

The learning phase took place over four two hours online sessions on Zoom within our topic group "Environment A", and aimed to explore different perspectives on our topic. The rationale was to create the same knowledge base for everyone and allow citizens to gradually take on more responsibility. **The first three meetings** began with expert inputs (see Tab. 3 for an overview) of approximately fifteen minutes, followed by a Question and Answer (Q&A) session. In the second half, the participants reflected on the experts' input, first individually (five minutes), then in small groups in break-out rooms (twenty minutes), and finally in plenary (twenty-five minutes). Reflections on the expert inputs followed the dialogue principles which are part of *Collaboratio Helvetica's* toolbox (Expressing yourself in the first person ("I"), speaking with intention, and listening with attention; see Collaboratio Helvetica (n.d.-b)). The reflections were based on these questions:

1) What struck you?
2) What does this mean for the topic of our working group?
3) What should/could we explore further?
4) What questions does this raise?

The questions thus aimed at gathering citizens' perspectives on the expert input and integrating them into the "big picture" of the group's topic. The facilitator and I were only present at the plenary. There, I was responsible for the harvest: I made notes on the key insights that emerged and summarized them on a Miro board that was freely available to all members of the BEP. Citizens were invited to look at this board and give feedback if they felt like the harvest was flawed. During the third meeting, we also summarized our key learnings and issues before the summer break. In doing so, citizens reflected in two successive ten-minutes

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dialogues on how their perceptions of the issue evolved and which issue they see as most relevant to food system transformation (WS-om1-3).

The main harvested points during the first meeting, which aimed to create a common understanding of the topic "Environment", were that a sustainable food system requires a change in diets (less meat, more plant-based) and a reduction of food waste. Citizens discussed that livestock plays an important role in mountainous regions and in closing nutrient cycles on farms, but that it should be reduced to sustainable levels. There was already a relatively high agreement at the first online meeting on the issues mentioned. However, there was controversy in the approach to the identified problems, especially related to the tension between incentives and bans. The second meeting explored interconnections between the groups' topics. Half of my group's citizens expressing dissatisfaction with the expert input. Four of the seven citizens present pointed out that they did not gain many new insights. Accordingly, the group came to similar main conclusions as in the first meeting. During the third meeting, which aimed to explore possible measures, consumer education and awareness emerged as a new theme in the harvest. This was a concern that had already been expressed by a majority of my group's citizens during the first exchange on the topic of "environment" at the start weekend, and was also brought up by this meeting's expert input (H-om1-3; PO-om1-3).

Controversy during the learning phase arose primarily between Wulf the *Wutbürger* and the rest of the group. For example, during the third meeting's plenary exchange, citizens agreed that improving education in schools could be an important lever for recommendations. Only Wulf expressed criticism towards this lever, as he considered it problematic to instrumentalize children. Wulf was also the only one who openly objected to the experts in the Q&A sessions. For example, during the first online meeting, he questioned the contribution of livestock to climate change, respectively climate change in general. In terms of the group dynamic, my co-facilitator and I observed that the rules of dialogue were gradually better internalized and that the discussions were reciprocal by the end of the third meeting. However, we observed that citizens engaged with expert inputs, self-reflection, and dialogues to different extents. For example, during the plenary session, a part of the group focused their comments on new insights from the expert inputs, while others returned to conclusions they had drawn previously. Also, some citizens followed the dialogue principles, while, for example, Wulf had difficulties to speak and listen with attention (H-om1-3; PO-om1-3; RN-om1-3).

Learning journeys took place during the summer break to get to know concrete projects with a pioneering character (WS-lj). The group visited seven different journeys overall (Fig. 6). The journeys started with a guided tour of the site, followed by a Q&A session. After lunch, citizens exchanged on what they had learned in small groups and shared the results of their discussions with the larger group. Also, they individually reflected on how these results might be relevant to their group's topic (PO-lj). At the **fourth online meeting,** citizens shared their insights on the journeys in a twenty-five-minute plenary dialogue. Next to it, I presented a synthesis of the harvest so far – the key ideas, topics and questions that I summarized after each online meeting on our Miro board. As the learning phase was coming to an end, the goal was to have a common understanding of the key take-aways. We revised and adapted the synthesis together. It was accepted by the citizens, except for Wulf the *Wutbürger*. He stated that he "recognizes himself at best partially in what was said" (H-om4, 4), and was not able to recall

that the group had talked about some of the topics presented. The facilitator then asked Wulf if he could phrase his comment positively and how he wanted to adapt the synthesis, to which Wulf did only partly respond. Achim, in contrast, said he recognized the formulated topics and ideas, and suggested two minor changes, which were accepted by the group. Due to time constraints, we had to move on soon after, although the dispute with Wulf was not settled. During the next program item, citizens took a more active role and entered into an open forty-five-minute plenary dialogue with an expert of their choice to clarify remaining questions (Tab. 3). In the end, we further updated the synthesis. From the reflection of the learning journeys, we newly added, among others, the idea of improving the boundary conditions for innovation. From the reflection of the expert input, we refined some existing ideas, such as that a change in societal eating habits toward less meat could be accompanied by a promotion of legumes. We also included topics that came to the fore in public discourse during the summer in connection with the Russia-Ukraine war, such as the Swiss dependence on the international market. This time, Wulf contributed his ideas constructively. Still, he stated that the synthesis did not reflect his priorities at the end (H-om4; PO-om4).

The updated synthesis included meat consumption, food waste, site-adapted agriculture and education, as well as, among others, incentives, seasonality, price of food, land use, self-sufficiency, gastronomy, dependence on the international market, genetic engineering, and innovation. All in all, we ended the learning phase with a wide range of topics, without explicitly agreeing on topics to prioritize. Also, we discussed the topics to varying degrees and had varying degrees of consensus on them. The topic of food waste, for example, already had a high level of consensus during the start weekend. It was discussed repeatedly in subsequent sessions, based on insights from the expert inputs that included food waste. In contrast, genetic engineering - although it also came up repeatedly - was not dominant in either the expert inputs or the dialogues in the plenary sessions, and conflicting opinions on it were not clarified (H-om4; PO-om4).

Figure 6. Citizens at the learning journey in Ticino (CH), which was part of the learning phase. After a guided tour of the terrain, the journeys also focused on reflecting key-insights in a small group. © Ernährungszukunft Schweiz, Photographer: Caroline Krajcir

Table 3. Input givers' organization in the topic group "Environment A", the goal of their input and the topics they covered (based on WS-om1-8). The topics are derived from the presentation slides of the expert inputs.

Meeting	Goal of the input	Expert's organization	Topics covered in presentation
Online Meeting 1	Creating a common understanding of the big picture of the topic "Environment".	Food Science and Management, University of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences (HAFL), Bern	Environmental impact of intensive and extended land use; Overuse of natural resources; Nutrient inputs (nitrogen/phosphorus); Greenhouse gas emissions; Pesticide use; Environmental impact of consumption and diet.
Online Meeting 2	Becoming aware of the connections between the different topics that the groups are working on.	World Food System Center, ETH Zurich	Overview of agricultural policy actors; Overview of sustainable food systems, including key challenges on the pillars "Natural Resources and Environment", "Agricultural Production", "Processing and Trade", "Consumption", and "Nutrition and Health".
Online Meeting 3	Exploring possible measures that could help address the challenges discussed.	Food Science and Management, University of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences (HAFL), Bern	Carrots and sticks; Education and information; Consumption and production as entry points; Promotion of healthy and sustainable nutrition; Alignment of direct agricultural payments with positive environmental and climate measures; Reduction of biodiversity-damaging subsidies; Incentive taxes on the consumption and production side.
Online Meeting 4	Clarify remaining questions with chosen expert (a person from agricultural practice).	Life Cycle Assessment, Agroscope, Bern	No presentation.
Online Meeting 7	Give feedback to recommendations (in person).	Environmental Decisions, ETH Zurich	No presentation.
Online meeting 8	Give feedback to recommendations (in written form).	Agroecological Transitions, ETH Zurich	No presentation.

4.1.3 Listening phase

The listening phase was about reflecting and exploring what can emerge from what has been learned. In the **fifth online meeting**, an exchange with the other topic group "Environment B" took place. The two groups' syntheses were presented by a citizen each that volunteered, and citizens discussed key areas of con- and divergence. The next step was to vote on the syntheses' most important issues (WS-om5). The two groups were largely aligned. Accordingly, the vote was clear, with "food waste", "reducing meat consumption", "promoting the right incentives", and "promoting site-adapted agriculture" being chosen out of the eighteen issues. Each citizen had three votes. The prioritized issues received four to six votes, while other issues received only up to two votes. Still, at the end of the meeting, two citizens said they felt that they did not have time to make sense of what they were prioritizing. A second concern was that Wulf - although he had not voiced any objections during the meeting - subsequently left the BEP (H-om5). He wrote an e-mail, criticizing that the positions desired by the left-wing extremist organizers were prominently displayed in the citizen's presentation of the synthesis during the fifth online meeting, while less agreeable positions were sidelined. Also, among others, he generally criticized the lack of time during the process of prioritizing issues in line with the other two citizens, and justified his departure by saying that he does not want to support an eco-extremist farce (Wulf, personal communication, November 2, 2022).

Between the fifth online meeting and the mid-term meeting, the prioritized issues of each topic group were collected. A group of citizens and facilitators who volunteered then clustered the issues, deriving sixteen main transformation needs for food system transformation from it. At the **mid-term meeting**, the different topic groups first presented their prioritized issues to each other at booths. I observed that citizens valued feedback and were delighted to learn that topics not prioritized by their group were taken up by others, for example, education. Next, the group of facilitators and citizens presented the sixteen main needs for food system transformation to create a shared sense of ownership and allow for adjustments to be made (Fig. 7). The presented main needs for transformation were accepted by the assembly, with only minor adjustments. The last part of the mid-term meeting marked the beginning of the deliberation phase: A group of citizens gathered initial recommendations on each of the main transformation needs in a World Café in two rounds (PO-mm; WS-mm).

Figure 7. Presentation of the sixteen main needs for transformation that emerged from the citizens' assembly at the mid-term meeting in Lausanne (CH), which was part of the listening phase. © Ernährungszukunft Schweiz, Photographer: Caroline Krajcir

4.1.4   Deliberation phase

During the deliberation phase, the recommendations were elaborated and finalized in three two-hours online-meetings. From now on, the groups "Environment A" and "Environment B" were merged. The transformation needs were assigned to the different topic groups, with the environmental groups receiving the three themes "Site-appropriate agriculture and promotion of biodiversity", "Food waste reduction" and "Promotion of sustainable agriculture through financial incentives". The three themes were worked on in parallel in a Google Docs in three national languages, following a predefined structure (see, e.g., Tab. 4). Midway through the deliberation phase, an additional column was added to the recommendations' structure to accommodate minority opinions, aiming to prevent citizens from leaving the assembly. This decision was made due to ten citizens leaving the assembly. Their reasons for leaving were diverse, including health issues and new job opportunities, but at least three individuals left stating that their concerns were not sufficiently addressed. Further, citizens could choose to which theme they wanted to contribute, and were allowed to switch between themes during the meetings. They deliberated freely, with the facilitators supporting them in working in a goal-oriented manner. The guiding question was "What changes would we like to see in this theme so that food policy in Switzerland makes healthy, sustainable, animal-friendly, and fairly produced food available to everyone by 2030?". The organizers and facilitators stressed that the focus of the recommendations should be on what changes the citizens want to see and that they were not chosen because they are experts on food policy but because they represent different groups of Switzerland (RN-om6-8; WS-om6-8).

During the **sixth until the eighth online meetings,** we worked on recommendations based on the ideas collected at the World Café (mid-term meeting). Citizens were asked not to delete ideas if their authors are not present. Feedback was provided between meetings; citizens were encouraged to do so, and policy experts provided constructive oral and written feedback (see Tab. 3). The recommendations were translated in three national languages, making them

understandable for everyone. However, this made the recommendations messy, which was further exacerbated by the increasing number of comments in the document. Consequently, especially older citizens stated that they had difficulties to work on the Google documents. Additionally, citizens could visit another group during the seventh online meeting to bring their perspective to it, and to create citizen co-ownership over all recommendations. However, in retrospect, these exchanges did not work as the citizens were not able to familiarize themselves sufficiently with the new topic. In parallel, two of my group's citizens started to work on overarching guiding principles for the assembly due to a citizens' initiative (RN-om6-8; WS-om6-8).

I was in the group on site-adapted agriculture and biodiversity promotion. By the end of the sixth meeting, we had made sense of the recommendations of others from the World Café, spending the most time on those that aimed at reducing feed and livestock production (18 and 19 in Tab. 4). I found the discussions one-sided, as the citizens present – initially Achim, Edy and Enno, later Edy, Levi and Gabi - had a similar perspective. Five of the six citizens were elderly men with an economic orientation. Achim could not follow the discussions due to technical issues. Other happenings at the meeting were that two citizens wanted to make a contribution (an event note and a reflection on the assemblies' guiding question), but due to the tight process design, they could not be considered (H-om6; PO-om6). Also, Levi withdrew from the assembly after the meeting due to health-related reasons. During the seventh online meeting, Achim the academic and Fanny the farmer were with me. Thus, the citizens that had formulated the recommendations at the last meeting were missing. The exchange between Achim and Fanny was very constructive, with Achim doing most of the formulating but placing great emphasis on incorporating the farmer's opinion. Again, we mostly focused on the recommendations regarding the reduction of feed and livestock production as we wanted to ensure that the concerns of all citizens present were addressed before proceeding. I had no visitors from other groups. During the eight online meeting, Edy and Fanny joined my group, as well as Amy and Stuart who had not worked on this theme before. We approved pending recommendations and deleted many that were redundant. We also added two recommendations (20 and 21, Tab. 4). We could only partly incorporate citizen and expert feedback due to time constraints (H-om6-8; PO-om6-8).

In summary, the group discussions were characterized by few (two to four) and changing (due to illness, switches to other groups/themes, technical issues) perspectives, resulting in a "time-shifted" deliberation. My co-facilitator and I observed that arguments were often made from an expert perspective (based on personal experience in the field or factual knowledge). This made the discussions technical and rational. Accordingly, citizens repeatedly asked for an expert who can provide direct support as questions arise. Also, by the end of the deliberation phase, some recommendations were more developed than others: Some emerged in a single meeting, while others underwent several iterations. I observed that the general thrust of the recommendations on site-appropriate agriculture was welcomed by the citizens, but the recommendations were multifaceted when elaborated in detail and had a direct impact on Fanny's life. For example, citizens did not want to patronize farmers and at the same time adopt recommendations on their production. Another example is that they were unsure which crops could be cultivated in mountainous areas. Discussions thus focused on the recommendations on site-appropriate agriculture in the meetings. In contrast, the biodiversity recommendations were developed quickly (H-om6-8, PO-om6-8; RN-om6-8).

Table 4. Final form of the objectives and recommendations concerning the theme "Site-appropriate agriculture and promotion of biodiversity", as well as voting results (translated from German and adapted from BEP, 2023).

Objective	Recommendation	Yes [%]	No [%]
Site-adapted, reasonable land use (allocation to production zones: mountain, hill, valley area)	18. Successive reduction of feed production by 30% of the current farmed area by 2030 through a corresponding increase in plant-based food production, but without compensation through feed imports.	64.4	35.6
	19. Cows, goats and sheep, as well as chickens and pigs, should be kept in a site-adapted manner, namely in the hilly and mountainous areas, as well as in the lowlands where there are no alternatives (such as the cultivation of potatoes, corn, cereals and vegetables). In the other areas a successive reduction of livestock production should be aimed at.	86.4	13.6
	20. Farmers who want to implement (pilot) projects that contribute to site-adapted agriculture should be supported. This holds especially if they proactively work for a transition or improvement of standards, but do not have the financial means to do so. However, the total amount of subsidies is not to be increased.	88.1	11.9
Save red-listed animals, plants, etc. from extinction	21. Convert unproductive areas (are identified in the database) on agricultural land into biodiversity areas.	76.3	23.7
	22. Raising consumer and producer awareness of ecosystem fragility and low-threshold solutions for biodiversity conservation.	100	0
CO_2 reduction in food production, processing and logistics	23. Introduce a CO_2 tax on CO_2-intensive foodstuffs and use tax revenues accordingly.	57.6	42.4

4.1.5 Closing weekend

The final weekend took place in Zurich (CH). On Saturday morning, the citizens finalized the recommendations: The majority of my group worked together on pending recommendations. Citizens freely deliberated them with the support of the facilitator, while I adjusted the recommendations on a shared screen visible for everyone. The facilitators had previously flagged recommendations that overlapped with those from other groups. Thus, the remaining citizens discussed overlapping recommendations with citizens of other groups or read the recommendation catalog, providing feedback to other groups if they did not agree with or had questions concerning one of the recommendations. We finalized the recommendations very efficiently and reciprocally. There were only minor changes in my theme, except that we were able to formulate a recommendation for a CO_2 tax (23, Tab. 4). The idea for the recommendation came up during the World Café, but had not been discussed yet (PO-cw).

We spent the rest of the weekend voting on the final recommendations and their goals (Fig. 8). In total, 67 people voted on 137 recommendations. Due to the large number of recommendations, citizens could only briefly read the recommendations and decide if they would vote "yes" or "no". Citizens were encouraged to vote "no" if they had no clear opinion or open questions. We voted in theme blocks, whereby citizens had five minutes to read a theme's recommendations. Most citizens had not read the other groups' recommendations beforehand at this point. The vote was thus a reality check on how a representative set of the population feels about the recommendations. Generally, my group's citizens stated that they had a clear gut feeling but felt that some recommendations were unclearly worded or translated, or ambitious. Some of my group members voted against the recommendations they had helped to elaborate (in some cases they announced this during the elaboration, explaining that they take themselves back given the common goal). The "Environment A" group's citizen unanimously accepted twelve of our group's 28 recommendations. Of the 137 recommendations, 126 were accepted by the assembly and the rest was rejected. Of the accepted recommendations, 32 were accepted with over 50% of the votes, 88 with over 75%, and six with 100% (see BEP, 2023). Finally, there was a joint closing and aperitif with various emotional words from the organizers and participants (PO-cw).

Figure 8. Voting on the recommendations during the closing weekend in Zurich (CH). ©Photographer: Dimitri Brooks

4.1.6 Dissemination of results

The results were disseminated at three events attended by about one-third of citizens. First, at the media conference held the morning after the BEP's closing weekend, where the focus was on citizens' experiences since the recommendations had not yet been processed (PO-mc). The organizers left most of the speaking time to the citizens, three of whom were on stage. In addition, about one third of the citizens participated online or in person, so that additional citizens' perspectives and statements were fed into the conference. Second, a parliamentary meeting was held during the winter session, where citizens that volunteered discussed individual recommendations accepted with a high percentage with politicians. Two citizens from my group participated and expressed that they found it a very encouraging experience to discuss with politicians on eye level and to realize how much they learned (I-p7,8). Ultimately, both the results of the BEP and the expert panel that took place in parallel were handed to the government and presented to 300 stakeholders from along the supply chain at the *Food Summit* of the project *Food Future Switzerland* (PO-fs) in February 2023. Following the handover of the recommendations to the Federal Council and a keynote speech, the head of the expert panel presented the panel's process as well as the resulting recommendations in a fifteen-minute presentation. In contrast, the shorter presentation of the citizens' assembly was given by one of the organizers and focused on the process. No recommendations were mentioned. The next program point was, as stated by the moderator, dedicated to the question "which priorities measures are necessary from a scientific point of view and to what extent they are supported by a representative set of the population, the citizens' assembly" (SDSN Switzerland, 2023, 1:27:50). Accordingly, the experts presented their proposed transformation path and clusters of measures, while the citizens' recommendations were shown when there was overlap (see, for example, Tab. 5). This was followed by a discussion with representatives of the value chain about the recommendations. After the lunch break, individual recommendations of the citizens and the experts were discussed in more detail with the

stakeholders in twelve impact sessions. Finally, the organizers and the Federal Council emphasized that the transformation path of the citizens, the experts, and the Federal Council were largely aligned apart from the time frame: The focus was on moving forward together, but faster (PO-fs).

Table 5. Example of a measurement cluster "Cluster 12: Animal husbandry" of the expert panel of the *Food Future Switzerland* project as presented at the Swiss *Food Summit*. On the presentation slide, the measures of the expert panel were contrasted with the recommendations of the BEP that supported the expert recommendations. The percentage by which the citizen recommendation was approved in the vote was indicated in brackets.

Priority measure of the expert panel	Recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly for Food Policy
4i. Reduction of the number of livestock manure units from 3 to 2.5 in the Water Protection Act.	52. Number of animals must be adapted to the existing agricultural land: Reduce livestock manure unit per hectare. (76.3%)
4j. Adaptation of the Spatial Planning Act; No new soil-independent livestock facilities in intensive agricultural zones in the shortest possible time.	

4.2 Emergences

Here, I outline four key "emergences" that arose from the experiences of the citizens and (assistant) facilitators. I derived them inductively using constructivist grounded theory from my data of the deliberative process in the "Environment A" group (see Chapter 3.2.4).

4.2.1 Becoming a social family

Citizens appreciated the time they experienced together: Nine out of eleven citizens in the "Environment" groups said that their highlight of the BEP was the space for reciprocal encounters it provided and the prevailing atmosphere of appreciation that peaked during the deliberation phase (I-p1,2,4-10). The high level of reciprocity is illustrated by the comment of Gabi, who was struggling with personal issues during the BEP:

> I have experienced this [process] very positively. As I said, I am not so resilient at the moment. I'm maybe also, because of that, more sensitive to a certain extent. But I found it really terrific, the communication with each other. We sat together and had a joyful time together … It was really a super good experience. (I-p2,280-2)

Gabi commented that she greatly appreciated sharing with the group, despite being sensitive at the moment. She later described that the high reciprocity contributed to a sense of unity with other citizens (I-p2). This sense of unity seemed to hold true not only for the "Environment A" group, but the entire assembly: On several occasions, such as the media conference or online meetings, individual citizens from different groups described the BEP as a "social family" united across language barriers (I-p7,8; PO-mc,mm,cw; RN-om4,6,cw). These descriptions of the BEP were passionate, and my group was more moderate in parts; Four citizens expressed a more pragmatic view of the BEP despite greatly valuing the exchange with others (I-

p1,3,6,10), and Fanny and Wulf expressed no sense of "family" at all (P-11, PO-om5). Still, the BEP's description as "social family" recurred repeatedly and reflected its high reciprocity that contributed to a sense of unity. Also, it was often brought up in connection with the desire to move forward together despite great diversity and differing opinions (I-p7, PO-cw,mc). For example, when I asked Colin why he was touched by the closing weekend, he explained that he was moved by how the "family" managed to focus on a common path:

> It was hearty. It was like a family. We all want the same thing. We want a change. Each in our way, according to our personalities and everything. There were a lot of warm-hearted people. And they do it all voluntarily. (I-p7,429)

Colin valued that the BEP made fruitful moments outside of the usual bubble possible, which raised his hopes for the future (I-p7). Six additional citizens of the "Environment" groups expressed their appreciation for working constructively together toward shared goals (I-p1,2,4-7,10). At the closing weekend, another citizen remarked vividly that for the first time he had witnessed a diverse group that, instead of making excuses, had found solutions (PO-cw). The focus on the common path contributed to citizens accepting other opinions and democratic decisions, despite the polarized food policy context and even if they did not always fully agree with each other (I-p2,3,4,5,9,10, PO-cw,mm,om6-8). Thus, although the citizens of the "Environment" groups were moved to different degrees by the high reciprocity and sense of unity, and there were exceptions, it is fair to say that the BEP had transformative potential as it created a window of opportunity for the formulation of political demands on a highly contested topic.

The facilitation team experienced the process similarly as the citizens, and reported a high level of reciprocity with the organizing team and citizens. All (assistant) facilitators I interviewed – and many more during the process debriefing - stated that it was a crucial experience for them to learn that it is possible to jointly develop recommendations for a controversial topic if the boundary conditions are set right (I-af,f1,2; RN-pd). In addition to the space for encounters it provided, the BEP was also described as transformative by the facilitators in that citizens took partial ownership of the process and its cause. Citizens took ownership of the process on several occasions (e.g., by adding the elaboration of guiding principles to the process, and making statements in the media). However, it was most evident at the media conference (I-af,f1), where citizens visibly stood up for each other and their work. For example, citizens declined to summarize their recommendations despite requests from the media for a much reduced set of information, acknowledging the complexity of the problem and the resulting diversity of solutions. They made a statement that if the media and politicians care about their voice, they need to take the time to read their message, as all aspects of it are important (PO-mm). To summarize, the citizens stood up for their common cause, giving an impulse that reflects a desire to move forward on food policy matters, which was strongly valued by the facilitators (I-af,f1; PO-mc; RN-cw).

In sum, the citizens' assembly contributed to creating a window of opportunity for positive change through its high reciprocity and sense of unity. This has manifested itself in citizens expressing their desire to move forward on food policy matters, for example, at the media conference. Still, the question remains as to what citizens exactly advocated for during the media conference and other moments of contestation. If the output of a citizens' assembly is

to contribute to the political discourse, the new "social family" needs to not only be united but also have clear demands. The unwillingness of citizens to provide a summary of their recommendations at the media conference could also be interpreted as a lacking clarity as to exactly what they are advocating, which I will explore in the following subchapter.

4.2.2   Diluting the recommendations

The assemblies' outcome indicates a possible food system transformation path that is perceived as positive by a representative set of the Swiss population. Ten out of eleven citizens expressed that they are willing to adapt to this path, for example, by eating less meat (I-p1-10). The recommendations are felt and sensed by the citizens, which is reflected in the fact that nine of them stated that their core concerns were addressed (I-p1,2,4-10). Thereby, five of them pointed out that the issues emerged from an interplay between the expert presentations (e.g. site-adapted agriculture) and what people already brought to the process (e.g. food waste) (I-p1,4,6,7,10). Also, while feeling closest to their group, eight citizens commented that the recommendations reflect the diversity of the BEP (I-p1,3,4-9). Nevertheless, citizens questioned the utility of the recommendations: On the one hand, two citizens worried that the recommendations were not feasible or already exist, and that their work would consequently not be taken seriously (I-p9,11). On the other hand, seven citizens subjected that the recommendations were not finished, focused on uncontroversial topics, or diluted (I-p1-5,8,9). Concerning the latter, for example, Reto pointed out that recommendations were kept on a general level in order to achieve the broadest possible acceptance:

> ... the whole process was somewhat watered down. ...There was little, in my view, that got to the point at the end. We want exactly that. In the end, the consensus was a bit: We do not want to hurt anybody, we have some suggestions here, do with it what you want. There are all formulated as friendly as possible so as not to attack anyone. (I-p3, 239)

Reto explained to me how he first made precise suggestions for recommendations. However, he had the impression that these proposals were watered down during the process as the views of other citizens were incorporated, or that the recommendations were kept at a general level from the beginning (I-p7). Thus, while the citizens were united behind their desire to move forward in food policy matters (see Chapter 4.2.1 "Becoming a social family") and formulated recommendations that reflect their core concerns, the recommendations remained diffuse.

A study by Lehner (in preparation) confirms the seven citizens' observation that the recommendations were not finished, focused on uncontroversial topics, or diluted: While the recommendations are broad and thus reflect the complexity of the food system, they remain at a reformative level. More stringent goals and clear wording were rare. Also, she analyses that the majority of the recommendations do not advance a more radical transformation of the food system that challenges the liberal-capitalist society but conformed to liberal-capitalist hegemony. Nevertheless, most recommendations are oriented toward social values and healthy diets, suggesting that citizens generally enjoyed normative discussions (Lehner, in preparation).

Assistant facilitators generally expressed a similar view of the recommendations as the citizens at the focus group (I-af): We also found the recommendations to be diluted but valued the positive thrust and dialogue that the recommendations generated greatly (I-af). Beyond that, however, we discussed that the recommendations do not reflect a sense of urgency (I-af). Many of us were closely connected to the issue of food policy through our backgrounds and felt the urgency with which the food system needs to be transformed. As one assistant facilitator pointed out, this was in contrast to the rest of the facilitator team, who had mostly a management or professional facilitation background (I-af); Thus they focused on the process, while the assistant facilitators were also emotionally connected to its outcome (I-af). Because of our neutrality mandate that was stressed by the implementing organization as well as the BEP's consortium, we were not able to carry the urgency some of us felt for the topic into the process (RN-mm). I hoped that it would be awakened in citizens in other ways. However, seven citizens explained to me that they intellectually understood the topic's urgency, but did not *feel* it during the discussions (I-p1,2,5,6,8-10). Consequently, I and the facilitators of my group observed that the issue remained stuck in the citizens' minds and was not embodied (I-f1,f2). I suspected this to be problematic, believing that the potential of the process cannot be fully realized if it remains too lifeless and non-urgent. I felt that we talked about simple levers that we could easily agree on, while difficult and serious issues were swept under the rug, such as large power imbalances in the food system. Consequently, I brought up my and other assistant facilitators frustration with what we saw as lifeless discussions in the interviews with the citizens. While five citizens appreciated that the discussions did not degenerate into emotional wrangling, but remained on a rational rather than emotional level (I-p1,2,6,7,10), at least three citizens acknowledged the impact of the citizens' lack of feeling of urgency when approached about it (I-p5,6,8). For example, a dialogue with Achim, the academic, helped me put into words my frustration, He first brought up the concept of *feu sacré*:

> Me: In any case, because of my background, I relatively often have relatively emotional discussions about our food with my family, friends, etc. And I've wondered how moving the discussions were that we had. … I have often found them relatively factual and somewhat distanced, and wanted to ask how that was for you.
>
> Achim: Yes, similar. Similar. [Thinks about it] Yes, similar. The feu sacré. I felt little [of it]. One who had a lot of sacré and brought it in, left again [Wulf the *Wutbürger*]. … He could get heated up on the thing, so to speak. But actually … it was more a bit of an outrage emotionality and less a constructive feu sacré.
>
> Me: Yes.
>
> Achim: And otherwise, from the others it was rather a distant listening, waiting, contributing. I was left with the same impression, yes. I also felt that way myself. … [I] started to be warmed up, excited, by the topic. But not in such a way that I really got going and started to bubble over [with new ideas]. It is also the connections in the brain that work differently when the feu sacré or something like that is triggered. Then it gets vibrant, then one word feeds the other. … [it is] generally rather fruitful. It seems to me that we actually never reached that level. That's something. Good observation. (I-p5,268-271)

Achim aptly points out that he did not perceive a *feu sacré* (I-p5). *Feu sacré* is French and describes an enthusiasm or passion, an almost physical burning, that enables one to continue a difficult activity that requires high personal commitment or even sacrifice (Planelles, 2018). It comes originally from the sacred fire that in some cultures in ancient times had to be maintained at all costs by the priests on the altar of the gods (Planelles, 2018). Thus, *feu sacré* would have meant that citizens would have been passionate about and resonate with the BEP's topic, and would have, for example, done extensive research on the topic in their scarce free time. Rather, Achim and I realized that the discussions remained rather "Swiss" - distant, neutral and objective - and thus less generative (I-p5). Accordingly, the recommendations might have remained superficial, which was contrary to the original motivation to be bold and ambitious that four citizens of my group "Environment A" expressed at the start weekend (H-sw). When asked about their initial motivation, they indicated that their feu sacré was initially present but was lost along the way (I-p1,2,4,7,8). One of the reasons given by three citizens and some assistant facilitators was that other more dominant citizens felt that the recommendations had to be realistic and acceptable to those currently in power in order to be implemented (I-af,p1,2,8). This is not to say that citizens did not take the BEP seriously: They volunteered and wanted to make a positive contribution to the transformation of the Swiss food system. The point I want to make is that while citizens were warmed up by the topic, as Achim noted, my group lacked a generative *feu sacré* that would have sparked far-reaching and lively discussions reflecting the urgency with which the food system needs to be transformed.

In summary, the people involved were proud to take a step forward: the recommendations indicate a possible transformation path that the population can get behind. Still, the full potential of the recommendations was possibly not reached, as they remained diffuse and managerial in nature. The discussions lacked a *feu sacré* that would do justice to the urgency with which the food system needs to be transformed. Citizens emphasized and valued above all the space for encounters that the BEP provided in the interviews (see Chapter 4.2.1), rather than the actual outcome, whose utility was questioned by half of the citizens interviewed in the "Environment" groups (I-p1-5,8,9,11). I thus came to the conclusion that the citizens were prouder of the *act of working together* on solutions, rather than the actual solutions. Next, the question arises if *all* the citizens can stand behind the recommendations. So far, I have reflected on the perspective of *most* citizens. I left the question open if everyone contributed to the recommendations in a balanced way and if the concerns of everyone have been addressed. I will look at these questions in the next two subchapters.

4.2.3   Approving unbalanced participation

The discussions were shaped by the group composition (I-p8) and individual participants, either because they had more knowledge or were dominant (I-p1-3,5,7,9-11; PO-om7,8). While all citizens acknowledged this unbalanced participation, nine of eleven citizens did not describe it as negative (I-p1-7,9,10). Rather, they judged it to be normal and unproblematic as long as no one is actively excluded. For example, Reto justified the unbalanced participation with the citizens' different levels of knowledge:

If you do not have to start from scratch but can say what's already given and where we still need to look, then you automatically put the focus of the group with your expertise a bit. But I do not think I necessarily perceived that as a negative. Rather, that's the thing that I missed a little bit. That expertise comes from the citizens. If by chance someone … has broad expertise, why should they not make a bit a greater input? (I-p3, 60)

Reto perceived it as positive for the process to involve people more that hold academic or practical knowledge (I-p3). Three other citizens explicitly supported that the strengths of the participants should be used to generate the desired output (I-p1,2,6). Accordingly, the citizens' proactive participation was supported by the facilitators (I-f1,2) – also because they observed that in our "Environment" groups, the dominance of some citizens in discussions was partly balanced by the fact that participants were able to contribute to different degrees during the distinct process phases (I-f1,f2). While some citizens were better able to, for example, process the expert presentations during the learning phase, others were able to contribute their practical knowledge during the deliberation phase (I-f1,p2,3,11; PO-om1-8). Similarly, while some individuals took the lead in formulating recommendations - such as Alchim and Ingo, who had academic backgrounds - other citizens, such as Tess and Gabi, expressed that they appreciated their proactive behavior (I-f1,2,p1,2,5,9; PO-om7). They preferred to provide feedback because they did not feel competent to formulate (I-p1,2). Thus, citizens contributed to the common goal of developing recommendations to the best of their ability, as one of the facilitators described: "We wanted to work together, and … everyone was committed to making that happen. That seemed cool to me considering the team spirit … everybody helped and every once in a while somebody took over who could do it better" (I-f1,146). In summary, the group supported unbalanced participation in the light of a high goal orientation.

Despite this general tenor among participants that unbalanced participation is acceptable or even beneficial to the process, concerns arose among assistant facilitators that the observed unbalanced participation indicates the reproduction of social hierarchies with the "white and academic man" at the top (I-af). Concerning education, citizens had to listen to lectures, reflect on them, digest the knowledge, and formulate recommendations - these were all academic tasks that required certain skills (PO-om1-4). We feared that this would lead to the privileging of participants with an academic background (I-af). These concerns were underscored by Tess and Gabi's statement that they felt intimidated by the reflection-heavy format during the learning phase because they did not have the necessary skills (PO-sw; I-p1,2), and by a third of my group's citizens stating that they did not feel able to contribute to the elaboration of recommendations about certain themes (I-af,f1,p1,4,7,11). Accordingly, a part of the citizens recalled that they were satisfied with the expert lectures (I-p5,6,9,10), while others said that they did not always understand the presentations or found them boring (I-p1,2,3,11). Concerning gender, my and the other assistant facilitators' fear of inequalities was first prompted by men taking more space during the start weekend and early meetings, or appearing more competent (I-af; PO-sw,om2). For example, the two women of the group "Environment A", Gabi and Tess, as well as myself, initially felt intimidated by the superior number of men in our group and feared elitist thinking (the group was initially composed of two women and six men, of which three had an academic background, see Tab. 2). This fear was soothed, as we quickly felt comfortable because of the men's fine character (I-p1,2; PO-sw). Still, underlying patterns manifesting hierarchies among citizens might have remained. For example, Tess blaimed herself for not being able to participate, saying that she is slower than

others to understand the knowledge transmitted (I-p1). Therefore, she appreciated the help of the academic men who were able to communicate the expert knowledge to her in an understandable way (I-p1). While I framed this as potentially problematic in the interview, Tess did not agree with me: She said that she did not feel disadvantaged and appreciated the different skills present in the group (I-p1).

To sum up, not everyone contributed to the final recommendations in a balanced manner. While assistant facilitators suspected the reproduction of inequalities due to gender and education, citizens did not frame this as a major problem and appreciated proactive citizens. Either way, one could argue that such inequalities are inherent to deliberation and cannot be eliminated. What is central is whether everyone was able to voice their concerns and whether these were addressed, which I will explore in the next subchapter.

4.2.4   Complying to a progressive framework

The guiding question can be seen as progressive as it was about a healthier, more equitable, and more sustainable future. In the context of the BEP, "progressive" means an attitude that favors social change in line with sustainability and justice concerns. In contrast, conservative describes an attitude that opposes social change. Since the BEP searched for *progressive* alternatives to the conventional food system, extremely conservative thinkers were inevitably in conflict with it: Wulf stated that the guiding question of the BEP did not correspond to his priorities at all during an online meeting (H-om4; I-p2). In discussions with citizens and facilitators about Wulf's departure, I found that my co-facilitator and two citizens had the impression that Wulf was unable to articulate his goals and concerns (I-p3,4; RN-mm); They were not consistent with the direction of the BEP and the majority will. However, Wulf was a special case. He joined the BEP raising manipulation claims from the very beginning: During the start weekend, he expressed his suspicion that the BEP was a means to democratically legitimize an agenda that has long been prescribed (namely, the FOAG's "Sustainability Strategy 2030"), rather than giving citizens a real and uninfluenced voice (PO-sw). He and at least two additional citizens from other groups who rose such accusations were from the political right (RN-mm,om6), suggesting a correlation of certain discourses with a willingness to engage in authentic deliberation (see also experiences at other assemblies, e.g., Felicetti et al., 2015; Hobson & Niemeyer, 2013; Curato & Niemeyer, 2013). When asked about these manipulation allegations, citizens brought forward various counter-arguments: Among others, all citizens pointed out that counter-opinions were allowed to be expressed and were at least heard (I-p1-11). Two citizens stated that the organization was authentic and that their intentions were credible (I-p1,7), and three citizens commented that they were capable of critical thinking and forming their own opinions - thus, the idea of being manipulated in a six-month process is funny to paternalistic (I-p1,4,7; PO-mm). Nevertheless, four citizens perceived a slight form of nudging (I-p4,5,10,11). For example, Edy the economist explained to me that

I always had the impression … that there was a gentle form of nudging. From time to time, I did not feel lost but a little alien. How should I put it? I'm extremely from the economy. … every now and then I felt it [the BEP] was almost a little too alternative. (I-p10,4)

Edy considered this nudging to be far from manipulation (I-p10). Rather, he pointed out his perception that the BEP had a rather narrow progressive focus on environmental and social concerns (I-p10. He said that the economy, which was important to him, had "no place at all" (I-p10,24). This might be partly explained by the group's topic "Environment". Still, it is interesting to note that the lack of identification with the assemblies' focus illustrated by Wulf was also felt in less extreme cases, although in a more moderate way. Next to Edy, Fanny the farmer felt as if the BEP was "not for the whole population" (I-p11, 316) because she felt that the majority was able to get their points through, but minorities that hold other priorities did not have enough say. Another case is Amy the activist, a politically right-wing citizen who felt "a bit alien" (I-p8, 197) as she would have liked more radical discussions questioning neoliberal hegemony. In contrast to her peers, she had the impression that the BEP was not progressive enough (I-p8). Thus, all the remaining citizens in the environment groups negated that there were bad intentions behind the citizens' assembly, but some pointed out that the BEP could not do justice to all concerns present among citizens.

The BEP's progressive focus on sustainability and justice influenced the expert inputs and the learning journeys selection, which became a discussion point among citizens that was often brought up in relation with their perception of a slight form of nudging in the interviews (I-p2-6,10,11; PO-mm). The stakeholder selection at the start weekend was perceived as representative (PO-sw). After that, my group heard scientists from universities and federal agencies (Tab. 3). The political background of these experts was broad. Also, the experts clearly distinguished between a scientific consensus and their own opinion (PO-om1-4). Still, five citizens criticized the expert inputs as too one-sided (I-p2,4,6,10,11); They pointed out that the expert inputs focused on environmental rather than, for example, economic dimensions of sustainability (which, again, is partly due to the group's topic "Environment"), and did not account for conservative viewpoints. Regarding the learning journeys, they focused on demonstrating a diverse set of sustainable innovations and developments, which was in line with the assemblies' guiding question. Four citizens acknowledged that the assemblies' goal was to *change* something in a progressive direction and that the journeys were thus adequate (I-f1,p2,4,6,9). Still, four citizens criticized that no journeys to conventional (not pioneering) projects took place (I-p3,5,6; PO-mm) and that the journeys already dictated solutions (I-p3,5,11; RN-om3). Therefore, with eight out of eleven, the majority of citizens criticized that either the focus of the expert inputs or the learning journeys was too progressive and did not give enough room to conventional or conservative viewpoints. Eight citizens especially missed the perspective of the conventional agricultural sector, as it imparts practical knowledge and is strongly characterized by the "provider mandate", i.e. its main orientation is only partly reflected in the environmental orientation of the expert inputs (I-p2-6,9-11). Accordingly, my group asked to hear a conventional farmer as expert in the fourth online meeting (PO-om4; RN-om4). To conclude, the citizens' criticism could be interpreted to mean that the experts' and journeys' progressive focus was perceived as too narrow, because it suggested a particular transformation pathway and gave too little space to conservative representatives of the current conventional system.

Interestingly, three citizens equated the guiding question with left politics (I-p2,4,9). One of them was Gabi:

> Gabi: ... The direction was given. An alternative food policy, right?
>
> Me: By the leading question?
>
> Gabi: Yes ... We are on a path now, that we want to leave ... the goal is to get away from it. You cannot keep walking on these old paths. The conservatives are the old paths. You have to go to the left, you cannot get anywhere with the rightists ... (I-p2,46-8)

In the interview, Gabi suggests that the search for future alternatives that are sustainable is *per se* leftist. Similarly, four citizens expressed their feeling that there was a nudging toward the ecological and social dimensions of sustainability, rather than the economy, which was also attributed to left politics (I-p5,6,10,11). However, at no point did a collective clarification of the actual problem (in the case of the citizen above, this is the "rightists") and the solutions ("leftist") take place (PO-om1-8). Thus, already through the assemblies' leading question certain implicit conclusions were made, which manifested in a minority of citizens interpreting the question and its concerns as politically left.

Despite some citizens' criticism, the assemblies' progressivity was in line with the majority of the citizens' concerns. Five of them stated this explicitly (I-p4,5,7-9), such as Stuart:

> ... when you exchange many opinions, you eventually find something in the middle. This then confirmed the general direction, which was actually not clear at the beginning but was implicitly there. ... One pulls more to the left or up, another to the right and down, ... you finally stay on the path that you already had before. Because that's the path that everyone can say is at least certainly headed in the right direction. (I-p4, 28)

What is interesting about Stuart's statement is that the original implicit direction of the BEP is the same as the one the collective adopted at the end. Consequently, citizens' opinions were not influenced significantly by the information conveyed: Ten out of eleven citizens said that no major change of opinion took place (H-om3; I-p1-5,7-11, PO-sw). They mostly observed that they strengthened their original opinion, pointing to a clarification effect (I-p1,2,4,5,7-10). As an explanation, seven of them pointed out that they already came to the BEP with a broad knowledge of the food system and its environmental issues (I-p2,4-7,10,11). Therefore, most of the citizens held on to their original opinion and had a selective perception (thus perceiving mostly what we like and already know) (H-om3, I-p1,9; PO-sw; RN-pd). Still, seven citizens said that horizons became broader as they gained a better understanding and stronger awareness of different perspectives, levers and the system (I-p1,4-8,10). Enno illustrated during a reflection round in the third online meeting that "actually, one knew everything. But thanks to the participation in the citizens' assembly, I became aware of a few things about the state of the whole issue once again" (H-om3, 10). He was the only one that stated that he corrected his opinion and moved away from his "hard meat line" (I-p6, 72). He explained to me that while he was already aware that too much meat consumption is unsustainable beforehand, the BEP raised his awareness and gave him a deeper understanding, which ultimately led to his more

moderate opinion (I-p6). Generally, the BEP seemed to have started a larger reflection. Amy illustrated figuratively that:

> Once you start dealing with it [the food system], you can only go forward. You cannot go back. I think that's the good thing about the citizens' assembly. Once you have the knowledge [about the issues of the food system], you cannot erase it. (I-p8,430)

Similarly to Amy, four other citizens stated that they developed greater awareness and inevitably became more informed as they noticed things concerned with food system sustainability more (e.g., documentaries on TV and labels while grocery shopping) (I-p4,6,8,9,10). As a result, two citizens became politically activated (I-p4,8), and half of the group reported having changed their behavior (H-om3;PO-mm; I-p1,2,4,5,8,9). In summary, although more than half of the citizens criticized the BEP for being selective in its progressive focus, they were very aware of the importance of sustainability and justice issues from the beginning and saw them as important.

Facilitators brought a different perspective to this emergence. They perceived the process as participatory, but *directive*, as many project steps were predetermined to achieve the set goal of developing recommendations in a short time (I-f1,2). While the *Theory U* process is normally organic (Scharmer, 2009), it had to be adapted to a timed process (RN-om6). This left limited room for addressing citizens' interests (e.g., inviting an additional expert, iterating on the choice of themes) because the meetings were packed and the next steps were already clear (I-f1,p3,6,8). Still, my co-facilitator felt that the citizens could influence the process if they disagreed with something (e.g., at the closing weekend citizens decided over the voting procedure twice) and by substantively contributing their ideas within the framework laid out by the organizers (i.e., the basic conceptual structure of the BEP, such as the choice of guiding question, experts, or learning journeys) (I-f1). Accordingly, the process was seen as legitimate and democratic by all the citizens of my group (I-p1-11; PO-cw). Additionally, in contrast to the perception of a minority of citizens that the BEP was too progressive, among the assistant facilitators there was a sense that the BEP was not progressive enough: Some of us missed critical voices that pointed out, for example, power inequalities in the food system or gender inequalities at the BEP (I-af). This was exacerbated by the fact that the majority of assistant moderators were young, female, academic, politically left-wing, and urban, and were poorly represented among the assemblies' citizens. Since we were discouraged to contribute to the discussions in terms of content and discussions at meetings seldomly addressed the critical points that were important to us, our perspective was only partly present in the deliberative process (RN-om6). In summary, the (assistant) facilitators found the deliberative process directive, and some found it not critical enough.

Additionally, there was a high awareness among organizers and (assistant) facilitators of their neutrality mandate. There were many efforts to be transparent and justify the steps taken. The organizers were in a difficult position as the BEP was attacked from day one by political parties and the public, for example by framing the BEP as a "shadow parliament" (Häne, 2022). There also seemed to be a discourse around the organizers' intentions; Wulf already questioned on the start weekend whether the BEP would give enough space to the different perspectives (PO-sw). In addition, various decisions of the organizing committee, such as gendering in official texts or offering majority vegetarian meals, were attacked by Wulf and individual

citizens from other groups (PO-sw; RN-om6). As a result, the organizers were afraid of making themselves attackable, which was transferred to the assistant facilitators. Some of them took their neutrality mandate *too* seriously in the sense that there was a constant fear of accidentally acting judgmentally or losing one's neutral position (I-af). As a result, we discussed at the focus group that some of us felt that we had to hide, which was rather self-imposed than ordered by the organizers (I-af; PO-sw,mm). This manifested itself, for example, in the fact that we did not mention our own professional background or that some tried to dress as politically neutral as possible (e.g. wearing plain clothes, avoiding political statements such as unshaved legs, which in feminist circles are considered a refusal to conform to societal ideals of beauty) (I-af). In addition, most of us expressed great reluctance to fact-check or assist in the formulation of the recommendations, fearing that we might accidentally influence the discussions too much, for example, by phrasing our follow-up questions insensitively (I-af). This reluctance was echoed in my interviews with citizens, who would have liked more support in formulating the recommendations (I-p3,6,8-10). As a result of this *too* serious effort to be neutral, the facilitation of the process was perceived by all citizens of my group to be very neutral. This was important, but at the same time, all citizens found the facilitation to be not firm enough, as it focused more on ensuring that everyone had their say than developing effective recommendations (I-p1-11).

In summary, a majority of my group's citizens criticized the BEP for not giving enough space to conservative claims. The narrow focus was not due to a lack of neutrality - both the facilitation of the process and the experts' contributions were generally perceived as neutral - but rather to the framework provided by the organizers and state. The narrow framework led to the feeling of a minority of citizens' that the BEP was slightly nudging them towards progressive topics, even though the BEP's actual "progressiveness" was contested. While the progressive orientation of the BEP reflected most citizens' concerns, it meant that not all citizens' concerns could be expressed within this given framework.

4.3 Explanatory angles

The BEP created a sense of unity for positive change which was able to create a window of opportunity for the formulation of political demands on a highly contested topic (emergence "Becoming a social family"). However, this window of opportunity might not have been fully exploited to produce rigorous recommendations (emergence "Diluting the recommendations"), and a minority of citizens felt incompetent to participate in the elaboration of the recommendations (emergence "Approving unbalanced participation"). Last, the progressive direction based on sustainability and justice issues of the BEP was a discussion point among a minority of citizens that could not fully identify with the given framework or perceived it as a form of nudging (emergence "Complying to a progressive framework"). In the following, I ask how these emergences can be explained, focusing on contestation (how contestatory versus consensus-based were the discussions?), expertise (how was expertise framed and transmitted?), and time (What role did time play and how was it allocated?).

4.3.1   The role of contestation

The BEP was based on an integrative approach as it was based on *Theory U* (Scharmer, 2009) and dialogues (Bohm & Weinberg, 2004), which is built on the belief that different realities of life have their *raison d'être* (WS-fb). *Theory U* recognizes people's experiences, worldviews, and ways of knowing are important for the deliberative process. It emphasizes the importance of listening empathically, and seeing and feeling the world from the perspective of another person or group (Scharmer, 2009). This requires being open to that perspective and accepting it as legitimate. Rather than convincing others of the "rational best argument", the emphasis was thus on integrating different perspectives into a holistic understanding of the food system. Thus, throughout the process, a constructive tone was encouraged by the (assistant) facilitators, while attempts to introduce contestatory patterns of discourse were mostly restrained. This was evident during the different phases of the project. During the learning phase, dialogues were held. Dialogues contrast with argumentative, blame-focused, and dismissive styles of discourse (Bohm & Weinberg, 2004). Unlike debates, they are based on the assumption that learning occurs through listening to other perspectives and gaining a new understanding of the broader ecosystem of which the topic under discussion is a part (Bohm & Weinberg, 2004). That does not mean that diverse and opposing positions were not voiced during the dialogues. However, the focus was not on figuring these differences out, but, as stated earlier, to learn from each other's contrasting perspectives (RN-om4). During the listening phase, the selection of core topics was built on collective intelligence: It was based on each group bringing their concerns to the entire BEP, which eventually manifested into main transformation needs that should be acceptable to all. Last, during the deliberation phase the aim was to draft holistic recommendations that incorporate multiple perspectives, rather than trying to convince others to agree to a one-sided recommendation. In doing so, the integrative approach required the subordination of all participants to the overall goal to draft recommendations (I-f1,f2). We called this *going from ego to eco* among the facilitators of my group, as it was important to the *Theory U* approach that participants acknowledge that their perspective (ego) is embedded in a wider ecosystem (eco) (Scharmer, 2009).

The integrative approach might have contributed to the emergence "Becoming a social family". While most participants already entered the process open-mindedly, this was reinforced as the BEP progressed (H-om5; I-p2,4,9,10). The dialogue format arguably played a role in this: For example, while Edy the economist first had to get used to the slow pace of the dialogues as he was used to more time-efficient discussions (I-p10), Tess felt empowered by them:

> It was just the right thing for me because often I would not have said my opinion at all. Because I did not think it is so competent. … Now we just take turns and everyone says something. That's when I thought, wow. Then it's not a problem at all for me to say something. But I would have thought that it is not important. (I-p1, 31)

Tess' statement indicates that the dialogue format facilitated giving everyone space and was a demonstrative act that every opinion counts (I-p1). Tess, and at least three additional citizens, had the impression that the process made them more open to listening to other opinions (I-p1,7,8,10) and, in the case of divergence, to "first consider whether it remains a 'no' or becomes a 'yes'" (I-p7,399). By the end of the process, my co-facilitator and I observed that our group's citizens had learned the dialogue principles and were listening attentively to each other, taking

each other's statements up (I-f1, PO-cw,om1-3,7,8,sw). Accordingly, all citizens said that they felt heard during the interviews (I-p1-11). It is noteworthy that uptake and listening were not only cultivated by the facilitators. Citizens wanted to learn from each other, as Gabi's delight with the atmosphere during the discussions in my group shows:

> You can just deal with each other normally. ... It exists after all ... you're just [there as] a human being with the experience that you have. And people even want to learn something from you. (I-p2,284).

A high level of reciprocity was actively encouraged by the participants in multiple aspects: For example, Achim the academic said that he actively held back during discussions to avoid discouraging others from contributing (I-p5). This was noticed and appreciated by Gabi and Tess who, over time, felt more comfortable speaking their minds (I-p1,2). Other examples include the empowerment of quieter participants by the group, for example, by asking for their opinions during the discussion (I-f1,p1,4,5,11). It is thus fair to say that the integrative approach was embraced by citizens of my group, which has contributed to a high level of reciprocity.

An emergence that seems to be linked to the high reciprocity supported by the integrative approach is the emergence "Approving unbalanced participation". Five citizens acknowledged social hierarchies after being approached about them, whether because of education, gender, or the inherent power of bodies (e.g., voice, argumentative power, charisma) (I-p1,3,5,8,11). However, with the exception of Amy and Fanny (I-p8,11), citizens did not frame these hierarchies as a major problem, pointing out the high reciprocity in the group. Nine out of eleven citizens, as well as the facilitator of my group, did not perceive an exclusion of people, for example, because of their lower education (I-f1,p1-6, 9-11). Seven citizens pointed out that they made an effort to be inclusive, also to minority opinions like that of Wulf the *Wutbürger* (I-p1-5,8,9). Also, the facilitators were perceived by at least three citizens as making a tangible effort to empower quieter participants (I-p9,10,11). Consequently, for example, Tess stated that no one stopped her from contributing to the elaboration of recommendations if she wanted to do so (I-p1). However, at the same time, she said that she restrained herself from it because she felt she did not know enough (I-p1). As Tess found that the "Environment" groups had an orientation that matched her values (I-p1), she trusted that her peers would work out good recommendations, at which point she could "just vote yes" (I-p1, 158) even if she didn't understand them one hundred percent. Tess and four other citizens explicitly said they were happy to leave work to others who were more knowledgeable about a theme because they trusted in their peers' abilities and the group's focus on the common good (I-p1,2,4,6,7). In contrast, Fanny the farmer, who was directly affected by some recommendations, complained that she could not contribute her perspective to all the recommendations she wanted to due to lack of time, leaving some of them flawed (I-p11). To conclude, although there were exception, approximately half of the citizens relied on other group members to draft good recommendations. They felt that although participation was not balanced, they had equal *opportunity* for participation thanks to the high level of reciprocity in the group.

Also, the high level of reciprocity arguably contributed to a transformative momentum as citizens were willing to put themselves on hold for a democratic process, which made the development of transformation needs and the drafting of recommendations possible (I-f1; PO-mm,om7). Six citizens commented that they subordinated themselves to the common goal of

drafting recommendations by, for example, taking a step back if they did not fully agree with a decision but also did not strongly object to it (I-p2-5,9,10). Accordingly, Stuart pointed out that he was willing to equate his opinion with others due to the high reciprocity and goal-orientation of the group: "… as long as my opinion is taken up and reflected, I must also take up and reflect the opinion of other people. The goal is to find [topics] where we agree …" (I-p4, 100). As Stuart and three additional citizens illustrated in interviews, my group's discussions focused on themes we could agree on easily, even though the integrative approach does not necessarily require this (e.g., one can also integrate many perspectives on a controversial topic) (I-p4,5,7,8). During the listening phase, the issues that most people related to were prioritized through a majority vote, and issues on which the group had a less uniform opinion were eliminated (PO-om5). As two citizens pointed out, for more controversial topics a clarification of positions and possibly a collective weighting of conflicting concerns would have been necessary first, which we didn't do (H-om5; I-p5,11). Time constraints back this point, as dealing with highly controversial issues such as GMOs during the learning phase arguably would have taken up a large portion of the time we had and limited the exploration of other issues (H-om4). Given the goal of developing majority-supported recommendations in a short time, focusing on commonalities seemed efficient to my co-facilitator (I-f1); If a topic is controversial in the group, it might also be in the wider society. However, the focus on commonalities went hand-in-hand with a gradual reduction of the friction that was originally present (H-sw,cw; I-p8). By the end, the facilitators and six citizens stated that there was a high level of consensus in the group (I-f1,2,p1-3,5,9,10). We took the "course of least friction", which led to a transformation path that was supported by the majority of citizens.

The flip side of the "course of least friction" is, as Achim pointed out, that throughout the process the group experienced a "mechanistic progression of statements … that we defined and prioritized", which could explain the emergence "Diluting the recommendations" (I-p5,313). His description of the process as "mechanistic" could be interpreted as an absence of moments of contestation. Accordingly, Ingo commented that the discussions during the deliberation phase were "totally consensus-based. To the point where you could have formulated something arbitrary that was just meaningless" (I-p9,251). This judgment is harsh, yet it indicates that there was a general reluctance for engaging in critical or contestatory discussions. In fact, four citizens commented that they did not want to relativize the opinions of others, and other assistant facilitators observed a similar tendency in their groups (I-af,p1,4,5,10). All citizens of my group said that they supported recommendations if they went in the right direction and did not violate their basic values (I-p1-11). This had the consequence that five citizens did not advocate their critical opinion too strongly as there was great respect for violating the rules of the game, which, again, was also observed in other groups (I-af,p3,5,8,10,11). For example, Edy did not want to disturb the process of finding a consensus and felt as if "constructive argument was not wanted" (I-p10,114). While this mindset was very inclusive, it might have prevented productive discomfort that could have resulted in more robust and effective recommendations. This is not to say that citizens did not enjoy the discussions: The majority found the dialogues generative and motivating, and highly appreciated listening to each other's viewpoints (RN-om2; I-p3-9). The point I want to make is that moments of collective contestation – important moments of reflection in which the work done is questioned or priorities are set – were rare. This possibly led to a mechanistic progression of the assembly, in which the majority course was not questioned, which might not have led to the most effective or concrete recommendations (I-af,p1,3,5,8-10).

While ambitious voices were not satisfied with the shallow, consensus-oriented contents, the strongest criticism came from minorities like Wulf the *Wutbürger* and Fanny the farmer, who felt they were not fully represented in the course taken by the group (I-p11; PO-om4). For example, Wulf's controversial points often could not be brought into the group process (PO-om1-4). On the one hand, he failed to formulate his wishes constructively and we had limited time to clarify his needs (PO-om1-4). On the other hand, he had fundamentally different priorities than the rest, who eventually heard but outvoted him (PO-om1-5). Wulf left after the selection of the "Environment" groups' themes. He expressed that the selection was focused on majority-decided commonalities instead of controversial topics that were important to him (such as GMO) (Wulf, personal communication, November 2, 2022). To avoid more people with minority opinions leaving the BEP, counter-opinions to the recommendations were given space in a separate column during the deliberation phase. However, this also meant that the energy of the counter-argument was not used to make the recommendations more robust, and there was no critical questioning of what lay behind it (I-f2). During the voting, minority opinions could no longer be incorporated into the recommendations but were democratically outvoted (I-p5,10; PO-cw). This is not to say that citizens did not take Wulf's or other minorities opinions seriously: Five citizens stated that they highly appreciated his critical opinions (I-p2,3,4,5,8). Citizens tried to listen to and incorporate minority concerns into the recommendations (accordingly, reciprocity was high). Also the dialogue format may have helped some minorities express their views - which, however, was not the case for Wulf as he had difficulties to speak with intention from the "I" perspective (PO-om1-4). The observation I made here is rather, that *some* aspects of the process excluded Wulf, as it was steered toward the group's center rather than his outskirts. This could partly explain the emergence "Complying to a progressive framework". While the departure of some people the *Wutbürger* might be beneficial for the sake of a constructive process or developing majority-supported recommendations, this raises the question if a critical democratic resource might have been lost.

In summary, the assemblies' integrative approach helped to create a high degree of reciprocity and thus a transformative moment. This went hand-in-hand with my group taking the path "of least friction", which yielded a food system transformation path that is supported by the majority of citizens. At the same time, moments of contestation were not actively encouraged, resulting in a rather uncritical and mechanistic drafting of recommendations. It is worth exploring whether such an encouragement could have resulted in more effective or concrete recommendations. As the process was steered towards the group's center, this did not actively empower minority opinions, possibly leading to their idea of a "framework" being imposed on them. While the departure of individuals like the *Wutbürger* may be justifiable for the sake of constructively developing recommendations that are supported by a majority, the question arises whether a critical democratic resources might have been lost.

4.3.2 The role of expertise

Different kinds of expertise were given space during the learning phase to create a holistic picture of the food system (PO-om1-4). Inputs from practitioners and stakeholders were limited to learning excursions and stakeholder panels at the assemblies' kick-off, while four online meetings were devoted to learning from scientists (Tab. 1). On the one hand, the organizers expected that citizens themselves bring practical knowledge into the BEP. On the other hand, they assumed that scientists look at the bigger picture and the interrelations between different issues. In contrast, the organizers thought that practitioners provide anecdotal evidence, which was not seen as a good basis for the recommendations (RN-mm). Although there were fewer opportunities to learn from practitioners than from scientists, they were longer; as much time was devoted to practical knowledge overall as to scientific (Fig. 9). Nevertheless, the citizens' impression was that more space was given to the scientific contributions than to the practical ones: Four citizens expressed this in interviews, and my group wanted an input from a practitioner in online meeting four because they were saturated with scientific knowledge (I-p5,6,9,10; PO-om3). This is not to say that citizens did generally not enjoy scientific inputs – four citizens expressed that they were satisfied with the inputs (I-p5,6,9,10). They just perceived them as more dominant to the processthan practical inputs. Accordingly, many citizens described the learning journeys during the summer break as a highlight (I-p3,4,6-8,10). However, we facilitators observed that there was insufficient time in the fourth online meeting to bring together the fragmented knowledge from the citizens' different experiences at the journeys during the summer break and apply it to the topic of "Environment" (RN-pd). This was confirmed by two citizens in interviews (I-p5,6). In contrast, the scientific presentations took place in the same meetings as other process' steps such as the elaboration of a synthesis or the discussion of important transformation needs (PO-om1-4). Also, more than half of the citizens concluded that the projects presented could not play a significant role in achieving the 2030 assembly goal, as they would remain niche projects (I-p2-5,8,9). Therefore, the insights from the journeys were only indirectly incorporated into the group work, mostly in the form of overarching ideas such as the promotion of innovation or circular economy (H-om4; I-p1,5,9). Thus, although practical and academic expertise informed the process, the latter was perceived by citizens as more dominant and was more directly linked to the rest of the process.

While a lot of time was allocated to listening to and reflecting on expert inputs, almost no weight was given to moments in which the citizens could learn from each other independently of an input (3% of the learning phase's time, mostly during the start weekend, Fig. 9). This is in contrast to the fact that citizens had expertise in the food system (PO-om1): For example, Gabi and Colin once worked in gastronomy. Gabi now produces her own food, and Colin switched to food processing. Reto worked in retail, Achim in development cooperation on food security issues. Amy, Edy and Enno had close family members in agriculture, and Fanny was a farmer herself. The majority of citizens wished they had more time to share with each other, as their dialogues were very generative and motivating (RN-om2; I-p3-9). As Amy pointed out, "the personal discussions are actually more important. … We did not really have that. You know, the free space. You only had that between eating, toilets, and smoking." (I-p8,446). Importantly, that doesn't mean that citizens did generally not appreciate the expert inputs. Four of them expressed that they were satisfied with them (I-p5,6,9,10). The majority of citizens would just have liked to *additionally* get to know each other closer in order to better

make use of people's skills and knowledge (I-p3-9). However, some citizens felt silenced because they could not bring in topics that were important to them, which was voiced by the *Wutbürger*, Fanny and Amy (I-p8,11, PO-om5). For example, Fanny the farmer wanted to explain the large bureaucracy she was confronted with to her peers (I-p11). However, there was no space for this, which is why her view that scientists and citizens "just do not have a clue and feel like we [farmers] are just freeloaders who receive money and nobody knows why we actually receive money" (I-p11,146) could not be addressed and discussed. Thus, the lack of space for citizens to exchange ideas among themselves contributed to, at best, to not using all the resources in the room and, at worst, to not addressing unspoken prejudices and conflicts.

Additionally, the lack of space to exchange ideas among themselves meant that citizens might have been deprived of the possibility to articulate and consider their own (collective) expertise without predefined narrowing of agendas (through the guiding question) or knowledge frames (through the expert inputs)[3]. This could be another explanation for the emergence "Complying to a progressive framework". The main goal of the learning phase meetings was to reflect upon the expert inputs in dialogues. The dialogue questions[4] aimed at collecting citizens' perspectives on the expert input and at integrating them into the bigger picture of the focus group topic (PO-om1-4). Some citizens appreciated this thrust; For example, Stuart told me that he was glad to take a more passive role at first, listening to the expert inputs, which avoided being overwhelmed (I-p4). However, a minority was frustrated, as illustrated by Reto who was demotivated by his allocation to the group "Environment" as he felt he had little to contribute:

> Me: What would have been a group that would have interested you? If you had to come up with one?
>
> Reto: If I had to come up with one … Maybe a group *citizens'* [emphasis added]? So really the view of an ordinary citizen [english for "Normalsterblicher"], so to speak. Because otherwise, with the environmental group, I have the feeling that you're already up there on an expert level again. …
>
> Me: It is a specialist area?
>
> Reto: Yes exactly, it's a specialist area and either you know about it or you do not. And either it interests you or it does not interest you. (I-p3,133-136)

In this excerpt, Reto emphasizes that he perceived the topic "Environment" as determined by experts. He would have liked to be part of a group where citizens' views can flow in. Since he did not relate to the topic "Environment" and neglected the possibility of becoming an expert

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[3] Framing can be defined as "the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue" (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Framing entails a selection of valid ideas and points of view as well as the accentuation of some problems at the expense of others (Chong & Druckman, 2007). For example, framing often takes place in political campaigns (e.g., by the term "refugee crisis", the image of an overrun Switzerland was drawn by the right-wing political party).

[4] (1) What struck you? (2) What does this mean for the topic of our working group? (3) What should/could we explore further? (4) What questions does this raise?

himself, he was frustrated about his group assignment and would have preferred to choose his group himself (I-p1). Two other citizens were also frustrated with their group assignment (I-p1,5). However, this was more because they just weren't that interested in the topic than due to a frustration with the expert inputs (I-p1,5). Despite the possible framing effect through the experts outlined by Reto, citizens were given space to voice their own opinion (e.g., during the expert input reflections) and themes (e.g. self-sufficiency came up in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war). It would therefore be unfair to claim that my group's discussions or themes were determined solely by the priorities set by experts: Citizens weighted and added to the themes mentioned by them, and the expert inputs were short compared to the time given to ask questions and reflect on the inputs (PO-om1-4). Accordingly, when I asked my group about the roots of the selected themes, five citizens said they resulted from a mix of the main concerns of citizens and experts (I-p1,4,6,7,10). For example, the theme "food waste" was important to my group's citizens from the beginning, and its relevance was confirmed by experts (PO-om1-4,sw). As Stuart explained, most citizens were simply aligned with the expert inputs' priorities: "If the great masses are satisfied with the direction, there is not much reason to steer [the direction]" (I-p4,6). No one forced the citizens to talk about specific topics. Despite the reflection questions' nudge, they were free to use their time to discuss topics that were important to them. Stuart's comment indicates that, however, the majority of the group was open to the topics mentioned by the experts because they felt those were important and valid.

Still, citizens might not have had time to consciously think about and understand the frame imposed by the expert inputs: Two citizens pointed out that it was not entirely clear to them which issues were (not) covered by the experts, as they lacked a larger big picture of the food system, and where the experts positioned themselves in that food system (I-p4,9). These citizens did not consciously reflect on the framework laid out by the organizers through the guiding question and expert choice, possibly because little measures were taken to break it up or make it transparent (e.g., reflect on the experts' background, reflect on which topics are left out by the expert inputs, show counter-opinions). It is noteworthy that there was no theme chosen by my group that was not also covered by the expert inputs (see Chapter 4.1.2). Also, with one exception, citizens pointed out in interviews that they forgot some topics that were important to them during the theme choice, such as water pollution (I-p1-5,7-11). The observation I thus want to point out is that the expert inputs might have given less weight to rationales that were not considered in them in an *not transparently reflected* way. In sum, my group – as Reto illustrated - was influenced by the experts' understanding of the food system and the topic "Environment". While these possible framing effects were kept flexible enough to be responsive to most citizens' concerns, they were not actively reflected upon with the citizens.

Next to the framing *by* experts, the framing *of* experts deserves a closer look. While most citizens saw academic inputs as objective, three citizens did not (RN-om3). In my groups, this included Wulf (PO-sw), but also Amy who found that scientists' backgrounds must be considered (e.g., if they work for the federal agency; I-p8) and Fanny who questioned science in general:

I do not think scientists are neutral. ... They're just scientists. ... they read stuff, but I bet they've never been on a farm and seen how stuff works properly. They just see the written stuff. To me, scientists are just hypocrites. They can say whatever they want, it has nothing to do with reality, for the most part. (I-p11,224)

Especially Fanny's statement points to the importance of balanced expert selection in a polarized context. The academically perceived learning phase was difficult for her, who generally did not agree with science (I-p11). Once, she left a meeting earlier out of frustration with the facts presented in a scientist's presentation (I-p11). Although she disagreed with the scientist, there was little opportunity to verify the knowledge given and contest it: The Q&A sessions of the inputs and the subsequent reflections in small groups helped to digest the information. However, citizens were encouraged to fetch the experts' knowledge, not to question it (PO-om1-4). Of course, citizens could have spoken out even if their criticism was not invited - but this took courage for people that were not used to doing so. In addition, the scientists were presented as objective by the organizers (RN-mm). Their contributions were thus not contrasted with others or provided with counter-frames, possibly increasing their influence on the process (PO-om1-4). Thus, the academics were generally presented as objective at the BEP. This might not have encouraged a healthy contestation of the imparted knowledge and reinforced the idea of having to comply to a set framework.

In the deliberation phase, citizens had a new role (PO-cw,mm,om7,8). Personal experiences could be incorporated into the discussions around the recommendations, and citizens' knowledge was more in the focus (I-f1,2,p1,2,5,7; PO-om6-8). In fact, some citizens that were quiet during the expert inputs could now take an active role and bring in their practical knowledge (PO-om6-8). Nevertheless, my co-facilitator and I observed that the focus of the deliberation was more on facts and knowledge than on citizens' values and experiences, which might explain the emergence "Approving unbalanced participation" (RN-om6-8). During a plenary reflection session of the deliberation phase's first online meeting, I took notes on the exchanges of three men who felt they needed more expert information to develop the recommendations:

Reto: ... we would be glad about an expert on the subject of hygiene regulations and expiration dates. So that we don't formulate goals that already exist or that are not practicable at all.

Enno: That's a very important point concerning the experts, that we need to get reliable information. Also, I had a similar experience as you, Amy [name changed]. Once you dived into the theme, the time is much too short. ... It is better to work on only one theme and to look at it in a profound and comprehensive way.

Edy: I have also said that [in my theme group], we must be careful that we do not argue with half-knowledge or assumptions. None of us is a professional. We just think or say in good faith that it is like that, but we don't know that at all. ... Depending on the situation, the citizens' assembly could disqualify itself if it is not well-founded enough. Of course, it is in the nature of things that we represent citizens and not experts. Nevertheless, a certain degree of professionalism is required. (H-om6, 5)

As this excerpt shows, the citizens' did not want to disqualify themselves with half-knowledge and have some degree of professionalism, which was also stated by two additional citizens in interviews (I-p5,9) – interestingly these were all men. Professionalism was associated, at least by the three men in the excerpt, with reliable facts and information. However, as Enno noted, the time constraints made it difficult for citizens to engage with the themes in depth (H-om6). As the discussions were technical and time was scarce, those who hold practical or theoretical experience on the topic under discussion or could catch up on it fast enough might have been able to contribute more, such as Amy the activist who spent a lot of time looking up information (I-p8). In line with this, four citizens stated that the process required previous knowledge on the topic (I-p1,3,5,7).

The learning phase was meant to fill in knowledge gaps and bring citizens closer together in terms of knowledge. However this was only partly successful: Three citizens explained that they absorbed a lot of passive knowledge, but this knowledge could not be sufficiently elementarized to be incorporated into the recommendations and meet citizens' high expectations due to the topic's complexity and the short time frame (I-p1,4,7). As a result, at least the aforementioned citizens stopped contributing to some themes in the deliberation phase that were new to them, stating that they did not understand them well enough to contribute to recommendations that would meet policy demands (I-p1,4,7). For example, during the first online meeting of the deliberation phase, Tess stated that she could not follow the discussions around the theme of financial incentives as they became too specialized (PO-om6). She found the knowledge gained useful for voting, but, like others (PO-om6-8), wanted to go back to the themes where she already had prior knowledge when drafting the recommendations (in her case matters of education or health but not environment) (I-p1). This constraint appeared to be self-imposed, as there were other citizens who confidently contributed on topics for which they had no prior knowledge (PO-om6-8). As a consequence, the facilitator of my group and I suspected that the focus on academic expertise during the learning phase led to intimidation of a minority of citizens who were not as familiar with the BEP requirements (e.g., formulate clear recommendations, listen to expert inputs) (I-f1). Other assistant facilitators shared this impression with regard to their groups (I-af). At the same time, the three aforementioned citizens blamed themselves retrospectively for not investing more time in enhancing their knowledge (I-p1,5,7). The combination of technical discussions and citizens blaming themselves when they were cut off could explain why citizens supported better-informed or more self-confident citizens taking the lead.

The rather rational and fact-based discussions at the BEP might have contrasted with the recommendations' goal to represent the wishes and concerns of citizens. The facilitator of my group remarked that:

> There was an overall tendency that they [citizens] always claimed that they need to know everything rather than [focusing on] what is their opinion and what they want. We did try, but it was already very influenced by the design. (I-f1, 10)

My co-facilitator observed that the focus was more on writing factually correct recommendations than on what is important to the citizens (I-f1). In line with this, the second facilitator of the "Environment" groups commented that she "sees pictures where the energy just goes into the head" (I-f2,4). She outlined that the deliberation was focused on the ratio (I-

f2). This impression seemed to hold for some other groups as well, as told by their assistant moderators (I-af). In discussions with (assistant) facilitators and citizens on this matter, the question came up if a focus on facts and knowledge can establish emotionality or urgency (I-af,f1,p5,8). Although the ratio is important to write "factually correct" recommendations, it might not empower us to focus on what is dear to us. The importance of this question is reflected in the fact that three citizens stated that they had never actively consolidated their own position (I-p5,7,8); For example, Achim told me that he tended to look at issues from the outside rather than looking inward and asking, "Is this right for me? Where am I in this?" (I-p5,55). Also, Reto, who was generally critical towards the expert inputs, stated that they gave him little drive as it informed him top-down of the problems and solutions; "What should we do then, they already know" (I-p3,20). He went on to explain that he found it difficult to relate the discussion topics to his own life:

> It would simply have been a completely different way of discussing together if you could have discussed what you experience in everyday life, instead of suddenly being mentally placed on an alp with a bunch of cows around you and being told: You are now in this group, do something (I-p3, 54)

Reto points out that it was difficult to translate academic knowledge into reality, especially into his own lives, because it remained on an abstract level. He could not relate to recommendations on site-adapted agriculture in the mountains, and he had to start at the very basis because he had no previous expertise on the theme. Two additional citizens felt like little connection was made between the recommendations and their or their peers own lives (H-om1,2; I-p1,11). Thus, this suspected difficulty of citizens to make the leap from expert knowledge to their own concerns or life might be one explanation for the emergence "Diluting the recommendations" and the lack of *feu sacré* connected with it.

In summary, citizens had little time to exchange with each other in an *open* process. Instead, the focus was on listening to and reflecting on expert knowledge, whereby academic knowledge was perceived as dominant by citizens. Most citizens appreciated this because they valued the information they received from the experts. What needs to be better understood, however, is if the focus on expert knowledge led to citizens focusing on the experts' understanding of the food system rather than their own, especially since these possible framing effects were not actively reflected upon and expert knowledge was not actively contested. This could have contributed to the emergence "Complying to a progressive framework". Also, discussions at the BEP were technical and rational, which meant that citizens with practical or theoretical experience on the topic could contribute best, possibly accounting for the emergence "Approving unbalanced participation". Finally, the question was raised whether a rational and fact-based orientation to the discussions at the BEP can motivate citizens to articulate their own wishes and relate the recommendations to their own life, and whether it could explain the lack of *feu sacré* during discussions and the resulting emergence "Diluting the recommendations."
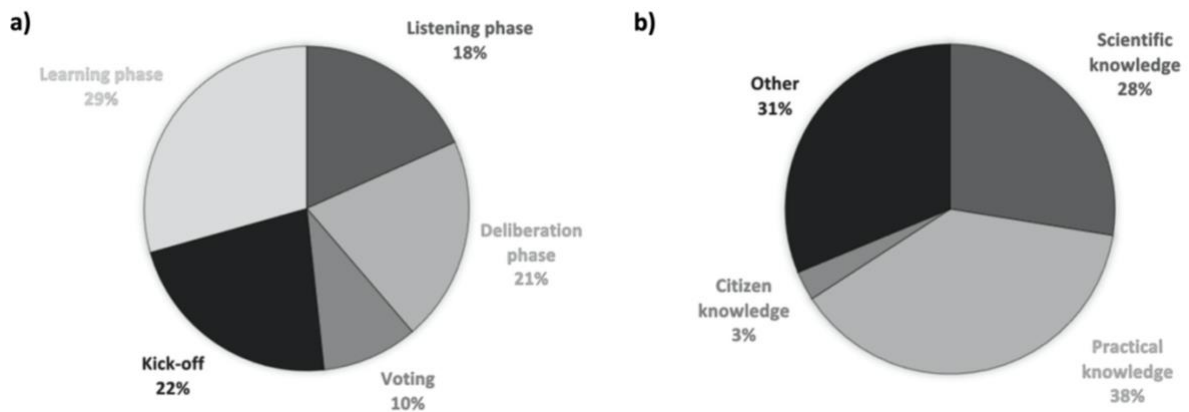
Figure 9. Time allocation at the BEP for the different process phases and types of knowledge sources. a) Time (in percentages of total duration without breaks) spent on the different phases of the BEP. b) Time spent on learning and translating different types of knowledge during the kick-off and learning phase of the BEP. Here, "Scientific knowledge" includes the "expert" inputs, the Q&A sessions, and discussions of the inputs. "Practical knowledge" includes stakeholder and policymaker inputs, as well as the learning journeys and reflections on them (only considering the compulsory journey). "Citizen knowledge" includes exchanges between citizens that activate citizens' own knowledge independently from an input. "Synthesis" includes all activities for reflection and synthesis of the knowledge gained. "Other" are the remaining activities during the learning phase (e.g. time for organizing the process, getting to know each other) (based on own data).

4.3.3 The role of time

Time was a talking point at the BEP. Facilitators and citizens involved in the BEP repeatedly described a feeling of lacking time. Seven citizens commented that the time pressure emerged due to the difficulty to combine everyday commitments with the citizens' assembly (I-p1,2,3,5-7,11). However, the assemblies' process design also played a crucial role, as an assistant facilitator explained at the process debriefing:

> We built this huge machine and at some point, it started to run. ... I kind of felt at some moment that the machine was going quicker than any of us could control it. ... I like the image of the machine that has its own life. I do not feel like it was pressured by any of you. ... It was the machine that everyone contributed to building, also in the sense of giving space to the participants. ... what suffered from this machine and running behind it was the space for deliberation and deep engagement, debate, and exchange of opinions on several levels. (RN-pd, 58)

The assistant facilitator paints the picture of a machine, which developed a momentum of its own and could no longer be controlled. Everyone contributed to the machine, virtually building a small piece of the machine that than had to be used. These pieces were then taken up by others and built upon, until people eventually lost track of their machine pieces, building here and there, constantly running around trying to contribute where it was most needed. It was a busy bunch, creating an ever more monstrous machine without a common plan (RN-pd).

The metaphor of the construction of the machine, among others, represents the emergence "Diluting the recommendations" (I-af): During the first recommendation drafting at the mid-term meeting, everyone made a contribution (PO-mm). This led to many ideas that wanted to be used as much as possible. These ideas were then taken up and built upon in subsequent

sessions (PO-om6-8). Different people kept writing on the recommendations of my group, which often meant that citizens did not follow the entire development of a set of recommendations, having difficulty making reference to what was said during last meetings with other people (PO-om6-8). In addition, Reto pointed out that he had lost his personal relationship with "his" recommendations because he had not followed their entire development, which made him reluctant to advocate for their adjustments (I-p3). What is interesting about the image of the machine is its "own life" (RN-pd,58). The organizers did not want to dictate to the citizens how many recommendations they should write, because they wanted to let emerge what is willing to emerge from the assembly (RN-mm). However, we (assistant) facilitators discussed at the process debriefing that this led to a lack of time to understand and feel the many recommendations, and get a clear "yes" to all of them (RN-pd). This was also reflected in the interviews with citizens: For example, Amy said she never took a step back and questioned the recommendations because she did not have time to do so (I-p8). She and two other citizens recalled that they were reticent to criticize because they prioritized getting the recommendations finished (I-p6,8,10). Accordingly, some group members voted against their own recommendations because they were not satisfied with them, but deferred their position during the elaboration of recommendations (PO-cw). The large number of recommendations, combined with the complexity of the topic, was unmanageable in *detail* in the given time (I-af,p3,6,7,10; RN-pd).

Once the monstrous machine began to run, it became a constant race under which the deliberative process suffered. The run against the machine here is a metaphor for the lack of resources for the complex process, which was already noticeable at the beginning of the process. This might be another explanation for the emergence "Approving unbalanced participation". In order for the recommendations to be developed, a directive process with a tight schedule was needed (I-f1). This manifested itself in short and fragmented meetings, as different tasks had to be packed into a meeting. What was lost through this constant time pressure was the space "for deliberation and deep engagement" (RN-pd, 58). During the learning phase, for example, three citizens and myself observed that there was little time to truly listen to minorities such as Wulf the *Wutbürger* (I-p2,4,6; PO-om3). During the listening phase, one example is that we had to vote on the themes quickly. The group "went back to the simple" (I-p7,285), and four citizens were dissatisfied with the theme choice as they felt we did not have time to understand what could emerge from what we learned (I-p5,8,9,11). This was also the case in other groups (RN-om5). During the deliberation phase, for example, five citizens felt like they could not make a meaningful contribution in the short time (I-p1,6-8,10), while others took over the process to advance it in an efficient manner (PO-om6-8). More than half of the citizens said that they had too little time or motivation to read up on all the "Environment" themes and were, therefore, grateful to leave the elaboration of some themes' recommendations to others (I-p1-5,7,11). To sum up, the scarce resources (especially time and money) combined with high goals (namely the elaboration of over 137 recommendations on the whole food system) probably led to a reduction of its democratic capacity.

The lack of time may also partly explain the emergence "Complying to a progressive framework", as the assemblies' process was highly managed. The tightly scheduled meetings were perceived as paternalistic by Reto, as citizens were not free to use their time and adapt the process to their needs (I-p3). While citizens could still influence the process (e.g., contributing their ideas within the framework laid out by the organizers), the assemblies'

process was consultative rather than reflexive: The final authority over the process and its agenda was with the organizers. Citizens could give feedback and adapt it to their needs. Still, this could have given raise to the impression that the process was "steered" (other assemblies experienced similar issues, see, e.g., Lang, 2008). Concerning time pressure, citizens felt like they could not reflect on their decisions during the choice of themes or the voting on the recommendations. For example, Fanny criticized that she was not given enough time to read the recommendations during the vote, so she suspected that the organizers did not really want her to think about them (I-p11). Time, then, is a thoroughly political issue, as its allocation to the BEP as a whole, as well as the individual procedural steps, determine how much say citizens have.

In summary, people involved in the BEP constantly lacked time. This led to a dilution of the recommendations, as their large number, combined with the complexity of the topic, could not be managed in detail in the given time. In addition, the constant race against time probably led to a reduction of the BEP's democratic capacity and to unbalanced participation. This partly explains the feeling that the citizens had to comply to a set framework, as they could not shape the process - which was directive due to time constraints - and had to make decisions under time pressure.

5. Discussion

So far, I have described what emerged from the contrasting experiences of citizens and facilitators. First, the BEP contributed to create a window of opportunity for the formulation of political demands on a highly contested topic through its high reciprocity and sense of unity (emergence "Becoming a social family"). This window of opportunity, though, might not have been fully utilized to produce rigorous recommendations. This gave rise to the second emergence "Diluting the recommendations". Third, a small number of citizens felt unqualified to participate in the elaboration of the recommendations (emergence "Approving unbalanced participation"). Last, the progressive direction based on sustainability and justice issues of the BEP was a discussion point among a minority of citizens that could not fully identify with the given framework or perceived it as a form of nudging (emergence "Complying to a progressive framework"). Based on my observations, I offered possible explanatory angles for these "emergences": Contestation, expertise, and time. I will explore and contextualize these observations in the first part of the discussion with the help of scientific literature and other experiences with citizens' assemblies. The discussion is structured according to the emergences, including "Becoming a social family" (Chapter 5.1), "Diluting the recommendation" (Chapter 5.2 and 5.3), "Approving unbalanced participation" (Chapter 5.3), as well as "Complying to a progressive framework" (Chapter 5.4). Subsequently, I provide an overarching synthesis of the BEP's potential for transforming the Swiss food system based on the points previously discussed (Chapter 5.5). Last, I outline my limitations and provide an outlook (Chapter 5.6).

5.1 The transformative and democratic potential of citizens' assemblies

The BEP was able to create something meaningful: People came and stayed in the deliberative process because they strongly valued the solution-oriented exchange with others. It is important to recognize this in the context of a polarized discourse around food policy in Switzerland, as well as considering other assemblies where citizens grew increasingly hostile against one another or rigid in their beliefs (see, e.g., Hobson & Niemeyer, 2012). The BEP painted a picture of an open-minded and constructive Swiss citizenry that can act collectively toward the common good. This is in contrast to the picture painted by politicians who cannot agree, and liberal-capitalist realpolitik narratives that claim that people are either too self-centered, unmotivated, or short-sighted to get informed about politics and propose coherent policy solutions (Downs, 1957; Schumpeter, 1974). The most powerful experience of citizens, (assistant) facilitators and mine was the renewed hope that we, as a society, can solve the crises associated with the food system. Most citizens at the BEP did not behave in a self-centered manner: They did not strongly focus on their own needs and perspectives during discussions but subordinated themselves to the BEP's common goal, the development of majority-supported recommendations that reflect the diversity of the Swiss population. They were not unmotivated, because they showed volunteerism. And they were not short-sighted when deliberating, because they drafted forward-looking, long-term recommendations. In line with the normative claims of deliberative democracy (Böker & Elstub, 2015), the BEP provided an example of what democracy could be, namely citizen-centered and deliberative, rather than

focused on "more competent" politicians whose discussions do not follow deliberative principles.

Even though the BEP only included a small sample of citizens, Niemeyer (2014, p. 185) argues that "in principle, the effect of mini-public deliberation should be scalable in a broad sense ..." as "we are talking about the roughly same population in mass-public, with the same capabilities as those observed in mini-publics". Thus, I argue that the BEP's evidence that it is possible to empower the collective elaboration of a transformation path that is perceived as positive by a representative set of Swiss citizens is strong. In doing so, the integrative approach based on dialogues formed the basis for authentic deliberation to occur. It contributed to high reciprocity and trust, and enabled work-sharing. This is reflected in other studies that found that non-agonistic approaches contribute to setting the ground for the deliberation, among others, by creating a positive sense of cohesion among citizens (Curato et al., 2013; Kim & Kim, 2008; Sprain & Black, 2018). Accordingly, Niemeyer et al. (2023) showed in their analysis of 19 deliberative forums that a high degree of group building increases the quality of deliberative reason as well as the groups' capacity to overcome the challenge of complexity. So, we can affirm other experiences that citizens' assemblies can create consensual moments in which actors come together and reconcile differences on complex topics (see, e.g., Curato et al., 2013; Giraudet et al., 2021; M. P. Pimbert & Boukary, 2021). It is fair to argue that the application of Otto Scharmer's (2009) *Theory U* and its integrative approach has contributed significantly to this.

5.2 The importance of contestation for rigorous recommendations

While a good groundwork for deliberation was laid out by the BEP's integrative approach, it is questionable if it was fully exploited to produce rigorous recommendations. There was a disparity between the considerable effort done to create a positive group atmosphere and the smaller attention paid to the content of the BEP's discussions, the citizens' own knowledge and the product of their effort. The implementing organization, *Collaboratio Helvetica*, was trained in designing transformative group processes, but had little to do with the food system, so some assistant facilitators had the impression that they were more focused on the process design rather than on facilitating critical engagement with far-reaching recommendations. Also, citizens gave the notion during interviews that they were prouder of the *act of working together* on solutions with a diverse set of citizens than of the actual solutions: Nine out of eleven citizens emphasizing the space for encounters that the BEP created and its prevailing atmosphere of appreciation. In contrast, although the citizens managed to outline a food system transformation path that was supported by the majority, more than half of my group's citizens questioned the utility of the recommendations as they felt they were, among others, not finished or diluted.

The explanatory angle for the dilution of recommendations I focus on here is the lack of contestation. This perspective was prompted by the frustration of some assistant facilitators and a minority of citizens with what we perceived as superficial and consensus-driven discussions. A citizens' description of the BEP process as mechanistically advancing the majority course also played a role. Harmony was fostered more than productive moments of

contestation by the organizers and facilitators through the process design: There was little time assigned to moments in which citizens' viewpoints or recommendations were collectively opposed considering the BEP's overarching goal, or contestatory exchanges were actively encouraged. However, the focus on harmony was not only a design question, but also prioritized by the citizens of my group: A majority stated in interviews that they valued the focus on harmony and did not want more confrontational discussions. The focus thus came very naturally in my group and was in line with the Swiss consensus-seeking culture (Bächtiger et al., 2008).

The excessive civility often observed at citizens' assemblies is strongly criticized by agonistic scholars (Machin, 2019, 2023; Mouffe, 1999). In contrast to deliberative scholars, agonistic scholars view democracy as *conflictual* by definition (Mouffe, 1999). They argue that assuming that a rational consensus based on fair and neutral procedures is possible in class-ridden societies with power inequalities is naive (Banerjee, 2022; Schäfer & Merkel, 2023). Accordingly, they reject the idea that a rational societal "truth" can or should be found, arguing instead that democracy is about building temporary coalitions that can drive change by winning the majority for their cause (Mouffe, 1999, 2005). A political system is democratic when a plurality of perspectives can be voiced and debated, rather than focusing on an artificial consensus shaped by the dominant hegemony (Machin, 2022). Hence, the main concern of agonists is to maintain ongoing, *polite* political conflict (Machin, 2019). Consequently, they argue that a deliberative framework that does not allow for conflict and dissent and aims for an authoritarian consensus risks depoliticizing politics to the detriment of oppressed people (Mouffe, 1999).

Importantly, the BEP never sought to achieve a rational social "truth" but recognized the citizens' plurality of perspectives. Its integrative approach, based on Otto Scharmer's (2009) *Theory U* and dialogues (Bohm & Weinberg, 2004), is about allowing a new collective vision to emerge. This vision is based on a deeper inner knowledge of the group that comes from learning from the citizens' and experts' plurality of perspectives (Bohm & Weinberg, 2004; Scharmer, 2009). In fact, evidence suggest that integrative approaches can be successful in reaching agreements while acknowledging pluralism: One such living evidence is *La Via Campesina*, a transnational social movement that brings together family farmers, indigenous peoples and others (Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2010). To bring the movement with its wide base forward, the *diàlogo de saberes* (in English, this means "dialogue among different knowledges and ways of knowing") are held (Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2014). Thereby bearers of different local and traditional ways of knowing are invited to come together without imposing one knowledge on the others (Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2014). Out of one of these dialogues emerged the demand for food sovereignty as an alternative to the neoliberal consensus on food security (Martínez- Torres & Rosset, 2014). In accordance with this evidence, not all agonists are *per se* against deliberative *practices* such as citizens' assemblies; They acknowledge that consensual instances of democratic practices in which diverse actors come together and reach an agreement while recognizing their plurality are possible and important in decision-making settings (A. Machin, personal communication, January 17, 2023). However, there needs to be room for voicing radical disagreement and real alternatives rather than focusing only on the positivity of reaching a consensus (A. Machin, personal communication, January 17, 2023). The point at which my observations and the agonistic critique meet is that the general reluctance of all parties to engage in critical or contentious

discussions at the BEP was possibly problematic as it led to, among others, the dilution of recommendations.

In line with my observation, deliberative scholars have argued that deliberation needs to include contestation to fulfill its epistemic potential (Bächtiger & Gerber, 2014; Curato et al., 2013; Ward et al., 2003). Other studies on deliberative processes found that a too strong focus on harmonic or positive modes of communication can impact the quality of assemblies' outputs (Curato et al., 2013; Ward et al., 2003). On the one hand, contestation or disagreement is considered crucial for meaningful moments that mark effective deliberation, as it motivates people to think about conflicting impulses and construct more sophisticated arguments and justifications instead of reaching superficial compromises (Sprain & Black, 2018). Also, conflict is necessary for people to understand the foundations of their own opinions (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2006). On the other hand, an appreciative – or in the case of the BEP integrative - approach can convey that every opinion is reasonable and fairly incontestable: Ward et al. (2003) contends that such a mindset unduly restricts discussion to topics where disagreements are merely surface-level, but that it is precisely a lack of consensus that can indicate the need for a more extensive discussion, for which citizens' assemblies can serve as crucial spaces. Accordingly, Lehner's (in preparation) analysis of the BEP's recommendations concluded that they focused on uncontroversial topics and remained reformative with regards to a food system transformation.

Still, I want to emphasize the positive aspects of the BEP's integrative approach and its appreciative dimension. As my group's citizens embraced the approach, it resulted in a high degree of reciprocity. At least four citizens expressed that the approach made them more receptive to other opinions. Also, half of my group's citizens actively expressed that they were willing to put themselves on hold for the democratic process, which made the development of transformation needs and the drafting of recommendations possible. In her empirical study, Curato et al. (2013) argues in favor of contestatory moments at citizens' assemblies, but at the same time considers that if only contestation is encouraged, there is a danger that deliberation turns into an insulting "anything goes" and "winner takes all" debate. Also, appreciation can be important for citizens to open their minds to alternative arguments (Curato et al., 2013). This open-mindedness is, according to deliberation and public opinion researchers, important for opinion formation to occur when citizens are exposed to new and diverse arguments (Barabas, 2004; Neblo, 2007; Schneiderhan & Khan, 2008), and is fundamental to reciprocity (Dryzek, 2009). Nevertheless, some citizens' and facilitators' impression that the BEP was depoliticized, and their mixed attitudes towards the outcomes of the BEP, support previous findings that the positive and respectful atmosphere created at citizens' assemblies loses value if it is not used as a basis for a respectful but critical discussion of contentious issues (Bächtiger & Gerber, 2014; Curato et al., 2013; Ward et al., 2003). Evidence suggests that deliberation on "hot" topics can be high-quality (Beauvais & Warren, 2019). Therefore, care should be exercised in allocating time to both, creating a generative atmosphere and critically contesting the work done (Bächtiger & Gerber, 2014; Curato et al., 2013). In my group, citizens – with the exception of the *Wutbürger* – were consensus-oriented and moderate. Thus, moments of contestation that are respectful and in line with the Swiss consensus-seeking culture or the integrative approach should be actively encouraged. For example, a dialogue could have taken place with the aim of critically reflecting on the recommendations drafted so far, or time could have been specifically allocated in the online conferences to discuss controversial points.

5.3 The idea of an "information deficit" and the dominance of rational argumentation

A further explanation for the dilution of recommendation is the framing of expertise. It has been refuted that good policy simply entails sticking to scientific findings (Machin, 2018, 2019). Although authoritative scientific work, such as the IPCCC reports, make strong recommendations on how we can address sustainability crises, societal and policy responses have often been poor (see, e.g., Lorenzoni et al. (2007) for the UK, or the fact that Switzerland did not meet any of its environmental goals (BAFU, 2016)). There seems to be a gap between scientific outputs and the information required to address fundamental sustainability concerns that have been acknowledged by many scientists (Caniglia et al., 2021). A social transformation needs to be based on the realities of the people, too (Marris & Rose, 2010). Thus, the knowledge of citizens is a much-needed resource: On the one hand, citizens may be able to provide crucial insights on the meaning, as well as potential benefits and challenges that a given policy may or may not face when implemented in their lives (Machin, 2018). This link to reality is an important complement to the academic, which, next to its practical connections and implications, often forgets its normative content (Wironen et al., 2019): Amy's experiences as a mother, for example, gave her clarity in the normative question about what foods we want our children to eat, as well as practical information about what recommendations addressing retail stores could work when shopping with children (I-p8). On the other hand, citizens can generate new forms of knowledge and understanding that are otherwise missing: Knowledge and ideas might develop through processes of interacting with people, living in a certain environment, and confronting power relations (Machin, 2018). The most profound insights for transformation are not found among intellectuals because they do not feel the pulse of what is at stake the way people who work in the fields, in processing, and the stores do (Marris & Rose, 2010; Swyngedouw, 2010). Assemblies that fail to express "*alternative* ways of thinking than those that normally govern rational decision making" (Tsouvalis & Waterton, 2012, p. 113) thus lose an important resource and limit their transformative potential.

Despite the acknowledgment of the importance of citizens' rationales, critical social scientists argue that meaningful citizen participation is often inhibited in participatory processes, as expertise is ambiguous or ill-defined (Marris & Rose, 2010; Wynne, 1998, 2006, 2007). They criticize that citizens often learn from scientists about the issue under discussion, as it is assumed that participants otherwise lack the expertise to participate (Marris & Rose, 2010; Wynne, 1998, 2006, 2007). This follows the widely held "information deficit" model, which claims that the main problem preventing sustainability transformations is an information deficit in society (Suldovsky, 2016). Public opinion and deliberation academics argue that, in general, citizens are uninformed about political issues (Ackerman & Fishkin, 2002; Converse, 1964; Delli & Keeter, 1996). If citizens, in contrast, engage with accessible scientific information, as was the case during the BEP's learning phase, this can lead to policy decisions that are more ecologically rational (Dryzek, 2000). However, critical social scientists such as Wynne (2007) point out that participatory processes are not about discussing technical issues, but about helping citizens define socially relevant and salient public issues that involve technical issues. Participants are inherently qualified for this task and, moreover, do not even need detailed technical expertise (Wynne, 2007). Rather, learning from scientists directs citizens to think in a

technical scientific way about the issue, which paradoxically deprives them of the opportunity to express their rationales. In the attempt to inform them objectively about the issue at hand, citizens are steered towards pre-framed problems and solutions (Marris & Rose, 2010; Wynne, 2007). This is especially troublesome when scientific authority is unchallenged, as experts are then regarded as authoritative (Howell et al., 2020). However, the insights of critical social theory on participatory processes have only partly reached mainstream deliberative practice. For example, Machin (2023) points out that a top-down knowledge transmission and a pre-set framework is typical for citizens' assemblies.

Agonistic scholars also discuss the issue of expertise in participatory and deliberative processes. They acknowledge the power of hegemonies (Hammond, 2020a; Honig, 2007), one of the current hegemony being the neoliberal one (Mouffe, 2005). Swyngedouw (2009, 2010) connects the neoliberalism hegemony with *techno-managerism*. Solutions are only considered rational, desirable, or feasible if they can be implemented in the (neo)liberal system since the latter is not open to change. Thus, possible solutions to our crisis are technical or managerial (hence the word *techno-managerism*). In the case of climate change, common examples are carbon taxes or the economization of ecosystem services. They are screws we turn on our system without questioning what created the crisis in the first place. Thus, if deliberative or participatory processes are based on the assumption that citizens have an "information deficit", agonistic scholars see them as inherently anti-democratic and anti-transformative (Machin, 2019): The focus is then on getting to know, adapting, and weighting the restricted techno-managerial problems and solutions proposed by experts (see, e.g., Buletti Mitchell & Ejderyan, 2021; Tsouvalis & Waterton, 2012). However, this assumes the complete neutrality and absolute authority of scientists, which is contested by agonists (but also, for example, by Latour (2004), the feminist critiques of Haraway (1988) and Harding (1991), or by Montenegro de Wit (2022) with respect to the food system). A focus on techno-managerial solutions is not objective but explains and manifests the status quo (Machin, 2019). As the experts are framed as *holders of truth*, the disruptive elements of participation and its politics are suppressed by technocratic expertise (Buletti Mitchell & Ejderyan, 2021), and new ways of thinking are not inspired (Machin, 2019). In other words, if the focus remains on the discourses of experts, citizens are not given more power and voice in democracy (Hammond, 2020a). In sum, agonistic critiques are in line with critical social science theories that less weight needs to be given to expert inputs in deliberative processes, but stress that these inputs also need to be contested (A. Machin, personal communication, January 17, 2023).

At the BEP, the learning phase was centered around expert knowledge. Although the BEP was innovative in that it separated the science and stakeholder inputs and added learning journeys to the design, my group's citizens still perceived the learning phase as being dominated by science: Four citizen expressed this in interviews, and there was a general call for more inputs from practitioners throughout the process. Also, there was little time for *open* exchange among citizens during the learning phase (Fig. 9), reflecting the assumption that participants would first have to obtain the necessary facts and form their opinions by listening to experts. This distracted from the knowledge that citizens already brought to the process: A large fraction of my group's citizens had prior knowledge of the food system, as they work in different areas of the food supply chain. Also, the BEP's scientists were generally presented as objective and not provided with counter-frames. This might have given more weight to issues considered by the experts without actively reflecting on it with citizens (e.g., what topics were

not covered so far by the experts? What is the bias introduced through the expert selection?). At the same time, however, an attempt was made to bring the experts into a dialogue with the citizens: The expert presentations were generally short. During the Q&A session, citizens had time to exchange about the input with the experts. Additionally, during the subsequent dialogues, they had time to exchange only among themselves. Therefore, expert inputs without digestion were avoided and sufficient time was given for questions and joint reflections among citizens on what had been learned. Also, during the fourth online meeting citizens entered in an eye-to-eye-level dialogue with an expert of their choice. Thus, the BEP's framework was kept flexible and citizens could influence the discussion points. Also, scientists were not necessarily oriented towards Swyngedouw's (2009, 2010) *techno-managerialism* but had a variety of backgrounds. In fact, several of the experts actually proposed more radical content than the participants, but this content was not picked up (among others, due to lack of time). What I argue applies to the BEP from the critiques of critical social scientists and agonistic scholars is *not* that the expert presentations were per se problematic because they dictated solutions; While they most likely had an influence, framing effects were kept flexible. However, first, too much time was allocated to hearing from expert as opposed to citizen knowledge and, second, scientific knowledge was presented as objective and not critically contested or provided with counter-frames. Both have likely reduced meaningful citizen participation in the ways emphasized by critical social scientists and agonists (Machin, 2019; Marris & Rose, 2010; Wynne, 1998, 2006, 2007).

While the assumption of an information deficit was partially and probably unconsciously reflected in the BEP process, it was primarily brought forward by the participants. A minority of citizens such as Tess were convinced that they had an information deficit and self-censored themselves. That resulted in better-informed or more self-confident citizens taking the lead and others, who felt incompetent to participate, happily embracing this pro-active behavior. This led to a unbalanced participation at the BEP that was observed by all of my group's facilitators and citizens. Thus, the assistant facilitators notion that inequalities due to gender and education were reproduced was possibly not the crucial reason for the observed unbalanced participation. Rather, critiques argue that the valorization of fact-based, rational forms of deliberation that is common in Western societies and goes hand-in-hand with a focus on experts (Ward et al., 2003) belongs to a particular social class - namely that of the (white) average citizen (Casullo, 2020; Schäfer & Merkel, 2023; Young, 2002). Some people are uncomfortable with this form of communication or are perceived as less able to contribute because of their embodied status characteristics (e.g., accent or style of dress) (Casullo, 2020; Schäfer & Merkel, 2023; Young, 2002). In response, citizen assemblies are increasingly called upon to make space for other forms of communication, such as storytelling (Bächtiger et al., 2010). The BEP was sensitive to these critiques: *Theory U* encourages consideration of personal experiences and values next to facts (Scharmer, 2020), and the dialogues were a demonstrative act that every opinion counts. This was valued, for example, by Tess that then felt more comfortable speaking her mind and subsequently felt heard by her peers. Still, she believed that she has nothing to offer during the elaboration of recommendations. Thus, the unbalanced participation of citizens might not only be due to the valorization of fact-based, rational forms of communication, which were partly counteracted at the BEP, but due to deeply internalized patterns as identified by Polletta and Lee (2006) that see formal argumentation as more valuable when real policy decisions are at stake, devaluating, for example, storytelling. In fact, my co-facilitators and I observed a tendency towards formal, more technical, and fact-

based argumentation in the deliberation phase, as the majority of my group's men wanted to show some degree of "professionalism" (H-om6,5). Accordingly, my group's citizens repeatedly expressed that they would have appreciated direct help from experts during the elaboration of recommendations. Thus, the incorporation of other forms of communication at citizens' assemblies is too simple a solution as internalized patterns that already exist previous to the deliberative process need to be overcome. In this sense, the BEP was sensitive to power differences that are inherent in all argumentation (Mouffe, 2000) in applying *Theory U* as a collective theory of transformation. However, to enhance equal participation, the BEP indicates that it is not enough for an assembly *not* to reinforce the idea of the "information deficit" in its process design (which is what partly happened at the BEP), but it must also combat the "information deficit" belief among participants, which was not done proactively enough.

Coming back to the dilution of recommendations, I, some assistant facilitators, and individual citizens were frustrated by the discussions because we felt they did not reflect the urgency of transforming the food system. Rather, the discussions often remained at an abstract and distant level. Achim, for example, shared that he tended to look at issues from the outside rather than wondering "Where am I in this?" (I-p5,55). On the one hand, citizens' self-imposed ideas might – again - have played a role: Three of my group's citizens and (assistant) facilitators observed that dominant citizens promoted the narrative that they should develop "realistic" recommendations that could be implemented in the current system by the actors in power (I-af,p1,2,8,f1). This might have limited citizens' imaginary in line with Swyngedouw's (2009, 2010) notion that solutions are only considered rational, desirable, or feasible if they can be implemented in the (neo)liberal system. On the other hand, the framing by the expert-based learning phase may have played a role: The passionate exchange of ideas that motivates political actors - what I have termed *feu sacré* - can be undermined by a focus on reason rather than emotion (Machin, 2023). Thus, scientific expertise based on reason, argumentation, and rationality can depoliticize discussions (Blühdorn, 2015; Buletti Mitchell & Ejderyan, 2021; Machin, 2019; Swyngedouw, 2009, 2010). The BEP's process design encouraged reflection on the expert inputs from a variety of perspectives (e.g., one reflection question was, "What struck *you*?"). Thus, it invited discussion of the points presented by the experts, which could as well have been political. However, the BEP focused primarily on a discussion *of* the food system rather than proactively *relating* citizens to it.

Accordingly, the facilitators of my group observed that the focus of the discussions was top-heavy (I-f1,2). However, it might precisely be the observation of the world from an objective distance that destroys much of what awakens life in us: Escobar (2019) argues that we have become rational, dreamless people. He draws on Berry (1988), who points out that the Western divide of nature and culture has disconnected us from earth, which explains its devastation. If we follow these scholars, we must build a relationship with nature, or in the case of the BEP, the food system, to achieve political activation and sustainable transformation (Berry, 1988; Escobar, 2019). Accordingly, my co-facilitator and I discussed that it is precisely in one's own affectedness where social transformation becomes possible and the political begins (I-f1). This relationality with the food system was not proactively empowered at the BEP but should not be too far-fetched: We eat every day, thus the food system goes through all our bodies; We could not be more related to it. In sum, if a productive *feu sacré* is deemed beneficial in deliberative processes, the question of how we can best empower citizens' relationality to the topic under discussion should be explored.

The devotion of the beginning of the BEP to learn from experts was widely accepted (e.g., citizens were glad to sit back and learn first, it was in line with the "information deficit" model). At the same time, this did not lead to the active empowerment of citizens to acknowledge that they already bring a lot of valuable knowledge to the process, and develop recommendations that reflect their values and relate to their life. Also, only one citizen in my group changed his opinion because of the expert inputs and discussions. Last, less self-confident citizens went back to topics they already had previous knowledge on in developing the recommendations because the expert inputs could not be sufficiently elementalized. This suggests that at least less weight might be given to expert inputs in deliberative processes – which is reinforced by the fact that a sustainability transformation is a highly political, not technical, challenge, asking in what kind of world we want to live – a question that cannot be answered by experts (Hammond, 2020a). Expert knowledge is undoubtedly important for deliberative processes. The point is that there needs to be a reflection on how to incorporate it best in deliberative processes. Evidence suggests that a good balance between experts' and citizens' ways of knowing can be created by good process design, for example, by *critical* reflections of the scientific inputs in small groups or the implementation of counter-frames (Lang, 2008; Leino et al., 2022). Also, expert knowledge could, for example, be included upon request of the citizens or, if this is not possible for administrative reasons, at least at a later stage of the process so as to not frame the assembly's content and form of discussion too much. In sum, there is a need to contest the authority of science and reconsider which kind of discussions organizers and citizens deem important in citizens' assemblies.

5.4 The recognition of plurality within a narrow consensus-oriented framework

The BEP focused on sustainability and justice issues, which was due to the framework provided by the organizers and the state (e.g., the guiding question, expert selection, and theme choices) rather than a lack of commitment to neutrality. The organizers had to provide a framework for the sake of practicality. The framing of the BEP was an operational issue, which is shared by other examples of deliberative processes (see, e.g., Lang, 2008). That this framework is *progressive* is in the very nature of deliberative processes. These processes want to achieve a greater political self-determination of citizens, which requires a certain amount of progressivism (Schäfer & Merkel, 2023). Still, the BEP's framework was a talking point among more than half of my group's citizens during the interviews. Five citizens of my group perceived a slight form of nudging through the framework of the BEP, and a majority of citizens missed more conservative viewpoints during the expert inputs and learning journeys. The framework was based on the national sustainable development strategy of the Federal Council (Federal Council, 2020). In line with their government, the majority of citizen were concerned about and aware of sustainability and justice topics from the outset. Also, the framework was kept flexible, as citizens were able to influence the process (e.g., deciding on the expert in the fourth online meeting, adding and weighting to themes mentioned by experts, deciding on main transformation needs). Accordingly, the five citizens of my group that perceived a slight form of nudging through the framework of the BEP simultaneously did not raise it to a major issue as they felt they were able to talk about the issues close to their hearts - with the exception of Wulf the *Wutbürger.* So how is it that the BEP's framework was a talking point among citizens,

even though it was needed for operational reasons, and generally perceived as legitimate and flexible?

The citizens' discourse around the framework of the BEP could be interpreted to mean that, despite political agreement at the Federal Council level, alignment with progressive goals for greater sustainability and justice is still controversial in Swiss society. Sustainability concerns tend to be associated with the agendas of the political left in the public discourse (e.g., climate change adaptation measures are mostly brought forward by left political parties in Switzerland (Dupuis & Knoepfel, 2011)). At the same time, the neoliberal hegemony contributes to a contradictory understanding of neutrality in our society – logically implying that valuing profit above life is understood as more legitimate than life before profit (see post-democratic theories such as Mouffe, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2009, 2010). Consequently, sustainable development is contested in our society, which holds also true in the context of agriculture (Connelly, 2007; Constance, 2010). "Sustainability" and "justice" are thus contested and political concepts (Pope & Morrison-Saunders, 2013). This is, for example, illustrated in that opinions differed over the actual "progressiveness" of the BEP. While the majority of citizens stated that the BEP might have been *too* progressive in that conservative actors were underrepresented, some assistant facilitators and a minority of citizens missed experts and stakeholders advocating for a *more* progressive and radical sustainability transformation (e.g. environmental activists).

Consequently, presenting the framework of the BEP as neutral follows the mechanism of avoiding contestation criticized by agonistic scholars (see Chapter 5.2). We should not assume that we have a rational societal consensus that sustainability and justice issues should be advanced and present this as neutral. Otherwise, if we follow agonistic scholars (Machin, 2019, 2023; Mouffe, 1999; Swyngedouw, 2009), the plurality of perspectives that actually exist in Switzerland is negated and the minority that does not agree with the majority's consensus is rendered invisible. This is not to say that the organizers' framework was not legitimate. There is nothing wrong with inviting citizens to discuss a sustainable food system, which is also the goal of the Swiss government. However, the notion of a minority of citizens' that the BEP followed left-wing politics showed that it cannot be assumed that *any* framework is a neutral or unchallengeable decision. Rosendahl et al. (2015) applied "strong objectivity" (see Chapter 3.1.1; Harding, 1992, 1995) to transdisciplinary research projects, showing how they benefited from actively and transparently reflecting the organizers' position (e.g., instead of being as "neutral" as possible, they actively adopted a framework that gave the poor a stronger voice and transparently justified it to stakeholders). Similarly, it could be beneficial if organizers of citizens' assemblies would not only actively reflect on their framework (which the BEP's organizer did), but also make it transparent (which could have been done more clearly, e.g., by explaining how experts were selected at face-to-face meetings) and pro-actively open it to contestation (which was not the case). The fact that citizens discussed the BEP's focus on sustainability and justice, but did not make it a major issue, reflects that most people are likely to support multiple value systems, such as progressive and conservative goals. Therefore, being proactively open about the BEP's framework and acknowledging other value systems alone might have settled the discussions.

The insight that "sustainability" and "justice" are contested concepts goes hand-in-hand with acknowledging pluralism (Pope & Morrison-Saunders, 2013). Pluralism, simply put, is a

philosophical and social concept that acknowledges the existence of multiple values, beliefs, and knowledges (Pope & Morrison-Saunders, 2013). Applied to a sustainability transformation of the food system, it states that there are various understandings of it that differ from a scientific understanding (Caniglia et al., 2021; Pope & Morrison-Saunders, 2013). According to Caniglia et al. (2021), these plural understandings need to be recognized and integrated in order to advance a sustainability transformation: Only then can a holistic understanding of the transformation, as well as important normative, political and context-specific knowledge, be gained (see also Chapter 5.3 on why not only scientific expertise is important). Also, taking into account various types of values, beliefs, and knowledge can encourage people to think beyond what is known and familiar and encourage them to reevaluate their presumptions (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). This is essential to deliberation (Dryzek, 2009).

At the same time, deliberation has often been criticized by difference democrats and agonists for not acknowledging pluralism (Mouffe, 1999; Young, 1996). For example, Young (1996) argues that the idea of reaching a consensus, as well as promoting unity and the common good, can sometimes be oppressive as it tends to prioritize the interests of the more powerful. Indeed, decolonizing scholars argue that deliberation can lead to the development of new kinds of dominance that are supported by reason itself: The struggles of people whose values differ from the norm are neglected when the plurality of values and rationalities is disregarded in the pursuit of rational consensus (Banerjee, 2022). However, it is often exactly the marginalized voices that are critical to sustainability transformations, as they are likely to offer an alternative viewpoint to the dominant groups (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2006; Harding, 1992, 1995). Also, from a democratic vantage, it might be legitimate if minorities bring in their self-interests in deliberation - it can be difficult or self-deprecating for a minority to explain why their concerns are also important to a majority (Mansbridge et al., 2006). Still, as Dryzek and Niemeyer (2006) put it, "diversity begs the question of how conflict is to be managed" (p. 635). A possible solution is brought forward by Caniglia et al. (2021), who emphasize that it does not follow from an integration of different knowledges that pluralism can not persist or be desirable. Dryzek and Niemeyer (2006) agree, pointing out that it is necessary to appreciate pluralism at the basic level of values, beliefs, and preferences while accepting that it is still possible to have a consensus on one or more of these three elements at the meta level.

The BEP's framework reflected the majority's concerns well. However, it may not have given enough room to dissenting voices, which might have led to the loss of a critical democratic resource for the Swiss food system transformation. This is illustrated by the comment of Stuart:

> Stuart: … Before, I had the feeling that I am in my opinion bubble, where most people think like me. Then I see that outside this bubble many also think like me. … Where are the majority of those who think differently that nothing happens?
>
> Me: That's a very valid question. [Both laugh]
>
> Stuart: Are they only in politics? Do they all work for Monsanto? Or … Where are they? (I-p5, 149-151)

In this excerpt, Stuart wonders why it has been so easy to reach a consensus at the BEP despite a lack of progress on sustainability issues at the political level. There are many reasons for this,

such as unequal lobbying and power inequalities in politics Huber (Huber, 2022). Still, if there is no dissent or conflict in deliberation, this might mean that dissenting stakeholders have been marginalized (Banerjee, 2022). As already discussed previously (see Chapter 5.2), the BEP's approach acknowledged the plurality of citizen perspectives, values and knowledges and tried to integrate them. Thus, it did try to reconcile pluralism and consensus as proposed by Caniglia et al. (2021) and Dryzek and Niemeyer (2006). In my group, however, time was too short to always include all voices, so majority decisions were sometimes made (e.g., in selecting topics in the listening phase, in not always including minority opinions in the elaboration of the recommendations, in voting on recommendations). Thus, dissenting voices did not always have an impact on the results of the group work despite the integrative approach, and the process in my group was rather steered towards harmoniously finding the will of the majority. One dissenting voice was Wulf the *Wutbürger,* who consequently resigned from the BEP. Fanny, for example, also voiced that her concerns did not receive enough attention - but only retrospectively, while keeping a low profile at the BEP itself. Despite the majority decisions that had to be taken, there was not a conscious, intentional mechanism put in place to marginalize Wulf or Fanny. In fact, citizens and facilitators were committed to including both in the discussions, and reciprocity was high. Rather, in the context of an unequal and polarized society, not enough mechanisms were put in place that proactively tried to counteract almost natural forms of exclusion and marginalization. For example, who is "the majority" is influenced by who even comes to the BEP (e.g., citizens interested in sustainability and food issues), who can participate in it (e.g., Fanny missed three meetings because of her high work-load as a farmer) and who is dominant in discussions (see Chapter 5.3). Possible measures to account more for pluralism could have been to allocate more time to contestatory discussions of the majority opinion, to include experts that represent minority groups and perspectives that might not be present at the BEP, or to leave more space for citizens to voice their concerns in an open process.

5.5 The BEP's potential for a sustainability transformation of the Swiss food system

The BEP has successfully proposed and legitimized policy decisions steered toward a more sustainable food system that is approved by the majority of citizens that participated in the BEP. The organizers' expectations towards the BEP were not that something completely new would emerge from it. Rather, the goal was to understand which recommendations would be supported if the citizens were to deal with the issue for half a year and set their priorities. In this respect, the BEP has achieved its goal. Together with the whole *Future Food Policy* project, it has contributed to the government's current transformation path: It has shown that the concerns of the citizens generally coincide with those of the experts, which strengthens the sustainability agenda of the Federal Council and various political actors, as they know the majority of the population behind their goals. In doing so, the BEP supported the narrative that the burden of transformation toward a more sustainable and equitable food system rests on society as a whole. This is particularly important in the Swiss context, where the recent opening of agricultural policy to food policy aims to address all actors in the supply chain to advance a common transformation of the food system (Federal Council, 2022b). On the one hand, the BEP's recommendations reflect the complexity of the food system. On the other hand, they show that the majority of citizens acknowledged their responsibilities as consumers,

as well as those of the actors in the middle of the supply chain. The citizens' awareness of the issue was largely there from the beginning, but it needed to be (re)awakened. This indicates that, in a *well-mannered* environment, not much education of the Swiss society is needed to make first solutions acceptable: The BEP was a representative set of the Swiss population, and its majority quickly acknowledged important first levers towards a more sustainable food system, such as reducing meat consumption or food waste. Thus, the BEP made a politically important contribution to the ongoing debate on the future direction of the Swiss food policy.

However, it is questionable if the BEP's transformative potential was fully exploited, as its recommendations remain diluted and the majority does not advance a more radical transformation of the food system that challenges the liberal-capitalist society (Lehner, in preparation). This reflects other experiences with deliberative tools, which is why scholars have argued that deliberative democracy – and with it, citizens' assemblies – is in need of a more critical and disruptive turn to contribute to a sustainability transformation (Böker & Elstub, 2015; Hammond, 2020a). This could involve citizens' assemblies that are more open and critical by challenging existing power structures, promoting dissent and conflict, and bringing marginalized voices to the forefront (see, e.g., Böker & Elstub, 2015; Ward et al., 2003).

Unfortunately, there is a gap between what is imagined to be best for sustainability transformation and what is possible and meaningful in the political and social context in which citizens' assemblies take place (see problem-oriented approach to deliberation; Saward, 2021; Warren, 2012). Deliberative practices are always embedded in their context, which has implications for their potential outcome (Schäfer & Merkel, 2023). Citizens' assemblies are often initiated and supported by the state. By doing so, they accomplish substantive democratic renewal and serve policymakers well, for example, by showing which policies are supported by a representative set of the population or broadening support for new political ideas (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Grönlund et al., 2014). In this instrumental function, however, they serve as a system-reinforcing tool and can be disruptive only to a limited extent (Hammond, 2020a). For example, the state can influence the assemblies' framework or decide which recommendations to take up. In fact, the institutionalization of citizens' assemblies in Western democracies has let them to derive from their normative and critical roots of deliberative democracy (Dryzek, 1990, 2000), and become reformative in the first place (Böker & Elstub, 2015). Similarly, the BEP was under the patronage of federal authorities and its organizers had to make decisions under difficult political conditions (e.g., polarized debate on agricultural policy, little resources available, debate at the political level whether citizens' assemblies are legitimate at all). Combined with the current neoliberal hegemony and expertocracy that constrain our political culture and democratic imagination (see post-democratic but also deliberative theories; Hammond, 2020a; Mouffe, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2009, 2010), it is not surprising that the recommendations remained rather reformative; The "very context in which decision making about sustainability takes place is thus structurally opposed to transformation" (Hammond, 2020a, p. 221).

We should not limit our vision of citizens' assemblies in face of challenges, yet there are limits to their short-term critical and disruptive implementation at the governance level. Accordingly, Hammond (2020a) argues that more radical citizens' assemblies should take place within protest movements, while supportive assemblies might remain situated within government processes. Deliberation can be important for both its supportive and disruptive roles in light

of the vast social change that lies ahead (Hammond, 2020a). The BEP's instrumental function – for example, in showing at the *Food Summit* which expert recommendations are supported by a representative set of citizens - is not inherently objectionable: As I have described above, the BEP arguably made an important political contribution. Also, the next instrumentals citizens' assemblies are already being planned, and increasing acceptance for more critical or disruptive assemblies could go a long way, including discourse with politicians and governments. Therefore, the question is how we can – quite pragmatically – increase citizens' assemblies' contribution to a sustainability transformation within government processes right now.

Based on the experiences of citizens and facilitators at the BEP, I argue that such supportive assemblies need to be more reflective and conscious of addressing structural problems and societal ideas that impede a truly democratic process. The BEP could empower collective action and make a more citizen-led democracy imaginable (see Chapter 5.1). It let to the elaboration of a transformation path that is perceived as positive by a representative set of the Swiss population. However, proactive measures are needed to (1) enhance critical or contestatory forms of communication next to harmonic ones (Chapter 5.2), (2) actively question the idea of an information deficit and the dominance of rational argumentation in deliberation (Chapter 5.3) and (3) recognizing plurality within a narrow consensus-oriented framework (Chapter 5.4). Finally, the topic of time was not dealt with in detail, as it would have gone beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it was an important – if not the most important - constraint of the BEP. Its allocation determines how much say citizens have. For example, a certain framework had to be imposed on the citizens' assembly for it to function in the short time frame, or majority decision had to be taken instead of taking time to deeply engage with minority opinions. In that sense, supporting a democratic process but giving it too few resources is inherently anti-democratic and -transformative. In the end, as Fanny pointed out, citizens' assemblies are "not a marathon that you must complete in the shortest amount of time. When it comes to these kinds of issues, where so much wants to be changed and improved, it just takes time." (I-p11, 338). So above all, this is an appeal to the government to provide citizens' assemblies with sufficient resources. True democracy that can lead to a sustainability transformation means radically recognizing the voice and value of citizens and giving them an empowered and unrestricted voice in shaping the future.

5.6 Limitations and outlook

A limitation of my thesis is that I could only work with one topic group, but different groups had different experiences. My work draws a partial picture of the BEP and is based on the deliberative process in the "Environment" groups. For example, discussions were shaped by the group composition, and sometimes more controversial or lively in other groups compared to mine. In order to focus on the emergences and explanatory angles that were relevant to the assembly as a whole, I triangulated my observations with other groups' experiences through the facilitator debriefings. Just as my group's experiences differed from those of other groups at the BEP, my view of the group process was different from that of other group members. This work is necessarily interpretive, and my disortion and particular perspectives are included. I took a set of measures to ensure my work's validity. First, I made my positionality transparent, thought about "strong objectivity," and actively brought this into the work (see Chapter 3.1.2).

Second, I had to actively think about the bias introduced by participants. When interpreting the interviews, I tried to take a step back and think about what biases may have been incorporated (e.g., social desirability, framing bias). Third, in interviews, mutual exploration can take place and tacit knowledge can be made explicit, but embarrassment and prejudice can also emerge (Faulkner & Becker, 2008). I tried to minimize the latter by taking enough time for the interviews (to get used to the interview situation) and conducting them in a comfortable environment (e.g., over coffee). That I already knew most of the citizens well was supportive. However I was able to speak more confidently with some citizens, while the setting was more difficult with others (e.g., I was nervous or didn't understand them). This gave me more confidence in the interview data of participants such as Tess or Achim, whom I knew well and with whom the interview took place smoothly in person. Accordingly, I may have subconsciously woven their perspectives more into the work, which might have partly limited my thesis to perspectives of citizens that were close to me. Finally, I did information triangulation (see Chapter 3.2.3), as well as member checking by discussing some of my findings with other assistant facilitators in informal conversations. I did not do this with citizens because their effort for the BEP was already high - with the exception of the confrontational interviews, which served as a form of member checking.

This thesis is broad rather than in-depth. Constructivist grounded theory is a multi-step and iterative approach in which the researcher first derives a theoretical orientation from the data and then selectively collects more data until a grounded theory can be formed and saturation is reached (Charmaz, 2014). Since my master's thesis had a limited time frame, it was neither possible nor the goal to form a grounded theory or reach saturation. I was able to make some observations based on my data and discuss them in the literature, but further study is needed to further explore the issues raised. For example, the benefits and ways to empower a constructive *feu sacré* in deliberative processes could be further explored. Also, I could not go into depth on my third explanatory angle, time. Ironically, I lacked the time. This is not to say that the constant race against time at the BEP was not important. In fact, it played a crucial role, which is why I included it in the results in the first place. For example, citizens, (assistant) facilitators, and I observed that the democratic capacity of the BEP was compromised because there was no room for deep engagement and deliberation in the tightly timed meetings (see Chapter 4.3.3). Still, the influence of time on deliberation is controversial in some respects, such as its influence on the recommendations. The number of recommendations and the complexity of the topic could not be addressed in detail in the time available. However, it could also be argued that this is beneficial, as time constraints could encourage focus on the most important information and issues. Nordgren and Dijksterhuis (2009), for example, argue that in the context of preference formation in consumer decisions, thorough deliberation can be a form of distraction and lead to inconsistent preferences, especially for complex issues. The extent to which these findings can be applied to citizens' assemblies is an open question that would need to be explored. In short, time has a complex impact on deliberative processes that was not sufficiently explored in this work.

The emergences and explanatory angles I focussed on are a selection. They were derived by applying constructivist grounded theory and inductive coding. Nonetheless, additional topics were subjects of discussions at the BEP and may be explored in the future. For example, the meetings' online format was brought up by four of my group's citizens during the interviews (I-p1,4,5,10), as well as by the facilitators (I-f1,2). Especially in discussions about the lack of *feu*

sacré in our group, the online format was cited by citizens and facilitators as a possible explanation for it. They observed that the format made it more difficult for them to relate to their peers. Interestingly, the face-to-face events were characterized by a different energy than the online meetings, which was most obvious at the closing weekend (I-f1,2,p5-7,9,10; RN-cw). Facilitators described it as a moment of getting into gear; a moment when fragments came together and started to function as a whole (I-af,f1,2; PO-cw). The citizens were previously fragmented into different groups and topics, as well as locally separated. At the weekend, they physically merged into a whole, completing the project together. This had implications for participation. For example, one citizen described that she was better able to participate in the recommendations' elaboration than in earlier meetings, which she attributed to being able to resonate with other citizens (I-p1). The flow of energy and emotionality might be interrupted if bodies are only connected through a cable or antenna. Thus, we might need to set ourselves physically in relation to each other to create deliberative moments. Further studies could thus explore the opportunities and challenges of online meetings with regards to bodies and relationality.

Other points that also received resonance but were not incorporated in this work were, among others: The complexity of the topic that was perceived as overwhelming by some citizens (H-om3; I-p7,8) and the consequent difficulty in forming an opinion on the whole food system (I-p5,10); The lack of interest in the topic (I-p3,10); The inconsistency in the groups (e.g. by guest visits to other groups, absence of participants, working on recommendations from the World Café) so that discussions could not be deepened and be built upon each other (H-om8; I-f2,p3,5,6,8,9; PO-om6); And the lack of support in writing rigorous and in-depth recommendations, for example, the absence of an editorial group and the lack of leadership from the facilitators (I-p3,6,8-11).

6.Conclusion

I participated in the BEP as an assistant facilitator. I asked myself what we can learn from the experiences of citizens and facilitators to tap the potential of citizens' assemblies for sustainability transformations. I confirmed that deliberative processes can prepare the ground for collective and progressive action: The BEP made a politically important contribution to the ongoing debate about the future direction of Switzerland's currently polarized, unsustainable, and unjust food policy by indicating a citizen-supported transformation path and demonstrating that the public can get behind the goals of the Federal Council. In doing so, the BEP supported a reformist and "win-win"-oriented sustainable development, but did not reach the level where it would have provided space for articulating a radical, alternative sustainability discourse.

While the reformative focus of the BEP can be supported – for the large-scale transformation ahead of us, we need different approaches - I argue that proactive measures are needed to address structural problems and societal ideas that impede a truly democratic process. First, in the context of the Swiss consensus-seeking culture, active measures are needed to promote not only harmonious but also contentious forms of communication. The BEP indicated that the positive and respectful atmosphere created at citizens' assemblies should be used as a basis for respectful but critical discussion of contentious issues. Second, in the context of the dominance of rational argumentation and the idea of an information deficit in policy-making processes, active measures are needed to promote meaningful citizen participation. The BEP's approach recognized the importance of people's experiences, worldviews, and forms of knowledge to deliberation. Nevertheless, the BEP showed that the idea that formal and fact-based arguments are more valuable when it comes to real policy decisions is socially entrenched. Accordingly, it needs to be actively countered. This could include enabling citizens not only to talk *about* an issue, but also to *relate* to it. Third, in the context of an unequal and polarized society, active measures are needed to promote plurality in deliberation. People whose values differ from the norm are perhaps the most important critical democratic resource for the Swiss food system transformation. The BEP has indicated that they can be disadvantaged by a too narrow framework or by the goal of finding consensus. Recognizing plurality means, among others, acknowledging that no framework represents a neutral or unchallengeable decision. Therefore, open discourse about it should be encouraged.

To support a sustainability transformation, we need to have the courage to bring controversial points and criticisms to the table, to question the supposed neutrality of the current technocracy, and to allow sufficient time for deep deliberation and mutual exchange in a pluralistic society. This ultimately requires a willingness on the part of a liberal-capitalist government to reopen itself to a genuine and citizen-led democracy that leaves open the possibility to at least talk about a more radical form of sustainability transformation. Ultimately, citizens' assemblies are not only critical to supporting sustainability transformation by developing policy recommendations but are an important learning ground for how we can empower citizens to actively participate in shaping the food system, as well as their relationships with food and agriculture. They are places where *food democracy* can be tested and envisioned.

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Appendix

A. Coding scheme empirical research

Data derived from my participation in the BEP: SOURCE-EVENT
Data derived from the interviews: I-PERSON

Source:

Participant and participatory Observation:	PO
Harvesting:	H
Reflection notes (personal and with facilitators):	RN
Written sources & recordings provided by the BEP:	WS

Event:

Assistant facilitator briefing	fb
Facilitator process debriefing	pd
Starting Weekend:	sw
Closing Weekend:	cw
Learning Journey:	lj
Mid-term meeting:	mm
Online Meeting:	om (+ number)
Media Conference	mc
Food Summit	fs

Person:

Group "Environment A":

Teacher (female, not academic, old adult)	p1
Gardener (female, not academic, old adult)	p2
Retailer (male, not academic, young adult)	p3
Student (male, academic, young adult)	p4
Academic (male, academic, old adult)	p5
Engineer (male, academic, old adult)	p6
Cook (male, not academic, middle-aged adult)	p7
Facilitator	f1

Group "Environment B":

Activist (female, not academic, old adult)	p8
Intellectual (male, academic, old adult)	p9
Economist (male, academic, middle-aged adult)	p10
Farmer (female, not academic, young adult)	p11
Facilitator	f2

Assistant Facilitators	af

B. Interview outline (example for interviews with citizens, in German)

Einleitung:
Danke das du da bist.

Es ist jetzt zwei Wochen her, seit wir den Bürger*innenrat abgeschlossen haben. Wie geht es dir jetzt?

Ich schreibe meine Masterarbeit im Rahmen der wissenschaftlichen Begleitgruppe des Bürger*innenrats. Dabei schaue ich mir an, wie unsere gemeinsame Reise war und was wir darauf für zukünftige deliberative Prozesse lernen können. Da der Prozess für euch Bürger*innen sein soll, interessiert es mich besonders, wie der Prozess für dich war.

Da wir unsere gemeinsame Reise reflektieren, führe ich kein typisches Interview durch. Viel mehr möchte ich mich mit dir über den Prozess austauschen. Ich habe Einstiegsfragen für das Gespräch vorbereitet. Danach kannst du mich ebenfalls Dinge fragen, und ich werde meine eigenen Gedanken und Beobachtungen einbringen.

Das Interview ist anonymisiert und für meine Masterarbeit verwendet. Dein Name wird nirgends vorkommen. Ist das so in Ordnung für dich?

Darf ich das Interview aufnehmen?

Hast du noch Fragen?

Gemeinsame Gedankenreise durch das BEP:

Lernphase	Frage, um Gedanken der Bürgerin/des Bürgers abzuholen: • Wie war die Lernphase für dich rückblickend? Was war spannend/bewegend/überraschend? Meine Gedanken (situativ und selektiv einbringen): • Die Teilnehmer*innen schienen überfordert mit den Experteninputs. Sie wurden mit Informationen gefüttert, anstatt selbst zu kochen. *Konntet ihr eure Anliegen während der Lernphase einbringen? Wie fandest du die Experteninputs (Nachhaken: Waren sie zu „akademisch"?)? Konnte ein Verdauungsprozess der Informationen stattfinden? Wurde während der Lernphase einen Bezug zwischen den Informationen der Expert*innen und eurem eigenen Leben hergestellt?*
Learning Journeys	Frage, um Gedanken abzuholen: • Welche Rolle haben die Learning Journeys für dich persönlich und für den Prozess gespielt?

	Meine Gedanken: • Die Learning Journeys schienen als zu progressiv wahrgenommen zu werden und waren nicht genügend in den Prozess eingebunden. *Waren die Learning Journeys zu «progressiv»? Gaben sie die Richtung der gewünschten Veränderung vor (kleinräumig, lokal, nachhaltig)? Konntet das Wissen von den Learning Journeys in die Empfehlungen einfliessen?*
Verdauungsphase	Fragen, um Gedanken abzuholen: • Wenn du das Schweizer Ernährungssystem einem Freund erklären müsstest, wie würdest du das tun? • Ist das anders, als am Anfang? Meine Gedanken: • Es schien eine begrenzte Meinungsänderung und Downloading stattzufinden*. Am Anfang meintet ihr, ihr hört nur das, was ihr eh schon wisst. Wie ist das rückblickend? Hast du deine Meinung geändert? Was hätte es gebraucht, um deine Meinung zu überdenken? Was hast du aus dem BEP mitgenommen?*
Listening Phase	Fragen, um Gedanken abzuholen: • Wie war die Fokussierung der Themen rückblickend? Was war spannend/bewegend/überraschend? • Konntest du die Themen, die dir am Herzen liegen, in den Prozess einbringen? Wenn ja, was hat dich dabei unterstützt? Wenn nicht, was hat dich daran gehindert? Meine Gedanken: • Die Gruppe «Umwelt A» hat bereits früh die Themen «Food Waste» und «Fleischreduzierung» als wichtige Schalthebel identifiziert. Ich bin unsicher, ob sie sich für neue Themen geöffnet haben. *Waren dir Fleisch und Food Waste von Anfang an wichtig, oder ist dieser Fokus durch den Prozess entstanden? Wann/Warum? Was ist mit den anderen Themen Anreize und Standortgerechtigkeit?* • Die beiden Gruppen hatten sehr viele Überschneidungen, bei den Themen, die ihnen wichtig waren. *Worauf sind die Überschneidungen zwischen den beiden Umwelt Gruppen bezüglich den Themen zurückzuführen?*
Austritt von Wutbürger	Frage, um Gedanken abzuholen: • Ein Teilnehmer hat uns auf halben Weg verlassen. Wie war das für dich? Meine Gedanken: • Ich weiss nicht, wie die Bürger:innen zum Wutbürger standen. Sein Austritt stand unreflektiert im Raum. *Hättest du es gut gefunden,*

	wenn der Teilnehmer länger dabei geblieben wäre? Wie war es für dich, dass wir seinen Austritt nicht besprochen haben? • Der Teilnehmer hatte eine starke Auswirkung auf meine Energie und die Art, wie ich mich in der Gruppe einbrachte. *Hat sich der Teilnehmer auf deine Beteiligung in der Gruppe ausgewirkt?*
Mid-Term meeting	Frage, um Gedanken abzuholen: • Beim Mid-Term Meeting haben wir erstmals die Arbeit des ganzen Rats zusammengetragen. Wie war das für dich? Was war spannend/bewegend/überraschend? Meine Gedanken: • Es gab ein Manipulationsvorwürfe gegen den BEP am Mid-Term Meeting. *Hast du dich manipuliert gefühlt? Woher kommen die Vorwürfe? (Beispiele zum Nachhaken: Leitfrage, Learning Journeys, Experteninputs)? Gab es beim BEP „Klassenkämpfe" (= "tribal politics")? Wenn ja, warum?* • Es gab bei der Auswahl der Hauptthemen viele Überschneidungen mit dem ganzen Rat, weshalb von einem kollektiven Prozess gesprochen wurde. *Konnte das Wissen, dass jede:r in seine Gruppe gebracht hat, zusammengebracht werden? Gab es einen „kollektiven" Prozess in unserer Gruppe? Zwischen den Gruppen?*
Deliberationsphase	Fragen, um Gedanken abzuholen: • Wie war die Ausarbeitung der Empfehlungen für dich? Was war spannend/bewegend/überraschend? • Wie würdest du die Diskussionen während der Ausarbeitung beschreiben (z.B. hitzig, respektvoll, einseitig, politisch...)? • Gab es Menschen, auf die weniger/mehr Einfluss auf die Diskussionen hatten? • Hast du das Gefühl, du konntest deine Perspektive und Fähigkeiten bei der Ausarbeitung der Empfehlungen einfliessen lassen? Was hat dir dabei geholfen? Gab es Hürden? • Wurde dir zugehört? • Konntet ihr konstruktiv zwischen den Gruppen zusammenarbeiten? Meine Gedanken: • Ich bin persönlich sehr bewegt vom Thema und ich diskutiere viel auch sehr emotional darüber. Ich bin nicht sicher, ob alle Leute gleich bewegt waren von den Diskussionen. *Was war dein Eindruck? Wie hast du dich gefühlt? Hättet ihr gerne «tiefere» Diskussionen gehabt? Was sind Erklärungsansätze?* • Wir hatten wenig bis keine kontroverse Diskussionen. *Was war dein Eindruck von den Diskussionen? Ist etwas verloren gegangen/hättet ihr euch kontroverse Diskussionen gewünscht? Waren wir uns immer einig? Wenn nicht, auf was lässt sich diese Beobachtung zurückführen?*

	- Die Teilnehmer*innen haben vermehrt gesagt, dass sie es allen Stakeholdern recht machen möchten – vor allem den Bäuer*innen. Dies kann im Widerspruch dazu stehen, eigene Wünsche zu äussern. *Wie stark habt ihr den Bürger*innenrat als eine Chance gesehen, eure Wünsche in die Politik zu tragen und wie stark wolltet ihr es „allen recht machen"? Haben Gemeinwohlüberlegungen eine Rolle gespielt?* - Ich hatte das Gefühl, die Diskussionen waren sehr reziprok. Trotzdem bin ich misstrauisch, dass alle gleich zu Wort kommen konnten. *Konnten alle gleich zu Wort kommen? Wurden alle befähigt, ihre Ressourcen und ihr Wissen einzubringen?* - Es gab eine zeitversetze Deliberation. In der Gruppe haben an jedem Treffen andere Menschen an den Empfehlungen gearbeitet, und ihre Perspektive aufbauend auf die vorherige Arbeit eingebracht. *Konnten wir auf die Arbeit vorheriger Bürger*innen aufbauen? Wurden dabei Anliegen übergangen?*
Eigene Rolle	Fragen, um Gedanken abzuholen: - Wie war die Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Facilitators und den Bürger*innen rückblickend für dich? - Welche Rolle hatte ich für dich in der Gruppe? Meine Gedanken: - Mir lag das Thema persönlich sehr am Herzen und ich habe mich als Teil der Gruppe gesehen. Darum hat es sich teilweise nicht kohärent angefühlt, die Rolle der „aussenstehenden", „neutralen" Moderatorin zu übernehmen. *Wie war das für euch? Habt ihr diesen Konflikt wahrgenommen?* - Aus Angst, zu manipulieren oder nicht „neutral genug" zu sein, konnte ich die Teilnehmer:innen nicht so stark unterstützen, wie vielleicht gut gewesen wäre. *Hättet ihr euch gewünscht, dass Jeannine und ich uns stärker beteiligt hätten? Wo hättet ihr mehr Unterstützung von uns gebraucht?*
Abstimmung	Fragen, um Gedanken abzuholen: - Wie war das Abstimmungswochenende für dich? Was war spannend/berührend/bewegend? - Hast du das Gefühl, die finalen Empfehlungen „kommen von dir"? Kannst du dich mit den Empfehlungen identifizieren? Meine Gedanken: - Ich frage mich,, ob es ein Ownership über die Empfehlungen oder den Prozess gab. *Siehe oben und: Hast du das Gefühl, ihr konntet den Prozess genügend an deine Bedürfnisse anpassen? Sahst du dich als aktiver Teil?* - Der Sonntag Abend war sehr emotional und für mich transformativ. *Wie war der Sonntag Abend für dich?*

	- Leute haben «Nein» zu den eigenen Empfehlungen gestimmt. Dies deutet darauf hin, dass die Deliberation nicht zu genügend stattgefunden und hat nicht alle Perspektiven berücksichtigt wurden. *Wie hast du entschieden, ob du «Nein» oder «Ja» stimmst? Wie hast du bei den Empfehlungen der eigenen Gruppe gestimmt? Warum?* - Die Leute meiner Gruppe haben bei den eigenen Empfehlungen weniger oft «Nein» gestimmt. Deliberation scheint eine Auswirkung auf das Abstimmungsverhalten zu haben. *Hättest du ohne den Prozess anders über die Empfehlungen abgestimmt? Hast du bei Empfehlungen von anderen Gruppen anders abgestimmt?*

Abschluss:

Am Anfang des Prozesses haben einige von euch gesagt, dass ihr die Politik herausfordern möchtet, dass ihr mutig und hoffnungsvoll sein möchtet. Wurdet ihr rückblickend durch den Prozess abgeholt und befähigt, dies zu tun? Wenn nicht, wie hätten wir euch besser darin unterstützen können?

Was denkst du, könnte der Beitrag des BEPs sein an unsere Demokratie?
Was denkst du, können wir vom BEP für unsere Demokratie lernen?

Gibt es sonst noch etwas, das du sagen möchtest?

Vielen Dank!

C. Assistant facilitator workshop (in German)

Zeit	Programm	Material
15:00	Ankunft	
15:10	Check-in: • Wie kommt du an dieses Treffen? • Was ist deine Erwartung? Erwartungen unsererseits: • Teilen der Erfahrungen. • Kein Fokus auf die „technische" Details des Prozessdesigns, da dies in anderen Treffen diskutiert wird (z.B. Prozessdesign Debriefing). • Vielmehr: Was hat sich „richtig" oder „nicht richtig" angefühlt? Wie habt ihr den Prozess erlebt? Welche Themen standen im Raum? • Kein Workshop sondern lockerer Austausch.	Notizen zu Erwartungen
15:30	Zwei Minuten Zeit um sich Gedanken zu machen und Themen, die ihr besprechen möchtet, auf Post-its zu schreiben. Samira schreibt ihre Themen auch auf. Sammeln der Themen: Jeder präsentiert seine Post-its. Clustern der Themen	Post its Stifte Leute vorher darüber informieren, damit sie sich Gedanken machen.
15:40	Start mit erstem Themen-Cluster.	
16:50	Check-out: Was nehmt ihr aus diesem Treffen und dem BEP mit?	
17:00	Apéro	Apéro.

D. Declaration of originality

ETH

Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich

Declaration of originality

The signed declaration of originality is a component of every semester paper, Bachelor's thesis, Master's thesis and any other degree paper undertaken during the course of studies, including the respective electronic versions.

Lecturers may also require a declaration of originality for other written papers compiled for their courses.

I hereby confirm that I am the sole author of the written work here enclosed and that I have compiled it in my own words. Parts excepted are corrections of form and content by the supervisor.

Title of work (in block letters):

Contestation, Expertise and Time: An Ethno-graphic Case Study of the Swiss Citizens' Assembly on Food Policy

Authored by (in block letters):
For papers written by groups the names of all authors are required.

Name(s):	First name(s):
Amos	Samira

With my signature I confirm that
- I have committed none of the forms of plagiarism described in the 'Citation etiquette' information sheet.
- I have documented all methods, data and processes truthfully.
- I have not manipulated any data.
- I have mentioned all persons who were significant facilitators of the work.

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