New Perspectives on Food Democracy

Editors

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Editorial

Editorial: New Perspectives on Food Democracy

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Abstract
With the overall intention of stimulating the debate on food democracy, this thematic issue aims to shed fresh light on the complex relationship between food and democracy in different contexts. New theoretical perspectives and empirical analyses are presented that explore, sharpen, question, and expand the potential of food democracy as both, an analytical lens onto the state and development of contemporary food systems, and as a political idea for transforming the dominant agri-industrial food system. In this editorial to the thematic issue "New Perspectives on Food Democracy," we briefly re-capitulate the existing debate on food democracy, explain the goals and overarching questions of the thematic issue and provide an overview of the assembled articles.

Keywords
democratic governance; food citizenship; food democracy; food system; participation

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue "New Perspectives on Food Democracy" edited by Basil Bornemann (University of Basel, Switzerland) and Sabine Weiland (Université Catholique de Lille, France).

1. Food Democracy Debate

The globalised food system of the 21st century is characterised by unprecedented productivity, which some see as a central factor for achieving food security and fighting world hunger. Others, however, highlight considerable negative social and ecological consequences. Current patterns of food production, distribution, and consumption are regarded as not only unjust but destructive to natural resources and livelihoods. Existing exploitative economic relations contribute to food insecurity and malnutrition for millions of people, livelihood crises, environmental destruction resulting from resource and fossil-fuel intensive production and distribution, as well as the degenerative diseases associated with the Western lifestyle's diet being rich in fat, sugar, and processed foods. These critical perspectives on the current food system are articulated in various alternative visions of the food system.

Ideas and concepts such as 'food sovereignty,' 'food justice,' 'food citizenship,' and 'food democracy' (Booth & Coveney, 2015; Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011; Levkoe, 2006; Renting, Schermer, & Rossi, 2012) emerged at the intersection of critical agri-food movements such as 'La Via Campesina' and a critically-oriented academic community (Constance, Renard, & Rivera-Ferre, 2014; Goodman, DuPuis, & Goodman, 2012). These concepts are closely related, as they all denote a strong move to problematise the existing industrial agri-food system and present counter-proposals to remedy the current system's problems. Yet, due to the particular contexts in which they emerged, there are differences between these concepts in terms of the elements of the current food system they problematise as well as the goals, norms, and transformation strategies they promote.

The concept of food democracy, which is at the centre of this thematic issue, deals with the problematisation and transformation of established structures, pro-

cesses, and practices of food governance, i.e., the way in which common and collectively binding goals are formed, agreed upon, and implemented. From a food democracy perspective, the rebuilding of the food system fundamentally depends on the adoption of democratic principles and practices in food governance. Instead of profit-oriented multinational corporations as well as international networks of scientific and administrative experts who are making critical decisions regarding the food system without a clear democratic mandate, it is the citizens affected by food issues who are supposed to shape food systems in line with their ideas and interests in a democratically organised process of will formation and decision-making.

1.1. Origin and Concept

The term 'food democracy' was prominently coined in the late 1990s by Tim Lang (1999), a London City University professor and former farmer. Lang himself dates the beginnings of food democracy back to 19th century industrialisation when in England and other countries demands for adequate, affordable, and safe food were made as part of early welfare policies (Lang, 1999, p. 218). Nowadays, the term essentially refers to a counter-concept to the dominant food governance regime, which according to Lang can be described in different practices of 'food control'. Firstly, food control takes the form of centralisation and concentration processes in the food industry with some major global companies dominating the food markets at the expense of smaller firms and small farmers (Lang, 1999). Secondly, the companies exert control over food vis-à-vis the consumers. In current food supply chains, retailers, and supermarkets 'choice-edit' the products before they are presented to the consumers. Retailers act as the main gatekeepers between producers and consumers, e.g., through contracts and specifications that frame farmers' and producers' opportunities as well as consumer choice (Lang, 2005). Food labelling is also a tool for consumer control. In a context of often low-profile legal requirements for food labelling, companies only reveal information regarding the origin, production processes, and ingredients which will not negatively affect their sales (Hamilton, 2005). By restricting information and choice through their limiting of the consumers' right to know what is in their food, these corporations, thirdly, also control public, democratic decision-making. Regarding genetically modified foods, Shiva (2014) argues that corporate control of technology and intellectual property enables corporate decision-making outside of the democratic realm, which she dubs 'food dictatorship.'

Food democracy, in contrast, calls for people to regain control over the food system. The aim is to challenge and counterbalance food control choices and choice-edit of the food industry, in order to allow people access to an adequate, safe, nutritious, sustainable food supply and to collectively benefit from the food system

(Booth & Coveney, 2015; Lang, 1999). This is achieved through greater participation of citizens and by increasing public standards in democratically accountable ways (Hassanein, 2003; Lang, 2005). The contested debates on food are thus "representing a struggle between those economic and social forces seeking to control the system and those citizens seeking to create more sustainable and democratic food systems" (Hassanein, 2008, p. 287). Food democracy serves to counterbalance the neoliberal agenda of a globalised food industry directed at feeding the world cheaply and profitably (Goodman et al., 2012; Lang & Heasman, 2004). It is about establishing justice and fairness in the system. It creates spaces for the individual and collective agency of people to determine the values they want in their food system. The multiplicity of inputs and initiatives at various levels is seen as an asset since it can bring about innovations that will progressively transform the system. Surely, this presents a challenge to the established food system and its key players who seek to control the system, as well as a challenge to liberal democracies and market economies (Hassanein, 2003; Renting et al., 2012). Food democracy is not only seen as functional in terms of its ability to provide solutions to the problems of the current food system. A strong food democracy constitutes in itself a space for developing possibilities for "a genuine transformation of societal values and practices" (Hassanein, 2003, p. 85; see also Barber, 2004).

Food democracy comes with great hope that the democratic process will be able to bring about such change. At its core is the idea that all people meaningfully participate in shaping food systems locally, nationally, and globally. They realise that food is political (Hassanein, 2003). As set out in manifestos of the food movement, such as Frances Moore Lappé's *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971) and Michael Pollan's *In Defense of Food* (2008), people realise that, by eating differently, they can transform the agri-food system into a more just and sustainable place. The notion of 'food citizenship' denotes the altered role of people in this scenario: Rather than passive consumers, manipulated by supermarkets and deskilled through the proliferation of convenience foods, people become food citizens who get engaged and actively shape the food system (Welsh & MacRae, 1998; Wilkins, 2005). Citizenship implies that the commodification of food is contested and that people hold and develop capacities and responsibilities beyond the simple consumption of goods. Making food choices often involves decisions in the face of conflicting values and uncertainty over wider impacts. These decisions must "be determined socially and politically through meaningful civic participation and political engagement by an informed citizenry" (Hassanein, 2008, p. 289). Some decisions might be difficult to make, but people will eventually agree with an outcome if it resulted from a fair and participatory process. Empowering people to meaningfully participate and to determine food policies and practices is a key element. In that respect, food democracy

is also concerned with the problematisation and transformation of established views and practices of democratic governance per se. The rebuilding of the food system is frequently seen as a stimulus to explore new ways of democratic decision-making and an opportunity to reassert the institutions of liberal representative democracy, as well as to reject elitist forms of governance altogether.

1.2. Food Democracy in Practice

In practice, the ways of producing food democracy are manifold. It begins on the individual or family level in people's households and kitchens. People may practise food democracy for example by home cooking and cooking from scratch, using little or no prepared foods from the supermarket. This is not only an act of improving cooking skills which, as evidence shows, is related to enhanced diet quality (Larson, Perry, Story, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2006). It is also an act of self-empowerment to regain control over food. People may also decide to consume foods that represent certain values, such as organic, local, cruelty-free, Fair Trade, etc. Being intentional about daily food choices creates added value on a personal level, but also sends signals to the marketplace and supports the producers of such foods (Booth & Coveney, 2015; Wilkins, 2005).

Food democracy can also be practised at the community level. People may get involved in food swaps with neighbours, buy at farmers' markets, participate in consumer-supported agriculture (e.g., green box schemes), be active in a community garden project, a consumer food co-op, and so on (Booth & Coveney, 2015). These acts go beyond the individual and household level and refer to varying degrees to the larger food system. Finally, food democracy at the societal (regional or national) level includes food advocacy and lobbying for the 'common good,' getting involved in a food movement (e.g., 'Slow Food' or the German 'Wir haben es satt'—'we are fed up'—movement), a food policy council, and other means of civic participation in public policy-making (Goodman et al., 2012; Welsh & MacRae, 1998).

All of these are spaces to practise food democracy by bringing control of the food system back into the hands of the people. This is seen as an act of transforming passive consumers into active food citizens. Hassanein (2008) made a first and widely cited attempt to operationalise the key dimensions required for such empowerment of people. She proposes the following five dimensions, namely: 1) Collaborating toward food system sustainability, indicating that food democracy requires not only individual participation of people in various places but also their collaboration; 2) Becoming knowledgeable about food and the food system, which is an act of countering corporate control of food; 3) Sharing ideas about the food system with others, pointing to the deliberation of values and visions about the food systems people would like to have; 4) Developing efficacy with respect to food and the food system, referring to people's capacity to be able to promote change of the food system; and 5) acquiring an orientation towards the community good, which involves people's food relations moving beyond their individual self-interest to being oriented towards the common good. These dimensions represent normative characteristics of food democracy but can also serve as criteria to empirically analyse the various food initiatives that are presently emerging (Hassanein, 2008).

1.3. Boundaries

The concept of food democracy, as outlined, revolves around the notions of food citizenship, participation, taking back control, and strong democracy. Essentially, food democracy is a normative counter-concept to the current food system dominated by corporate interests. Deviating from this understanding, a number of voices propose more liberal interpretations of food democracy. These are based on accounts of political consumerism, i.e., purchasing food products for ethical or political reasons (Micheletti & Boström, 2013), and consumer rights to an informed food choice (Campisi, 2016; de Tavernier, 2012). The food citizen is constructed here as the consumer who 'votes with their fork,' and as a bearer of legal rights, e.g., regarding their right to safe food and food information. In a liberal conception, the latter is not a positive right in the sense of entitlement but rather a negative right not to be misinformed regarding their food choices. Appropriate food labelling is therefore crucial. According to some scholars, this should also contain information on ethical and environmental aspects of food products and production processes (Beekman, 2008; Micheletti & Boström, 2013).

The main difference between these contrasting interpretations of food democracy lies in the conception of food citizenship: Whereas liberal concepts see people as 'consumer-citizens' who use their buying power in order to bring about change in the food system, the proponents of a more substantive notion of food citizenship are critical of the, in their view, passive role of the food consumer. They advocate instead a more active and political engagement in collective food affairs. From this perspective, food democracy goes beyond simply the adequate supply of food for individuals and stresses the importance of the wider public good, i.e., human and ecological health, as well as social justice (Booth & Convey, 2015; Hassanein, 2003).

2. New Perspectives on Food Democracy

This thematic issue aims to conceptually and empirically advance the discussion on food democracy. The consideration of new perspectives is motivated by two contrasting, yet linked observations. The first relates to the existing discourse on food democracy, which seems to have undergone a certain stabilisation and closure. Food democracy has become an important and recurring refer-

ence point for scholars and practitioners. In conceptual terms, however, the debate mainly revolves around a specific notion of empowerment and increased participation of people, or the contrasting notion of liberal market-based and consumerist food democracy. Other forms of organising and doing democracy tend to be neglected.

The second observation is related to developments surrounding the food democracy debate that renew the relevance of food democracy, and at the same time change the conditions of its meaning. On one hand, the food system is marked by various developments that come with new opportunities and challenges to its democratic governance. In the last years, we observe a significant and increasing politicisation of food, triggered by food crises and scandals, concerns such as sustainability and climate change, but also by a more general politicisation of everyday life (Herring, 2015; Micheletti & Stolle, 2012). On the other hand, the understanding and practice of democratic governance have undergone a major transformation, with potential implications for the notion of food democracy. Recent upheavals of populist movements aside (which certainly change the political conditions of democratic food governance), there are other more systemic transformations in contemporary democracies evolving, some of which may serve as explanatory factors for populist movements. In the context of recent pluralisation and decentralisation, the concepts and institutions of liberal democratic governance are said to be fundamentally transformed, if not hollowed out as suggested by some observers (Crouch, 2010). Democracy is increasingly becoming a practice to be thought of and analysed in relation to a highly complex (post-liberal) governance system, transcending the notion of a neatly organised structure of functionally linked institutions and practices satisfying the principles of a liberal representative democracy (Bevir, 2014; Peters & Tatham, 2016; Rosanvallon, 2011; Sørensen & Torfing, 2005). This democratic transformation comes with new challenges and opportunities for food democracy—and thus calls for a reconsideration of the conceptual repertoire for analysing food democracy.

Taking these developments into account, the concept of food democracy may open up new perspectives to illuminate the interplay between changes in the food system and transformations of democratic governance. It allows new insights into the democratic conditions and consequences of recent developments in the food system. Conversely, it can shed new light on the consequences of recent democratic transformations for the governance of contemporary food systems. With the general intention to gain fresh theoretical and empirical insight into the complex and dynamically changing relationship between food and democracy in different contexts, as well as to examine the theoretical and practical significance of food democracy today, the thematic issue pursues three objectives, each related to a specific set of questions:

1. The first aim is to deepen, differentiate and further develop the conceptual repertoire for the analysis of food democracy: What are the established approaches and how can food democracy be understood today? To what extent have existing understandings proved useful and how do they need to be adapted in the light of recent developments in food systems and democracy? What are appropriate concepts for a differentiated analysis of the democratic quality of contemporary food governance or the food system as a whole?

2. The second aim is to generate new empirical insights about (old and new) phenomena of food democracy: How are food concerns being articulated, processed, and regulated in modern democracies? Which forms of food democracy can we observe? How significant and/or prevalent is democracy in the food system? Do we find indications of a democratisation of food? Are there counter-movements? What are drivers of and barriers to the democratisation of food?

3. The third aim is practical-political. It refers to the identification of approaches and strategies for promoting different forms of food democracy. How can food systems be democratised? What strategies and practices strengthen democracy in relation to food?

3. Mapping the Contributions to the Thematic Issue

The contributions assembled in this thematic issue examine a wide array of ways in which food and democracy are connected. They are based on different normative and analytical reference points, focus on different objects or places of manifestation of food democracy, and make use of different approaches and methods.

In terms of their normative theoretical foundations, the spectrum ranges from contributions based on and developing established participatory notions of food democracy to contributions that problematise existing normative concepts and place them on new democratic foundations, as well as establishing links to other normative concepts such as sustainability and justice. Also, from an analytical point of view, a wide range of references to concepts such as governance, power, conflict, and transformation can be identified. Here, too, some contributions take new paths, for example by emphasising the sensual dimension of food democracy or by anchoring food democracy in the practice of knowledge.

There is also a considerable variation in the subject areas covered. The contributions focus on various manifestations of food democracy, ranging from bottom-up initiatives and networks to top-down governance. Some contributions are particularly interested in how social and government initiatives work together to create food democracy. Within these different places, the contributions focus on different 'aggregate states' of food democracy—from institutional arrangements to dis-

courses, and cognitive structures to concrete practices. Irrespective of this variation in relation to the objects, a certain dominance of contexts can be discerned. The majority of contributions to food democracy focus on Western countries, while the countries of the Global South rarely appear. In this broader cultural context, a focus on urban settings prevails. It is possible that this focus is not random, but reflects a systematic affinity between food democracy and Western contexts (see Carlson & Chappell, 2015).

The methodological spectrum includes theoretically accentuated as well as empirically oriented contributions. The latter range from analyses of new primary data to reinterpretations of existing studies from the perspective of food democracy. They include in-depth qualitative case studies as well as approaches to comparing manifestations of food democracy on the basis of quantitative data. While these approaches reflect the classical spectrum of social science methods, transformative research approaches such as participatory action research or participatory experiments express the hybrid character of food democracy as both an analytical and a practical concept.

Notwithstanding these differences, the contributions to the thematic issue share the common goal of taking on and developing new perspectives on food democracy. To highlight their respective novelty, we have grouped the articles into three sections that highlight three different innovation movements we observe in relation to the existing debate on food democracy.

A first group of contributions, entitled 'elaborating and differentiating food democracy,' ties in with existing concepts of food democracy, deepening, detailing, and differentiating them on the basis of empirical analyses. Here we find studies on the democratic qualities of food-sharing initiatives (Davies, Cretella, & Franck, 2019) and alternative food networks (Lohest, Bauler, Sureau, Van Mol, & Acten, 2019), both in urban governance contexts. Two articles analyse the democratic potential of food policy councils in different contexts and reflect the empirical lessons for the concept of food democracy (Bassarab, Clark, Santo, & Palmer, 2019; Sieveking, 2019). Two further contributions focus on the special role of state actors in shaping food-related participation (Baldy & Kruse, 2019; van de Griend, Duncan, & Wiskerke, 2019). The part concludes with two articles on the democratic implications of governance innovation, either bottom-up as produced in local food initiatives (Fernandez-Wulff, 2019) or top-down as anchored in new ideas of behavioural governance (Gumbert, 2019).

A second group of articles is concerned with 'exploring and pushing food democracy' in conceptual and empirical terms. It contains contributions that clarify, reflect, and extend the theoretical foundations of food democracy beyond the usual participatory or liberal perspectives: by comprehending the empowerment claims of food democracy in the sense of a power-based concept of complex democracy (Bornemann &

Weiland, 2019); by proposing the tying of food democracy back to different dimensions of democratic legitimacy (Behringer & Feindt, 2019); or by distinguishing different conceptions and arenas of democratic participation (Lorenzini, 2019). Other articles advance the notion of food democracy by applying it to new thematic areas, such as the context of economic deprivation (Prost, 2019) or the historical design of urban food policy (Hasson, 2019). Broadening this perspective on the production of food democracy, two further articles examine the role of technological conflict in the creation of food democracy (Friedrich, Hackfort, Boyer, & Gottschlich, 2019) and the role of land investment in Africa in the rise and fall of the democratic quality of African food systems (Dekeyser, 2019).

A third group of contributions can be characterised as 'challenging and enlarging food democracy.' Rather than refining or pushing existing concepts, they propose more radical reconsiderations and extensions of the current understanding of the concept. This includes critical readings of food democracy from a governmentality (Jhagroe, 2019) or a neo-Marxist perspective (Tilzey, 2019). Other contributions reach for new terrain of the concept, when working out the epistemic foundations of food democracy (Adelle, 2019), or the democratic implications of taste and sensory experience as a part of food democracy (Voß & Guggenheim, 2019).

While all contributions provide new insights into food democracy, many articles identify additional topics for future research and practice. We hope that this rich pool of novel perspectives will provide an inspiring basis for exploring new ways of 'knowing' and 'doing' food democracy.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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PART I

ELABORATING AND DIFFERENTIATING FOOD DEMOCRACY

Article

Food Sharing Initiatives and Food Democracy: Practice and Policy in Three European Cities

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Abstract

Calls for greater food democracy in Europe have emerged as the limitations of urban food systems dominated by commercial organisations are documented, but little attention has been paid to how policy arrangements affect attempts to transition to more democratic food futures. This article examines food sharing initiatives—increasingly facilitated by the use of information and communication technologies—as a potential means to enhance urban food democracy, and explores the role of policy in shaping those practices in three European capital cities: Berlin, London, and Dublin. We pose two related questions: To what extent are diverse food sharing initiatives exemplars of food democracy, and to what extent do policy arrangements affect food sharing practices and the nature of any food democracy they might embody? Our empirical evidence demonstrates where the goals and impacts of food sharing initiatives align with key dimensions of food democracy. We also consider how food sharing initiatives—and any food democracy dimensions that they support—are affected by the policy environment in which they operate. The food sharing initiatives examined revealed to be agents of pro-democratic change, at least within the boundaries of their spheres of influence, despite policies rarely having their activities and aspirations in mind.

1. Introduction

> The greatest deficit in the food economy is the democratic one. (De Schutter, 2014)

In 2014 the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, specifically urged urban areas to take matters of food democracy into their own hands; where food democracy relates to matters of health, safety, equal rights to culturally-appropriate food, and opportunities to participate in the food system (Hassanein, 2003, 2008; Lang, 1999; Levkoe, 2006; Welsh & MacRae, 1998). While acknowledging the challenges inherent in addressing the concentration of power and control within the

food system, De Schutter and others have argued that there are grounds for optimism, with innovations appearing internationally that reconnect food producers and consumers in new ways (Biewener, 2016). This article explores one such arena of innovation—information and communication technologies (ICT)-mediated urban food sharing initiatives that allow people to grow food, cook, eat and redistribute food together with others (Davies & Legg, 2018, p. 237)—to see if it addresses the democratic deficit that De Schutter identifies. Reflecting on the practices and governance of urban food sharing initiatives in three European capital cities—Berlin, London and Dublin—two interrelated questions are posed: To what extent are current food sharing initiatives exem-

plars of food democracy, and to what extent do policy arrangements affect the achievement of food democracy through food sharing?

2. Interrogating the Nexus of Food Sharing and Food Democracy

The concept of food democracy is a relatively recent arrival in the arena of academic food studies with a landmark publication by Hassanein (Hassanein, 2003) being one of the earliest and most influential papers in the field. Hassanein's article extended the foundational research of Tim Lang that described the importance of eating "adequately, affordably, safely, humanely, and in ways one considers civil and culturally appropriate" (Lang, 1999, p. 218). Although expressed in various ways across the literature, the general view is that people should have enhanced opportunities to *actively* participate in "shaping the food system" (Hassanein, 2003, p. 79). This implies opportunities to participate at a variety of scales and with respect to the formation of policy at every stage of the food system (Levkoe, 2006; Welsh & MacRae, 1998). The driving forces behind these calls for greater participation are multifaceted, from providing opportunities for people to expand their knowledge about food and the food system (Hassanein, 2003) to sharing ideas and opinions about food with others as a pragmatic means to ensure that decisions about food go beyond market forces that emphasise profit over people and planet (Levkoe, 2006). This brings food democracy directly into conversation with the causes and effects of inequities in the food system and to ideas of food poverty, justice, sovereignty and sustainability. Linked to narratives around active participation and the right to food are calls for reorienting control of the food system away from the current agropoly model (EcoNexus, 2013). Sometimes this is articulated in terms of shortening food chains and connecting producers and consumers more directly (Johnston, Biro, & MacKendrick, 2009). In other cases it is about consumers having the capacity and capabilities to exercise their own power to shape the ways food is produced and distributed (Levkoe, 2006; Mann, 2015).

With the core dimensions of food democracy identified—participation, the right to food, sustainability, and reorienting control—it is possible to see whether there is any commonality between these and the goals and practices of urban food sharing initiatives. We selected and examined twelve urban food sharing initiatives from a population of 379 initiatives mapped in Berlin, London and Dublin (Davies et al., 2017) that focus on shared growing, cooking, eating and food redistribution, and use ICT (defined here as websites, social media platforms, digital applications and other online platforms) to mediate their sharing activities, goals and impacts (see Table 1). The information in Table 1 is drawn from content analysis of online information provided by each food sharing initiative, ethnographic fieldwork with each initiative and in-depth interviews with key stake-

holders in each city between 2016 and 2018 (Davies & Weymes, 2018). To preserve anonymity, initiatives are identified by their location (Berlin, London, or Dublin) and their main focus (growing, or cooking and eating, or redistributing) with the title 'multifunctional' used where there is more than one main focus. We use a number to distinguish initiatives with the same focus in the same city (e.g., Growing 1, London; Growing 2, London, and so forth). The three cities—London, Berlin and Dublin—were selected because they are members of the European Union (EU) and are subject to the common policy framework that exists for all member states, but they also have particular socio-economic, environmental, political and cultural histories and characteristics that affect how food is governed (Davies & Weymes, 2017).

Table 1 shows how all the initiatives examined articulate goals and undertake activities that connect with dimensions of food democracy. Specific food democracy dimensions are not excluded if the activity is a community café or a community garden, for example. Table 1 also indicates that in each initiative food sharing activities speak to multiple dimensions of food democracy albeit in distinctive ways. Indeed, ten out of the twelve initiatives address all core dimensions of food democracy. However, it is hard to establish the impact of these food sharing activities, as in many cases the initiatives do not have the capacity or resources to identify and track the impacts they create. For instance, while measuring the weight of food diverted from landfill as an indicator of environmental sustainability is technically straightforward, it is notoriously difficult to identify, isolate and measure impacts that relate to the social, health and well-being benefits of coming together around food; an important part of social sustainability (Mackenzie & Davies, 2019).

Similarly, while counting the numbers of people who attend events run by initiatives may be relatively straightforward, it is not always feasible for initiatives to monitor the depth and frequency of participation or what that participation means to people and for the food system. In addition, there are multiple challenges with establishing whether activities improve an individual's right to food or assist in reorienting control within the food system. It is outputs—rather than impacts—that tend to be reported, such as counting the number of cooking or gardening classes offered, or the numbers of participants. Understanding what difference those experiences make to individuals and communities once the class has ended is an entirely different matter. Although it is beyond the scope of this article, establishing the impacts of food sharing at an individual, community, regional and national scale is an important issue which requires further consideration (see Mackenzie & Davies, 2019). The remainder of the article focus on the extent to which food sharing initiatives—now identified agents of food democracy—are supported (or not) by the wider governing arrangements which shape what they do and how they do it.

Table 1. Relation to dimensions of food democracy of food sharing initiatives in Berlin, London and Dublin.

City	Initiative identifier	Initiative activities	Initiative goals	Impacts*	Relation to dimensions of food democracy
Berlin	Redistribution 1	A not-for-profit food waste initiative that diverts edible food from disposal. Operates in numerous locations in Germany, Austria and Switzerland	"We want to make food unconditionally accessible to all people and thereby promote respect for them." "The goal is to initiate education, rethinking and responsible action on a personal level."	Quantitative impacts reported for entire initiative: 1000 collections per day; 3,827,489 kg of food saved; 55,000+ volunteer 'food savers'	*Sustainability*—reducing food waste by redistributing edible surplus *Right to food*—providing unconditional accessibility of food to all people *Participation*—facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges of surplus food *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to develop skills and understandings around food
	Redistribution 2	A global not-for-profit mapping and redistribution initiative that connects surplus harvests from fruit trees with those in need and encourages exchange of knowledge and skills for growing	"to connect people with fruit trees." "[to foster] responsibility, respect and common sense…pay attention to the property rights…gently handle trees and nature…share the fruits of your discoveries…engage in the care of fruit trees."	Quantitative impacts reported for entire initiative: 72,885 participants; 153 groups formed; 53,116 locations mapped; 360 actions founded by users; 33 new trees planted	*Sustainability*—reduce food waste by redistributing edible surplus *Right to food*—increasing the accessibility of healthy food *Participation*—facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges of surplus food; providing support to plant and maintain new trees *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to develop skills and understandings of fruit trees
	Growing 1	A not-for-profit social enterprise that provides inclusive space for growing together, learning about food growing and eating locally grown food in its café	"An intercultural garden…open to everyone who likes to be a little closer to nature." "the good life for all…access to food and education…social transformation and value beyond money."	No quantitative impacts recorded, but descriptive, visual and qualitative impacts are documented: educational workshops, seed sharing, medicinal herb production, co-design of inclusive educational supports	*Sustainability*—providing low carbon, local food *Right to food*—increasing opportunities to access healthy, local food *Participation*—facilitating peer-to-peer knowledge exchange around growing and cooking food *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to develop skills and understandings around food growing
	Cooking/Eating 1	A social enterprise providing opportunities for shared cooking and eating experiences with a particular focus on the integration of refugees	"encourage face-to-face encounters between the local community and refugees—we cook, work, reflect and spend time together."	Limited quantitative impacts reported: 3 cookbooks published; 40 volunteers trained and 30 satellite activities developed in three other cities. Descriptive and qualitative impacts reported through testimonials	*Right to food*—unconditional accessibility of food to all people *Participation*—facilitating opportunities for people to eat together with refugees within communities *Reorienting control*—empowering communities to build greater community cohesion and understanding around food

Table 1. (Cont.) Relation to dimensions of food democracy of food sharing initiatives in Berlin, London and Dublin.

City	Initiative identifier	Initiative activities	Initiative goals	Impacts*	Relation to dimensions of food democracy
London	Redistribution 1	A for-profit food redistribution initiative using a free app to connect people with each other and with local businesses to share surplus food	"[to] create a world in which nothing of value goes to waste, and every single person has enough to eat—without destroying our planet in the process."	Quantitative overall impact of initiative is reported: 971,783 registered users; 32478 volunteers and 1,448,269 portions of food exchanged	*Sustainability*—reduce food waste by redistributing edible surplus *Right to food*—increase accessibility of food to participants *Participation*—increasing opportunities to participate in sharing surplus food *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to connect directly with others to access food
	Redistribution 2	A social enterprise providing a space for redistributing food at reduced cost to low income participants from businesses and support services to build community capacity and confidence	"empowering individuals and building stronger communities, by realising the social potential of surplus food."	Quantitative impacts reported: financial savings to members of £45m in 2018; 97% of members say they have the tools they need to achieve life goals; 96% say their mental well-being has improved; 92% say their physical well-being has improved; 56 million meals	*Sustainability*—reduce food waste by redistributing edible surplus *Right to food*—providing reduced cost food to members *Participation*—facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges of surplus food *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to develop life skills around food
	Multifunctional 1	A not-for-profit initiative which provides opportunities to grow food, cook and together by providing events and workshops	"to nurture a close-knit and collaborative community, which cares about its environment—and about the planet as a whole." "to create healthy, integrated and environmentally responsible communities."	Quantitative impacts reported: more than 100 young people achieving qualifications; 10,000+ engagements with local children and young people; 150 graduates from youth leadership scheme	*Sustainability*—provide educational workshops on environmental protection and sustainability *Right to food*—providing educational training to help build skills to access food *Participation*—facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges of surplus food *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to develop skills and understandings around food
	Cooking/Eating 1	A social enterprise providing free meals and a suite of educational and skills-based programs, courses, and activities	"[to address] inequalities whilst building community cohesion and developing skills." "enriching local life through connecting people through community activities and cultivating respect over a bite."	Quantitative impacts reported: 80% of food used is surplus; 100% of catering costs are reinvested in weekly community meals; 79% of attendees return to socialise with others	*Sustainability*—reducing food waste by using surplus food *Right to food*—providing free food to all participants *Participation*—bringing people together to grow, cook and eat together *Reorienting control*—providing support to participants over communal meals

Table 1. (Cont.) Relation to dimensions of food democracy of food sharing initiatives in Berlin, London and Dublin.

City	Initiative identifier	Initiative activities	Initiative goals	Impacts*	Relation to dimensions of food democracy
Dublin	Redistribution 1	An informal collective harvesting seasonal gluts of food by volunteers and the redistribution of this surplus food for free to those in need	"getting fresh fruit to local people who otherwise wouldn't have access to it."	No quantitative impacts are reported. Qualitative impacts are recorded via blog posts relating to harvesting events and detailing donors, volunteer harvesters and recipients.	*Sustainability*—reducing food loss from seasonal harvests *Right to food*—providing healthy free food to community groups supporting people in need of food *Participation*—providing opportunities for participation in collection and redistribution
	Redistribution 2	A not-for-profit redistributing surplus food from business to charities and community groups. Operates across Ireland and the UK	"to offer our solution to communities around the world who can benefit and achieve our vision of a world where no good food goes to waste." "Charities have access to a supply of fresh food and businesses can contribute to their community in a meaningful way."	Reports quantitative impacts for the entire initiative: supports 7,500 community groups; 20,000+ tonnes of food redistributed or 45 million meal equivalents and more than 65,000 carbon savings made	*Sustainability*—reducing food waste through redistributing surplus *Right to food*—distributing food to community groups and charities which provide food services *Participation*—supporting businesses and communities to connect in new ways and for volunteers to help redistributed surplus food *Reorienting control*—allows charities and community groups to connect more equitably with retailers around surplus food redistribution
	Growing 1	A not-for-profit garden providing opportunities to grow food together with others	"an organic community garden [which] provides an opportunity for local people living in an urban environment to develop skills and knowledge in horticulture. Volunteers learn about growing fruit and vegetables and can take food home to their families free of charge."	Few quantitative reports recorded. Some numbers relating to volunteers provided in social media. Evidence of physical regeneration of the site and the garden contains raised beds, hand-built shed, supports for biodiversity (bird boxes etc.) through photos on social media	*Sustainability*—providing space for local food production *Right to food*—providing new opportunities to access healthy, locally grown food *Participation*—providing new opportunities for local people to get involved in the food system by growing collectively *Reorienting control*—empowering people to learn how to grow food for themselves
	Growing 2	A for-profit initiative which creates opportunities for hands-on learning about urban agriculture, food sharing, food waste management, and the circular economy	"to cultivate [activities] that together will bring social change to improve the livelihood and liveability of our city." "Through participatory learning and action…inspire people to adopt sustainable practices in their everyday lives."	No quantitative impacts reported. Descriptive impacts of individual projects are summarised online which provide evidence of participation in events, including media coverage of activities	*Sustainability*—raising awareness about sustainable food *Right to food*—empowering people to be able to grow food to help meet their needs *Participation*—providing opportunities to engage with and learn about growing activities *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to develop growing skills

Note: *Impacts reported in 2019.

3. Policy and Food Sharing Practices

Attention to policy that affects food in an urban context has expanded over the last decade as the negative externalities caused by the current food system have become clearer (Harris, Dougill, & Owen, 2015; Morgan, 2009). The need for regulatory instruments to improve access to, and the quality of, sustainable food, as well as the general well-being of urban dwellers, is visible in developments such as the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. Launched in 2015 and endorsed by the United Nations, the Pact brought civic leaders together to discuss how to best tackle food-related issues at the urban level (Deakin, Borrelli, & Diamantini, 2016). Such institutional efforts are attempting to build synergies between the different policy domains which affect the food system (Wiskerke, 2009) and have given greater visibility to more holistic Food Policy Councils and Urban Food Strategies (Deakin et al., 2016; Moragues et al., 2013; Reed, Curry, Keech, Kirwan, & Maye, 2013; Sieveking, 2019). Yet, the ability of these mechanisms to affect change has been questioned because of their predominantly non-statutory status, with further monitoring and evaluation required to establish their impact where they have been formed, and to reflect on why such developments have not been taken up in all urban locations (Cretella, 2019a, 2019b; Hawkes & Halliday, 2017; Sonnino, 2017).

In the absence of any holistic statutory urban food policy, food sharing initiatives remain subject to a fragmented and multiscalar policy landscape which has evolved to govern food as a commercial commodity. However, food sharing initiatives adopt diverse understandings of food which go far beyond seeing it as simply financialised fuel for the body. Instead, food is seen as a social and educational catalyst, and involvement in the means of producing, consuming and redistributing food a barometer of livelihood sustainability (Davies, 2019). Decentring commercial drivers has led food sharing initiatives to adopt diverse organisational structures including co-operatives, charities, networks, clubs, social enterprises (Davies et al., 2017), yet the external governing framework they experience is often the same whether activities are for-profit or not. This article draws on research that explores how the external governing framework affects food sharing initiatives. Ethnographic fieldwork revealed this governance in action, while interviews and documentary analysis identify past experiences and reflect on how policy affects food sharing activities. The qualitative data collected were analysed using N-Vivo. All material relating to a node of 'policy, rules, and regulations' from the twelve initiatives was collated and then re-coded according to the policy areas identified as significant in the data: food risk and safety; land use planning and urban development; health and well-being; food security and waste. This revealed a number of common themes running across initiatives in the cities but also particular issues that relate to the specific focus of initiatives.

3.1. Common Policy Impacts: The Challenges of Over- and Under-Regulation

While all food sharing initiatives recognised the need for safe food, the 'one-size-fits-all' system of risk management (embodied in EU hygiene regulation 178/2002) was frequently mentioned as a challenge, particularly by those who shared surplus food. Redistribution initiatives are seen as engaging in retail, and charities that receive food are considered to be conducting mass-catering activities. This means they have the same obligations as commercial operators irrespective of their organisational structure or the size and scale of sharing taking place (Davies & Weymes, 2018). As one surplus food redistribution initiative in Berlin articulated:

> Although…most people who work do it voluntarily…we are by law run as a food distributor, because we are dealing with food; that means, the same duties and laws apply to us like for all supermarkets and retailers. (Redistribution 1, Berlin)

The same initiative was concerned about the appropriateness and equity of the binary perspective of food risk regulators, calling for more nuanced attention to the spectrum of organisational forms, modes of sharing and diverse economies that inhabit urban food sharing landscapes:

> Existing legislation…only envisages private or commercial [activity] and nothing in between, it just has not been thought out when formulating these regulations….And that is why the framework has to adapt to reality and not reality to the framework. (Redistribution 1, Berlin)

The European Commission 2017 food donation guidelines, driven primarily by a global campaign to raise awareness of and take action to reduce food waste, make it clear that donated food must be traceable and edible (reinforcing the existing food hygiene regulations), but they do not specify the roles and responsibilities of the various actors involved in ensuring that this happens. Thus, questions remain about who should provide and pay for the new logistics infrastructures required for the expanded volumes of surplus food redistributed, and who should evaluate the qualities of surplus food and its appropriateness for consumption. With no clear answers to these questions there is concern that legislation is currently focused on limiting the liability of donors rather than on resolving the underlying causes of either food poverty or food waste (Davies, 2019). As a result, there is little opportunity to reorient control across the wider food system.

In contrast to the hot policy topic of food waste management and the highly regulated arena of food safety, land use planning and health and well-being were mentioned repeatedly in all three cities as policy areas with regulatory gaps which obstruct sharing initiatives from

shifting urban food system onto more sustainable pathways. Collective growing activities, for example, have been identified as a tangible means for people to reclaim some power and control over their lives (and diets), cultivating not only the land but also a wider ethic of care described by one initiative as attending to "I, we, and the planet" (Multifunctional 1, London). Yet, their activities are seldom protected in development plans or promoted through land use planning strategies. The food sharing initiatives themselves do not hold, as Hasson (2019) also notes in relation to urban agriculture in London, influential leverage on policy formulation. As set out in Sub-Section 3.2, they are commonly seen as useful place-fillers for vacant land until other developments are proposed. Policy rarely acknowledges the value created by shared growing initiatives for the environment, for the communities, and for the mental and physical health of the individuals who grow together. Even when such values are identified they tend to be scattered between disparate departments in local governments that are rarely in conversation, leaving the aggregate benefits of food sharing invisible and ignored.

The right to food—one other area which is both a common goal for food sharing initiatives and features in dimensions of food democracy—has barely an imprint in legislation across all three cities. Ireland, a signatory to the UN International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, still has one in eight people experiencing food insecurity, with state interventions around food security criticized as limited, fragmented and uncoordinated. For example, the updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion developed by the Department of Social Protection has no food remit, while government visions for Irish food futures are dominated by expansionary plans for commercial food exports rather than food security (Davies, 2019). This is not an issue for Ireland alone. In 2015 the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food stated that "many countries have failed to develop a judicial culture of recognition in practice or the necessary legal frameworks required to ensure that the rights enshrined in the ICESCR are justiciable" (Elver, 2014, p. 2). As one initiative stated, city governments are "open for business" (Cooking & eating 1, London) in relation to for-profit food enterprises, but community kitchens rarely receive similar recognition or support.

3.2. Shared Growing

Areas for shared growing, such as the community gardens, tend to be located on vacant public sites. As a result, they often receive temporary leasing agreements from local authorities, making their long-term existence precarious and pitting their activities against other important social developments, such as housing (e.g., Dublin) and recreational facilities (e.g., Berlin). Across all three cities, community gardens are not classified as public parks or gardens and are not therefore granted protection under land use planning regulations.

As explained by one community garden in Dublin:

> We secured a license agreement, a formal license agreement from Dublin City Council for using the site, and that's renewable on an annual basis. So, we effectively have temporary use of that site. On the local area development zone for the site it's zoned for development actually. (Growing 1, Dublin)

In Berlin, shared growing initiatives reported that the privatization of public land has been increasing despite that numerous community gardens were established on many vacant spaces over the last 15 years. According to one shared growing initiative, 3,000 sites were privatized between 2002 and 2012 alone. Indeed, one initiative was threatened with eviction from their site and was only able to remain when a public campaign led to the Senator of Finance ensured that the garden received a reprieve. One land use planning expert and founder of a food sharing initiative that experienced a similar issue in Berlin stated that such case-by-case campaigning has not led to any systematic policy shifts. He said:

> We didn't solve the overall issue…but we had so much publicity, also national media and local media, that even the Senator for Finance was willing to say "Okay, what I will not do is change my policy. What I can do is to decide we don't have to sell this specific site right now." (Land use planning expert 1, Berlin)

Other community gardens in Berlin and Dublin had similar experiences, with their sites being put up for sale. While growing initiatives in London also faced precarious access to land, one embraced the spirit of temporality by designing-in mobility, creating garden units in skips, pallets and other mobile containers. This ensures that even if sites are subsequently sold, the labour of cultivation (of the soil, plants and people) could be transferred to new locations. The same initiative in London has moved beyond the use of vacant public land and is working with private landowners to develop community gardens on their sites. While this approach provides no more guarantee of permanence, they felt that even temporary use of underutilised land for gardening is better than no use at all:

> I'm looking at it from the angle saying, well, I'd rather have this land grow food for a couple of years than be rubble and then, you know, being built on. So it's kind of increasing the amount of positive use of the land. And quite a lot of those gardens have started growing…and then the Council saw it was really good, didn't have any other plans [and] kept it. (Multifunctional 1, London)

3.3. Shared Cooking and Eating

In contrast to the concerns noted earlier on the tight control of risk and safety for surplus food redistribu-

tion, shared cooking and eating initiatives were more positive about hygiene regulations, particularly in relation to the skill-shares and cooking classes they provide. However, as such classes are commonly viewed as private groups, they are exempt from EC Food Safety Regulation 852/2004:

> So when we do catering we do [it] outside. We have a rental kitchen. Cooking classes are closed groups, so that's sort of a grey area….But yeah, we don't use this commercially. It's not a commercial kitchen. (Cooking & eating 1, Berlin)

However, there are still barriers with respect to required hygiene training courses, particularly where initiatives explicitly seek to work with vulnerable populations who may face intellectual, linguistic or cultural barriers in undertaking such training:

> If they're going to run these community cooking workshops they need to have at least their Level 2 [hygiene training course] to be able to do that….You can work in a professional kitchen if you have a Level 2. (Cooking & eating 1, London)

Despite the donation guidelines for surplus food developed at the European scale, cooking and eating initiatives working with surplus food commonly mentioned that they still face significant paperwork signing off liability agreements, since many donors fear legal action from recipients:

> That is a big problem generally, as you know…people are terrified of being sued the whole time. So much food gets wasted because people don't want to give it away because they're worried it won't be used properly. (Cooking & eating 1, London)

In Dublin, the landscape of shared cooking and eating is less well-developed than either London or Berlin. This is partly because meeting emergency food needs has typically been provided by the Catholic Church via food banks and drop-in centres. As a result, these initiatives tend to be supported by well-established infrastructures compared to the collective community cooking and eating initiatives found in London and Berlin. However, the specific needs of people seeking asylum are becoming more visible in Dublin as a number of new grassroots initiatives emerge campaigning for people under direct provision to be given the right to cook their own food.

3.4. Surplus Food Redistribution

In the case of surplus food redistribution, the issue flagged by initiatives most often was the burden of food risk policies. However, there are differences in emphasis across the cities: in London the main concern of initiatives was that donors fear liability, and in Berlin it was the

rigid enforcement of legislation by certain local authorities that caused most consternation. In particular, the phenomenon of community fridges has created a flash point for food risk enforcement. At the heart of tensions between sharing initiatives and regulators was a different conception of how risk should be allocated: legislation requires a responsible individual to take the burden of demonstrating adherence to the cold chain as it is being redistributed, while food sharing initiatives often articulated a more commons-based vision of risk and responsibility (Morrow, 2019). As one initiative said:

> [We have] collective ownership and the German law has a real problem with that because…we don't have anyone in charge and this kind of community model where you have eight hundred people who co-own a hairdryer, there's no legal framework for that (Redistribution 1, Berlin)

In another case food redistribution initiatives worked with other environmental and community groups to apply pressure on policy makers to heighten the requirements on waste management for food retailers. In 2019 in Berlin, one initiative working with an environmental organisation launched a petition addressed to the German Minister for Food and Agriculture demanding a legally binding waste ban for supermarkets. In Dublin, one surplus redistribution initiative (Redistribution 2, Dublin) has become a key actor in national and European policy developments focused on reducing food loss and waste, participating in transnational, multi-stakeholder platforms and working groups developing new frameworks for monitoring and managing food waste and actively shaping food policy:

> Ireland doesn't have a Good Samaritan Act which affected retailers willingness to donate food initially, but we worked with them to develop a system that assured all participants (Redistribution 2, Dublin)

In the case of urban foraging, initiatives in Dublin and London mentioned a lack of visible regulations of these practices. This is partly because parks and recreation departments are often poorly equipped and rarely have the resources or capacity to communicate existing regulations better, causing urban food waste. In contrast, one initiative in Berlin lauded the district of Pankow for its commitment to be an 'edible district', which includes encouraging fruit tree planting and loosening laws on urban harvesting.

3.5. Navigating Multiscalar Food Policy Frameworks

Identifying and navigating regulations from across sectors and scales is a challenge for many food sharing initiatives, even where mechanisms to support the governance of urban food more holistically have been developed, as seen in the formation of the London Food Board.

Given the sheer diversity of policy sectors shaping food sharing, as well as the differentiated scalar provenance of policies (i.e., the scale at which policies are formulated) and the different legal status of policies as statutory or non-statutory (Eisenschitz & Gough, 1993), this is unsurprising.

Developed through stakeholder interviews and an analysis of academic and policy literature, Table 2 indicates how policy areas that relate to food sharing can be nested and multiscalar. For example, all three cities have statutory policy documents which regulate land use on the urban scale. However, while planning policy is an entirely urban affair in Berlin, the London Development Plan has to have due regard to national regulation (National Planning Policy Framework) and Dublin's Development Plan is required to respond to guidance formulated at both regional and national scales (Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area and the National Spatial Strategy for Ireland). In the latter two cities food sharing initiatives seeking to influence how they are considered in planning would need to work in a co-ordinated fashion across scales to make a significant impact on policy; a difficult task for any organisation but particularly for those food sharing initiatives which are small-scale and largely operated by volunteers. In contrast to other areas of policy such as statutory food safety legislation, development planning in all three cities has well-established systems for public participation so that food sharing initiatives at least have

clear processes to engage with, providing they can generate the capacity to do so. In addition, there are non-statutory land use strategies and plans in each city which address issues at the urban scale allowing for attention to be given to emerging or context-specific issues of interest to food sharing initiatives. The 2018 London Food Strategy for example, encouraged London Boroughs to:

> Highlight the importance of including food growing spaces in new developments and as meanwhile use on vacant or under-used sites, encourage provision of space for community gardens, and protect existing allotment sites. (Mayor of London, 2018, p. 46)

However, as indicated by the reference to "meanwhile use" the precarity issue is not resolved with this non-statutory strategy.

It is largely within non-statutory policy documents that themes resonating with food democracy are found— sustainability, right to food, participation, and reorienting control. Non-statutory policy documents focusing specifically on the topic of food security are developed at the national level in Germany and the UK, with strategic guidelines for German development policies produced in 2013 and the UK Food Security Assessment conducted 2009. At the urban scale there are no specific documents focusing solely on food security, but the topic is mentioned, to varying degrees, within municipal documents taking a more holistic approach to food (such as

Table 2. Provenance and legal status of policies affecting food sharing.

Scale of plan/ policy formation	Urban		Regional		National		Supra-national	
Status of plan/ policy — Policy areas	Statutory	Non-Statutory	Statutory	Non-Statutory	Statutory	Non-Statutory	Statutory	Non-Statutory
Food safety					Dublin Berlin London		Dublin Berlin London	Dublin Berlin London
Land use planning & urban development	Dublin Berlin London	London Dublin	Dublin		Dublin London	Dublin		
Health & well-being		Berlin London			Dublin Berlin London	Dublin Berlin		
Food security		Dublin London				Berlin London		
Waste	Berlin	Berlin	Dublin		Dublin Berlin London		Dublin Berlin London	
Food system		Dublin London						

the 2018 London Food Strategy and the 2011 discussion document Food and the City produced by the Dublin City Council). However, the Berlin Food Policy Council, founded in 2015 by a group of citizens seeking greater sustainability and justice in the food system and organized explicitly around the motto "food democracy now", is currently discussing the development of an urban food strategy (Ernährungsrat Berlin, 2019). In Berlin, the Food Policy Council has been working towards recognising and uniting diverse food initiatives, including urban food sharing initiatives; acting as a bridging point between local activities and global movements around food democracy. Its leaders are looking to ensure different perspectives are incorporated within the Council as a means to widen the knowledge base and aid integration. They are also building alliances with other cities in Germany and within Europe, as well as with farmers and food processors in the areas surrounding Berlin. However, as noted by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2018), while the mobilization and continued efforts to enact ideals of representation around food by the founding members of the Food Policy Council have been exceptional, any transformations around food will be restricted without engagement with established multiscalar legislative frameworks. Indeed, despite the increased visibility non-statutory developments can give to emerging or cross-cutting food issues, food sharing initiatives focused entirely on statutory policy during interviews about rules and regulations shaping their activities. Certainly, it was the perspective of food sharing initiatives in all three cities that the statutory policies currently in place are not designed to facilitate their practices. Consequently, policies are failing to support food sharing initiatives achieving their goals and are therefore limiting contributions towards greater food democracy.

4. Discussion

This article posed two related questions: it asked whether the goals of food sharing initiatives are promoting food democracy in diverse urban contexts and then explored the extent to which external governing arrangements affect how these initiatives achieve their goals. It is clear from the evidence presented that the urban food sharing initiatives involved in this research all articulated goals that resonate with multiple dimensions of food democracy. However, the initiatives also documented how policies—particularly the heavily regulated sector of food safety—presented challenges for achieving those goals. In both food safety and waste policy arenas the frameworks of legislation have been predominantly designed for large-scale commercial operators and it is hard for grassroots initiatives to meet the increasingly stringent requirements of policy in these areas. The negative impacts of such scalar fixes relating to waste management policies are well-known (Boyle, 2002; Davies, 2008), but it seems that there are similar patterns of scalecraft across food risk policies that

demand further interrogation. It is also the case that the drive to reduce food waste has highlighted the tensions between food safety and food waste management policies. While all initiatives were committed to producing, cooking or redistributing food safely, they took issue with the characterisations of risk and responsibility that legislation articulated. In particular, the framing of their actions as 'business' and the requirement to identify 'responsible' individuals to take the burden of liability in relation to food risk for the initiatives' activities caused concern. In some cases these concerns are ideological and based on the view that food should not be commodified (Vivero-Pol, 2017), in others it is a pragmatic response to the often limited capacities and capabilities within grassroots initiatives to take on the onerous task of accepting responsibility for food risk management. Certainly, the stringent regulations hamper wider participation in surplus food redistribution networks and raise concerns for community kitchens in areas, such as Dublin, without a strong framework to support citizen-driven food provision. Yet, innovative responses are possible, as illustrated by food sharing initiatives in this study that use different forms of ICT alongside face-to-face interactions to facilitate rapid and traceable connections between large numbers of people and between organisations. Adopting such socio-technical innovation reduces the time it takes to get edible food to those who need it and leaves digital traces that can respond to existing food safety demands for transparent information around the movements of food. More detailed research is still needed, however, to fully understand the nature of participation that ICT is supporting and to explore the extent to which these new ways of engaging serve to reorient control within the food system to facilitate both sustainability and the right to food.

The complexity and diversity of specific contexts makes drawing general conclusions around the sharing-democracy-policy nexus difficult and raises questions about the appropriateness of the current 'one-size-fits-all' policy approach. Community gardens and all their social, economic and environmental benefits not being considered as worthy of protection in development plans, for example, limits the possibilities for communities to collectively reorient control of their urban food systems. Even when there is the political willingness to include food growing in local plans, the scalar differentiation in policy formulation discussed in this article can hamper its actualization. Local authorities are becoming more cognizant of this, as clearly stated by the Mayor of London (2018, p.46) Sadiq Khan in the London Food Strategy: "Not everything that can be done to improve good food growing is within the Mayor's powers." Nonetheless, there are ways to respond to this situation, as illustrated by the shared growing initiative 596 Acres in New York, which has been supporting community gardens to seek reclassification of their gardens as green spaces protected through planning regulations. While this service is currently suspended due to resource and

capacity constraints, and because of a lack of progress in securing the founders' vision of diverse participation in the endeavour (Davies, 2019), the concept has demonstrated the potential benefits of collective action by food sharing initiatives to increase visibility and take on the complexities of urban planning processes. Research has shown that having such champions for food sharing initiatives alongside a web of supports from other community organisations can help to create a more resilient ecosystem of sharing (Edwards & Davies, 2018) to assist initiatives in achieving their goals.

Despite the focus of food sharing initiatives on the constraints of statutory policy in relation to their activities, research underpinning this article found that cities with a better developed infrastructure of non-statutory policy (including holistic plans, policy statements or deliberative for a) also tend to have a denser and more diverse landscape of urban food sharing initiatives. Where such supports are lacking, as in Dublin, initiatives tend to be sparser and more fragile. Certainly, non-statutory documents are more likely to embrace the themes that lie at heart of food democracy, marking an initial discursive shift in the way food is approached by public authorities, even if the ripples from this shift have yet to reach statutory policy landscapes.

5. Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how there are clear intersections between food sharing initiatives and food democracy. However, it also flagged the concerns of food sharing initiatives that statutory policies do not support them to achieve their food democracy goals. While the research also found that non-statutory food policies were more likely to include statements of support for food sharing activities (and their dimensions of food democracy), their lack of legal status meant that they were not seen as powerful tools by food sharing initiatives. This is particularly the case in relation to well-being and the right to food where there is a paucity of statutory policy to operationalise. Further research is needed to help discern how and where such non-statutory policies exert influence and whether there are any trends towards formalising these non-statutory supports.

Beyond the consideration of formal policies and plans, we need creative ways of thinking about how urban food governance should evolve to support food democracy, through food sharing and otherwise. This will require multi-stakeholder engagement and not just with mainstream incumbents in urban food systems (which clearly influence the shape of the current policy landscape), but also including grassroots food initiatives, start-up food entrepreneurs and the multitude of often invisible community initiatives that fly under the radar of policy or which are so severely disciplined by policy demands that their presence and impacts are much diminished. Specifically, we need to think about a means to create influential spaces to consider food policy in the round

at the urban scale and the implications of this for institutional arrangements within urban authorities. Tweaking existing structures, or inserting food matters under the remit of existing policy departments, may not be sufficient and likely requires a more radical departure from established policy areas at the urban scale.

It is also important to recognise that food sharing initiatives often have their own detailed codes of conduct shaping their practices and decisions even in the absence of statutory and non-statutory policy frameworks. We need further interrogation of the complementarities and tensions between these internal and external governance arrangements. Nonetheless, this article demonstrates the potential for ICT-mediated food sharing to further democratise urban food systems. This is significant, but the influence of food sharing needs to be recognised by policy. Following De Schutter (2014), it is only through harnessing people's knowledge and skills, and ensuring their needs and preferences are designed into ambitious and holistic food policies across all scales that we will arrive at food systems that are built to endure.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Linking Food Democracy and Sustainability on the Ground: Learnings from the Study of Three Alternative Food Networks in Brussels

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Abstract
The article explores and discusses, both conceptually and empirically, the exercise of food democracy in the context of three alternative food networks (AFNs) in Brussels, Belgium. It demonstrates that food democracy can be described as a "vector of sustainability transition". The argumentation is built on the results of a 3.5-year participatory-action research project that configured and applied a sustainability assessment framework with the three local AFNs under study. Firstly, the article presents a localized understanding of food democracy. Food democracy is defined as a process aiming to transform the current food system to a more sustainable one. This transformation process starts from a specific point: the people. Indeed, the three AFNs define and implement concrete processes of power-configuration to alter the political, economic, and social relationships between consumers and producers as well as between retailers and producers. Secondly, the article assesses and discusses how the three AFNs perform these practices of food democracy and what effects these have on the actors concerned. The assessment shows that the three AFNs distinguish themselves along a gradient of their transformative potential in terms of practices. However, this variation in their interpretation of food democracy does not translate into a gradient of performance.

Issue
This article is part of the issue "New Perspectives on Food Democracy" edited by Basil Bornemann (University of Basel, Switzerland) and Sabine Weiland (Université Catholique de Lille, France).

1. Introduction: Alternative Food Networks, Sustainability, and Democracy

Alternative food networks (AFNs) are under deep scrutiny since they emerged as concrete attempts to counter the negative externalities of the dominant global and industrial food system (Deverre & Lamine, 2010; Le Velly, 2016; Maye & Kirwan, 2010; Tregear, 2011). Commonly, the concept of AFNs "cover[s] newly emerging networks of producers, consumers and other ac-

tors that embody alternatives to the more standardized industrial mode of food supply" (Renting, Marsden, & Banks, 2003, p. 394). Examples of AFNs include short food supply chains, solidarity purchasing groups, farmer's market, and community-supported agriculture or consumers food co-operatives and foods with a geographical indication of origin.

On the ground, AFNs are mainly alternative food distribution systems, their primary focus being to experiment with and drive the transition towards sustainabil-

ity of the current food system (Kirwan, Ilbery, Maye, & Carey, 2013; Maye & Duncan, 2017; Rossi, 2017). A recent literature review states that AFNs intend to build sustainable food systems by way of three types of innovative practice (Forssell & Lankoski, 2015). First, AFNs promote ecological ways of growing food by marketing and distributing high-quality foodstuffs. Positive impacts on the environment, especially on soils and biodiversity, as well as on human health, are expected. Second, AFNs experiment with new types of food chain configuration reducing the spatial and social distance between producers and consumers involving minimal geographical transport distances, minimal value chain length (number of intermediaries) and minimal informational distance. Socioeconomic impacts are projected, such as improved income for producers and stronger social ties between food chain actors, improving territorial/rural development (Praly, Chazoule, Delfosse, & Mundler, 2014; Renting et al., 2003). Mutual trust is targeted, too, as well as ecological benefits from reduced food miles (Mundler & Rumpus, 2012). Third, AFNs experiment with new governance schemes and reconfigure power relationships along the food chain. While the first two sets of innovative practices target ecological and socio-economic impacts, the third dimension directly addresses the issue of food democracy. Although AFNs could only choose one of these three archetypal sets of innovative activities, they generally combine two or all of them, with different intensities. This means that AFNs hold a core set of sustainability promises with which food democracy is intrinsically associated.

Introduced in the 1990s by Lang (1999), food democracy was precisely developed to describe such grassroots experiments, alternative to the global food system controlled by big companies and framed by the agricultural (production) agendas. The core idea of food democracy is then to give more power to all the actors involved in the food chain; it is a call for more consumer/citizen participation in the management and the control of the food system (Booth & Coveney, 2015; Dubuisson-Quellier & Lamine, 2008; Hassanein, 2003; Levkoe, 2006; Lockie, 2009; Renting, Schermer, & Rossi, 2012; Wilkins, 2005). Similarly, Hassanein (2003) defined food democracy as a means for collective action, and more precisely as a pragmatic and gradual method for the transformation of the food system to sustainability. The concept of "civic food networks" equally emerged to designate AFNs as the "expression of the revitalized role of civil society-based governance mechanisms" and "a source of dynamism and innovation" (Renting et al., 2012, p. 297). From this specific point of view, the project of AFNs concerns the transformation of the food regime from a particular starting point: the people.

In this article, we argue that in the context of AFNs, food democracy mainly acts as a "vector of [sustainability] transition" (Chiffoleau, Millet-Amrani, & Canard, 2016; Kropp, 2018; Rossi, 2017). It is a core set of innovative practices implemented by AFNs that reconfig-

ure power relationships along the food chains they promote in order to build a more sustainable food system. If using a sustainability transition perspective (Geels & Schot, 2007), this definition of food democracy allows AFNs to be linked to the developing concept of "transformative social innovation" defined as "a process of change in social relations, involving new ways of doing, organizing, framing and/or knowing, which challenge, alter and/or replace established (dominant) institutions in a specific socio-material context" (Haxeltine et al., 2016, p. 8). It means that AFNs have a high transformative potential linked to the new ways of organizing and governing the entire food chains they promote; this potential to transform sustainability relates to their practices of food democracy/democratic processes, and that is concerned with the power-relationships they configure.

However, the literature on AFNs remains unclear in identifying clearly and systematically how AFNs conceptualize, operationalize, and implement food democracy, and what effects are exerted on the actors/citizens involved. This article attempts to fill this gap and suggests giving specific content to food democracy in the context of AFNs daily sustainability practices. Based on the results of 3.5 years of participatory research (CosyFood, 2019) which configured and applied a sustainability assessment framework for local AFNs, this article conceptually and empirically explores the relationship between sustainability and democracy in the context of three AFNs in Brussels, Belgium. This article demonstrates how food democracy forms a cornerstone of the sustainability project of these AFNs but also that the idea of food democracy shapes a diversity of practices. Moreover, this article explores whether and how local AFNs in Brussels allow for the emergence and navigation of food democracy within their very own alternative practices.

The article is structured as follows. In the next section (Section 2), the research context is described, empirical materials, and method. We will focus on the participatory aspects of our research. In Section 3, the indicators linked to food democracy and the results are presented. The particular practices that promote the construction of food democracy will be described and discussed (Section 3.1), as well as the impacts of those processes on each AFN stakeholder (Section 3.2). In Section 4, based on the results, the link between food democracy and sustainability transformation is discussed. Section 5 presents the conclusions.

2. Research Context and Empirical Materials

This article is based on (a part of) the results of the CosyFood project. In this participatory-action research project, we worked for 3.5 years with three AFNs in Brussels. Each project partner (i.e., us, a university partner, and the three AFNs) was funded by the research program (1.5 full-time employees for the university partner and 1 full-time employee for each AFN partner).

2.1. The CosyFood Project: Partners and Goals

The three AFNs involved in the CosyFood project are quite different. The first AFN is a brand (and partially a franchise) of neighbourhood organic shops with a co-operative status ("the organic shops" in the following sections). This AFN exclusively retails organic foodstuffs favouring local products and shorter supply chains. It started in 2013 with only one small shop. It is now (early 2019) a bigger cooperative network involving nine organic shops in Brussels. Total sales were around €15.5 million in 2017 and it employs around 100 staff.

The second AFN is a non-profit organization which networks solidarity purchasing groups for peasant agriculture ("the Gasap" in the following sections). Since 2008, organic local farmers deliver their products every (two) week(s) directly to ninety (in 2019) small groups of consumers. Every group organizes themselves to take collective care of the foodstuffs' distribution as well as financial operations. Each local farmer and each purchasing group is a legal member of the organization. The organization supports the system in multiple ways: the selection of farmers, organization of meetings between farmers and consumer groups, dissemination of the model. The Gasap receives a public subvention for sustaining these support activities. The total sales by the local farmers involved were around €1.3 million in 2017.

The third AFN is an online shop which exclusively sells local foodstuffs from organic or conventional small/medium-scale farmers and transformers ("the online shop" in the following sections). Farmers and food processors must participate in the weekly 2-hour distribution event. The digital tool provider, which is a start-up located in France, manages the online shop centrally. However, at the local level, it is always a person who is in charge of configuring the network of producers and consumers, and of organizing and hosting the weekly distribution. For the Brussels case under study, it is a co-operative that hosts this configuring task. In 2017, sales were around €0.5 million.

To involve the three AFNs in the whole research process, the research methodology was built on the existing good practices for participatory-action research (Chevalier, Buckels, & Bourassa, 2013) and participatory evaluation (Sébastien, Lehtonen, & Bauler, 2017). The five people funded by the project together managed all of the research activities and considered themselves as equally skilled citizen-researchers, with a mutually recognized field expertise related to food chains and food sustainability. The goals of the project were as follows: 1) to configure a shared sustainability assessment framework for 2) assessing and comparing the impacts of the three AFNs on local sustainability and 3) to apply the content of the shared sustainability framework into specific sustainability improvement-tools for each AFN. This article is built on the results linked to the two first objectives, for which we gathered distinctive materials corresponding to particular methods.

2.2. Materials and Method

The first set of materials used in this article is the content of the sustainability assessment framework. This content has been co-constructed by the four project partners for nearly two years. To do this, the "principle-criteria-indicators" framework was used (Rey-Valette et al., 2008). By starting from a blank page, this method takes into account the actors' representations, values, beliefs, and knowledge. Concretely, a series of participatory workshops and co-creational activities were conducted with each type of AFN stakeholder: leaders and employees, producers, and consumers. By the end of the process, the sustainability assessment tool contained 14 sustainability principles, 55 sustainability criteria, and 105 indicators (the full framework with the detailed description of all principles is available in French at CosyFood, 2019).

The *principles* designate the most critical sustainability goals for the (alternative) food system. They reveal a shared and collective vision in terms of values, beliefs, and ethics. This vision embraces fundamental values of sustainability such as solidarity, economic viability, fairness and justice, sensitization and transparency, and of course elements regarding strong respect for the ecological limits of the planet. The *criteria* define the precisely elaborated conditions for respecting those principles in the context of a food network. The whole set of criteria represents a shared roadmap towards a sustainable (alternative) food system. It is important to mention that the three AFNs wanted to distinguish "performance criteria" from "practice criteria". *Performance criteria* designate "levels of performance" (e.g., the level of participation) that can be more or less defined as impacts. *Practice criteria* identify the concrete practices that AFNs have to implement to be able to perform at the desired level (e.g., promoting participation [or not] in the decision-making process). Finally, the indicators translate each criterion into precise measurements and allow them to assess whether AFNs conform to their roadmap. In Section 3.1, the criteria and indicators of food democracy identified for this article are presented and discussed.

The second set of materials used in this article is the data collected for the measurement of the identified food democracy indicators. This data was produced following a qualitative survey conducted between February and June 2018. Data was collected through anonymous online questionnaires with the relevant actors of each AFN (farmers, wholesalers if any, food processors, consumers) and consolidated with semi-structured interviews with three leading actors ("managers") in each AFN. The number of questionnaires sent varies in each AFN because they vary in terms of size (see Table 2 and its footnote).

Using these two sets of materials, the following sections of the article consist of, on the one hand, in an inductive re-construction and ex-post re-interpretation of

a localized understanding of food democracy in the context of the three AFNs; an interpretation of the materials in the light of a food democracy perspective. On the other hand, the data collected by the survey allows assessment of whether the three AFNs conform to their understanding of food democracy, understood as a vector of transformation towards sustainability.

3. Reconstructing Perspectives on Food Democracy in the Context of Three AFNs in Brussels

3.1. Food Democracy: Vector of Transition by Giving Back Power to the Food Chains Actors

As mentioned in the introduction, food democracy as a concept was developed to promote and apprehend grassroots experiments such as AFNs that give back control and power to the actors involved in the food supply chains. Food democracy is about re-engaging citizens and food actors into the governance of the food sys-

tem, which is currently wholly framed and structured by "state-market" interests and agendas (De Schutter, Mattei, Vivero-Pol, & Ferrando, 2019). It also refers to a demand for more citizen participation in the management and control of the food system. Based on this, we consider that food democracy leads to transformation towards sustainability through the *re*configuration of power-relationships.

For this article and with these very generic and general considerations in mind, we scrutinized the whole set of sustainability criteria and indicators. We identified and selected 12 (of 55) criteria linked to the field of food democracy as broadly defined above: six performance criteria and six practice criteria. Subsequently, we linked 15 (of 105) indicators to the notion of food democracy as described in the introduction (see Table 1).

By analyzing the content of the 12 criteria and the 15 corresponding indicators, it is possible to reconstruct the vision of food democracy shared by the three AFNs involved in the project. This was done by connecting food

Table 1. Criteria and indicators linked to democracy.

	Assessment criteria	Indicators
Practices	Funding resources	A1. Ownership properties of the retailer/facilitator
	Participation in the decision-making process	A2. Existence of participative and/or cooperative decision-making processes
		A3. The formal/legal distribution of power in the decision-making process
	Sensitization practices	B1. Existence of formal sensitization programs for consumers
		B2. Which information is offered to the consumers and by which means
	Knowledge transmission and learning processes	B3. Existence of frequent and formal meetings between producers and consumers
	Terms of trade	C1. Level of pricing power for producers/suppliers
		C2. The basis for setting prices
	Competition management by the retailer/facilitator	C3. Commitment modalities between sellers (producers/suppliers) and buyers (retailer or consumers)
Performances	Level of participation of the stakeholders	A4. Whether the stakeholders are satisfied with their power and inclusion in the decision-making processes
	Quality of social relations between stakeholders	B4. Whether the producers/suppliers trust in the reliability of the relationships with the retailer/facilitator
	Level of recognition of the work of the producers/suppliers	B5. Whether the supplier feels recognized and valued for his/her work by the client
	Level of consumers' sensitization about sustainable food and producers' daily realities	B6. Whether the consumers feel more and more aware and conscious about the sustainability of food systems and producers' labor conditions
	Level of the economic viability of producers	C4. Level of monthly income in regards to the minimal local income to live
	Affordability	C5. Level of feeling about economic affordability (consumers)

democracy to their overall common sustainability framework. Regarding this, food democracy for them does not solely represent an isolated "fourth pillar" of sustainability. It instead appears as a transversal starting point for diverse practices aiming to reach a certain global level of sustainability. Indeed, when scrutinizing the criteria and indicators linked to food democracy listed in Table 1, the interdependence between practices and performances can quite easily be observed. Also, it can be seen that the identified criteria and indicators address the idea of power-(re)configuration. In this respect, the practices that give back power to the actors involved are envisioned along three dimensional comprehensions of power: political power, understood as the "power to decide and to participate in the decision-making process" (indicators labelled with an A in Table 1); power, in terms of social resources, understood as gaining capacity through learning and building a confident social network (indicators labelled with a B), and economic power understood as gaining commercial and economic capacity (indicators labelled with a C).

Furthermore, the above selection of criteria and indicators illustrates that the three AFNs want to assert explicitly that the three different dimensions of power are interrelated. As we observed during the research process, the three AFNs are aware that, for example, giving a formal right to vote to a producer to participate in the decision-making process does not necessarily mean that he/she will use it. For this producer, gaining the legal power to configure the AFNs functioning (political power) does not mean either that they will be free from all constraints when they set the prices of their foodstuffs (economic power) or that they will feel part of the AFN community (social power). Though, for the three AFNs which developed the sustainability framework, as far as food democracy is also part of the general sustainability endpoint, the ideal target is that all the conditions linked to democracy and listed in Table 1 must occur. In their perfect world, sustainability would only be fully achieved if those three sets of power-configuration practices arose and if they led to the expected performance.

These elements illustrate the result of a Brussels-contextualized inquiry about the grassroots significance of food democracy, understood in relationship to food sustainability. Moreover, we assert that the participatory process has produced and defined a formal set of food democratization practices. These practices appear as necessary conditions and vectors of sustainability. So, it becomes now possible to extend and give concrete content to the notion of "food democracy". The sustainability assessment framework includes the contextualized conditions (the criteria) for building food democracy; at the same time, it offers a way to assess the effectiveness of its implementation and related effects (the indicators).

Finally, based on the criteria and indicators they co-constructed during the CosyFood project, it is evident that the three AFNs involved are, at least in terms of intentions, democracy-led and aware of the democracy issues around food. The food democracy elements they have put on the table is empirical proof of their awareness of the need to implement participatory processes and more balanced power-configurations within their daily practices of food distribution and consumption. Such shared attention to food democracy illustrates that the grassroots actors are already on their way to building a more democratic, and as a result, a more sustainable food system. However, the following section explores in more detail what effects each AFN has concerning food democracy.

3.2. Food Democracy on the Ground: Food Democracy Performances in 3 Contextualized AFNs

The results compiled in Table 2 show if and to what extent the three AFNs implement (some of) the identified practices for building food democracy and the effect of these on their performance.

The first category of indicators relates to the configuration of *political power* within the food chains. The results reveal that when the stakeholders involved were asked if they were satisfied with their political power, the average satisfaction score (Indicator A4) is very similar for each of the three AFNs. This even though the daily implemented practices (Indicators A1 to A3) vary between the three AFNs.

The online shop is hosted by a co-operative recognized by the Belgian *Centre National de la Coopération*, which means, among other things, that each member gets one vote at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Formally, the consumers and farmers who invested and bought some shares get an equal power in the decision-making process. Informally, in this AFN, the general assembly tends to validate decisions and choices made by the project manager. The project manager thus has the power to decide about the day-to-day practices as far as informal consultations of AFNs members nurture the most important choices.

Even though they are called "co-operative", the organic shops are not recognized as such because they do not respect all basic principles of co-operatives (e.g., mechanisms to limit the power of controlling partners and distribution of dividends). Indeed, at the AGM, the members' voting power depends on the number of economic shares owned. Because a few investors own the majority of shares, the final decisions belong to them, and they are more potent than the other "co-op members" (consumers, farmers, suppliers, managers, workers). Nevertheless, they have a more balanced power when it comes to the daily management of the supermarkets. At the level of the board, investors cannot force a decision even if they were to join together and oppose all the other represented categories of cooperators.

The Gasap is a non-profit organization. This official status implies that each member at the general meeting must have equal voting power ("one man, one vote"). However, in the way that the organization performs

Table 2. Measurement of the indicators linked to food democracy in three Brussels-based AFNs.

Power type	Indicators	Organic shops	Gasap	Online shop
Political power-configuration practices	A1. Ownership properties of the retailer/facilitator	Non-recognized co-operative; ownership by investors	Nonprofit organization, no capital ownership	Host within a recognized co-operative; ownership by cooperators
	A2. Existence of participative and/or cooperative decision-making processes	Structural, formal participative decision-making processes	Structural, formal participative decision-making processes	Informal participation and consultation
	A3. The formal/legal distribution of power in the decision-making process	One share, one vote	One member (group or farmer), one vote	One member (farmer or consumer), one vote
Political power-configuration performances	A4. Whether the stakeholders are satisfied with their power and inclusion in the decision-making processes	Average 3.2/5	Average 3.6/5	Average 3/5
Social power-configuration practices	B1. Existence of formal sensitization programs for consumers	No	Yes. One employee is dedicated to this. Specific "discussions" 4 times a year for the members	No
	B2. Which information is offered to the consumers and by which means	Label, newsletter, digital social networks	Visits on farms, Label, dedicated communication, participative quality control, free conversations with farmers during the distribution	Dedicated communication, open discussions with farmers during the distribution
	B3. Existence of frequent and formal meetings between producers and consumers	No	Yes, every (two) week(s)	Yes, weekly
Social power-configuration performances	B4. Whether the producers/suppliers trust in the reliability of the relationships with the retailer/facilitator	Average 4.1/5	Average 4/5	Average 4.4/5
	B5. Whether the supplier feels recognized and valued for his/her work by his clients	Average 3.4/5	Average 4.1/5	Average 4.5/5
	B6. Whether the consumers feel more and more aware and conscious about the sustainability of food systems and producers' labor conditions	Average 3.7/5	Average 4.2/5	Average 4.3/5

Table 2. (Cont.) Measurement of the indicators linked to food democracy in three Brussels-based AFNs.

Power type	Indicators	Organic shops	Gasap	Online shop
Economic power-configuration practices	C1. Level of pricing power for producers/suppliers	Negotiation with suppliers, no negotiation with farmers	High	High
	C2. The basis for setting prices	94% of farmers who sell directly to the AFN set prices based on production costs	47% of farmers set prices based on production costs	95% of farmer set prices based on production costs
	C3. Commitment modalities between sellers (producers/suppliers) and buyers (retailer or consumers)	No commitment	Mutual commitment	No commitment
Economic power-configuration performances	C4. Level of monthly income in regards to the minimal local income to live	65% of farmers have monthly income higher than the minimal income	52% of farmers have monthly income higher than the minimal income	71% of farmers have monthly income higher than the minimal income
	C5. Level of feeling about economic affordability (consumers)	Average 3/5	4/5	3.7/5

Notes: For the organic shops, the questionnaires were sent to seven wholesalers and six farmers and eight transformers who deliver the stores directly. Together, these actors represent 50% of the total supply of the organic shops. The response rate was 95%: All the wholesalers and farmers responded and seven of the eight transformers. For the indicators regarding consumers, 122 consumers voluntary responded to the survey, online or on paper. For the Gasap, the questionnaires were sent to 20 farmers and three transformers, in other words, all the network providers. The global response rate is 73%: 16 farmers and one transformer. In this AFN, 186 consumers answered the online survey. For the online shop, we went the questionnaires to all the providers (17 farmers and four transformers), and only one farmer did not respond. So, the response rate was 90%. 76 consumers answered the online survey. In the case of performance criteria and corresponding indicators, the respondents were asked to evaluate the theme/subject at stake on a satisfaction scale, from 1 (not satisfied at all) to 5 (very satisfied). The final scores, as compiled in Table 2, refer to the average score of the all concerned actors' level of satisfaction. In the case of practice criteria and corresponding indicators, the results summarize the qualitative data that was gathered.

day-to-day, the board takes all the important decisions, together with the employees, while the AGM approves the annual budget and the annual action plan.

As a significant innovation on the path towards greater levels of food democracy, we see that every type of actor in each of the AFNs gets an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Providers (farmers, transformers, wholesalers) and consumers hold an influence over the configuration of the system and the way it operates. In the case of the organic shops, the formal power is less balanced between actors. For now, a few investors own most of the capital and have the last word. However, in the cases of the Gasap and the online shop, if the distribution of political power seems to be fairer and better balanced, the main decisions are taken by board members, employees, volunteers, or manager(s).

However, in terms of practices, the legal position and the ownership configuration of the AFNs are still only symbolic signals about the formal opportunity to participate given to the actors in the value chain. Indeed, each AFN can operate formal and informal participative processes, whatever its legal status and ownership property.

In this way, the organic shops and the Gasap have implemented structural participative decision-making processes, contrary to the online shop, which consults value chain actors only informally. Simultaneously, the measurements of the performance show that even though each AFN implements different practices, this makes no difference in terms of the effects observed. Within the three political power-configurations, the actors (farmers and suppliers in our data) do feel involved but are not completely satisfied with their involvement.

The second category of indicators relates to *social power*. The central insight resulting from the assessment concerns the direct contact between farmers and consumers, a characteristic which differentiates the organic shops from the two other AFNs. In terms of performance, the results show that when there are frequent direct meetings between farmers and consumers, as in the Gasap and the online shop, the farmers feel more recognized for their work (Indicator B5).

However, regarding the two other scores, the differences between the three AFNs are not significant. Firstly, concerning sensitization (Indicator B6), the frequent di-

rect meetings between farmers and consumers should help to make consumers more involved and aware of sustainability and agricultural conditions. However, this does not produce significantly different effects. This practice is the leading information channel about production processes and the quality of foodstuffs used by the Gasap and the online shop. The organic shops use more delegation practices such as labels and passive information, which seem to perform equally. Secondly, regarding the level of trust in the reliability of the relationship between providers and retailers/facilitators, there is little evidence of a difference. The Gasap has the lowest score in terms of trust and reliability. This result is puzzling; indeed, the Gasap implements the most coherent and complete program of sensitization in comparison to the other two. It also gives priority to the building of ties between categories of actors. In summary, as in the case of the decision-making processes, different practices generate no significant difference in terms of performances, except maybe for the farmers' quest for recognition of their work.

Social ties and relationships between actors could also be associated with *power dynamics in economic terms*. If looking at commercial relationships (Indicator C1), none of the AFNs negotiate the prices of the foodstuffs with the farmers and the organic shops negotiate solely when the supplier is a wholesaler. The Gasap in the only one that operates with a mutual commitment between the buyers (the consumers directly) and the farmers (Indicator C3). However, if relating this to the scores concerning the farmers' level of economic viability (Indicator C4), and the ratings about the freedom to set prices based on production costs, we identify a paradox for the Gasap. Indeed, mutual commitment to a fair price is formally much stronger than in the two other AFNs, but it does not lead to economic viability for farmers. Moreover, prices seem to be implicitly constrained by this mutual commitment because farmers do not dare to increase them. This situation contrasts with the case in the online shop: More farmers are profitable and are able to set prices based on their real production costs. Moreover, last but not least, the scores for the three AFNs regarding affordability are positive. A big dilemma remains: how to generate increased profitability for farmers while maintaining affordability for consumers.

4. Food Democracy as a Vector Sustainability Transformation: Three Gradients of Transformative Potential

If we return to the concept and definition of "transformative social innovation", we could say that the three AFNs distinguish themselves by their position along a gradient of their transformative potential. At one end of the axis, the organic shops implement the least stringent practices for each category of power-configuration. At the other end of the axis, the Gasap has the most ambitious targets and appears the most coherent system:

deep democratic processes, lots of initiatives to reconnect individuals, especially farmers and consumers, as well as mutual economic commitment. Between these two AFNs, the online shop operates a more or less hybrid configuration.

Indeed, in terms of food democracy, the organic shops are only able to alter and challenge the dominant food system through their governance processes and practices, tending to reproduce the mainstream methods of organizing economic relationships and social ties. The online shop goes one step further: its transformative potential appears in the food chain's governance. Most of the democratic practices are informal, but it seems to perform well, especially if we look at the second category of indicators, regarding the social ties that are developed. However, this AFN is not transformative in terms of the configuration of its economic exchanges because of the mainstream market rules. The Gasap makes one more significant step beyond this. This AFN tries to alter the dominant regime through the governance of its chain. It builds solidarity through a community of people and implements disruptive commercial relationships between actors. Then, the Gasap holds the most potential to enact a radical version of transformation, because it is the most challenging to the dominant regime in each category of power-configuration.

Considering food democracy as a "vector of transition towards sustainability", the distinctive deepness of the transformative practices implemented by the three AFNs could have led to some differences in terms of performance. However, as we can see, none of the three AFNs performs in a perfectly democratic way. The observed and measured effects of the three distinctive power-configurations do not distinguish the three AFNs in terms of their performance, except for profitability where there is a more distinctive score. We may explain this constatation by the fact that the actors who responded in the survey are very diverse. It means that they could participate in each AFN for various reasons due to their diverse backgrounds. For example, the farmers' profiles are very distinctive, in terms of activity, size, means of production (e.g., manual vs. motorized), or longevity.

Of course, these explanations need more investigation. However, in the end, the results further contribute to illustrating that each AFN achieves at least a part of its objectives and generates (positive) effects on the actors who are involved. In this sense, the three categories of power-configuration processes can clearly label the three AFNs as an alternative to the mainstream regarding food democracy. They are all participative, formally as well as informally. So, if we look at the broader situation for the sustainability of the Brussels food system/regime, the results tend to show that the three AFNs participate in the transformation of the current food system, despite different transformative potentials (more or less stringent) but also despite their having different scales of activity. In the context of the broader field of research on

sustainability transition, this assessment leads to further discussion and reflection on how coordinating and upscaling a diversity of food democracy practices can contribute to food sustainability.

5. Conclusions

The article showed that the three AFNs conceptualize and define food democracy as the way to reach some sustainability goals, mainly in governance and socio-economic terms. In this respect, AFNs connect their daily practices and normative beliefs to the sustainability transition approach. Our participatory *sustainability-focused* assessment approach allowed us to reconstruct a grounded and socially constructed "vision" of food democracy that the three grassroots AFNs share in common. The identified criteria and indicators illustrate this vision and show a rather pragmatic relationship between food democracy and sustainability. Power-configurations need to transform, and new ways of organizing must be implemented to achieve sustainability goals. Democracy dimensions as such are part of the sustainability landscape but are also part of the pathway to more sustainable practice. Food democracy is a means for collective and transformative action. It consists of a set of processes that give more power to the actors involved in the food chains, at the three political, social, and economic levels. The authors proposed in this article to provide concrete and operational content to the concept of food democracy that can surely open new empirical research and investigations.

Furthermore, the article brings to the fore a new proposal that helps to assess aspects of food democracy practices in the context of AFNs. The set of criteria and indicators opens an interesting analytical tool around the three kinds of power-configuration processes at stake. Regarding this, the article fills a gap in the literature on food democracy and AFNs. It gives and proposes a concrete but potentially generic content to the concept of food democracy that as a result becomes more useable. Moreover, in terms of methodology and discussion, the developed analytical/assessment tool allows discussion of the potential interdependence between the three categories. For example, could it be possible for the organic shops to change their economic (commitment) practices, regarding their commercial scale and model, to achieve more direct contacts and learning between farmers and consumers?

Finally, the results illustrate that, in the context of a sustainability project, none of the three grassroots experiments are perfect, although they all achieved some great results, whatever the practices involved. On this basis, we classify the thee AFNs as transformative social innovations although they have different potentials for transformation.

However, our results appeal for more investigation. Firstly, it would be interesting to repeat the same process in other places to compare the visions of food democracy and food sustainability in the context of unconnected AFNs in terms of localization. Secondly, more detailed and empirical research should be conducted regarding the relationship between AFNs as social innovations which merely constitute a "niche", and the broader food "regime" (Seyfang & Longhurst, 2013) at a regional or national level. Indeed, even if our article shows promising results about the effects of food democracy processes on the actors and individuals, it still lacking in the measures and explanations offered about how these transformations could lead to the transition of the regional food system.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Finding Our Way to Food Democracy: Lessons from US Food Policy Council Governance

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Abstract

Food policy councils (FPCs) are an embodiment of food democracy, providing a space for community members, professionals, and government to learn together, deliberate, and collectively devise place-based strategies to address complex food systems issues. These collaborative governance networks can be considered a transitional stage in the democratic process, an intermediary institution that coordinates interests not typically present in food policymaking. In practice, FPCs are complex and varied. Due to this variety, it is not entirely clear how the structure, membership, and relationship to government of an FPC influence its policy priorities. This article will examine the relationship between an FPC's organizational structure, relationship to government, and membership and its policy priorities. Using data from a 2018 survey of FPCs in the United States by the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future paired with illustrative cases, we find that an FPC's relationship to government and membership have more bearing on its policy priorities than the organizational structure. Further, the cases illustrate how membership is determined and deliberation occurs, highlighting the difficulty of including underrepresented voices in the process.

Issue

This article is part of the issue "New Perspectives on Food Democracy" edited by Basil Bornemann (University of Basel, Switzerland) and Sabine Weiland (Université Catholique de Lille, France).

1. Introduction

Food policy councils (FPCs) are promoted as an expression of food democracy, creating a space for professionals, business, government, and community members to learn together and to galvanize collective action around policy strategies to address complex food systems issues. Food policy is a relatively new policy arena at the local level (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 2000); therefore, new forms of collaboration and governance, such as FPCs, emerge to serve as a voice for the community,

in turn helping government to navigate its role in this arena (Mendes, 2008). FPCs work at scales not dominated by powerful global institutions (Sonnino, 2013) and challenge corporate hegemony in food and agriculture (Hassanein, 2003). They tend to tackle "wicked problems" that require boundary-spanning relationships among stakeholders across sectors based on trust, interdependence, and a need for new norms and approaches (Williams, 2002). FPCs provide a forum for a diversity of stakeholders to express their values and deliberate about how to change the food system. These fora reflect the

unique history, political culture, and socioeconomic characteristics of a place, which is why no two FPCs are identical in form (Dahlberg, Clancy, Wilson, & O'Donnell, 1997).

The scholarship on FPCs is inconsistent and incomplete in terms of understanding the influence of the form—hereafter considered to be organizational structure, relationship to government, and membership—of an FPC on its policy priorities and actions. The literature is mostly comprised of examination of FPCs of a particular organizational structure, such as those embedded in government versus those incorporated as a nonprofit organization, or case studies of individual FPCs.

This article seeks to understand how FPCs, as a vehicle for democratic participation, represent the values of a community. In particular, we analyze the relationship between structural factors and policy orientation, that is, how does an FPC's form influence the food systems issues (policy priorities) that an FPC decides to focus on? To answer this question, we first contextualize how FPCs and food democracy literature relate to concepts of participatory democracy and collaborative governance networks. Using data from a 2018 survey of FPCs by the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF), we then explore the relationship between the form and policy priorities of FPCs across the United States (US). Following this analysis, we present three cases to illustrate how these relationships work in practice. Finally, we discuss the implications of key elements of our findings on FPCs' policy work and conclude with suggestions for further research on the processes of public participation in food democracy through FPCs.

2. Food Democracy and Collaborative Governance

The merits of representative versus direct democracy have been debated in the US since the late 18th century (Roberts, 2004). Key to the debate was, and continues to be, the extent to which government can accommodate citizen participation and whose values are represented in policymaking. The nature of problems facing the country have changed over the past two centuries (with greater complexity and globalized relationships), as have notions of representation by government officials. This debate and the changing nature of problems are not unique to the US. In the US, though, efforts by rights movements demanding greater participation of marginalized populations in political processes and by the federal government to urge citizen participation in government decisions have helped to codify expectations of participation (Roberts, 2004).

Food systems are one arena in which the legitimacy of representation by government is being challenged. Food democracy builds upon theories of direct citizen participation, whereby "members of society (those not holding office or administrative positions in government) share power with public officials in making substantive decisions and in taking actions related to the community" (Roberts, 2004, p. 320). Corporate consolidation of farm and food businesses, rising income inequality, and historic and systemic racial injustice all contribute to food system problems. Furthermore, citizens are skeptical about the federal government being representative of and accountable to all citizens. As growing corporate influence on federal food policy undermines citizens' desires for transparency in food production and distribution (Petetin, 2016), calls for consumers and producers to regain control of food systems through participation in local governance have emerged (Hassanein, 2003; Renting, Schermer, & Rossi, 2012). Moreover, political gridlock has disrupted the federal food and agriculture policy regime, creating a space at the local level for collaboration and debate about whose values are being represented in public policy decisions about food (Hassanein, 2003; Renting et al., 2012; Sheingate, 2014).

FPCs provide a forum to practice food democracy by way of working with government rather than taking an adversarial approach (Andrée, Clark, Levkoe, & Lowitt, 2019). They counter the problems of representational democracy serving mostly well-resourced interest groups by coordinating citizens, both lay stakeholders and paid professionals, from sectors and interests across the food supply chain and political institutions to address food system issues (Clancy, Hammer, & Lippoldt, 2007). Lay stakeholders can be defined as "unpaid citizens who have a deep interest in some public concern and thus are willing to invest substantial time and energy to represent and serve those who have similar interests or perspectives but choose not to participate" (Fung, 2006, p. 68). Paid professionals include staff from nonprofit organizations that serve the interests of marginalized communities affected by food systems issues, small and mid-sized farm operators, farm workers, and local and regional farm and food businesses. Central to food democracy is participation by citizens or organizations representing citizens who have traditionally been excluded from political and economic processes.

FPCs are a participatory democratic undertaking that build on elements of both direct and representative democracy. While on the surface FPCs may appear to be in opposition to a representative democracy, in practice, they function as what public administration scholars call collaborative governance networks. FPCs embody a transitional stage in the democratic process by moving representative democracy away from the dominant neoliberal agenda toward greater citizen participation in response to the complexity of food systems problems (Klijn & Skelcher, 2007). Food systems problems involve a multitude of ever-evolving, context-specific decisions about environmental resource allocation, economic viability, equity, and welfare across multiple levels of government. As public administration literature has expounded, policy solutions to complex problems, particularly at the local level, benefit from collaborative governance approaches (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). Citizen participation in the policy process—from formation (input) to decision-making (throughput)—lends legitimacy to policies (out-

put) as reflections of the values of citizens (Schmidt, 2013) and can lead to greater acceptance by the populace (Roberts, 2004). As collaborative governance networks, FPCs provide a space for citizens and government representatives to collectively navigate a policy problem and work towards shared goals. They engage citizens to build political capital and hold government accountable to the public interest (Schiff, 2008). In doing so, they add to the effectiveness of the policy process by making the process more transparent, inclusive and open (Bornemann & Weiland, 2019; Harper, Shattuck, Holt-Giménez, Alkon, & Lambrick, 2009; Schmidt, 2013; Sørensen & Torfing, 2018).

Members of collaborative governance networks and their relationships can drive the networks' decisions and actions (Ansell & Gash, 2008), and in the instance of FPCs, their eventual policy work (Koski, Siddiki, Sadiq, & Carboni, 2018). Scholars have explored dynamics related to participation and representation on FPCs (Clancy et al., 2007; Dahlberg et al., 1997; Harper et al., 2009; Schiff, 2008), emphasizing that FPCs should take a systems-based perspective on membership from across three axes: across domains (e.g., health, education, economic development), across the supply chain (e.g., production, retail, distribution), and across sectors (e.g., public, private, community; Irish, Clark, Banks, Palmer, & Santo, 2017). Members become "boundary spanners" by crossing organizational and sector boundaries, creating a bridge that enables a systems-oriented approach (Williams, 2002). The specific permutation of members looks different for every FPC, as do the processes by which members engage in decisions and actions. The variations in FPC membership composition and processes reflect the dimensions of what Fung (2006) has termed the "democracy cube": who participates and how those participants are selected, the authority and power granted to participants, and how members derive decisions. The interaction of these dimensions influences the policy priorities and actions of FPCs.

Furthermore, membership alone does not necessarily translate directly to policy change. As Koski et al. (2018) point out, descriptive representation, or "representation on paper," is not substantive representation, or "representation in practice." In their study of one council, the authors found that who is at the table influences what is on the agenda, but it is not a clear one-to-one relationship (Koski et al., 2018). An overemphasis on process, open structure, unequal capacity and resources across members, and lack of a shared goal contributes to the discrepancy between descriptive and substantive representation (Koski et al., 2018). Findings from previous research on how other factors, such as organizational structure and relationship to government, influence the policy work of FPCs are mixed. For FPCs in California, structural autonomy alongside strong collaboration with government was key to creating more inclusive policies and building connections between community members and government (Gupta et al., 2018). Yet a study of FPCs across the US found that FPC structure may not be a significant factor in its policy strategies but may depend more on local influences and available resources (DiGiulio, 2017).

The forms and decision-making processes of FPCs are complex and varied. Due to this variety, it is unclear how the form—organizational structure, relationship to government, and membership—influences the policy priorities and subsequent actions of an FPC. This article only addresses part of this complex puzzle by examining if there is a relationship between an FPC's form and its policy priorities. This article focuses on the policy priorities of an FPC because the policy priorities drive where an FPC invests its resources. Policy priorities reflect the food systems issues that FPC members identify as critical to address collectively. Policy outputs (e.g., legislation) and policy outcomes (e.g., individual health changes) can take years to achieve (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999) and are difficult to track and measure for one FPC let alone across hundreds of FPCs. The outcomes of specific policy changes are especially hard to measure due to the complexity of interrelated elements across a system. These challenges with policy outputs and outcomes explain why the most comprehensive dataset available on FPCs, used for this article, only tracks FPC policy priorities. Using this dataset, we examine the patterns in the relationships between how an FPC is structured, how it works with government, and who participates in an FPC, and the FPC's policy priorities. In addition, we provide three cases to illustrate how these relationships play out in practice to create spaces for co-learning, deliberation, and decision-making.

3. Methods

We use a mixed methods approach to examine the relationship between an FPC's form—organizational structure, relationship to government, and membership—and its policy priorities. First, we provide descriptive statistics on characteristics of FPCs across the US. Next, we use quantitative analysis to examine broad patterns in the relationships between FPC form and policy priorities. Lastly, we provide three cases to illuminate how these relationships work in practice.

The data we use for the descriptive statistics and quantitative analysis come from an annual survey of FPCs conducted by CLF. The survey asks about an FPC's jurisdiction level, contact information, internet presence, year formed, governance structure, organizational and policy priorities, funding, influences on policy work, government levels and issue areas of policy work, and notable accomplishments. One member of the FPC completes the survey for the FPC. The survey was sent out to 380 FPCs. If no responses were received after two email reminders, council contacts were called up to two times before the survey was closed. Survey responses were received from 321 FPCs, but only responses from 222 FPCs were analyzed for this article (our analysis excludes FPCs

in Canada; those reporting to be inactive; ten duplicate survey responses; one response that did not qualify as an FPC; as well as FPCs that did not provide information on membership, reported an "other" organizational structure, or were developing policy priorities).

The survey tells us if and how an FPC is incorporated as an organization (referred to as organizational structure in the survey): 1) unincorporated or grassroots, 2) embedded—fiscally or administratively supported—in an institution or a nonprofit organization, and 3) standalone nonprofit organization. Additionally, the survey provides a crude assessment of membership; it only considers if a sector is represented among the membership of an FPC, not the total number of members nor number of members representing a sector. More importantly, the information collected through the survey does not tell us about the mechanisms of participation: how (if) members are selected and how decisions are made.

We employ the bivariate Chi-square (χ^2) test to examine patterns in relationships between an FPC's organizational structure, relationship to government or membership categories, and policy priorities (McCrum-Gardner, 2008). For example, this test allows us to compare FPCs that have and do not have a representative in a particular membership category (e.g., health care) and whether that FPC has a particular policy priority (e.g., healthy food access), creating a two-by-two matrix of possible results. Are differences in numbers in the cells of the matrix random chance, or is there a patterned difference between the two groups? A standard approach to determine significant relationships is a p-value of <0.05 (McCrum-Gardner, 2008); significant results mean that there is a correlation between the two nominal variables that we are testing (with a 95% certainty). However, p-values of up to 0.10 are common (90% certainty). Considering the literature recognizes that p-values are continuous and that any cut-off is arbitrary, we report any relationship up to a p-value of 0.10. We did not test relationships with policy priorities when the food systems issue area had less than five observations because a sample size of fewer than five can be problematic. We therefore excluded the bivariate relationships with the policy priorities of food labor, natural resources and environment, transportation, and food processing. Further, while relying on p-values to determine significance is debated (Amrhein, Greenland, & McShane, 2019), they can still be useful as one type of evidence when analyzing large datasets.

To illustrate some of the dynamics of the significant relationships we found in the statistical analysis, we provide three cases of FPCs in Baltimore (Maryland), Adams County (Pennsylvania), and Austin (Texas). The FPCs were purposely sampled to yield the most relevant data to illuminate gaps left by the survey data (Yin, 2015). They were selected based on the knowledge of the cases given established relationships between CLF staff and the FPC. This analysis uses a practitioner-action research framework which "is carried out by professionals who are en-

gaged in researching…aspects of their own practice as they engage in that practice" (Edwards & Talbot, 1994, p. 52, as cited in Denscombe, 2014, p. 127). Three of the authors are CLF staff who designed, conducted, and analyzed the survey used in this article. The other author serves as an adviser on the work of CLF with FPCs and is a member of a local FPC and a state FPC. Such positionalities provide us with rich experiences and context to inform this article, with the goal of creating findings that could be useful to FPCs (Denscombe, 2014). The content was gathered through personal knowledge of the FPCs and follow up with the FPCs for clarification. These cases offer a sampling of the breadth of mechanisms that FPCs use to engage participants.

4. Findings

In the following section, we present our findings from the quantitative analysis and illustrative cases. First, we detail the characteristics of FPCs across the US and then present our survey analysis examining broad patterns in the relationships between FPC form and policy priorities. Finally, we describe three cases to demonstrate how these relationships work in practice.

4.1. FPCs in the United States

FPCs have existed in the US since 1981, but have significantly increased in number over the last decade. Every year since 2009, 23 to 45 new FPCs were formed (Bassarab, Santo, & Palmer, 2019). At the end of 2017, there were 284 active FPCs in the US, based on data collected from the annual survey of FPCs conducted by CLF, historical data about FPCs maintained by CLF, and data gathered from online searches to verify the active status of FPCs. FPCs or similar groups are emerging across the Global North, including in Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and several other countries (Santo & Moragues-Faus, 2019).

FPCs in the US are heterogeneous. Each council weighs decisions about their geographic focus, organizational structure, structural autonomy from government, and membership against the political, social, economic, and demographic context of the area. Like a Rubik's cube, there are seemingly endless combinations but some characteristics are more common. Most FPCs (71%) focus their work at the local level: city/municipality, county, or both city/municipality and county. Only 8% of FPCs work at the state level and 22% work at the regional level (multiple counties). Additionally, the majority of FPCs are embedded in an institution: 35% are sponsored by a nonprofit organization, 29% are embedded in government, and 6% are housed in a university. Another 18% are unincorporated (grassroots) groups and 12% are nonprofit organizations (Table 1).

Being embedded in government is only one way for FPCs to connect with government. An FPC may be created by legislation (17% of FPCs); include government

Table 1. FPC structure (N = 222).

Structure	N
Housed in a nonprofit	78
Embedded in government	64
Grassroots coalition	39
Nonprofit	27
Embedded in a university/college	14

employees or elected officials as members[1] (86%); have members appointed by government (21%); receive in-kind support—meeting space or administrative help—from government (40%); or receive funding from government grants or appropriations (35%)—Table 2. We also account for FPCs that have no relationship to government. A relationship with government can lend credibility and legitimacy to the work of an FPC and thus enable policy success, or it can hinder and even halt the efforts of an FPC (Clancy et al., 2007; Santo & Moragues-Faus, 2019; Scherb, Palmer, Frattaroli, & Pollack, 2012; Schiff, 2008).

Table 2. Relationship to government (N = 222).

Relationship	N
Government appointed members	46
Government staff and elected officials are members	183
In-kind support from government	89
Legislated by government	37
Financial support from government	78
No connection to government	55

FPCs' membership consists of professional stakeholders, public administrators, and elected officials from across the food supply chain and interrelated issue areas, e.g., environment, education, economic development, and health care. FPC membership also includes lay stakeholders, referred to as community members in the survey. FPCs could report their membership composition by selecting as many membership categories represented on their council as necessary (Table 3). On average, FPCs selected 10.84 (standard deviation 3.55) of the total 19 membership categories, with a range from 1 to 19. The membership of the majority of FPCs (92%) includes a community member. All but two FPCs have representation from professional sectors.

FPCs are woefully underfunded; 68% operate on an annual budget of $10,000 or less (35% have no funding). 12% have an annual budget over $100,000. As FPCs mature, their funding increases slightly. Of the FPCs more than five years old, 29% have an annual budget over $25,000, compared to 11% of FPCs that are five years or younger. The top three sources of financial support for FPCs are in-kind donations, non-federal government funding from grants or appropriations, and private foundations. A challenge consistently reported by FPCs on the annual survey is a lack of financial resources.

Table 3. Membership categories by FPC (N = 222).

Member Type	N
Community	204
Public health	194
Anti-hunger/emergency food	192
College/university/community college	186
Food production	185
Government staff	174
Health care	145
Food retail	123
Economic development	119
Farm/food industry workers	119
Social justice	112
Elementary and secondary education	111
Faith-based organizations	102
Natural resources and environment	100
Food processing/distribution	91
Food waste/disposal	76
Elected official	66
Philanthropy	59
Youth	49

The charge of FPCs is to tackle issues facing their food system, but they do not work across the entire food supply chain simultaneously. To understand how an FPC approaches the food system at a given time, the survey asks FPCs to identify their top three policy priorities from a list of 11 food systems issue areas. For the past three years, healthy food access has been a priority for a majority of FPCs. In 2018, healthy food access, economic development, and anti-hunger were the most common policy priorities (Table 4). More recently, we have seen FPCs prioritizing food waste and food labor laws (Bassarab et al., 2019; Morrill, Santo, & Bassarab, 2018).

Table 4. Policy priorities by FPC (N = 222).

Policy Priority	N
Healthy food access	146
Economic development	96
Anti-hunger	81
Food production	69
Food procurement	63
Land use planning	58
Food waste/recovery	40
Local food processing	24
Transportation	18
Natural resources and environment	10
Food labor	4

[1] Inclusion of government staff and elected officials in an FPC's membership was asked in the survey question about membership. We include the count of FPC membership with government staff and elected officials in both Tables 2 and 3 as this information is relevant to both an FPC's relationship to government and the composition of its membership. Table 2 shows the total number of FPCs with membership that includes a government employee, an elected official, or both. Table 3 shows the number of FPCs with membership that includes a government staff or an elected official. There were 57 FPCs with membership that included both a government employee and elected official.

4.2. Patterns in Relationships between Form and Policy Priorities: Quantitative Results

Our findings on the relationships between an FPC's form and policy priorities from the bivariate analysis, shown in Table 5, demonstrate that membership composition and relationship to government have more bearing on the policy priorities of an FPC than the organizational structure. Organizational structure has one significant relationship to policy priorities, namely if an FPC is a grassroots coalition, embedded in a nonprofit, or a nonprofit itself, it is more likely to have policy priorities around production. In contrast, both membership and relationship to government have several significant relationships with policy priorities.

As Table 6 shows, most types of relationships that an FPC has with government have inverse relationships with some policy priorities. Seven out of the ten significant relationships suggest that FPCs put less priority on certain issues. In other words, having a relationship with government is related to what FPCs do not prioritize. For example, FPCs that are embedded in government, have government support (in-kind or financial), or have government-appointed members are less likely to prioritize food production policy issues. Conversely, FPCs with no connection to government are more likely to prioritize food production.

Overall, the relationships between a membership category and the corresponding policy priority are positively and significantly correlated (Table 7). Appendix A pro-

Table 5. Summary of bivariate relationships between form and policy priorities.

Form	Policy Priorities
Organization type	One significant relationship to a policy priority with $p < 0.10$
Relationship to government	Ten significant relationships to policy priorities with $p < 0.10$; Five significant relationships to policy priorities with $p < 0.05$
Membership	Twenty-four significant relationships to policy priorities with $p < 0.10$; Fifteen significant relationship to policy with $p < 0.05$

Table 6. Significant relationships between policy priorities and relationship to government.

Relationship to Government	Relationship to Policy Priority (*p*-value)
Embedded in government	Less prioritization of food production (0.077)
Government appointed members	Less prioritization of food production (0.058)
In-kind support from government	Less prioritization of food production (0.023) Greater prioritization of food waste/recovery (0.034)
Financial support from government	Less prioritization of food production (0.080) Greater prioritization of land use planning (0.076)
Legislated by government	Less prioritization of healthy food access (0.077) Greater prioritization of food waste/recovery (0.012)
No connection to government	Greater prioritization of food production (0.003) Greater prioritization of land use planning (0.003)

Table 7. Membership significantly related to topically similar policy priorities.

Membership Category	Relationship to Policy Priority (*p*-value)
Anti-hunger/emergency food	Greater prioritization of anti-hunger (0.001)
Faith-based organizations	Greater prioritization of anti-hunger (0.008)
Food waste/recovery	Greater prioritization of food waste/recovery (0.000)
Food production	Greater prioritization of food production (0.080)
Economic development	Greater prioritization of economic development (0.010)
Elementary and secondary education	Greater prioritization of food procurement (0.026)
Food retail	Greater prioritization of food procurement (0.015)
Youth	Greater prioritization of food procurement (0.067)

vides a full reporting of all relationships. The priorities of food waste/recovery, anti-hunger/emergency food, and land use planning have more significant relationships to membership categories than other priorities. One explanation is that some policy priorities are common across all FPCs (e.g., healthy food access) or prioritized overall by very few FPCs (e.g., land use planning). Additionally, some membership categories are related to more policy priorities than others. For example, having members representing faith-based organizations is significantly correlated to three of the seven policy priorities while members representing anti-hunger/emergency food are correlated with two policy priorities. Government staff, elected officials, and community members are not correlated with any policy priorities. Because nearly all FPCs have community members, we would not expect any significant differences in relationship to policy priorities across councils.

4.3. Illustrations of Collaborative Governance and Food Democracy in Practice: Case Studies

The three examples described below illustrate how members are engaged in the process of determining an FPC's policy priorities. In particular, these cases highlight the choices that FPCs make regarding who and how they recruit members, as well as the interplay between members, authority, and decision-making. The cases describe an open, self-selected membership process, an application process, and a process by which members are appointed. The FPCs featured work at different levels (city, city-county, county) and have different structures (initiative of city government, advisory board of city-county government, nonprofit in small town). These differences further contextualize the influence of an FPC's relationships to government and organizational structure on its policy priorities.

4.3.1. Adams County, Pennsylvania

Adams County, Pennsylvania, is a mostly rural county with an estimated population of just over 100,000 in 2017. The main town in the county, Gettysburg, had a population of around 7,600 in 2017. While the Adams County Food Policy Council (ACFPC) was established through a county proclamation in 2009, it is housed within Healthy Adams County, a nonprofit organization. The FPC's structure is non-hierarchical; there is no official leader, but logistics and meetings are coordinated by a facilitator. While membership is self-selecting and open to anyone who wants to participate, it mainly attracts professionals from government, academia, health care, and nonprofits working on related issues. Approximately 12 to 15 people regularly attend meetings in a volunteer capacity. Community input is sought periodically during a forum whereby anyone who wants to participate is invited to share their opinions and outreach to community members who receive services from organizations that

participate in the ACFPC. This input informs the ACFPC's actions, although there is not a formal process for determining policy priorities.

At one forum, community members identified two issues affecting access to healthy food: the need for farmers and consumers to better understand each others' needs and constraints, and better advertisement and collaboration around existing healthy food initiatives. The ACFPC acted on this input by helping the Adams County Farmers Market Association (ACFMA) determine if closing a weekday market and only hosting a Saturday market would have a negative impact on low-income customers. To inform the ACFMA's decision, the ACFPC surveyed low-income participants of member organizations to see if dropping the weekday market day would severely hinder their ability to access healthy food. The conclusion was that while a small percentage of attendees could not attend a Saturday market, the majority could and would attend a market on Saturdays. The survey also provided the ACFPC an opportunity to increase understanding between farmers and consumers by talking about the implications for small farmers when business is much slower at the weekday market. The ACFPC keeps the discussions during the community fora in mind when making decisions about their priorities and actions.

4.3.2. Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore is the largest city in the state of Maryland and has a majority African American population. Housed within the city government and funded by the city, the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI) engages government staff, elected officials, and professional and lay stakeholders through three approaches: 1) intra-agency collaboration, 2) the Food Policy Action Coalition (FPAC), and 3) the Resident Food Equity Advisors (RFEA). The City's Food Policy Director and two staff housed in the Planning Department work with other government staff throughout the city on food systems issues.

FPAC is an open network of more than 60 self-selected people, mostly professionals from area nonprofit and community organizations, businesses, as well as university faculty and students whose work intersects with food systems. The network meets quarterly. This format allows for participation from a wider network of actors, but those who choose to participate in FPAC do not reflect the majority of Baltimore's population and are generally not people directly affected by food system problems (Swartz, Santo, & Neff, 2018). Quarterly meetings consist of formal presentations and informal networking, whereby FPAC members learn from one another and share ideas with BFPI staff on current policy issues. FPAC members also approach BFPI staff as policy issues arise because of relationship building efforts by BFPI staff outside of the meetings. FPAC members' input, along with BFPI staff's own assessment of the feasibility of changing a policy, help BFPI select which policies to focus on. In this interaction, FPAC fulfills a comple-

mentary role as described by Klijn and Skelcher (2007) to BFPI, allowing professional and lay stakeholders to listen and learn about policy issues in the city and to have their "say" in providing advice in the policy process.

Recognizing the need for a more deliberate means of eliciting residents' perspectives, BFPI formed the RFEA in 2017. Supported by a stipend, one resident from each council district in the city is selected through an application process to serve as an adviser to BFPI staff on food system issues facing the city. Over the course of six meetings, RFEA and BFPI staff convene to hear presentations from content experts, converse about their experiences related to the issue, deliberate about solutions, and craft appropriate policy recommendations. While BFPI staff make the final decision about recommendations, they are there to learn from residents about what they think will work. Advisers are invited to meet with their elected council member to share their experiences and to talk about the group's recommended food policy strategies. By recognizing and integrating the voices of those most affected by food policy decisions into their work, BFPI is facilitating a transition in democratic participation from representational to participatory democracy.

4.3.3. Austin, Texas

Austin, the state capital of Texas, is home to nearly a million people. Established in 2008 through local ordinances, the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board (ATCFPB) is a 13-member advisory board for the City of Austin and surrounding Travis County. Board members are appointed by the City Council and the County Commissioners. Members are encouraged to represent a diversity of sectors across the food supply chain but there are no required sector-specific positions. Appointed members decide which policies to recommend to local government staff and elected officials. The Board is supported by four working groups with open, self-selected membership and coordinated by City and County staff. Working groups serve as technical advisers to the Board around specific food systems issues. Citizens are invited to participate in a working group or to express their opinions during an allotted time at the beginning of the Board's monthly meetings.

As appointed representatives, Board members must navigate suggestions from self-selected members of working groups, the preferences of a broader network, as well as their own professional and personal interests. This balancing act led the Board to punt on a decision on a paid sick leave bill proposed by the Austin City Council. Faced with a recommendation from the Healthy Food Access Working Group to support the bill, as well as mixed recommendations to support and not support the bill from business and community organizations from the wider Austin community, the Board decided to neither support nor oppose the bill. The bill, however, was eventually passed by Austin City Council because of overwhelming support expressed by attendees at a community input meeting held by the Austin City Council (Morrill et al., 2018). At the center of the debate was a complex issue steeped in opposition from businesses that are better resourced and have more access to public officials than other stakeholders, such as workers and their representatives. Collaborative governance networks are prone to imbalance if there is not a way to equalize the capacity, resources, authority, and status of members (Ansell & Gash, 2008). The ATCFPB tried to balance the views of proponents from the working group and community organizations with opposing views from Board members and businesses through a null vote. This vote held the ATCFPB accountable to both the Board and the working group but ultimately did not represent the desire of the community.

5. Discussion

The analysis above adds to the existing debate about how FPCs' forms relate to their policy work. Our findings demonstrate that membership and relationship to government have more bearing on the policy priorities of an FPC than the organizational structure (although the relationship to government is related to the lack of some priorities rather than their presence). Further, by illuminating the relationship between membership and policy priorities, and often policy development itself, the case studies underscore the role of FPCs as vehicles for food democracy. FPCs use a collaborative governance framework because it allows citizens with varying interests to grapple with the complexities of food systems issues, deliberate on appropriate and timely strategies, and collectively agree on directions to pursue for policy change.

This study shows that members matter; membership is related to a wide range of policy priorities. Some policy priorities have significant relationships with multiple membership categories. For example, the priority of food waste and recovery bears significant relationships with members representing anti-hunger organizations (recipients of excess food), food processing and distribution (involved in coordinating logistics for delivery of excess food), food waste, health care (for whom hunger and health are intricately linked), natural resources and environment (for whom wasted food represents wasted water and greenhouse gas emissions), and philanthropy. These relationships align with national campaigns to reduce food waste. This alignment raises questions about the degree to which national efforts influence the decisions of FPCs and whether FPCs can serve as a gateway to increase civic engagement at a national level.

Additionally, for some membership sectors, there is a relationship between the policy priority and the sector that the member represents. For instance, FPCs with members representing economic development are more likely to prioritize economic development policies while those with farmers, ranchers, or small producer advocacy groups are more likely to prioritize food production policies. The relationships between sector representation and policy priorities are of particular interest in con-

sideration of whose values are being represented by the FPC. In an analysis of two local government planning processes, Baldy and Kruse (2019) point out that the values represented by members participating in the processes are complex and varied and based both on their personal experiences and professional role. Further research is needed to understand if members are representing the interests of their employer, an area of the food system for which they have a deep interest, or a particular demographic of the community.

FPCs struggle with community representation both in determining who counts as community members and how community members are included in FPC decisions. While most FPCs report to have members that represent the community, it is often unclear how FPCs define community members. Do they include lay stakeholders with a vested interest in an issue and willing to participate for free, people affected by problems with the food system, socially marginalized communities, low-income communities, minority populations, or people traditionally excluded from economic and political processes? A few lay stakeholders amongst a dozen paid professionals could cause an imbalance in decision-making. Collaborative governance approaches can be designed to build the capacity of members at a disadvantage (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015).

Not all mechanisms for participation are equal, but the survey used for this article does not collect information about member selection (open, self-selecting, or targeted recruitment) or authority (voting members of a steering committee or non-voting expert advisers of a working group). These distinctions are important to understand the power dynamics among members in setting the policy agenda for an FPC. For instance, the ACFPC and the BFPI Resident Food Equity Advisors use an open, self-selecting process for member participation, yet mostly paid professionals participate. Such a format poses the risk that members are recruited through existing networks, which could inhibit inclusiveness and exacerbate inequity and underrepresentation of certain groups. Additionally, some members, such as professionals, may be perceived to have more expertise or authority because they have more resources and capacity. They may also represent the priorities of organizations outside of the community. Further, as Sieveking (2019) found with the Oldenburg FPC in Germany, openness of membership, and the resulting diversity, can bog down decision-making processes. Allowing elected officials to appoint members, such as the ATCFPB however, could also exclude stakeholders who traditionally lack economic capital, knowledge, or capacity to engage in the policy process. FPCs struggle to find a balance between harnessing the energy of those eager to transform food systems, learning from those with food systems and policy expertise, and empowering those impacted by food systems issues.

A membership process that deliberately places those who experience the effects of policy decisions in a po-

sition to influence policy can add to the effectiveness and equity of policy decisions (Fung & Wright, 2001). The BFPI Resident Food Equity Advisors program elevates the authority of residents in food policy decisions by specifically selecting residents to work directly with local government staff on policy recommendations. The ACFPC also tries to elevate the perspectives of residents who are affected by food systems issues in the FPC's decisions and actions through direct outreach to them. Our findings reinforce those of the Koski et al. (2018) case that the engagement process is important to ensure member representation on paper, in practice, and in the selection of policy priorities.

An FPC's relationship to government also bears a number of significant relationships to its policy priorities. Unlike membership, however, there is a significant inverse relationship between food production and an FPC's relationship to local government. One plausible explanation is that many regulatory issues (e.g., crop insurance, organic certification, food safety) facing farmers and ranchers are the result of federal policy decisions. While some FPCs do follow and advocate on federal policies, participation in the federal policy process requires different strategies and diminishes the effectiveness of policies to address place-based problems.

The aim of FPCs to create greater pathways for citizen participation in the policy process can only be achieved with government cooperation. Elected officials and public administrators must be willing to engage in co-learning, deliberation, and power-sharing with members of society, as shown in the case of the BFPI RFEA program. The effectiveness and sustainability of an FPC as a collaborative governance network is questionable without this willingness. Other scholarship on FPCs has shown that an unwillingness by government staff to make the policy process accessible to citizens and attempts to impose the agenda of appointed or elected officials on an FPC can reduce the effectiveness or lead to the dissolution of FPCs (Coplen & Cuneo, 2015; Gupta et al., 2018; van de Griend, Duncan, & Wiskerke, 2019).

Organizational structure is not an irrelevant factor for FPCs, but our findings echo DiGiulio's (2017) findings that it does not drive policy decisions. An FPC's organizational structure can influence membership composition and the power dynamics amongst members, particularly for FPCs embedded in government or where members are appointed. In the case of the ATCFPB, the members appointed to the Board by local elected officials represented certain interests (e.g., businesses) that had opinions contrary to the desires of the community. For BFPI, an FPC embedded in government, determining its policy agenda and strategies often depends on political timing and agency collaboration and readiness.

6. Conclusion

Communities across the US are being confronted with food insecurity, unequal access to healthy food, family

farm hardships, climate disruptions to food production, and other food systems related problems. Food democracy can be viewed as both a *goal* (output) to transform current food systems by addressing these problems that have arisen from imbalances in power, as well as a *process* of policymaking around food systems by (input) and with (throughput) citizens. We explore how collaborative governance networks in the form of FPCs are fora to engage citizens in the *process* of food democracy. The FPC framework is particularly useful for navigating the complexity of food systems and for negotiating policy strategies that address issues that members could not tackle alone. Our findings corroborate their collaborative nature, demonstrating that who sits on an FPC, and to a lesser extent, how they are connected to government, are key in shaping which issues FPCs address in their policy work. In this way, FPCs organize participation, and yet filter participation by determining rules for membership and decision-making.

These findings both reveal new insights and raise questions about FPCs' contributions to food democracy. On one hand, the importance of members' sectoral backgrounds in determining policy priorities underscores that their perspectives are informing which issues councils act on. On the other hand, there are dynamics of FPCs' decision-making process that we still do not fully understand. Issues of representation, power, and trust are not unique to FPCs. There may, however, be elements about the systems nature of food issues that make it uniquely challenging to focus the decisions and actions of an FPC, and to meaningfully incorporate perspectives from across the food system, especially of those who are traditionally excluded from the policy process. Additionally, while FPC membership fluctuates, policy change is a long game. Little is known about how transitions in membership affect the priorities and ultimate outcomes of FPCs. Future research could explore the power dynamics, policy deliberation, and conflict resolution processes involved in member participation on councils, particularly over time.

Since our analysis did not explore FPC policy outcomes, we are left with further questions around the goal of food democracy—that is, if and how FPC policy outcomes yield transformative food systems change. FPCs provide mechanisms for citizen participation in the policy process at local and state levels, but many of the challenges in the food system—especially those food democracy purports to address, such as corporate hegemony—stem from federal and global political decisions. Could FPCs build the capacity and interest of citizens to engage in higher levels of food policy advocacy? Does involvement with an FPC increase efficacy and encourage political participation beyond food systems? Amidst the current polarization and skepticism in US politics, the growing interest in FPCs may offer hope that people are recognizing the need to collaborate and (re)engage in democratic processes to ensure their values are reflected in policies at all levels of government.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Appendix. Membership categories by policy priorities (N = 222). Note: Only two of the four cells are shown from each chi-square test. The two cells shown are those FPCs with members in the category and the two cells not shown are the cells for FPCs without that membership category.

Table A1. Food procurement.

Member Category	No	Yes	*p*-value
Government staff	125	49	0.891
Elected officials	48	18	0.812
Anti-hunger/emergency food	141	51	0.129
College/university/community college	132	54	0.623
Community	147	57	0.627
Economic development	80	39	0.118
Elementary and secondary education	72	39	0.026
Faith-based organizations	69	31	0.433
Farm/food industry workers	84	35	0.714
Processing and distribution	65	26	0.985
Food production	133	52	0.842
Food retail	80	43	0.015
Food waste/recovery	53	23	0.653
Health care	105	40	0.719
Natural resources and environment	74	28	0.778
Philanthropy	40	19	0.447
Public health	136	58	0.186
Social justice	82	30	0.595
Youth	30	19	0.067

Table A2. Healthy food access.

Member Category	No	Yes	*p*-value
Government staff	55	119	0.117
Elected officials	23	43	0.900
Anti-hunger/emergency food	64	128	0.474
College/university/community college	68	118	0.097
Community	70	134	0.933
Economic development	43	76	0.521
Elementary and secondary education	34	77	0.258
Faith-based organizations	32	68	0.525
Farm/food industry workers	42	77	0.721
Processing and distribution	31	60	0.965
Food production	66	119	0.311
Food retail	44	79	0.590
Food waste/recovery	29	47	0.374
Health care	54	91	0.195
Natural resources and environment	44	58	0.010
Philanthropy	18	41	0.482
Public health	66	128	0.860
Social justice	40	72	0.639
Youth	15	34	0.545

Table A3. Food waste/recovery.

Member Category	No	Yes	*p*-value
Government staff	141	33	0.484
Elected officials	51	15	0.235
Anti-hunger/emergency food	154	38	0.082
College/university/community college	151	35	0.481
Community	165	39	0.151
Economic development	100	19	0.393
Elementary and secondary education	88	23	0.295
Faith-based organizations	79	21	0.295
Farm/food industry workers	96	23	0.585
Processing and distribution	67	24	0.007
Food production	150	35	0.435
Food retail	100	23	0.768
Food waste/recovery	46	30	0.000
Health care	114	31	0.074
Natural resources and environment	77	25	0.020
Philanthropy	44	15	0.084
Public health	157	37	0.282
Social justice	89	23	0.325
Youth	39	10	0.622

Table A4. Anti-hunger.

Member Category	No	Yes	*p*-value
Government staff	107	67	0.234
Elected officials	38	28	0.232
Anti-hunger/emergency food	114	78	0.001
College/university/community college	113	73	0.052
Community	128	76	0.423
Economic development	79	40	0.339
Elementary and secondary education	67	44	0.329
Faith-based organizations	54	46	0.008
Farm/food industry workers	78	41	0.499
Processing and distribution	56	35	0.610
Food production	119	66	0.575
Food retail	80	43	0.598
Food waste/recovery	47	29	0.709
Health care	82	63	0.003
Natural resources and environment	71	31	0.082
Philanthropy	36	23	0.642
Public health	123	71	0.929
Social justice	79	33	0.028
Youth	28	21	0.294

Table A5. Land use planning.

Member Category	No	Yes	*p*-value
Government staff	127	47	0.568
Elected officials	48	18	0.800
Anti-hunger/emergency food	140	52	0.411
College/university/community college	141	45	0.136
Community	150	54	0.694
Economic development	90	29	0.522
Elementary and secondary education	90	21	0.015
Faith-based organizations	82	18	0.013
Farm/food industry workers	90	29	0.522
Processing and distribution	71	20	0.241
Food production	135	50	0.494
Food retail	88	35	0.379
Food waste/recovery	53	23	0.311
Health care	114	31	0.027
Natural resources and environment	71	31	0.182
Philanthropy	45	14	0.625
Public health	145	49	0.438
Social justice	77	35	0.080
Youth	34	15	0.418

Table A6. Food production.

Member Category	No	Yes	*p*-value
Government staff	118	56	0.499
Elected officials	44	22	0.637
Anti-hunger/emergency food	133	59	0.774
College/university/community college	128	58	0.941
Community	80	39	0.118
Economic development	81	38	0.768
Elementary and secondary education	78	33	0.664
Faith-based organizations	77	23	0.019
Farm/food industry workers	85	34	0.385
Processing and distribution	63	28	0.933
Food production	123	62	0.080
Food retail	84	39	0.822
Food waste/recovery	53	23	0.849
Health care	102	43	0.529
Natural resources and environment	65	37	0.123
Philanthropy	42	17	0.661
Public health	133	61	0.759
Social justice	81	31	0.269
Youth	35	14	0.667

Table A7. Economic development.

Member Category	No	Yes	*p*-value
Government staff	97	77	0.563
Elected officials	39	27	0.648
Anti-hunger/emergency food	113	79	0.111
College/university/community college	103	83	0.345
Community	43	76	0.521
Economic development	58	61	0.010
Elementary and secondary education	64	47	0.786
Faith-based organizations	61	39	0.248
Farm/food industry workers	67	52	0.883
Processing and distribution	51	40	0.858
Food production	101	84	0.146
Food retail	64	59	0.113
Food waste/recovery	46	30	0.413
Health care	82	63	0.933
Natural resources and environment	58	44	0.977
Philanthropy	29	30	0.169
Public health	110	84	0.965
Social justice	59	53	0.216
Youth	27	22	0.791

Article

Food Policy Councils as Loci for Practising Food Democracy? Insights from the Case of Oldenburg, Germany

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Abstract

In the highly concentrated and consolidated 21st century food systems, a broad range of stakeholders are rarely involved in food-related decision-making processes. One innovative institutional response is the establishment of food policy councils (FPCs). These institutions are often initiated by civil society actors and seek to transform prevailing agro-industrial food systems. They aim to raise awareness for alternative practises of food consumption and production, and they try to shape food policies at different governance levels. FPCs have been acclaimed for their democratic potential in the past. This study uses the five key dimensions of food democracy identified by Hassanein (2008) to assess the ways in which FPCs might represent loci for practising food democracy. This is achieved by taking one of the first FPCs in Germany as an example. During a two-year study period (2016–2018), the emergence of the FPC Oldenburg was studied through participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Data analysis reveals examples of, as well as challenges related to, all five dimensions of food democracy. In addition, the in-depth analysis of the case also illustrates the importance of taking additional aspects into account, i.e., openness and transparency. Looking at an additional dimension of food democracy, which covers the "How?" of the deliberative process, might allow for a more nuanced analysis of the democratic potential of food initiatives in the future.

1. Introduction

In the highly concentrated and consolidated 21st century food system, citizen participation in food-related decision-making processes in Western democracies has mainly been limited to indirect control by representative democratic institutions. These processes have also been influenced by professional organizations and interest groups. It is perhaps the perceived outsized influence of some of these groups which has contributed to a lack of support for policy measures and a legitimacy crisis of the representative democratic system (Renting, Schermer, & Rossi, 2012, pp. 296–297). More specifically, food citizenship—i.e., the involvement of citizens in food-related decision-making processes—has been ad-

versely affected by four developments: the corporate control of the food chain, the limited information available to consumers about products, the manipulation of supermarkets to increase sales, and a proliferation of deskilling convenience food (Welsh & MacRae, 1998, p. 243). These developments notwithstanding, the food system affects people's daily life in a very intimate way, which might provide a strong motivation and opportunity for individuals to reclaim their citizenship.

In the context of diminishing food citizenship, "civil society-based initiatives become an important source of innovation through social learning, the building of new capacities and by creating 'space to manoeuvre' for organizing food production, distribution, and consumption differently" (Renting et al., 2012, p. 298). These ini-

tiatives reflect new relationships between, on the one hand, civil society and markets (active involvement in re-constructing alternative systems of food provisioning) and, on the other hand, between civil society and public institutions (civic engagement in shaping public opinion, culture, institutions and policies by communication, lobbying, and political activism; Renting et al., 2012, p. 300). Alternative food networks are but one example of the new connections which have emerged in recent decades (Goodman, Dupuis, & Goodman, 2012).

The emerging phenomenon of food policy councils (FPCs) seems to address both new linkages: These initiatives are mainly initiated by civil society (Harper et al., 2009, p. 25) and are striving to bring together stakeholders from a variety of sectors related to food, including public institutions and business. Their main aim is to influence local food policies, but under their umbrella, new food markets also emerge, e.g., community-supported agriculture. They comprise various representatives from the different segments of the food system community (e.g., members of community organizations, civil society organizations, the retail sector, and nutritional education) in order to discuss, coordinate, and influence the local food policy (Stierand, 2014, p. 169). FPCs can be regarded as concrete examples of a deliberate attempt to develop the practise of food democracy (Allen, 2010, p. 301; Hassanein, 2003, p. 79). Carlson and Chappell (2015) emphasize FPCs' potentially unique role in connecting the "How?" of deliberative processes with the "What?" of food access and justice. They furthermore stress FPCs' high potential for being "inclusive, transparent, and intentional spaces for dialogue" (p. 15). A tentative assessment of the democratic potential of FPCs based on a power-based concept of complex democracy is given by Bornemann and Weiland (2019).

Originating in the US in the early 1980s, the number of FPCs in North America has been increasing ever since, especially over the last decade. Based on a comprehensive survey, the latest Food Policy Report refers to 341 active councils in North America and Canada (Bassarab, Santo, & Palmer, 2019, p. 3). One well-known example is the Toronto FPC in Canada, which has also been discussed in terms of food democracy. Providing a mechanism for people's active participation in shaping the food system was an explicit goal of the Toronto FPC from its very beginning (Welsh & MacRae, 1998, p. 238). Its initial set up as a round table with people of differing political views and a variety of food system sectors (p. 250) is still characteristic of many FPCs. In contrast to North America, FPCs are a rather new institutional phenomenon in Europe, especially in Germany. The first two FPCs formed in 2016 in the cities of Cologne and Berlin. During the period of this study, four more FPCs were established in German cities (Frankfurt, Dresden, Oldenburg and Kiel). Currently, there are around 40 more FPC initiatives in Germany and German-speaking countries planning to form FPCs. To the best of my knowledge, no research has been done on these initiatives and their potential regarding food democracy.

This article seeks to disentangle a variety of aspects that potentially make FPCs loci for practising food democracy. Participation of citizens in the food system requires places where citizens have the opportunity to express and negotiate their interests and concerns. To study different expressions of food citizenship, it is necessary to move beyond simply conceptualizing food as a commodity and people as consumers (Welsh & MacRae, 1998, p. 240). Along these lines, this study aims to apply and refine existing conceptualizations of food democracy. The analytical framework developed by Hassanein, consisting of five key dimensions of food democracy, is meant to serve as a lens for analysing food initiatives and their democratic characteristics (Hassanein, 2008, p. 306).

This lens was applied to the emerging phenomenon of FPCs in Germany. The aim was to investigate one of the first German FPCs, the exemplary case of the FPC in Oldenburg (a city with approximately 167,000 inhabitants in Lower Saxony) in terms of food democracy. The process of its formation was studied in a qualitative case study between 2016 and 2018. The analysis of the emerging FPC Oldenburg (1) allows for a more nuanced understanding of the particular case and (2) represents a key step in conceptualizing how FPCs, in general, can contribute to a strengthening of food citizenship. By analysing the phenomenon of FPCs from a food democracy perspective and by extending Hassanein's analytical framework by adding additional aspects to be taken into account, this study contributes to existing research on food democracy both empirically and conceptually.

After an introduction to the food democracy concept and Hassanein's operationalization in particular (Section 2), the methodological approach for studying the phenomenon of FPCs in terms of food democracy will be explained in greater detail (Section 3). In the subsequent section, the results of the analysis will be presented vis-à-vis each food democracy dimension identified by Hassanein (Section 4). In the following section, the findings of this study will be discussed in the broader context of emerging FPCs in Germany and regarding the practise and concept of food democracy more generally (Section 5). The article concludes with a short summary and considerations concerning further research.

2. Conceptual Background

The food democracy concept is based on the assumption that food is more than a commodity and that people are more than consumers (Hassanein, 2003, p. 79; Welsh & MacRae, 1998, p. 239). In contrast to the ongoing process of diminishing food citizenship mentioned above, food democracy is about citizens having the power to determine agro-food policies and practises locally, regionally, nationally, and globally: The concept strives for active citizen participation in shaping the food system (Hassanein, 2003, p. 79). Food democracy, therefore, challenges the anti-democratic forces of control and claims the rights and responsibilities of citizens to participate in decision-

making instead (Hassanein, 2003, p. 83). According to Hassanein, every incremental step of pragmatic politics should be oriented towards the vision of an ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially just system of food and agriculture. As achieving sustainability involves conflict over values, food democracy considers active participation and political engagement as necessary pre-requisites if solutions to the dominant system are to be achieved (Hassanein, 2003, pp. 84–85). For Hassanein, active citizen participation is needed to achieve sustainability. In turn, citizen participation as such does not necessarily lead to more sustainable outcomes (Newig, Challies, Jager, Kochskaemper, & Adzersen, 2017).

One basic principle of substantive democracy is that people should have an equal opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them. Taking this notion of democracy seriously, the core of the food democracy concept "is the idea that all people participate actively and meaningfully in shaping food systems" (Hassanein, 2008, p. 289). In order to build and extend the theory of food democracy, Hassanein suggests an analytical framework consisting of five key dimensions of food democracy (Hassanein, 2008, pp. 290–291):

1. Collaborating towards food system sustainability;
2. Becoming knowledgeable about food and the food system;
3. Sharing ideas about the food system with others;
4. Developing efficacy concerning food and the food system; and
5. Acquiring an orientation towards the community good.

The first dimension (i.e., collaboration towards food system sustainability) refers to the need for partnerships which may increase citizens' power and which may thus make a difference beyond individual decisions and actions. Effecting changes towards sustainability requires strong coalitions that involve differing interests (Hassanein, 2008, p. 290). Becoming knowledgeable about food and the food system is an additional dimension of food democracy because knowledge is considered a prerequisite for meaningful citizen participation: "Hence, food democracy means that people have a broad knowledge of the food system and its various facets" (Hassanein, 2008, p. 290). Furthermore, being engaged in deliberation and having shared ideas (dimension 3) are assumed to help people make better decisions for both themselves and others: Ongoing discussion and deliberation are therefore key to food democracy as they help citizens clarify issues and scrutinize their own values. The fourth dimension of food democracy (developing efficacy concerning food and the food system) relates to citizens' ability to determine their relationship to food and to address and solve community problems instead of just being passive consumers. Lastly, acquiring an orientation of the community good implies a willingness to recognize the value of mutual support and interdependence, and to promote the well-being of the community. This sense of, and care for, the public good is central to food democracy and requires citizens to go beyond their self-interest (Hassanein, 2008, pp. 290–291).

Hassanein's attempt to operationalize the concept of food democracy was one the first and remains highly influential. It can help researchers and practitioners identify strengths and weaknesses in alternative agri-food initiatives concerning their democratic characteristics (Hassanein, 2008, p. 306).

3. Methodology

The recently founded FPC in Oldenburg, Lower Saxony, serves as an exemplary case of the emerging phenomenon of FPCs in Germany. The formation process of one of the first FPCs in Germany was studied between April 2016 and April 2018 in a qualitative case study, including participant observations, semi-structured stakeholder interviews, and document analysis. The rich dataset of eight participant observations, nine interviews, and a huge number of documents (e.g., internal protocols) allows for a detailed analysis of the FPC initiative. Data collection followed an iterative process between data collection and analysis that was carefully documented. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and transferred to the software Atlas.ti for coding. All data collected from the case is in German and the quotations in this article are my translations. Additional data on other emerging FPC initiatives were collected during my participation in the first and second networking congress between FPC initiatives in German-speaking countries in 2017 and 2018.

Taking the Oldenburg case as an example to provide initial answers to the question of how FPCs might serve as loci for practising food democracy, this study considers the whole dataset on the emerging FPC but focusses on a crucial event during the formation process (the so-called pre-formation). The so-called pre-formation marks the beginning of the phase during the emergence, in which the core initiators—after a long period of preparation—presented their ideas in public and inspired a couple of new people to join their activities prior the official formation. This particular occasion, therefore, allows for a comprehensive illustration of how the five food democracy dimensions identified by Hassanein played out in the case. Data analysis was guided by five sub-questions covering the five food democracy dimensions.

This pre-formation event took place in June 2017, one and a half years after the initiative had started their activities and four months before the council was officially established. This event was organized by the coordinating group, consisting of ten volunteers who prepared the formation of the council. At that time, the initiative's activities were solely based on voluntary work although the members had already started applying for funding. Around 30 participants joined the pre-formation event. The main aim of the event was to found different com-

mittees (thematic working groups), representing the basis of the future FPC. After an initial plenary session, the participants gathered in small groups to elaborate on the visions and tasks for the future committees of the council (see Figure 1). After a short presentation of each group in another plenary session, there was an informal slot dedicated to exchange between the participants. Afterwards, the coordinating group presented the next steps towards the formation of the council four months later.

4. Results

The results will be presented in five subsections, each covering one dimension of food democracy. As outlined in the methods section, the analysis takes the entire dataset of the case study into account but illustrates key findings with examples from the pre-formation event.

4.1. Collective Action towards Sustainability: To What Extent Does the Initiative Strive for Collective Action towards Sustainability?

The Oldenburg FPC initiative's activities started with a first workshop in April 2016 in the format of a so-called "Political Soup Pot," where people gather to talk about how to take action while preparing a communal meal. As one event during the city's Future Days, an annual

series of events related to sustainable living, this workshop provided an opportunity to exchange ideas among interested citizens about how to nourish Oldenburg in the future. Local initiatives that are "following new paths regarding a socially and ecologically just food production and consumption" (invitation flyer) were invited to present their projects, e.g., on community gardens or food sharing. In small group discussions around topics collectively selected in the plenary, such as food waste or education, the workshop participants exchanged ideas about how to move forward. One group discussed the idea of establishing an FPC in the city of Oldenburg in order to give the pre-existing transformative efforts a common voice.

After this event, a core group of about ten volunteers prepared the formation of the FPC and launched the pre-formation stage one year later. During this event, four different committees (see Figure 1) formed and the participants started planning future activities. The committees on different food-related topics had the main function of bringing together pre-existing transformative activities in Oldenburg and creating a network. These committees were meant to be open for everyone interested in participating based on their interests and resources. More formally, the 15 members of the representative body of the council (see Figure 1), equally covering civil society, public administration/politics, and business were formally
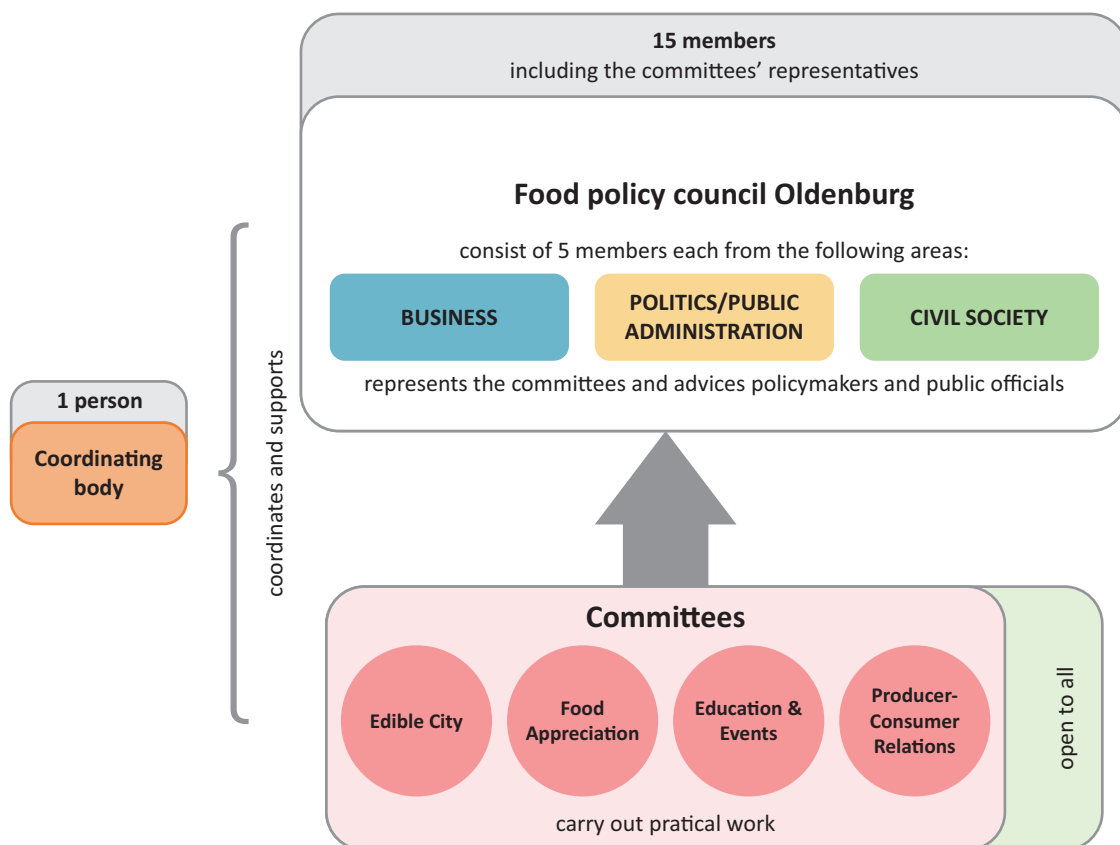
Figure 1. Structure of the emerging FPC initiative in Oldenburg, presented at the formation event (by Desirée Diering, my translation).

elected for an initial period of two years shortly before the official establishment in October 2017. At that stage of the emergence of the FPC, the volunteers successfully acquired public funding for a part-time coordinator for the first year following the formation. All meetings, activities, and events of the initiative were open to the public and announced in advance on the homepage.

At the pre-formation event in June 2017, the coordinating group presented the motto they had agreed upon as a baseline for the future work of the FPC: "Together for sustainable nutrition in the region," including the elements "regional, fair, need-oriented, self-determined, and ecological" (presentation at the pre-formation event). During this presentation, the initiators also outlined the need for dialogue between different stakeholders, e.g., producers and consumers, but also processors, retailers, and public officials. They also emphasized the ideal of having all of these groups being involved in the council, either as a representative or as an active member in one of the committees. The FPC initiative strives for collective action towards sustainability based on a broad group of stakeholders agreeing on a shared set of values regarding more sustainable food production and consumption.

In the emergence phase, the initiative's members were not able to agree on a more detailed version of their vision. Apart from disagreements, they also did not feel that they should determine specific criteria prior to the official formation without being able to take future members into account. After the council had been established, the representative body started a discussion about specific criteria and installed a working group to develop these in greater detail.

4.2. Knowledge about Food and the Food System: How Does the FPC Initiative Support Individual Learning about Food and the Food System?

In its early stages, the FPC initiative offered numerous opportunities for learning about the food system, simply by making it possible for individuals to get in touch with one another. Coming together on this multi-stakeholder platform, individuals who were ready to collaboratively strive for a transformation of the current system, encountered a number of different aspects of the food system. This diversity of perspectives was also a result of different ways to be involved, ranging from voluntary engagements in existing food initiatives, e.g., food sharing, to formal professional work, e.g., as a restaurant owner or employee of a retail company. The initiative mostly focused on the local food system, but dissatisfaction with the globalised food system often framed their activities. At the first workshop, for example, a food activist from South Africa, Zayaan Khan, gave a presentation about current challenges in the global food system and the need for local responses.

At the pre-formation event roughly a year later, the coordinating group defined education and the raising of awareness as central tasks of the initiative. The members presented examples of food-related events in Oldenburg where they informed the public about the initiative's goals (e.g., a sustainability week at the local university or a food truck event). On these occasions, the group members tried to make people think about food issues, for example with a memory game on the CO_2 emissions of different vegetables (presentation pre-formation event). The committees, as initiated at the pre-formation, particularly supported self-organized learning in the four different thematic areas (see Figure 1) chosen by participants. Despite huge interest in the work of the Education and Events Committee, it was initially difficult to find people willing to take on responsibility because of limited resources. In the following, the committees' activities ranged from excursions to farms in the region, harvesting and processing locally grown food to workshops in schools. These activities provided learning opportunities about how to enact alternatives to the predominant methods of food production and consumption in daily life.

Despite many activities being undertaken during the initial phase, at times it was still difficult to keep all the committees alive. This is why the FPC turned the committees into more concrete and manageable projects shortly after the end of the study period.

4.3. Sharing Ideas with Others: How Does the FPC Initiative Enable Discussion and Deliberation?

In its emerging phase, the FPC initiative provided space for discussion and deliberation in various ways. Internally, the coordinating group was organized on a grassroots basis, implying a commitment to consensus and openness to new members. In practise, decisions were often prepared by a small group of people (e.g., the formulation of the initiative's aims or a concept for an event), which were then discussed and agreed upon in a plenary session (Interview 2). This practise implied that some people were more involved in certain steps than others; however, they always fed the results back into the whole group for comments and took decisions collectively to try to find a consensus. Majority voting was only rarely used. Someone always took minutes of the meetings so people were able to follow what had been discussed. In the course of their activities, the group distributed certain tasks to individual members (e.g., the facilitation of their regular meetings). This decision in particular facilitated smooth meetings and a more structured setting for discussing contested issues. After the official formation, protocols were made public on the initiative's homepage.

Regarding external communication, the group members approached a huge number of people from different backgrounds (e.g., the mayor or different parties) and also participated in public food-related events, such as panel discussions with representatives from the conventional farmers' organization where they were also con-

fronted with those who did not share their vision of sustainability. At the pre-formation event, the coordinating group announced dialogue between different stakeholders as one of the initiative's central tasks. As with the other events they had organized and as with their regular meetings, they asked the participants to introduce themselves. Additionally, the organizers explicitly dedicated certain time slots to the informal exchange of ideas (e.g., after each committee presented the ideas previously elaborated in the small group discussions).

As time went on, it became increasingly difficult for the members to monitor their activities (Internal Meeting 23). Even though the initiative tried to have regular reports from each committee in the representative body's meetings, they did not always have this update due to a lack of presence or other topics being given greater priority. For newcomers, it was sometimes not clear whom they should talk to. Once, for example, a woman came to the representative's body meeting to report on a potentially interesting topic for the initiative but was then sent directly to the Edible City Committee.

4.4. Efficacy with Respect to Food and the Food System: What Kind of Opportunities Does the FPC Initiative Provide for Experiencing Capacities to Act and Actually Having an Effect?

The emerging FPC initiative was explicitly aimed at establishing new structures to allow individual citizens to participate: "I think we firstly need to learn democracy, to really talk and listen to each other and then becoming engaged at local level," as one interviewee pointed out when talking about the initiative's motto "Together for sustainable nutrition in the region" (Interview 7). The group also referred to self-determination as an important part of the realization of their vision (presentation pre-formation event). In the course of their activities, they created a variety of opportunities for experiencing capacities to act and to actually have an effect. On the one hand, citizens were always invited to join the committees and the activities undertaken (e.g., a bike tour to orchards in the city). On the other hand, the coordinating group always tried to organize their events according to their values and were, although being limited financially, always able to offer high-quality organic food due to donations from regional companies and their networking activities. In this sense, their activities provided a number of examples of how people can actually make a difference.

As regards to influencing policymakers and public officials, the initiative's members—despite many disappointments in the beginning—also experienced cases where they actually had an impact, e.g., the minister of food and agriculture becoming the FPC initiative's patron, the positive approval of a funding request, or the invitation to be part of a working group on improving the city's school catering. A strong motivator to go ahead with the actual establishment of the council was the strong reso-

nance manifested in new people joining the group after the pre-formation event. As one interviewee said: "After a long period of discussion, also including phases of internal difficulties manifested in less capacities for preparing the event, we just needed such a success to go ahead" (Interview 7).

4.5. Orientation towards the Community Good: To What Extent Does the FPC Initiative Encourage Individuals to Go beyond Their Self-Interest and Care about the Public Good?

In the emerging FPC initiative, there was a general orientation towards collective action as outlined in Section 4.1. As a result of their holistic approach "Together for sustainable nutrition in the region," being part of the initiative as such required an interest in food as a public good. The members of the coordinating team joined the initiative because of dissatisfaction with the current system of food production and consumption, e.g., the lost connection between producers and consumers (Interview 3) or decreasing food skills among children (Interview 4). In the Edible City Committee, orientation towards the community good became maybe the most obvious, e.g., when thinking about how urban areas could be used for planting crop plants in collaboration with the city. In the Producer–Consumer Relations Committee, participants were introduced to a recently founded community-supported agriculture initiative. This approach points exactly to the aspect of mutual support and interdependence between food producers and consumers. Additionally, the committee members organized several excursions to farms in the region. Here, participants were able to get in touch with farmers and to develop a better understanding of food production patterns. Internally, many members of the coordinating group used their individual skills for the good of the initiative (e.g., moderation, writing, or presentation skills).

At some point, many volunteers felt overwhelmed by the number of tasks and it became obvious that a staff coordinator was needed to support them. Several members also quit the group because they were no longer able to help due to other obligations. And among those who stayed, there was a constant feeling of doing too much for the initiative at the expense of their private life (clearly articulated by Interviewee 9). This situation improved when the initiative received funding to hire a part-time coordinator after the official formation of the council.

5. Discussion

The analysis of the emerging FPC initiative in terms of food democracy elucidates a broad spectrum of aspects that potentially make this case and comparable cases loci for practising food democracy. The analysis also reveals challenges related to the five dimensions. In the following section, the results of the case will be dis-

cussed and contextualized in the broader landscape of the first German FPCs, which have been established in different cities during the study period (Cologne, Berlin, Frankfurt, Dresden, Kiel) as well as the numerous initiatives which were planning to form at that time and participated in the networking congresses of emerging initiatives in German-speaking countries in 2017 and 2018. Building on these reflections, implications for the practise and the concept of food democracy and FPCs' potential to democratise the food system will be discussed.

5.1. Contextualizing the Case of the Oldenburg FPC

Building on its broad membership and its multi-faceted activities, the emerging Oldenburg FPC can be interpreted as an example of a civil society initiative trying to establish new relationships between civil society and public institutions as well as new relationships between civil society and business (Renting et al., 2012). Indeed, the FPC Oldenburg did attract a variety of stakeholders in its emerging phase, e.g., people from all three targeted societal realms (civil society, public administration/politics and business) who became members of its representative body, as was also the case in Cologne. The FPC in Berlin, to give another example, also approached and attracted a variety of stakeholders in its emerging phase, but this initiative did not want certain groups to become members of the FPC (e.g., policymakers and public officials). Despite differences in member composition, all emerging initiatives build on the idea of bringing together a diversity of stakeholders in order to foster collective action towards sustainability (dimension one).

The in-depth analysis of the Oldenburg case based on Hassanein's dimensions illustrated in various ways how an emerging FPC can serve as a locus for developing a practise of food democracy (Allen, 2010) by offering opportunities for learning, sharing ideas, experiencing efficacy, and strengthening a sense of care for the community good. Despite a general focus on the local, involving experts from abroad seems to be a learning strategy used in the emerging German FPC movement. Having an international guest at the first event as in the Oldenburg case seems to be an exception and might be explained by the professional background of the initiator, who worked at a development NGO. Already during the first networking congress in 2017, however, international guests from Brazil, Canada, the UK, and the US played an important role by sharing their knowledge and experience with the emerging initiatives in Germany.

Raising awareness of food system issues more generally seems to be a central topic for all initiatives that were established during the study period as reflected in corresponding committees or working groups dedicated to educational activities. Despite a huge interest in that topic, it was initially difficult to implement the activities of the Education and Events Committee in the Oldenburg case because of a continual lack of personnel. As dealing with limited and shifting personnel is a crucial topic

for many groups of volunteers, it might also be helpful to learn from initiatives at similar stages. Another emerging FPC initiative in Germany, for example, institutionalized continuous learning opportunities by starting their regular meetings with a short input on a specific topic (conversation second networking congress 2018). Such an approach might be appropriate for emerging FPCs and similar initiatives because it ensures ongoing mutual learning and provides an opportunity to step back from the time-consuming discussion of everyday operations.

Regarding the provision of opportunities for discussion and deliberation (dimension three), all emerging initiatives have to negotiate how to communicate with each other (e.g., in their regular meetings). In the Oldenburg case, designating a moderator for their meetings represented a crucial step in structuring their internal culture of deliberation and becoming more efficient. While the group members emphasized the positive effects (i.e., an improved flow of their meetings), attributing the moderator's role to group members is challenging and can be problematic because of personal stakes in the content under deliberation and a certain power to shape the outcome of the discussion. One solution to this role conflict might be to hire professional moderators as the organizers of the first networking congress between initiatives in Germany and German-speaking countries did. Other emerging initiatives decided to rotate the moderator's role in regular meetings. This approach allows all members to gain experience of being responsible for the process and is also applicable in the case of a lack of will or budget to hire professionals.

As the chosen structure of the Oldenburg FPC (a representative body, a coordinating team and committees) resulted in some gaps in terms of information flow, the people involved in the initiative currently rethink the structures they established and plan to have a regular plenary similar to the FPC initiative in Berlin. This format is assumed to allow for a more regular and direct sharing of ideas and projects (conversation networking congress 2018). Formats that allow sharing ideas are increasingly important for FPC initiatives that try to remain open towards new ideas and developments in their communities. These open formats might also serve as a tool for integrating new members, a concern of many emerging initiatives, which was also discussed during the first networking congress.

The emerging FPC initiative in Oldenburg provided a number of opportunities for experiencing one's actions actually having an effect (dimension four). Next to more tangible results of individual engagement such as having donated organic food at their events, for experiencing actually having an impact, it seemed essential to convince other people to join or support the initiative. The strong resonance, especially during the pre-formation event, indicated a broad interest among diverse stakeholders to shape the current food system. Instead, fluctuation of membership and varying degrees of involvement led to frustration regarding efficacy. The dilemma of not

wanting to overburden volunteers while at the same being a reliable organization seems to be a typical phenomenon in groups of volunteers (Turinsky & Nowicka, 2019, p. 261). As all emerging FPC initiatives mainly build on voluntary work, it remains a constant challenge to join forces to have an impact, which, in turn, increases motivation to go ahead.

As regards to the Oldenburg initiative's effects in the public sphere, being invited to an official working group on how to improve the city's school catering is relevant because this offer to participate implies being heard and acknowledged by public officials, at least to a certain extent. Improving public catering is also on the agenda of all other German FPCs that formed during the study period. The FPC Frankfurt, for example, is currently also part of a city's working group. This FPC is running a pilot project demonstrating that improving school meals within the current budget is possible (FPC Frankfurt, 2019). At a well-attended working group meeting during the second networking congress in 2018, it also became clear that improving public catering seems to be an area where FPCs in the early stages try to have an effect in their communities.

While FPC initiatives might raise awareness of food as a collective good in policy-making processes, they also provide many opportunities for citizens to develop a sense of care for food as a public good. The analysis of the Oldenburg FPC illustrated this with different examples, e.g., harvesting fruits from orchards or planting crops in urban areas. The initiative's variety of topics and activities seems to resonate with many people. This may also be the case because, in the FPC, people find a space where they can combine personal interests (e.g., in gardening or educating people) with an orientation towards the community good. Furthermore, pre-existing private initiatives for the community good can potentially gain more visibility through FPC initiatives, e.g., community gardens.

5.2. Implications for the Practise and the Concept of Food Democracy

Applying Hassanein's analytical framework to the Oldenburg case and its contextualisation within the broader context of pioneer initiatives in Germany demonstrated FPCs' potential to act as loci for developing a practise of food democracy in terms of the five dimensions. Despite several challenges and problems, all dimensions seem to become manifested in the emerging institutional phenomenon of FPCs. In this sense, the emergence of FPCs seems to be promising, suggesting a recent strengthening of food democracy despite the ongoing trends which tend to diminish food citizenship (Welsh & MacRae, 1998, p. 243).

The manifestations of the five food democracy dimensions in this study also demonstrate that the framework suggested by Hassanein seems to capture general aspects of food democracy that are relevant beyond the particular initiative she was studying when identifying the five dimensions. In this sense, this study offers a certain validation of her framework. Looking for greater specificity of the food democracy concept through practical exploration (Hassanein, 2008, p. 289), the insights from the case of the Oldenburg FPC potentially also elucidate avenues for further theoretical elaboration of the food democracy concept. Hassanein acknowledges the importance of processes and basic principles of substantive democracy (Hassanein, 2008, p. 289), but these aspects are not explicitly addressed in the five dimensions. Drawing on Carlson and Chappell's understanding of FPCs as playing a potentially unique role in connecting the "How?" of deliberative processes with the "What?" of food access and justice (Carlson & Chappell, 2015, p. 15), I argue that more process-oriented aspects should also be reflected in an analytical framework identifying characteristics of food democracy. The case of the Oldenburg FPC clearly demonstrates that the how of deliberative processes matters.

In the emerging FPC initiative, both striving for transparency and openness turned out to be central working principles. Regarding transparency, the members always took minutes of the meetings and made them available online so everyone could follow their activities. At the pre-formation event, when the council initiators launched the committees, the main requirement for the committees was to work transparently (presentation pre-formation event). This process criterion of transparency is closely linked to the second criterion to add, namely openness. As the group of volunteers always invited everyone to participate in the events they launched and their meetings were open to the public, the initiative can also be interpreted as inclusive compared to other food initiatives or interest groups which promote a particular interest and represent only a small group of people.

Openness and transparency appeared to be particularly relevant in the case of the Oldenburg FPC because conflicts in the emergence phase could often be attributed to situations in which information flows were interrupted or when it was not clear whether members or committees were entirely open about their actions or motivations. As a result, the initiative agreed to follow certain procedures (e.g., taking minutes or issuing open invitations to their events). The aspect of openness towards a broad spectrum of stakeholders, perspectives, and opinions is particularly relevant for multi-stakeholder platforms such as FPCs. Openness as a working principle, however, seems to be fundamental to food democracy more generally as an open mind could be regarded as a prerequisite for sharing ideas and learning from each other (dimensions two and three).

Openness vis-à-vis members and perspectives to be included in a civil society group, however, can also make the process of agreeing on certain venues and projects more difficult. Given the diversity of actors involved during the emergence of the FPC in Oldenburg, it is not surprising that they were unable to agree on the criteria to

specify their vision in the emergence phase. Managing to remain vague, by having agreed on a general baseline understanding, can also be regarded as a means to remain open and supports the role of FPCs as multi-stakeholder platforms. The FPC Berlin, in contrast, being less open in terms of not including policymakers and public officials as members of their initiative, launched a list of demands to the government concerning the implementation of a local food strategy roughly a year after its formation, stressing more FPC's roles as advocates for particular interests. This example illustrates different degrees of openness vis-à-vis members and perspectives to be included even within the emerging FPC movement in Germany.

This study suggests that food democracy goes beyond the five dimensions identified by Hassanein. The case of FPCs demonstrates that the how of the deliberative process needs to be taken into account when studying concrete expressions of food citizenship. Although there is certainly more refinement needed regarding different manifestations of deliberative processes in different kinds of initiatives beyond FPCs, aspects related to the how of the deliberative process, e.g., transparency and openness should be considered in an analytical framework designed for studying the practise of food democracy. In their study on state-driven participation processes, Baldy and Kruse (2019) also identified transparent processes for deliberating ideas as a key category of food democray.

5.3. FPCs' Potential to Democratise the Food System

FPCs provide an example of bottom-up democratization dynamics because they are mostly initiated by civil society. Their approach to collaboration across sectors and their aim to shape food policies, however, needs support from policymakers and public officials. Because of FPCs' orientation towards food as a public good, public support, including the funding of FPC initiatives, seems appropriate. Providing a space where practising democracy can take place requires time and resources as illustrated in the case study. If FPCs are to become recognized spaces of deliberation, there needs to be public support for providing opportunities for meaningful participation in all five key food democracy dimensions as well as for ensuring processes based on substantive democracy (e.g., transparency and openness).

Given their recent emergence, it is not yet possible to assess FPCs' impact on food-related policymaking in Germany. Having representatives from FPC initiatives at municipal working groups for improving a city's school catering can be seen as a first opportunity for advocating for the initiatives' beliefs (e.g., more organic and more regionally produced food) in policy-making processes. FPC initiatives are able to negotiate based on a more comprehensive orientation towards the public good in contrast to stakeholders, such as organic farmers, who directly profit from a higher proportion of organic food being in the city's school catering. Such an involvement

in policymaking might be expanded to other working groups or political committees concerned with food issues. Improving food systems by providing information for policy decision-making is one of the central tasks of FPCs (Clayton, Frattaroli, Palmer, & Pollack, 2015, p. 9). This information is less specific, and possibly less biased than that provided by those advocacy groups focused on more specific concerns.

Despite reaching out to three societal realms (civil society, business, public officials, and policymakers), the exemplary case studied here did not equally represent the food system's sectors. Farmers, for example, were seldom present at the initiative's events, while the food business stakeholder group of the representative body included only one farmer. The need for a stronger involvement of farmers was articulated (e.g., Interview 1) and discussed (e.g., Internal Meeting 12) but not achieved in the initial period of the FPC initiative. This lack of farmer involvement is typical for the phenomenon of FPCs: In the US, FPC members mostly represent the production, distribution, and consumption sectors (Harper et al., 2009, p. 24), but particularly at the local level, the agricultural sector appears to be underrepresented (Mooney, Tanaka, & Ciciurkaite, 2014, p. 238). Bassarab, Clark, Santo, and Palmer (2019) show that membership composition significantly influences the policy priorities of FPCs.

The potential for democratising the food system through FPCs could be assessed by who is represented in these councils. Considering that most FPCs in Germany, but also elsewhere, are initiated by civil society and primarily build on volunteers, FPCs mainly rely on those who are willing to become part of FPCs. Trying to cover different societal realms as in the case of the Oldenburg FPC is just one approach to think about member composition. Another attempt would be the approach referred to above (i.e., to have all food system sectors represented), which is often the case in FPCs initiated through government policy in the US. A recent study on representation in a public FPC in the US, however, demonstrated that representation by design and representation in practise varies considerably, for example in terms of attendance of meetings and agenda-setting (Koski, Siddiki, Sadiq, & Carboni, 2016). Their first attempt to identify factors that limit substantive representation refers e.g., to restrictive process norms, lack of structure or mission clarity and unequal resources (2016, p. 16). These findings support the argument of paying more attention to the process of how FPCs and similar initiatives practise food democracy in their day-to-day operations (e.g., regarding transparency and openness as suggested by the analysis of the Oldenburg case studied here). Any design concerning representation in FPCs should be crucially examined regarding representation in practise.

The potential for FPCs to democratise the food system should however not only be judged on who is represented and how initiatives are trying to strive for equal representation through certain working principles. By

involving citizens in decision-making processes and in other activities shaping the food system, FPCs might play an important role in empowering citizens' capacity to act. By offering different ways to participate, FPCs might also serve as an important tool concerning the legitimacy crises representative democracies are currently facing. Participation in decision-making in democratic systems is, however, not an alternative to political representation and expertise, but acts a complement to them (Fung, 2006, p. 66).

Diverse advisory councils such as FPCs—not limited to one stakeholder group but integrating citizens from various backgrounds—might represent an important tool for citizen participation in representative democracies more generally. The need for local platforms that bridge diverse forms of knowledge and expertise, has also recently been discussed in the broader context of innovations for sustainability (Perry, Patel, Bretzer, & Polk, 2018). Similar to other community-based food initiatives such as Urban Gardening, FPCs seem to provide the opportunity and space in which citizens can get involved and collaborate across different interests and perspectives. These experiences might strengthen citizens' democratic capacity (McIvor & Hale, 2015, p. 738).

6. Conclusions

This study applied Hassanein's five key dimensions of food democracy to FPCs, an emerging phenomenon that has been acclaimed for its democratic potential. In order to allow for a thorough analysis and to provide concrete examples of how these dimensions work in practise, a case study approach was chosen. Data analysis revealed that the FPC in Oldenburg, Germany, during its emerging phase provided a number of opportunities for learning, for sharing ideas, for experiencing capacities to act, and for developing a sense of care for food as a public good. The results also revealed that the initiative in Oldenburg faced several challenges related to Hassanein's key dimensions (e.g., joining forces for having an impact or creating regular spaces for sharing ideas). As the discussion revealed, these aspects seem to be relevant for other emerging FPC initiatives in Germany as well. Still, it would be desirable to have a more comprehensive survey of how these dimensions are covered by more established FPCs in different parts of the world. The analysis of the case of the Oldenburg FPC also revealed that additional aspects related to the how of deliberative democracy (e.g., openness and transparency) need to be taken into account when conceptualizing food democracy. A critical assessment of how initiatives beyond FPCs practise transparency and openness when inviting citizens to shape the food system might further our understanding of this additional dimension. The extension of Hassanein's framework by this additional dimension covering the how of deliberative processes might allow for more nuanced analyses of alternative agri-food initiatives in terms of food democracy in the future.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

How Civil Servants Frame Participation: Balancing Municipal Responsibility with Citizen Initiative in Ede's Food Policy

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Abstract

Contemporary governance is marked by increased attention for participation of non-governmental actors (NGAs) in traditionally governmental activities, such as policy-making. This trend has been prevalent across food policy processes and reflects a key feature of food democracy. However, the role of governmental actors in facilitating and responding to this participation remains a gap in the literature. In this article, we ask how civil servants frame the participation of NGAs in policy processes. Drawing on ethnographic research, we introduce the case of civil servants working on an urban food policy for the municipality of Ede (the Netherlands). Our analysis uncovers two competing frames: 1) highlighting the responsibility of the municipality to take a leading role in food policy making, and 2) responding reflexively to NGAs. The analysis provides insights into how the framing of participation by civil servants serves to shape the conditions for participation of NGAs. It further sheds light on related practices and uncovers existing tensions and contradictions, with important implications for food democracy. We conclude by showing how, in the short term, a strong leadership role for civil servants, informed by the responsibility frame, may be effective for advancing policy objectives of the municipality. However, the reactive frame illustrates that civil servants worry this approach is not effective for maintaining meaningful participation of NGAs. This remains a key tension of participatory municipal-led urban food policy making, but balancing both municipal responsibility and an open and reactive attitude towards the participation of NGAs is useful for enhancing food democracy.

Keywords

civil servants; food democracy; non-governmental actors; participation; urban food policy

1. Introduction

Food democracy—understood broadly as active participation of citizens and political engagement to address conflicting values and desires related to food systems— has been said to be the 'best hope for finding workable solutions to conflicts about the character and direction of the agro-food system' (Hassanein, 2003, p. 79). Unequal distribution of power in the food system propelled calls for food democracy, the essence of which

lies in the redistribution of power within the food system (Booth & Coveney, 2015). Lang (1999), who is credited with the introduction of the concept of food democracy, positions food democracy as a movement calling for better access and more equal sharing of the benefits from the food system. The concept of food democracy relates to food sovereignty, as both provide an alternative way of looking at the food system to the dominant corporate food regime perspective (Akram-Lodhi, 2015). However, food democracy puts more emphasis on con-

sumers or citizens, while food sovereignty has traditionally focussed more on producers (Renting, Schermer, & Rossi, 2012).

One way in which food democracy is being enacted is through the emergence of new governance mechanisms for urban food policy, such as food policy councils. Urban food policy has been defined as 'concerted action on the part of city governments to address food-related challenges' (Hawkes & Halliday, 2017, p. 9). In the development of urban food policies, there is often strong emphasis on cooperation between governments and non-governmental actors (NGAs). For example, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (2015), now signed by 183 cities, explicitly notes that 'civil society and the private sector have major roles to play in feeding cities' and signatories to the Pact have agreed to 'engage all sectors within the food system (including neighbouring authorities, technical and academic organizations, civil society, small scale producers, and the private sector) in the formulation, implementation and assessment of all food-related policies, programmes and initiatives'.

While a central tenet of food democracy relates to meaningful participation (Booth & Coveney, 2015), participation is not without contestation. Participation of NGAs in policy processes has been critiqued as symbolic ritual, for a lack of active participation, and as a symptom of an unresponsive government (Innes & Booher, 2004). Yet, despite these challenges, this shift towards participatory governance has altered the patterns of interaction between governments and NGAs (Kooiman, 1993). As such, the spaces in which these actors are interacting, the nature of these interactions, and the related responsibilities are changing and require further investigation, particularly with respect to potential implications for the quality and success of policy-making processes (Fung, 2015). Further, while NGAs' participation is increasingly commonplace in the development and roll-out of urban food policies (Moragues-Faus & Morgan, 2015), a gap remains in our understanding of how governmental actors understand and negotiate NGAs' participation in the traditionally governmental domain of policy making (Baldy & Kruse, 2019). To address this gap, in this article we analyse how municipal employees, charged with developing a food policy, frame the participation of NGAs. Improved understanding of the roles and perspectives of civil servants is important given that they play a key role in enabling the participation of NGAs, for example by designing participatory processes, particularly in processes where the municipality plays a leading role (Moragues-Faus et al., 2013; Viljoen & Wiskerke, 2012). The way in which these participatory processes are designed provides insight into a key mechanism for advancing food democracy.

Towards this end, in this article we examine how civil servants negotiate NGAs' participation in municipality-led policy making by asking the question: How do civil servants frame the participation of NGAs in urban food policy making? In what follows, we introduce theories of participation and framing which inform our analysis. This is followed by an introduction to our case study: the urban food policy of the Dutch municipality of Ede and a review of methods. We then present the results of our analysis, consisting of two frames. The first frame highlights the responsibility the municipality takes in leading a food policy, while the reactive frame calls on responsiveness to NGAs. We conclude that effective urban food policies require strong government leadership with openness and willingness to respond to NGAs and safeguard meaningful participation as a key feature of food democracy. As such, we see efforts of civil servants to balance the responsibilities of the municipality with the enhanced participation of NGAs as a useful tension.

2. Participation in Policy Making

As described by Hassanein (2003), participation is a key feature of food democracy. Across the literature, there are diverse understandings of what NGAs' participation involves, with the main point of contestation being the level of involvement representing actual or meaningful participation. According to Arnstein (1969, p. 216), participation refers to 'the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future.' However, Castell (2016) points out that this dimension of power tends to be forgotten in much of the contemporary thinking on participation. Gaventa (2004) stresses that spaces for participation are not neutral, but shaped by power relations. He explains that 'power relations help to shape the boundaries of participatory spaces, what is possible within them, and who may enter, with which identities, discourses and interests' (Gaventa, 2004, p. 34). Recognizing that power relations are unavoidable in participatory processes, Roberts (2004, p. 320) expands on Arnstein's (1969) definition, stating participation to be 'the process by which members of a society (those not holding office or administrative positions in government) share power with public officials in making substantive decisions and in taking actions related to the community.' This article draws predominantly on this last definition, combining the sharing of power and the division in society between governmental and NGAs. This article focuses on direct participation as opposed to indirect participation (such as representation through voting). In the literature on food democracy, we can find various examples of direct participation, with food policy councils being one of the most renowned forms (see also Bassarab, Clark, Santo, & Palmer, 2019). While participation of NGAs has been integrated into most governmental policy-making (Castell, 2016), Arnstein (1969, p. 216) has observed that participation 'is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you.' Still, participation remains contested, not only with regards to defining the concept, but also in terms of practical implications.

3. Context of Participation in the Netherlands

To understand NGAs' participation in the food policy processes of the municipality of Ede, situated in the Netherlands, an explanation of the policy context is necessary. One of the instruments being used to advise Dutch public administrators is the ladder of government participation (see Figure 1). Whereas most typologies of participation focus on explicating the role of citizens in policy-making, the ladder of the Dutch government advisory council (Raad voor het Openbaar Bestuur [ROB]; ROB, 2012) flips the perspective by defining the participation level of the government instead. The degree of government involvement ranges from 'letting go', in which the government is not involved in the process or content of a task, to 'regulating' which describes the government role of law and rule-making and the enforcement of law. The ROB argues that in each situation the role of the government can be different. However, the paradigm shift they propose involves increasingly moderate action on the part of the government. They claim that 'the vitality of society gets more room when the government limits climbing up the steps of the government participation ladder' (ROB, 2012, p. 68).

When the government takes a step back (i.e., down the ladder), it may be expecting more action from other actors. This mirrors the predominant trend in governance related to participation, with implications not only for the government, but also for citizens. However, a shift towards minimising government action does not automatically mean that there is more room for the meaningful participation of citizens. If not considered carefully, participation can be used to legitimise declining government action. From a food democracy perspective, declining government interference in the food system could, for example, make more room for corporate interests, thus contributing to the highly unequal distribution of power in the food system.

Following the literature (MacRae & Donahue, 2013; Moragues-Faus et al., 2013; Moragues-Faus & Morgan, 2015), and in contrast to the paradigm supporting the application of the ladder, we note the importance of both government-level leadership and citizen-led approaches. Indeed, we take as a central assumption that local food policies require strong municipal leadership and politi-

cal will, especially in the context of the increasing privatization of public interests (Kamat, 2004). In turn, we are cautious of the application for the ROB ladder of government participation, recognising that it is part of Dutch strategy to move towards a 'participation society', reinforced through slogans such as 'passing the baton from government to society' (Knijn & Hopman, 2015, p. 647). This participation society is assessed as part of a neoliberal-driven hollowing out of government (Jessop, 2013) which is antithetical to our basic assumption. Despite this, we have opted to make use of this tool as part of our analytic framework as it reflects the broader governance context within which our case study is situated.

4. The Case of Food Policy in Ede

The municipality of Ede is an area in the middle of the Netherlands and includes both a rural and an urban region. The city of Ede, and the rural area surrounding it, has about 115,000 inhabitants (Gemeente Ede, 2018). The area is characterized by the presence of woods, a protected national nature park, a high number of farmers and proximity to Wageningen University, a high-profile life-sciences university with a focus on food and agriculture. With other neighbouring municipalities, agri-food companies, research institutes and higher education establishments, Ede is member of the regional partnership called the Foodvalley, which emphasizes the combination of knowledge and production of food in the area.

Ede presents a good case to better understand how policy makers frame and address NGAs' participation in municipal food policy processes because it has taken a proactive leadership approach in this regard. A second reason is that literature on local food policy often focuses on large cities like Toronto, London, San Francisco and Cape Town (Haysom, 2015; Mah & Thang, 2013; Mansfield & Mendes, 2012). However, smaller municipalities, which include a substantial rural area, can influence how policy makers deal with problems and solutions relating to, for example scale or budget. Finally, Ede is considered to be one of the frontrunners in the Netherlands regarding food policy (Gemeente Ede, 2017) and was awarded a Milan Pact Award for Governance in 2017 (Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, 2017).
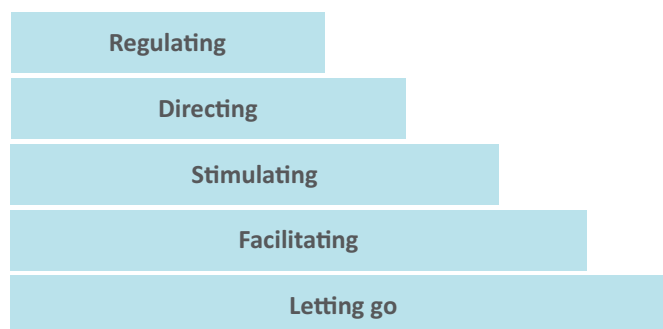
Figure 1. Ladder of government participation. Note: Figure based on ROB (2012).

5. Methodology: Framing

Framing is a helpful tool to deconstruct and analyse the language that people use. Framing is the notion that issues can be 'viewed from a variety of perspectives' (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 104; see also Baldy & Kruse, 2019) and that these perspectives are constructed by actors and guide their thinking. According to Schön and Rein (1994), framing is an action in which an actor actively makes a selection to make sense of complex situations. Making this selection is an active process, meaning that the actor has agency to do so. On the other hand, there are also structures that influence the construction of frames. For civil servants, these structures include 'laws, bylaws, guidelines and other policy documents' (Castell, 2016, p. 310) that constitute frames which direct his/her action.

These structures, that are shared within and across organisations, illustrate that framing is not just an individual act. Rather, frames can be created and shared within an institution. As explained by Snow (2004, p. 405), 'collective action frames are not only cognitive structures located in the mind of individuals, but they also are properties of organizations or collectivities and can be examined as such.' This collective framing relates to the notion that a certain institution, in this case the department dealing with urban food policy within the municipality of Ede, has created frames to 'organise its operations' (Castell, 2016, p. 310). How the civil servants of the municipality of Ede frame the role of NGAs in policymaking processes impacts the roles and actions that they take. As Castell notes, 'action is always informed or even formed by frames' and the institutional framing of the local authority 'shapes the conditions of community-led initiatives' (2016, p. 310).

Within a frame, we can distinguish three functions: the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational function (Snow & Benford, 1988). The diagnostic function points to the problem statement of the frame: what is the problem and who should be blamed. The prognostic function is a reaction on the diagnostic function and entails the solutions that are expressed within the frame. Lastly, the motivational function offers a reason for action. These three functions of frames serve as a basis for the analysis of the perceptions of civil servants of the municipality of Ede with regards to participation of NGAs in their food policy.

5.1. Data Collection

We apply the framing approach to enhance understanding of how civil servants in the Dutch municipality of Ede frame participation in food-related policy making. Towards this end, this article draws on data collected by way of participatory observation in the Ede municipality between September 2016 and January 2017. Ethnographic fieldwork is not commonly used to study local governance, however it can provide insight into how governance processes are experienced by those in the

field (van Hulst, 2008). During the fieldwork period, the lead author attended meetings with civil servants and participated in municipal events related to food and food policy. This included regular meetings where the civil servants discussed their tasks with one another as well as meetings where one or more civil servants met with one or more NGAs to discuss a specific issue. Also observed was an open meeting in which the municipality or an NGA invited anyone interested in a certain topic related to food policy to come discuss or share information. During meetings, notes were taken. Additionally, interviews were conducted with all ten civil servants of the municipality working specifically on food issues. These interviews were recorded and transcribed with consent from the interviewees. The interviews were triangulated by three interviews with NGAs. Interviews were conducted in Dutch to avoid miscommunication, then transcribed and translated into English after analysis. The data were coded in two cycles, with the three functions of frames serving as the basis for the coding. To protect participants, we have assigned a number to each interviewee from 1 to 10. As an additional source, we also made use of document analysis. The documents analysed include the municipal food strategy, food policy brochures and city-marketing materials from the municipality.

6. Findings

Despite the city having selected food as a key policy theme, governance of the food system is not one of the core tasks for the municipality and thus lacks a clear set rules and responsibilities. This means that when it comes to the engagement of NGAs in the municipal food policy, the municipality can adopt a variety of approaches ranging from no government involvement at all (low on the ladder of government participation) to the creation and enforcement of laws (high on the ladder; ROB, 2012). Importantly, civil servants play a key role in shaping how the municipality implements these processes.

The analysis of the case study begins with describing the initiation of the food policy and how NGAs where involved during the start-up phase. From our analysis, we have identified two distinct frames related to participation held by civil servants working on the theme of food. The first is *as the municipality we take responsibility*, or the responsibility frame. The second is *initiative should come from society* (Interviewee 7), or the reactive frame. As our analysis shows, the two frames relate to two roles that civil servants of the municipality see for themselves in the development of a municipal food policy, and as such they often find themselves operating between two competing frames.

6.1. Start of Ede's Food Policy

In 2012, the municipal councillors of Ede created a new vision for the city to guide the future direction of policy. Ede chose the theme of 'food' as a central point in their

vision of the future. One of the aldermen from the municipality became the portfolio holder for this theme (the first in the Netherlands) and the portfolio was secured with a budget. A food vision was designed to connect several policy areas like health, economy and social work. Despite the integral character, the vision focuses more on improving the economic opportunities of the city and becoming a socially stronger and healthier city. As the municipality notes, 'it is not the question what Ede can do with food, but what food can do for Ede' (Gemeente Ede, 2015). Consequently, in the context of Ede's food policy, food is understood as an instrument that can be applied as a solution to other policy domains. The local government, knowledge institutes, and businesses are mentioned in this food vision, but above all the motivation and initiatives of the inhabitants of Ede are stated as being of vital importance for the success of the municipality's food vision of Ede (Gemeente Ede, 2015).

When the municipality of Ede decided to formulate its food vision, it noticed that there was little knowledge on food issues amongst staff of the municipality and that they needed expertise from external parties in the region. The municipality tried to select people with various backgrounds, including from 'schools, companies, knowledge institutes, hospitality industry and politicians' (Interviewee 1). Selected people were invited for various feedback moments during the starting phase of the food policy. The identification, selection and invitation of these people was carried out by the civil servants who made use of the following criteria: that the person was recognised as an expert on food-related issues and they were known to the network of the civil servants (Interviewee 1). At the start of the food policy, this network was limited but it has expanded over the years (Interviewee 1). Over time, civil servants believe they will find the right parties to participate in projects. As expressed by one interviewee, 'you just have to start, and that is also fine and sometimes you cannot involve all the right parties from the start on because you do not know them yet' (Interviewee 9). This displays the willingness of the civil servant to take a leading role in the process to get things moving. It also demonstrates an awareness that not all parties that would ideally be participating are already part of the process. However, at the same time, it also shows that a top-down approach at the start of the urban food policy process means that civil servants need to carefully consider who they invite and who gets to influence the process.

6.2. The Responsibility Frame

This frame relates to the way civil servants perceive the responsibility of the municipality in the governance of the food system. Responsibility in this frame manifests as the municipality taking on a leadership role in developing a food policy. Though food is not a 'traditional municipal responsibility' (MacRae & Donahue, 2013, p. 4), by putting food on its agenda, the municipality of Ede has

shown they want to address food system issues. In what follows we discuss the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational functions of the responsibility frame in relation to the data.

6.2.1. Diagnostic Function

The central problem described as the diagnostic function is that challenges of the current food system are not addressed sufficiently by other actors. Thus, the municipality is taking responsibility to address this gap. This was explained by Interviewee 6, who noted that 'sometimes it can happen that as a government you see a dot on the horizon, which the partners you work with do not yet see' (Interviewee 6). Because according to the civil servant, the other actors are not yet aware of the current challenges, the municipality feels legitimized in taking a leading role on the development of the food policy.

Within the frame of responsibility, civil servants see a strong leadership role for the municipality. In this context, influencing people's personal choices is accepted when the government constructs aspects of the food system as social problems from the social-problems marketplace (Benford & Hunt, 2003). In the case of Ede, we can also see the leadership role of the municipality reflected in the initiative that was taken to put food on the political agenda and to create a municipal food vision document. In these instances, stakeholders were invited, but the leading role was played by the municipality.

6.2.2. Prognostic Function

The prognostic function of the frame discusses in what ways the diagnosis of food as a public problem, and related lack of action on the part of other actors, should be treated. Our analysis suggests that civil servants see the solution to lacking action from other actors, as a strong leadership role from the municipality with a focus on agenda setting. To create a sense of urgency and to legitimise the actions of the municipality, food needs to be on the public agenda. As well, since the municipality wishes to work together with NGAs, it is important these actors have a shared problem definition. This can be achieved by the strategy of agenda-setting and communication to NGAs.

Civil servants explained that though certain issues might not be of high or widespread importance to society yet, a municipality can act to change this: 'You can indeed make sure things are GOING to come alive' (Interviewee 1). This highlights the agenda-setting power that civil servants believe they have. The civil servant sees a role for the municipality in creating the framework within which action happens, and where important topics are identified. However, there is recognition that not everything should be decided by the municipality. In this way, the municipality creates room for citizens to participate, but at the same time creates the boundaries in which this happens.

6.2.3. Motivational Function

The motivational function of a frame offers a reason for action: in this case, a reason for the municipality to adopt a leading role and commit to agenda-setting. The responsibility frame as it applies to Ede is inspired by the ambition of the municipality to be a frontrunner in integrated food policy. This originates in the program goals that are formulated in the food policy vision document. In here, the ambition to focus on food-related policy is meant to position Ede as one of the European 'top regions' (Gemeente Ede, 2015, p. 3). In this sense, the motivation is to use food as a tool to enhance wealth and well-being. Furthermore, it is the ambition of Ede to use food to create a strong city profile. This combination of city-marketing and more substantive policy suggests that the municipality is using the theme of food to create a more attractive city for various groups of citizens. The consequence is restricted influence for NGAs to drive or change the course of the municipality's actions or ambitions and thus power is limited in the process. This raises questions on the ability of municipal-led urban food policy to advance food democracy.

6.3. The Reactive Frame

In contrast to the responsibility frame emerged the reactive frame. We understand this frame as civil servants reacting to societal processes. As noted by one respondent, 'Maybe sometimes you need to let things happen and wait until there are *really* initiatives coming from society and then jump into it. So let's say, not so much from above' (Interviewee 7). This statement shows an awareness of the tensions between responsibility (which can be seen as municipality leadership, or a more top-down approach) and the importance of NGAs-led or bottom-up initiatives.

This realisation shows that this frame is more about empowering what already exists, than about trying to force people into a certain direction. The next sections discuss the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational functions of the reactive frame.

6.3.1. Diagnostic Function

The diagnostic function of the reacting frame describes the issue that is problematic according to the frame. The reactive frame problematises the one-sided communication sent from the municipality to the NGAs which is a strategy within the responsibility frame. As one civil servant summarizes: 'Right now we are sending a lot of information. However, we do not know yet how it's being received' (Interviewee 4). The civil servant explains how the municipality finds it hard to make the connection with NGAs as they do not have a clear view on how their efforts regarding food policy are being received by, for example, the residents of Ede. When asked about the role of NGAs, one civil servant (Interviewee 7) felt that right

now there are some bottom-up initiatives, however they wished for more.

6.3.2. Prognostic Function

Within the wide frame, the solution to the diagnosis of wanting active NGAs' participation, but not yet adequately engaging them, is to look for the balance between input from the municipality and NGAs. As a consequence, when the reactive frame is invoked, we see civil servants being more cautious of expressing big ambitions, recognising that this might limit the willingness of other actors to join. In the context of this frame, the civil servants think about whether they do 'too much'; that is whether the responsibility frame dominates. One example of this was visible during an event where NGAs were invited to pitch their food-related initiatives to an audience. During the event, called *Foodfloor*, one of the civil servants felt that the number of contributions coming from the municipality should be limited, so she withdrew hers, because otherwise four out of eight contributions would have come from the municipality. Since the *Foodfloor* is considered one of the main opportunities for NGAs to participate in the food policy, the civil servants want most initiatives presented to come from the residents. There was recognition that it would be sending the wrong signal if at this event civil servants told most of the stories. We thus see the civil servants working to limit the presence of the municipality in favour of prioritizing the voices of NGAs.

6.3.3. Motivational Function

The motivational function of the reactive frame is twofold. Filling a more reactive role is provoked by a recognition of the importance of continuity and participation, but is also motivated by the limited resources and influence of the municipality. Civil servants are aware that they cannot force initiatives. Instead, they need to react and respond to initiatives as they arise. As one civil servant explained:

> We are not going to peddle our ideas to others. For example, when we as a municipality want a taste-garden, we are not searching for a business somewhere that wants to start a taste-garden. It should be in the right order. Initiatives that come to us, we support gladly. But it has to come from them [the initiatives], so that it will sustain. Otherwise just we as a municipality do something, and when we stop, everything stops. (Interviewee 8)

This shows that as part of the reactive frame the sustainability of initiatives exceeds the preferences of the municipality for certain projects. This quote also shows, in contrast to the responsibility frame, that some of the civil servants focus on supporting initiatives instead of steering them. Further, within this frame, there is recognition that

support from the municipality may be temporary, as current civil servants and aldermen, in their roles for a certain amount of time, cannot fully influence how their successors carry out the related food policy activities. To foster initiatives in the community that can survive changes in the public administration, it is important for the civil servants to be aware of the possible temporality of the resources the municipality invests in food governance. Also, from the literature, we can see that initiatives that receive support, but do not rely too much on the municipality, are most likely to sustain (MacRae & Donahue, 2013).

7. Conclusions

In line with contemporary trends in governance, NGAs and governments are expected to interact and collaborate increasingly in the managing of complex problems (Moragues-Faus et al., 2013; Moragues-Faus & Morgan, 2015; Viljoen & Wiskerke, 2012). However, little has been written about the role of civil servants in these new governance arrangements. This despite the fact that in many cases civil servants actively frame and thus shape many of the conditions in which NGAs participate. In Ede, the urban food policy is centred around the municipality with other actors depending on the municipality's leadership. Simultaneously, we see consumers being stimulated to take on roles as citizens and becoming active in transforming the food system.

Our analysis has built on the work of Castell (2016), taking institutional framing as a tool for analysis. Whereas Castell (2016) mainly focused on the framing of citizen initiatives, we investigated how the civil servants frame their own role, and the implications of this for participation and food democracy. The two identified frames have different outcomes for the participation of NGAs in food democracy. For the responsibility frame, participation could be seen as limited, as it needs to be in line with municipal ambitions. Given that the diagnostic function in the responsibility frame is summarised as 'we have to take responsibility, because other actors are not addressing issues sufficiently,' the sense of urgency municipal employees feel towards transforming the food system can motivate NGAs to participate. Taking on responsibility as a municipality in an area where it is not expected or prescribed by law, is taking a step higher on the ladder of government participation than formally required. Through this, we can see the municipality challenging the assumption that society is better off when the government minimizes its role, opposing the statement of the ROB (2012). When the municipality is taking on a leading role in urban food policy aimed at transforming the food system by activating those who do not yet participate or are not heard, we can say they contribute to food democracy by shifting power within the food system. This reinforces the objectives of food democracy as it was defined in this article: a more equal sharing of the benefits of the food system (Lang, 1999). At the same time, activating citizens who are not yet involved (be-

yond the usual suspects) remains one of the main challenges. Food governance initiatives such as food policy councils, the *Foodfloor* in Ede or other gatherings might serve as vehicles to increase the attractiveness of participation for the unusual suspects, but often civil servants are the gate keepers.

Within the responsibility frame, participation of NGAs can be seen as limited because it needs to be in line with municipal ambitions. This means that participation might be more about legitimising municipal action and finding support for issues that are on the municipal agenda than about empowering NGAs and creating space for meaningful participation in food democracy. The second frame, the reactive frame, is more about letting go, thus limiting the level of government interference. A possible outcome of this frame is that the NGAs have more opportunities to participate in, and even lead, the food policy. The tension between the two frames is evident in the attitudes of the civil servants who try to balance their perceived responsibility as municipal employees with their desire to engage NGAs.

To address food democracy in urban food policy, we argue, aspects of both frames (responsibility and reactivity) are required. On the one hand, a strong leadership (top-down) role for the municipality can raise awareness about food system problems, increase knowledge amongst citizens by putting a topic on the agenda and creating spaces in which food actors can meet and generate political will for food system change. However, meaningful participation is required, which is more in line with the second 'reactive' frame. A municipal-led urban food policy can serve as a means of collective action for transformation in the food system when meaningful participation is safeguarded. Municipalities can play a leading role in spreading knowledge on food and the food system for example by funding and facilitating relevant programs. Civil servants can play a role in the sharing of ideas and facilitate spaces of interaction and re-imagining the food system by bringing together people and ideas.

To conclude, focussing on how the civil servants frame their role in food-related policy making elucidates not only how civil servants shape the conditions for NGAs and how this leads to different sorts of participation, but also how they balance competing roles in an era of participatory policy making. We wish to highlight the struggle civil servants face between long- and short-term results in the context of these two frames. In the short term, strong leadership, reflected in the responsibility frame, may be more effective. However, the reactive frame entails the realisation that only this approach is not sustainable for the future. The civil servants' perception of being held accountable for short term results may lead to a preference for working according to the responsibility frame. At the same time, the civil servants expressed the wish to reach these results in collaboration with other actors, creating space for meaningful participation and food democracy. This impasse remains one of the main challenges of participation of NGAs in urban food policy making.

Several lessons for practice can be learnt from the case of Ede concerning NGAs' participation within the context of food democracy. Our analysis, backed by the literature, suggests that balancing between a strong leadership role for the municipality and a more reactive role may be preferable regarding the continuity of initiatives in the long term. One strategy is for municipalities to create space, both physical space as well as regulatory/experimental space, for ideas, connections and initiatives to emerge. Municipalities should find ways of ensuring these spaces are adequately representative and that relations of power are addressed to enhance and foster meaningful participation. The combination of a municipality committed to longer term urban food policy objectives and spaces where meaningful participation is safeguarded and translated into action, can support efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable food democracy.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Food Democracy from the Top Down? State-Driven Participation Processes for Local Food System Transformations towards Sustainability

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Abstract

Food democracy is a concept with growing influence in food policy research. It involves citizens regaining democratic control of the food system and enabling its sustainable transformation. In focusing mainly on civil society initiatives, food democracy research has so far neglected the potential of state-driven food-related participation processes. We base our study on qualitative interviews with local stakeholders in two smaller cities in southern Germany where the city administration and city council initiated participatory processes. The study aims to understand how local actors are framing state-driven participation processes concerning sustainable local food system transformation along key dimensions of food democracy. We identify eight categories that conceptually constitute food democracy: mutual knowledge exchange; legitimacy and credibility of knowledge claims; transparent processes for deliberating ideas; shared language for sharing ideas; expectations of and experience with efficacy; role model function of municipalities; raising awareness; and motivation and justification of the normative orientation. Furthermore, the empirical analysis shows that state actors can have important roles in food-related participation processes as potential initiators, shapers and implementers depending on how they interact with local food-related actors and how they design and coordinate food system transformation processes. This suggests that food democracy research should not necessarily conceptualize state actors, local entrepreneurs and citizens as opponents, but rather, should reconsider how these various actors can drive food democracy and citizenship in a supportive and coordinated way.

1. Introduction

Food democracy is a concept with growing influence in food policy research (Booth & Coveney, 2015; Hassanein, 2003, 2008; Lang, 2005; Perrett & Jackson, 2015; Renting, Schermer, & Rossi, 2012). Following an identified shift in food policy from state control to growing power of large corporations over the food system, food democracy is part of a trend where "demands from below" (Lang, 1999, p. 218) are given a voice and citizens regain control over the food system (Hassanein, 2003; Lang, 2005). Lang, Barling, and Caraher (2009, p. 67) argue that "the

success of public policy on food depends upon successful engagement with the actors across the food system from food producers to consumers and those who figure in-between." Consequently, food policy needs to be developed through a triangular collaboration between state actors, economic actors and civil society (Lang, 2005, p. 730). This means that these three groups of actors are understood to be equally important with regard to food system change.

To date, food democracy research has focused on civil society movements and the role of citizens (Hassanein, 2003; Johnston, Biro, & MacKendrick, 2009) while ne-

glecting the two other parts of the triangle. Nevertheless, state actors at the local level (e.g., elected members of the city council and members of the city administration) are core actors in various food policy initiatives aiming at sustainability, such as the development of sustainable urban food strategies (Hebinck & Page, 2017) or as shapers of "creative city politics" (Cretella & Buenger, 2016) concerning food system transformation. Already in 1999, Lang (1999, p. 220) argued that "[a] rethinking of the state's role in food is long overdue." Almost ten years later, Mendes (2008, p. 947) underlined that "we are now entering a new phase of local state involvement in food policy, governance and policy-making characterized by proactive partnerships, with cities playing the role of facilitator, educator, and promoter of efficiencies."

Against this background, we identify a research gap: While the importance of municipalities in initiatives aiming at sustainable local food system transformation is growing, food democracy research mostly focuses on social movements and the role of citizens. This article addresses this gap by focusing on food-related participation processes initiated by local state actors.

It can be assumed that the importance of state actors in shaping food systems will continue to increase in the coming years, especially at the local level. Furthermore, the way in which local political processes are shaped is also changing. At the local level, a change towards more participation and deliberation has been observable for some years now (Turnhout, van Bommel, & Aarts, 2010; Walk, 2008). In this context, administration and local policymakers are trying to involve actors from civil society and local economies in the policymaking process. With a special focus on top-down processes of food democracy, our research makes a relevant contribution to the body of knowledge regarding both food democracy and food policy: First, we identify the specific conditions, challenges and pitfalls of top-down initiated participation processes within food system transformation; second, we propose empirically grounded conceptual elements for food democracy from the top-down.

With our research, we aim to understand how local actors make sense of state-driven participation processes concerning sustainable local food system transformation along key dimensions of food democracy. Connected to this goal we aim to investigate the role of state actors in relation to food democracy and pose the following research question: How are local state-driven participation processes understood as food democracy?

Through an in-depth analysis of two cases in smaller cities in southern Germany where city administrations and local politicians initiated participatory processes in order to transform their local food systems in a sustainable way, we investigate how local actors frame these participation processes as processes of food democracy. Methodologically, we use the framing approach (Benford & Snow, 2000) as a tool to provide deeper insights into how people make sense of the participation processes.

First, we introduce food democracy as a relevant concept for food policy research. In this context, we shed light on the role of citizens in food system transformation and explain the conceptualization of food democracy as it is used in this article. In the following, we focus on the methodology, describing the two cases on which our research is based and our interpretative methodological approach. In the results section, we link our research findings to the conceptualization of food democracy. Finally, we discuss the results, thereby focusing on the roles of state-actors in food-related participation processes and the conceptual implications for food democracy research. In the conclusion, we summarize our contributions to conceptualize food democracy and substantiate the significance of state actors within processes of food democracy.

2. Food Democracy as a Concept for Food Policy Research

In the following, we first delineate the changing role of citizens within food policy and then introduce a heuristic of food democracy along four key dimensions.

2.1. The Role of Citizens in Food Policy and Sustainability Transformation of the Food System

The notion of food democracy was introduced by food policy scholars in the 1990s "to highlight the great struggle over the centuries, in all cultures, to achieve the right of all citizens to have access to a decent, affordable, health-enhancing diet, grown in conditions in which they can have confidence" (Lang, 1998, p. 18). In the past, governments were responsible for food safety and security to ensure safe and healthy populations. This was especially important in the post-war period when hunger and malnutrition were omnipresent. The economic upswing in western European countries resulted in a situation where food security seemed to be ensured. Over the twentieth century, the food system became globalized and production, processing, trade and consumption were delocalized. This resulted in negative impacts on the environment and food security, especially in poorer countries. The core task of food policy changed from security to the much broader approach of sustainability, within which food security is subsumed (Lang & Barling, 2012, p. 313).

Within the globalized food system, Lang et al. observe that governments no longer shape food policy; instead, "giant food and drink corporations...formulate their own food policies" (2009, p. 11) and their decisions elude democratic control. Food democracy thus evolved as a countermovement to balance power and control within food policy and the food system, especially on the local scale (Hassanein, 2003; Lang, 1998). Hassanein defines food democracy as a possibility and requirement for all citizens to actively engage in shaping the food system (2003, p. 83), while Lang stresses the need to rebal-

ance control between citizens, state and economic actors over how food is produced, traded, processed and consumed (2005, p. 730). Other scholars emphasize the introduction of democratic principles such as participation, transparency and public deliberation as the main aim of food democracy: "[t]he concept of food democracy…defines food as a life good that should ideally exist within democratic control in the commons" (Johnston et al., 2009, pp. 524–525). Hassanein (2003, p. 83) proposes that only a democratically legitimized control of the local food system is able to effectively address the above-mentioned need for a transformation of the food system towards sustainability. Other related concepts of civil engagement in food policies investigating food policy councils (e.g., Schiff, 2008; Sieveking, 2019), food networks (e.g., Seyfang, 2006) or food citizenship (e.g., Wilkins, 2005) also stress this link between food democracy and food system transformations towards sustainability through the active, democratic engagement of citizens and civil society.

2.2. Conceptualizing Food Democracy

As this short review on the role of citizens in food policy and sustainability transformation of the food system shows, food democracy research has some conceptual common ground. Nevertheless, it lacks clarity and has been only poorly operationalized for empirical research. Hassanein (2008, pp. 290–291) is one of the few scholars who proposes a heuristic of four key dimensions that enable individuals' meaningful participation in food democracy processes. The first key dimension involves knowledge and becoming knowledgeable about food and food systems to shorten the distance between producer and consumer (Hassanein, 2008, p. 290). The second key dimension comprises sharing ideas, which involves clarifying and discussing food-related issues and values among participants with the effect that they can "make better decisions for both themselves and others" (Hassanein, 2008, p. 290). The third dimension is efficacy as the individuals' "capacity to determine and produce desired results" (Hassanein, 2008, p. 290). As regards food and the food system, this involves citizens' work to address and solve food problems. An orientation towards the community good is the fourth key dimension of food democracy. This involves caring about general well-being in a way that considers "both the human and non-human communities of place we inhabit" (Hassanein, 2008, p. 291). This dimension addresses different levels of the common good: the micro-level of individual or self-interest, the meso-level of community interest and caring for the local area, and the macro-level where participants frame their motivations and justifications with regard to nature, climate, environment and humanity in general. Hassanein further considers collaborating towards food system sustainability as a precondition given that "food democracy is not achieved solely by individual decisions and actions but necessarily involves collective action by and among

organizations" (2008, p. 290). As a theoretical basis, Hassanein (2008, p. 290) draws on the criticism that representative or "thin" democracy does not offer enough possibilities to actively engage in decision-making processes in a meaningful way and produces less legitimate outcomes. Strong democracy on the other hand involves participatory engagement of citizens in policymaking, with citizens governing themselves as far as possible rather than delegating responsibility to representatives (Barber, 1984). For our research on state-driven participation processes for local food system transformations, we operationalize this four-dimensional framework, applying it as a heuristic and inductively developing categories for knowledge, idea-sharing processes, efficacy and normative orientations concerning the outcomes of participatory food democracy processes.

3. Methodology

In this section we introduce our case studies with a focus on the participation processes and present the methods used for data collection and analysis.

3.1. Case Studies: Transformation of the Local Food Systems in Two Cities in Southern Germany

This research was conducted in two smaller cities—each with around 20,000 inhabitants—located in southern Germany. For this publication, we call them A-town and B-town. As both cities had already engaged with climate issues and sustainability as well as, to some extent, with food as a topic of regional development, they were requested to become partners in a transdisciplinary project on food system transformation. As a result, both cities decided to transform their local food systems towards sustainability. According to the project design, the respective city administration and city council initiated a participation process with three dialog formats to discuss goals and measures leading to a sustainable transformation of the local food system (Annexes 1 and 2). Even though the integration of sustainable food as a topic on the local agenda was initiated by the transdisciplinary project, the dialog processes were shaped by the city administrations, starting with the recruitment of participants and concluding with the compilation of measures and goals and the implementation of concrete policy measures. Hence, the participation processes can be described as state-driven. Unlike many other food-related processes such as food policy councils, the impetus in our two cases did not come from the citizens, even though some citizens' initiatives such as urban gardening already existed in the two cities. The following dialog formats were used in both cities:

- Civil dialogs invited all citizens through different media (newspaper, homepage, billboards) to participate and develop measures and goals for the sustainable transformation of the local food system;

- For the expert dialog, the city administration chose and personally invited the participants, who represented local businesses, environmental organizations and social agencies. This selection process was not made transparent by the city administration. However, it became obvious that the administration had selected people who seemed to be relevant actors for urban development and with whom they already had experience of positive cooperation. The participants developed and discussed goals and measures for transforming the local food system. In a closing meeting, goals and measures from both dialog formats were combined and discussed in order to prepare a final list for the steering group;
- The steering group meeting was initiated and moderated by the respective city administration. It included personally invited administrative staff and members of the city council, indicating that these roles were the primary selection criteria used by the city administration. The aim was to discuss the goals and measures proposed by the civil and expert dialogs and to select or modify these before voting on them.

In both cities, the proposed goals and measures were discussed and put to vote in official city council meetings. These included measures such as support of urban gardening initiatives and ecological farming, cooking courses, making the weekly market more attractive, or including food as a topic in a holiday program for children.

3.2. Methods for Data Collection and Analysis

As mentioned in the case description, neither of the cities had previously been familiar with food-related participation and transformation processes at the local level. Against this background, we chose an interpretative approach to focus on how participants make sense of the emerging transformation of food system and policy. We use framing as an analytic tool in the analysis (Benford & Snow, 2000; van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). Benford and Snow (2000) conceptualize their framing approach with a special focus on the development of social movements. Their analysis of framing problems (diagnostic framing), solutions (prognostic framing) and motivations enables understanding of how individuals engage in policy processes. In both cities, we conducted participatory observations and semi-structured interviews with local actors who directly engaged in one of the three dialog formats or who were indirectly involved. The presented research is based on 36 interviews (Annexes 3 and 4).

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed following a reconstructive procedure (Kruse, 2015; Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2014) using the analysis software MAXQDA. The use of reconstructive procedures is necessary since this approach facilitates the identification of structures of meaning. We combined deductive and in-

ductive coding. Starting with the key dimensions of food democracy developed by Hassanein, we identified different kinds of framing. In a second step, we went deeper into the passages in which the interviewees described or evaluated the participation processes. Our inductive approach explored how interviewees were framing the participation process according to the four heuristic dimensions of food democracy (Section 2). Using an inductive approach, we identified new categories that are not part of Hassanein's conceptualization of food democracy. In the analysis and interpretation, we considered similarities and differences between the two cases and between the different groups of actors.

4. Results: Framing of the State-Driven Participation Processes of Local Food System Transformation

In the result section, we analyze the framing of the state-driven participation processes of local food system transformation. The framings of local actors will thereby be linked to the four key dimensions of food democracy: knowledge, sharing ideas, efficacy and orientation towards community good (Hassanein, 2008). As an outcome of our analysis, we conclude that these four dimensions can be substantiated by eight categories of food democracy derived from our analysis representing how interviewees are framing state-driven participation processes.

4.1. Knowing the Food System

The analysis of the participation processes shows that knowledge about food and the food system is both a starting point as well as an outcome of food democracy processes and thus a central element of these. Interviewees emphasize that *mutual exchange of knowledge* about local food systems is an important basis for true deliberation within the participation processes. This not only involves sharing different forms of knowledge among diverse food-related actors who would otherwise not come together (e.g., members of urban gardening initiatives, city planners, farmers, cooks and heads of nursing homes), but it also addresses the problem that lacking knowledge about the local food system hinders actors from participating in transformation processes in the first place and risks excluding issues relevant to a sustainable food system: "We were not aware that…[food] was also a topic that…had a very important influence on our CO_2 emissions" (Interviewee A17). This quote illustrates that not all members of the city administration were even aware of the climate impacts of food before starting the participation process. Meanwhile, the analysis revealed a high level of contestation among participants regarding what issues should be included in mutual knowledge exchange. Additionally, some interviewees were very open to mutual learning, while others assumed that they already had all the relevant knowledge about sustainable food system transformations.

Legitimacy and credibility are a second core framing of knowledge as a dimension of food democracy processes. During the participation processes, the question was raised as to which actors can legitimately organize and take part in the participation process and thereby gain the chance to bring their knowledge into the deliberation of ideas. Connected to these questions is the credibility of knowledge. Interestingly, actors from local food businesses as well as civil society actors question the credibility of the knowledge claims of the other party, accusing them of hidden goals or values. While interviewees from civil society organizations assume that local entrepreneurs are only engaging because they expect personal profit, interviewees from local businesses assume that civil society actors advocate growth-critical positions. For many interviewees, two types of knowledge were especially credible: knowledge of like-minded participants and scientific knowledge, especially if this could be used to underpin their own opinions.

4.2. The Process of Sharing Ideas about the Food System

Transparency and the degree of openness of the deliberation process are considered crucial within the participatory process of local food system transformation. The analysis shows that many interviewees consider openness and the exchange of issues and ideas at eye level to be important prerequisites for true deliberation and dialog, thereby criticizing rigidly structured, one-way procedures. Another emphasized prerequisite for mutual exchange is transparency in both the design and outcomes of the debate.

Another transparency issue was who participated in the three formats; interviewees emphasized that it was important for participants to know who else would or would not engage. This also helped participants to reflect on their own role within the participation process. While some questioned whether they were the right person to address the issues discussed (Interviewee B25), others considered themselves to be "chosen" experts (Interviewee A16) as they had been selected by the hosting city administration.

The second relevant aspect for sharing ideas on local food system transformation is a *shared language*. It was criticized that the language used during the participation process was partly too scientific and hindered the engagement of citizens and other stakeholder groups.

4.3. Expected Efficacy and the Role of Administrations

In both cities, many interviewees did not expect much efficacy from the participation processes in general. Some expected the outcome to become a "drawer concept" (Interviewee A13), representing the interviewees' fear that the outcomes would metaphorically disappear into a drawer rather than be implemented in practice. Others were explicitly skeptical about the quality of the result and its capacity to achieve changes in the local food sys-

tem (cf. Interviewees B5, B15). One reason for *limited expectations* is a perceived deficit within the participation process, especially concerning the mutual exchange of knowledge and ideas. Other reasons involve negative *experiences* with previous participation processes: "I have already accompanied many such projects. And apart from a lot of foam there is usually nothing left" (Interviewee B9, cf. B24). Finally, the city administrations initiating the processes were not expected to have enough influence on relevant policy levels or on significant sectors, for instance on agricultural policy.

Despite the identified problem framing concerning a perceived lack of agency, city authorities are considered pivotal for affecting change through participation processes. Interviewees from city authorities and from other stakeholder groups emphasized that the administration has a *role-model function* for local citizens: "if we don't manage to change the school meals in our canteen…where the city has a direct influence… then we have failed" (Interviewee A24). Though sustainable food system transformation at the local level is a relatively new issue for public actors, many interviewees demanded that the city administration use its scope for action, e.g., in the field of school nutrition and public procurement, to achieve increasing sustainability or at least increasing regionality within the local food system.

Another element of efficacy is *raising awareness* of local food systems and the need for a transformation towards sustainability. Despite the limited expectations of the participation process, raising awareness is a possible and important outcome for some interviewees. Others call attention to the dilemma that knowledge and awareness do not necessarily lead to desired action. In the two cases, awareness raising in general is a key solution framing, regardless of whether the problem framing focuses on economic, environmental or social aspects.

4.4. Justifying Different Orientations within the Food System

The analysis shows that stakeholders *justify* their participation and frame the need to transform the local food system in different ways depending on their respective backgrounds and roles. We identify three different levels of framing. At the micro-level, interviewees frame their own participation or the participation of other stakeholders with reference to particular individual interests and partly self-interest. This is especially true for local business actors (Interviewees B25, B12). One interviewee revised his assumption about his co-participants who he had initially described as being oriented by self-interest (Interviewee A16). This shows that learning takes place within participation processes, which can increase credibility and trust among diverse and partly opposing participants.

At the meso-level, interviewees stress their orientation towards the community good, believing local food system transformation could positively influence their

city's development. It is apparent here that most interviewees relate their *motivation* to support the community good to their role and responsibilities as citizens. At the macro-level, interviewees frame their motivation with reference to environmental goals, sustainability and climate change, justifying their participation with the need for a food system transformation (Interviewee A17). Interestingly, some interviewees frame their motivation on multiple orientation levels, even taking into account inconsistencies (e.g., self-interest at the micro-level while supporting the community good at the meso-level). It becomes obvious that the interviewees primarily refer to the kind of framing that relates to their professional life. However, their framing is also related to their everyday life and connected to a broader context. The use of different kinds of framing drawing on different levels of argumentation illustrates the high complexity of the topic.

5. Discussion: Food Democracy from the Top-Down

In our research, we focused on the framing of state-driven participation processes of local food system transformation. In the following, we discuss (1) implications for the roles of state-actors in food-related participation processes, (2) conceptual implications of our results for food democracy research and (3) prospects for further research.

5.1. State-Actors within the Triangle of Food Policy Actors

Based on our results, we identify three roles that state-actors can adopt in food-related participation processes and a set of influential context factors.

First, as *initiators of processes,* state actors have the possibility to introduce citizens to the topic, motivate and justify food-related transformation with an orientation towards community good and create legitimacy of the process. State-driven processes seem to have the potential to address a broader variety of citizens and economic actors than processes initiated by citizens only, as in the case of some food policy council initiatives (e.g., Clark, 2018). However, in their study of food policy in Ede, van de Griend, Duncan, and Wiskerke (2019) stress that the activation of different groups of citizens "remains one of the main challenges." In our cases, some members of civil society negotiate food-related topics with regard to changes in the economic system, while there are economic actors who explain their motivation to take part in food-related participation processes in terms of their own economic interest. As shown in the results section, this stereotypical categorization does not fit all actors. Nevertheless, in both cities, all groups of actors assume that there is a link between group membership and argumentative strategy. As a result, municipal and business actors perceive civil society actors as having stronger values and a rather low willingness to compromise. Due to

their role as initiators, state actors in general have the unique potential to act as mediators between these different motivations and justifications. However, there is a risk of imbalance from the start where the initiator of a food transformation process is not sufficiently open to the knowledge, ideas and normative orientations of all food-related actors in the city.

The second role state-actors can take on is that of *shapers of the process*, e.g., by deciding who is involved in the mutual knowledge exchange and in the sharing of ideas based on different normative orientations and by creating transparency within the process. The results show that although the participation processes in both cases were structured in the same way, they were evaluated differently in relation to the perception of mutual exchange and transparency. In A-town, participants perceived themselves as "chosen" and considered the process to be sufficiently open and transparent to exchange knowledge and share ideas. In B-town, participants of the civil and expert dialog criticized a lack of transparency regarding the selection of participants. Furthermore, they criticized the moderation and procedure and actively demanded more deliberative elements to facilitate a dialog at eye level. This implies that for the shapers of the process, not only is the process design pivotal but also the degree to which they are trusted and considered by participants to be credible.

In their role as *implementers,* state actors can be role models when they implement food policy measures themselves. They can, for instance, coordinate and support implementation of other actors by strengthening the interaction within the triangle of state actors, economic actors and citizens/civil society. As our results show, the participants do not have high expectations regarding possible outcomes. This is due, on the one hand, to negative previous experiences with urban participation processes and, on the other hand, to the perception that the municipality itself lacks sufficient agentive capacity. In a previous article, it has been discussed how this perceived lack of agency can result in a process of individualization of responsibility concerning food system change (Baldy, 2019). However, the role of the city as implementer shows that the perceived lack of agency does not necessarily mean that the municipal actors actually lack agentive capacities. Particularly as role models, municipal actors can support an orientation towards the community good by facilitating the interaction of all relevant actors. Van de Griend et al. (2019) underline the particular importance of state actors in local food policy, claiming that:

> A strong leadership (top-down) role for the municipality can raise awareness about food system problems, increase knowledge amongst citizens by putting a topic on the agenda and creating spaces in which food actors can meet and generate political will for food system change. (van de Griend et al., 2019)

Following our argumentation, this addresses especially what we call the role model function of municipalities. Furthermore, the results imply that the *political, socioeconomic* and *historical contexts* in which state actors initiate, shape and implement food-related transformation processes are highly relevant for the framing of the process. One of these contextual factors is regional identity, which seems very relevant for differences in political culture. In A-town, located in a rural area with a traditional value system, a tendency towards cooperative and consensus-oriented involvement of actors was observed. In contrast, B-town is located close to a larger city and is therefore shaped by a more highly fluctuating of the population and a less integrative political culture. The importance of "interpersonal social effects, which include relationships between people, group identities and associations, as well as economic exchanges" (Baker, 2011, p. 10) seems to become especially obvious in food-related initiatives at the local level.

Another important contextual factor we identified is that, in both cases, previous experiences with participation processes shaped the actors' low expectations of efficacy with negative consequences for both motivation and the perceived credibility of the actors. In B-town, for example, civil society members expressed rather critical assessments of the local political system's efficacy, thereby referencing previous attempts to achieve changes in local politics that were not supported by local politicians; correspondingly, the municipal actors stated that they would not cooperate with certain actors with whom they had previously negative experiences. As other studies have also shown, this can develop into a severe barrier for state-driven participation processes as the experience of efficacy is a core element of strong democracy (Booth & Coveney, 2015). Participation processes without efficacy might appear to be symbolic politics only and low policy impacts can lead to increasing political disenchantment (Schaal & Wilhelm, 2018, pp. 206–207). These insights suggest that previous experiences of appreciation and efficacy, as well as regional identity, influence the political culture and thus the relationships between local authorities, civil society and economic actors.

Summarizing, it becomes apparent in our two cases that, concerning the food policy triangle of state, economy and civil society, the conceptualization of active citizens versus an undemocratic economy in food democracy research needs to be questioned. In both our cases, we encountered initiatives of food system transformations that were neither initiated from within the organized participation processes, nor by citizens' initiatives, but rather by influential business actors. Initiatives such as a regional catering company, a cooperative for strengthening regional food production, and the establishment of regional labels through mergers of production, processing and trade companies are initiated as economic activities where profit is one goal, next to the community's well-being. They explicitly aim to increase re-

gional production and additionally to make the local food system more sustainable or healthy. In most cases, these local entrepreneurs act independently from, but in agreement with, the public administration.

5.2. Conceptual Implications for Food Democracy Research

The identified roles of state actors within food-related participation processes influence the existing conceptualization of food democracy. Starting with the four key dimensions of food democracy by Hassanein (2008, pp. 290–291), we derived an empirically substantiated concept with eight categories for the analysis of state-driven participation processes, thereby deepening the current understanding of food democracy. (1) *Mutual exchange of knowledge* and (2) the *legitimacy and credibility* of knowledge claims are essential for knowing the food system, while (3) *transparency* and (4) *shared language* are identified as crucial categories within the process of sharing ideas. A shared language is also an important condition of sharing ideas. From the actors' viewpoint, (5) *expectations and experiences* of previous participation processes determine the efficacy of the process, as do (6) *municipalities acting as role models* and (7) *raising awareness* of citizens. Actors' orientation within the food system depends on their (8) *motivations* and *justifications*. This set of categories helps to analyze state-driven participation processes and shifts the current understanding of food democracy from focusing on transformative actors only to a broader range of food democracy processes including the active involvement of state actors. Thus, our insights can, for example, be transferred to research on food networks (Hebinck & Page, 2017) or food policy councils at the local level as well as to both sites of interest: food democracy and food policy scholars (Lang, 2005; Schiff, 2008).

A second important implication for academic research relates to food democracy as a deliberative process. In line with other scholars in participation research (Baasch & Blöbaum, 2017, p. 17), Hassanein (2008, p. 290) assumes that deliberative elements are more democratic per se; our results question this. They rather show that the way in which stakeholders assess deliberative participation design critically depends on previous experiences with participation processes and the actors involved, as well as on their feelings of mutual trust, credibility and legitimacy.

5.3. Further Research

In this article, we developed an empirical grounding for the concept of food democracy by building on an interpretative analysis of food-related participation processes in two specific cases. Since our analysis and development of the food democracy framework is based specifically on two cases of smaller cities in southern Germany, the results cannot be generalized for food-related participa-

tion processes in smaller cities in general. To strengthen the robustness and transferability of our results, we suggest further research in other cities of different sizes in Germany and in countries with similar economic and political circumstances. The identified conceptual categories of food democracy need further development and deeper investigation of the relationship between state actors and other actors that reflect concepts of political cultures (Almond & Verba, 1963) and regional identity (Paasi, 2009). Further, we suggest linking the concept of food democracy more strongly to concepts identified in deliberative participation processes and participative governance research (Fischer, 2006, 2012; Turnhout et al., 2010; van der Heijden, 2018; Walk, 2008). For example, Fischer (2012, p. 464) assumes that "political-cultural and pedagogical strategies can facilitate the deliberative empowerment in participatory governance." Together with an emphasis on the importance of power relations and civic engagement within participation processes (Walk, 2008, pp. 17–18) a further connection to concepts of political culture seems highly relevant for the evolution of food democracy in both bottom-up and top-down processes, which could complement the concept of food democracy.

6. Conclusion

This article focused on the role of local state actors within food-related participation processes and has dealt with the question of how these state-driven processes can be described as processes of food democracy. Our results indicate that state actors play an important role in food-related participation processes as potential initiators, shapers and implementers, depending on how they interact with local food-related actors and how they design and coordinate the process of food system transformation within the context of the specific political culture and regional identity of the city. Credibility is one of the most important factors. Ideally, state actors are considered to be neutral, which offers the opportunity to mediate between economic interests and the interests of civil society. However, the comparison of the two cases shows that the extent to which state actors are accepted as neutral depends on the respective political culture. For academic research, this implies that the concepts of citizenship and democracy, and how these have been applied in food democracy literature to date, need to be reconsidered. Instead of conceptualizing state actors, economic actors and citizens as opponents, our study suggests that food democracy depends on supportive state actors, facilitating interactions between all groups of relevant actors in order to drive the transformation of local food systems. Furthermore, this article contributes to the conceptualization of food democracy in food policy research. Based on four dimensions of food democracy (Hassanein, 2008), we developed an empirically substantiated concept with eight categories for the analysis of state-driven participation processes.

Practical implications of this research for state-driven transformations of local food systems towards sustainability include: a need for state actors to reflect on their own roles when initiating and designing food related participation processes; to create a constructive and trustful atmosphere to foster transparency and credibility among the actor groups; to act as potential role models for sustainability transformation; and to draw together food-related initiatives that take place simultaneously and separately from the top-down initiated participation processes.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Overview of the participation processes in A-Town.

Format within the participation process	Participants
1. Civil dialog, 23.03.2017	9 citizens
2. Civil dialog, 06.04.2017	18 citizens
1. Expert dialog, 19.01.2017	24 participants: 14 local economy, 4 social agencies, 3 members of the city council, 2 city administration, 1 economic alliance
2. Expert dialog, 21.02.2017	15 participants: 8 local economy, 1 members of the city council, 2 social agency, 1 administration, 1 civil society, 2 economic alliance
3. Combined expert and civil dialog, 30.05.2017	12 participants: 7 citizens, 3 members of the city council, 2 local economy
1. Steering group meeting, 20.01.2017	6 participants: 2 administrative staff, 1 mayor and 3 members of the city council
2. Steering group meeting, 13.07.2017	6 participants: 2 administrative staff, 1 mayor and 3 members of the city council

Annex 2. Overview of the participation processes in B-Town.

Format within the participation process	Participants
1. Civil dialog, 30.03.2017	15 citizens
2. Civil dialog, 03.05.2017	16 citizens
1. Expert dialog, 03.04.2017	7 participants: 4 local economy, 2 environmental organization and 1 social agencies
2. Expert dialog, 26.04.2017	10 participants: 5 local economy, 3 environmental organization and 2 social agencies
3. Combined expert and civil dialog, 20.06.2017	4 participants: 3 environmental organization and 1 local economy
1. Steering group meeting, 11.04.2017	4 participants: 3 members of the city council, 1 former member of the city council
2. Steering group meeting, 25.07.2017	4 participants: 2 administrative staff, 1 member of the city council, 1 former member of the city council

Annex 3. Overview of the interviewees in A-Town.

Type of actor	Shortcut	Participant of the civil dialog	Participant of the expert dialog	Participant of the steering group meeting
City administration	A2			
	A6			X
	A15		X	
	A17			
City Council	A4		X	
	A9			
	A10	X	X	
	A11			X
	A12			
	A18			
	A20	X	X	
Local economy	A4		X	
	A5			
	A16		X	
	A20	X	X	
	A22		X	
	A23		X	
	A24			
Social agency	A8_1		X	
	A8_2		X	
	A9			
	A11			X
Civil society	A13	X		
	A14	X		
Economic alliance	A19		X	
Politician	A25			

Annex 4. Overview of the interviewees in B-Town.

Type of actor	Shortcut	Participant of the civil dialog	Participant of the expert dialog	Participant of the steering group meeting
City administration	B13			
	B15			X
	B19			
District administration	B24			
City Council	B8			X
	B9			X
	B14			X
	B22			
Former member of the city council	B4	X		X
Local economy	B8			X
	B9			X
	B18	X	X	
	B25		X	
Social agency	B14			X
	B21		X	
Civil society	B7_2	X		
Environmental organization	B5	X		
	B7_1	X		
	B12_1	X	X	
	B12_2	X	X	

Article

Collective Agency in the Making: How Social Innovations in the Food System Practice Democracy beyond Consumption

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Abstract
As the deleterious impacts of conventional food systems on areas including public health, environmental sustainability, and farmers' livelihoods are progressively unveiled, citizen-led initiatives have ubiquitously sprouted, collectively building what is now known as the alternative food system. Despite recent academic interest in the role of alternative food initiatives in countering a narrow view of democracy based on market-based purchasing power, little attention has been paid to a specific democratizing feature that allows for collective expression beyond consumption, that of collective agency. This article argues that it is precisely by focusing on collective agency as the driving force for food systems' change that we can recognize the diverse contributions of social innovations to the democratization of food systems. By engaging with the reasonings of consumer sovereignty proponents, building on academic literature on the concept of collective agency, and drawing from empirical work with over a hundred local social innovations of the global North, this article proposes an agency typology that allows for parsing out its different dimensions, highlighting social innovations' key role as agency enablers and agents of change in the democratization of food systems.

1. Introduction

As the deleterious impacts of conventional food systems on areas including public health, environmental sustainability, and farmers' livelihoods are progressively unveiled (see, e.g., De Schutter, 2014a; IPES-Food, 2017; Narula, 2013), citizen-led initiatives have ubiquitously sprouted, collectively building what is now known as the alternative food system. Over the past decade, social innovations have been increasingly recognized as a means to regain control of collective issues and lead a kind of development "from below" (Chiffoleau & Prevost, 2012, p. 16). In contrast with a traditional approach to innovation, based on competitive markets and technology, social innovations are directed at meeting human needs in terms of social relations (MacCallum, Moulaert,

Hillier, & Vicari Haddock, 2009), contributing to the enhancement of social diversity and heterogeneity in the transition towards more democratic food systems (De Schutter, 2017).

There exists a growing body of literature that engages with the contribution of collective action to the expansion and improvement of democracy through a focus on food democracy/democracies (Hassanein, 2008; Lang, 2007; Moragues-Faus, 2017; Renting, Schermer, & Rossi, 2012). Thus seen, democracy in the food system involves enhancing diversity, heterogeneity, and embeddedness, and redistributing power through the increased proactive engagement of local communities in shaping their own food systems. In contrast with this view, the proponents of consumer sovereignty have historically advocated for a market-based, consumer-centered food sys-

tem where citizens are expected to remain within patterns of passive consumption. "Voting with your wallet/fork" and ethical consumerism in its various strands are presented as people's best, but often only, voice.

Yet it is increasingly recognized that consumption alone, however critical, has a limited capacity to address power differentials or contribute to societal change due to its individual nature (Carlson & Chappell, 2015; Pleyers, 2011b). Instead, it has been argued that expanding food democracy can allow citizens to move from individualized, passive consumption to collective, active citizenship (De Schutter, 2014b), which raises the question of how this transition can occur. While previous works on food democracy have focused on identifying strengths and weaknesses in alternative food initiatives regarding their "democratic characteristics" (Hassanein, 2008, p. 308), I contend the need to further unpack the concept of collective agency by addressing the question of how it is enacted and continuously reproduced by the actors involved. This article illustrates how social innovations, by creating spaces "beyond the market" (cf. Wittman, Dennis, & Pritchard, 2017), provide opportunities for citizens to transition from patterns of passive, individual consumption to evolving, complex forms of collective agency in the alternative food system. Ultimately, these experiences show that the democratization of the food system must involve enabling other means of collective expression and engagement beyond consumption.

The article proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews and critiques the approach of consumer sovereignty, contrasting it with the contribution of social innovations to food democracy through collective agency. Sections 3 and 4 respectively present methodology and results of mixed-method fieldwork conducted with members of 104 social innovations of the alternative food system. Section 4 examines the strategies set forth by these initiatives to create contexts where different dimensions of collective agency can be reproduced. I argue that a transition between agency dimensions, which I describe as "agency in motion," can contribute to a more proactive engagement of local communities in shaping their local food systems, and therefore to food democracy. I conclude in Section 5 by resituating the proposed collective agency framework into a critique of consumer-focused food systems and by pointing at further questions about the role of public policy in supporting food democracy.

2. Democracy in the Food System: Beyond Consumer Sovereignty, towards Collective Agency

This section, first, outlines the problematic consequences of consumer sovereignty, as the skeletal principle of conventional food systems (Section 2.1). Second, it contrasts this view with social innovations' contribution to food democracy by providing a framework of collective agency in the context of alternative food systems (Section 2.2).

2.1. Consumer Sovereignty and Democracy in the Food System

Discussions around the concept of consumer sovereignty started during the early exchanges on the role of consumer preferences after World War I and continued during and after World War II. These discussions were directly based on Adam Smith's writings, where the role of consumption was deemed paramount:

> Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production; and the interest of the producer ought to be attended to only so far as it may be necessary for promoting that of the consumer. The maxim is so perfectly self-evident that it would be absurd to attempt to prove it. (Smith, 1776/2009, p. 390)

The notion of consumer sovereignty, as such, was introduced by William H. Hutt (1940, p. 66), and some scholars have used it to characterize consumer power as an expression of democratic values. For instance, economist Ludwig von Mises affirmed that "the capitalist society is a democracy in which every penny represents a ballot paper" (von Mises, 1951, p. 443), while, for politician Enoch Powell, "in a free economy, not even the poorest is disfranchised, we are all voting all the time" (Powell, 1969, p. 33).

Consumer sovereignty involves improving effective consumer choice through competition and trade liberalization (Averitt & Lande, 1997), which are in turn the foundational principles in classical economics that paved the way to the industrialization of food systems. Consumer sovereignty materialized, first, in the mercantile-industrial food regime through a "cheap food" policy and a food-as-a-commodity approach that created the modern, manufactured diet (Friedmann, 2005a). More recently, through global sourcing of foods (McMichael, 2009, p. 150), the corporate food regime is also representative of consumer sovereignty in that it privileges consumer demands, however unsustainable, thereby furthering the divide between rich and poor eaters (Friedmann, 2005b, p. 228). As a result, consumer sovereignty has led to a kind of structural violence (cf. Galtung, 1969) in which privileged populations have profited from increased information access, expanded choices, and better quality and healthier foods, while disenfranchised communities, subjugated to enduring gender, race, and class disparities, remained imprisoned in a reality of poor information access, limited choices, and lower quality, frequently unhealthy foods. While consumer sovereignty promotes the idea that consumers can "vote" for more sustainable or healthy food systems by, for instance, buying organic foods, it is now acknowledged that this choice does nothing to alter power differentials that characterize conventional food systems or to improve the food environment of communities with limited income (Carlson & Chappell, 2015, p. 6).

In that consumer sovereignty overlooks a number of systemic factors that affect consumers' decisions, I argue

that it does not expand but instead constrains democracy in the food system. It underplays how class, location, and culture-based imbalances in information access can influence the preferences of consumers, making some "votes" freer than others. In fact, socio-economic conditions determine key factors in consumer choice, including taste (Bourdieu, 1979), the perceived versus actual distance to food (Caspi, Kawachi, Subramanian, Adamkiewicz, & Sorensen, 2012), and the economic affordability of just and healthy food (PolicyLink & The Food Trust, 2013; Treuhaft & Karpyn, 2010). Through a focus on individual market-based choice, consumer sovereignty curtails the possibility for more complex forms of engagement in the food system, beyond individual, passive consumption. Instead, I wish to argue here that social innovations of the alternative food system create spaces and practices "beyond the market" (cf. Wittman et al., 2017) where more voices can be heard through people's collective agency, and not through the limiting criterion of one's purchasing power. If we are to move towards more democratic food systems, we must first recognize, and then support and bolster, the diversity and heterogeneity of engagement opportunities that social innovations provide.

2.2. The Role of Social Innovations in Democratizing Food Systems

Socially-innovative, citizen-led local initiatives have proliferated in recent years, building alternatives to the conventional food system (Renting et al., 2012; Whatmore, Stassart, & Renting, 2003). Their members display varying dimensions of agency by integrating new ways of expressing oneself beyond consumption and redistributing power in the food system through its re-localization (Pleyers, 2011a). The fact that a community organization is grassroots or "bottom-up" does not mean that it is inherently democratic (Born & Purcell, 2006; Drake, 2014; Joseph, 2002). However, I argue here that, collectively, these new voices push beyond the limitations of a model based on consumer sovereignty, towards one based on collective agency, where one's relation to food is not determined by one's purchasing power nor reduced to mere consumption. While only a few can "vote with their wallet," social innovations can allow many to collectively act in the food system, effectively contributing to the democratization of food systems.

In the last decade there has been an increased interest in unpacking the meanings of democracy in the food system. First, food democracy was defined in opposition to "food control," in the form of an "inclusive approach to food policy" where genuine debates between opposing opinions are held (Lang & Heasman, 2004, p. 279) and as a "method for participation," where all members have knowledge and opportunities to shape their food system (Hassanein, 2003, p. 83). Later on, it was defined "in opposition to the corporatization of the organics' movement" (Johnston, Biro, & Mackendrick,

2009, p. 510). Other authors have continued to frame the debate of food democracy in terms of "localism" (Brecher, Costello, & Smith, 2000; Lappé & Lappé, 2002; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007), while others frame it as "the problem of commodity fetishism or, put differently, *a lack of transparency* in the food system that obscures how relations of production are socially produced rather than naturally given" (Johnston et al., 2009, p. 511, emphasis added).

To these definitions, this article adds the ability for social innovations to create contexts where collective agency can be exercised and reproduced, and where acting collectively, and not individuals' purchasing power, becomes central to the expansion of democracy in the food system. Connected to collective action (Hassanein, 2008) and a capacity to act politically in the food system (Moragues-Faus, 2017), I contend that food democracy is more related to a collective action-based democracy than to a market-based democracy, making collective agency a key feature of social innovations' democratizing efforts in the food system.

Human agency is used in a variety of disciplines to refer to concepts as disparate as action, motivation, personhood, intentionality, or resistance. Modern sociology first explored agency within the historical structure-agency debate (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1979) through "seek[ing] to explain relationship(s) that obtain between human action, on the one hand, and some global entity which we may call 'the system,' on the other" (Ortner, 1984, p. 148). Despite the richness of the debate, a number of authors pointed at the problematic blind spots to which the lack of autonomy between the two concepts led (Archer, 1988, p. 80), eventually questioning their ability to explain resistance and social change (see, e.g., Ahearn, 2001; Sewell, 1992) and the very interest of the debate itself (Wallerstein, 2004, p. 317). Sociologists and social theorists in the late 1990s and early 2000s explored paths beyond the collapse of human intentionality (agency) and the historical process (structure) into one another, some calling for the transcendence of the opposition (Fuchs, 2001; Sztompka, 1994), others proposing we overcome the dichotomy by looking closely at language and the linguistic form (Ahearn, 2001; Leipold & Winkel, 2017).

Importantly for this study, typologies or dimensions of agency could be more explanatory than its mere relationship to structure, "to account for variability and change in actors' capacities" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 968). Alkire (2005, p. 226), for instance, notes that "agency is exercised with respect to distinct dimensions and indeed it is precisely the dimension-specific agency levels that may be of interest." While authors have distinguished different types of agency (Ortner, 2001, p. 79) and used temporal understandings (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) to capture these distinct dimensions, they missed what Moulaert and colleagues explain is needed to analyze agency: factors such as "practical consciousness," drivers of individual agency including efforts to promote

new values and interests, organizational agency (capacities and goals), and the role of inter-organizational collaboration (Moulaert, Jessop, & Mehmood, 2016, p. 171).

Recent research has identified that socially-innovative collective agency is simultaneously multi-faceted and iterative (Ling & Dale, 2014) and that it leads to the creation of contexts where collective action can have a potentially transformative impact (Haxeltine, Avelino, et al., 2016). Despite this, little attention has been devoted to unpacking the concept in the context of alternative food systems. Contributing to this literature, I propose we understand collective agency as a relational method that citizen groups put in practice both inwardly (exercising agency within a collective endeavor) and outwardly (stimulating or enabling agency in others). To substantiate this assertion, I draw on what prior literature has identified as enabling organizational features of collective agency while restricting the subject within the bounds of viable empirical exploration. Specifically, I propose an agency typology of four dimensions in order to understand how social innovations enact and continuously reproduce it in the food system: consciousness, individual voluntary action (IVA), cooperative agency, and agency feedback loop.

"Consciousness" is based on Moulaert et al. (2016) and Giddens's concept of "practical consciousness," the second of the three stages of consciousness (Giddens, 1986, p. 41), also known as "tacit knowledge" (Lippuner & Werlen, 2009, p. 39), which refers to the "reflexive monitoring of conduct by human agents" (Giddens, 1986, p. 44). In the context of alternative food systems, it is also generally referred to as a first step in active engagement (De Bouver, 2011, p. 172). "Consciousness" refers here to the internalization of the need to act, to transform oneself in conjunction with others. Because this transformation is ongoing, consciousness in this study was present and continuously enhanced as individuals transitioned from one agency dimension to another.

"IVA" was designed to refer to the "drivers of individual agency includ[ing]…efforts to promote new identities, values, and interests" (Moulaert et al., 2016, p. 171), capturing the idea of an individual who voluntarily participates in a collective project but does so as a passive participant. This characteristic is based on idea that there can be active participation, as detailed in research on food activism (Crossan, Cumbers, McMaster, & Shaw, 2016; Seyfang, 2006), but also passive participation, defined by research on political action in social media as "engaging in a platform while being subject to processes of decision that happen outside of one's control" (Casemajor, Delfin, Goerzen, & Delfanti, 2015, p. 856). IVA refers to a passive engagement within a collective endeavor, typically without a leading role.

Bandura developed measures of collective agency, namely agency that pertains to outcomes "achievable only through interdependent efforts," pointing out that perceived collective efficacy is not simply the sum of the efficacy beliefs of individual members (Bandura, 2000,

pp. 76–77). Taking this into account, the dimension "co-operative agency" was framed to simultaneously capture "organizational agency, that is, organizational capacities and goals" (Moulaert et al., 2016, p. 171) and notions of active participation detailed above, where actors take on and lead specific initiatives or projects and make their active involvement a key part of their lives.

Lastly, the dimension "agency feedback loop" was designed to capture Kirchberg's combination of Giddens' and Bourdieu's models into an "agency-structure feedback loop" where individuals reevaluate their positions or routines and improve their situation or structure (Kirchberg, 2007, p. 120). This feedback loop is considered "the prerequisite for strategies of social transformation towards sustainability" (Kagan, 2011, p. 119). In this dimension, as an enabling organizational feature, actors collectively exercise agency to further create new capacities for action, helping others create their own initiatives and eventually enable other dimensions themselves, as a feedback loop.

3. Methodology

The above typology was applied to design a questionnaire-interview implemented in 104 mixed-method interviews that lasted between one and three hours and were conducted with an equal number of social innovations of the global North between 2015 and 2017. My goal in this study was to understand the perceptions and interpretations of each agency dimension by members of social innovations of the food system, the means and messages used to attempt to enable or stimulate each dimension, and the challenges encountered in terms of perceived effectiveness. In so doing, however, my goal was *not* to empirically verify a change in individual or collective behaviors or a change at the societal level as a result of particular messages or mechanisms, as this would have necessitated both the use of psychological methods and a temporal (before and after) assessment of the effectiveness of the said strategies. Instead, the contribution of this article lies in exposing the organizational strategies that social innovations use to create a context where collective agency can be enabled and, critically, where a transition between dimensions can be made possible—a phenomenon I termed "agency in motion" (explained in Section 4).

Interviewed social innovations were located in six regions of the developed Northern hemisphere to be able to compare them easily under similar historical, socioeconomic, and political realities (see Table 1). These regions were chosen due to the high concentration of socially innovative initiatives, my previous personal connection with them, and the absence of language barriers to access these sites.

To determine the sample size, I followed the approach of mixed-method studies, balancing qualitative considerations (favoring small samples) with quantitative considerations (favoring larger samples; González

Table 1. Interviewed initiatives by location (n = 104).

Belgium		Germany		Italy		Japan		Spain		United States	
Brussels (region)	13	North Rhine-Westphalia	11	Lombardy	16	Tokyo (region)	12	Madrid (region)	17	San Francisco Bay Area, California	20
Wallonia	2	Hessen	3	Emilia-Romagna	1	Chiba	3				
		Rhineland-Palatinate	2			Kanagawa	2				
		Saarland	2								

Castro, Kellison, Boyd, & Kopak, 2010, p. 343). While in purely qualitative studies a practice is to "reach data saturation," criteria for defining "saturation" are often intuitive and inexact and promote smaller sample sizes, which may be antithetical from a quantitative perspective (González Castro et al., 2010, p. 343). By setting the number of initiatives sampled at between 15–20 per country from the outset, I avoided the perils of *p*-hacking or "optional stopping," in which researchers select subjects until they obtain significant results and then stop collecting data (Lindsay, 2015, p. 1828). To reach that approximate number, I combined a purposeful sampling strategy to initially select a small number of sites in each country (characteristic of qualitative research), and then followed it by probabilistic sampling involving randomly choosing initiatives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 111; Yoshikawa, Weisner, Kalil, & Way, 2008, p. 349) but always based on the following criteria:

- They are collective, citizen-led initiatives: Although government-led initiatives were excluded from this study, hybrid initiatives (e.g., citizen-led but government-funded) were selected if the degree of freedom of citizens vis-à-vis the government was sufficient, measured by the degree of intervention/guidance of the government after funding was provided;
- They are local initiatives: Their field of action was relatively small, regional at most. While country-wide organizations were definitionally excluded, some initiatives were local chapters of a nation-wide umbrella organization, and some selected organizations also developed programs outside of their geographic scope (e.g., local chapters of international organizations with solidarity programs with the Global South). This did not pose problems because interviews were explicitly limited to actions within the local, immediate areas;
- They are food system actors: Initiatives were not required to solely focus on food and agriculture (this could be one of their many fields of action), but it had to be at least *equal* or *superior* to their other goals—if food and agriculture was only a minor part of the initiative, they were excluded, and if they had other branches (e.g., climate, energy,

waste), then during the interview it was clarified that answers should be restricted to their work within the food system;
- They share a vision of sustainability: While the definition of sustainability can be controversial, interviewees shared a vision of contributing to a more sustainable future, in social, economic, or environmental terms.

Interviewed organizations were further limited to the following five broad categories (defined in Table 2), said to represent an important part of food activism today in the global North (see Alkon & Guthman, 2017), the geographic scope of this article. The large number of initiatives interviewed inevitably led to a high variability of organizational foci as well as policy and political contexts. However, a detailed account of these variations (part of structure, as opposed to agency) lies outside the scope of this article.

Social innovations were initially contacted with an explanation of the practical relevance of the research project for their daily actions, and interviews were scheduled to match moments where several interested initiative members (frequently formal or informal spokespeople) would be present. Before, during, and after interviews I was also invited to participate and observe in meetings and/or activities of the organization, which allowed me to collect additional data on members' interactions and different perceptions (conceptions) of agency.

In addition, the agency framework was presented to actors as a way to think about their daily work and activities, and a dialogue was established about its usefulness and interest. Many reported that conceiving of their work in terms of the stimulation of the agency dimensions was helpful, sharing their thoughts about how their initiative developed (or not) activities to instill each dimension. However, aware of the tendency to provide social desirable answers and to avoid dispositional mood states and tendencies on the part of interviewees to acquiesce or respond in a lenient, moderate, or extreme manner, I obtained predictor and criteria measures from different sources (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Podsakoff, 2011, p. 548). I randomly selected some initiatives to have an in-depth conversation with about the agency typology, whereas with others I was not so ex-

Table 2. Interviewed initiatives (n = 104).

Category	Definition
Community garden projects (16)	Established organization or informal group of citizens who coordinate a plot of land within an urban environment in which food is grown for personal or collective use.
Farmers' associations (13)	Associations of farmers or food processors, in the form of a network, platform, or cooperative or an ad hoc farmers' market.
Producer-Consumer Partnerships (PCPs) (26)	PCPs include consumer groups, Community Supported Agriculture groups (CSAs), online food distribution portals, food cooperatives, and second-level CSAs (food cooperatives focused on distribution).
Transition towns (10)	Local chapters part of the Transition Town Network, founded by Rob Hopkins in 2006.
Slow Food convivia (8)	Local chapters part of Slow Food International, founded by Carlo Petrini in the 1980s.
Community organizations (31)	Formal organizations or informal citizen groups formed to solve an issue of importance for its constituency, such as food banks, consumers' rights organizations, and advocacy organizations involved in the food system.

plicit. This allowed me to see whether the typology was truly applicable, making it more difficult (although not impossible) to have socially desirable answers.

Data from interviews were analyzed following a triangulation method (cf. Hesse-Biber, 2010) of: (1) qualitative data, including discursive data and data regarding activities of selected initiatives resulting from open-ended questions, qualitative comments provided to closed-ended questions, and additional data collected through participant observation; and (2) aggregated quantitative data from closed-ended questions (using a Likert scale). This combination of quantitative and qualitative data allowed me to develop a more nuanced understanding of actors' lived experiences than a purely quantitative study would have, while at the same time allowing for comparison across regions, a more difficult endeavor when using only qualitative data. To maximize the likelihood that the questionnaire and interview data aligned, I ensured interview prompts and questionnaire items were highly similar across initiatives, but, because this alignment comes at the cost of losing the richness of mixed methods, during interviews I accounted for differences in organizational types and adapted the questions accordingly (Harris & Brown, 2010, pp. 11–12).

While, in a coordinated design, methods are 'mixed' at the end when drawing conclusions, this research followed an "integrated design," where points of interaction between the different evaluation methods were planned throughout the duration of the study, and so results are less a report of findings from each method, and more a synthesis of all study data (Greene, Benjamin, & Goodyear, 2001, p. 31). Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis techniques with a directed approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) with the help of the software package Atlas.ti, and quantitative data using Excel and STATA. Through clustering analysis, particularly

useful for identifying patterns in complex data (Macia, 2015), in the following section I highlight the strategies perceived as most effective and reported by actors of initiatives particularly invested in enabling each dimension.

4. Collective "Agency in Motion": Working towards Democracy in the Food System

This section discusses the relevance of four dimensions of collective agency for the interviewed members of 104 social innovations. It shows that enabling collective agency means enabling a transition between agency dimensions—I call this "agency in motion." I draw on the strategies described by these actors ("strategies" understood as organizational mechanisms put in place by social innovations to create a context where collective agency can be enabled and reproduced) to illustrate how social innovations enable this transition between dimensions (see Figure 1, explained throughout the section). I argue that collective agency, when enabled in motion, constitutes an important feature of food democracy in that, contrary to consumer sovereignty, it allows for a proactive, continuously evolving engagement of local communities in shaping their own food systems.

4.1. Consciousness

Stimulating consciousness was a goal shared across a variety of initiatives and was related to two aspects: improving information about nutrition, environmental protection, farming practices, and new forms of producer-consumer relations, and increasing control in everyday food-related decisions (e.g., what to eat, where to eat, when to eat, how much to spend on food). The founder of a Japanese community garden and educational organization explained what enabling consciousness in others
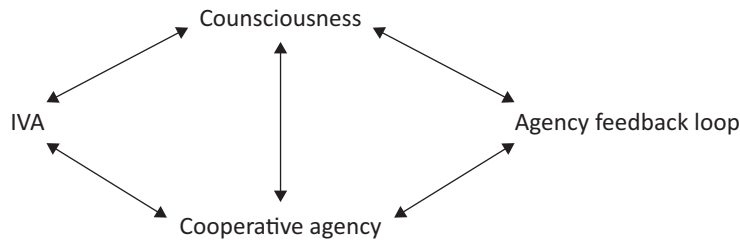
Figure 1. Relationship between agency dimensions.

means, in their view:

> People don't produce food, nature produces food, and we just help that process. That awareness is a revolution….We're helping people build that awareness. I'm trying to get people out of this role of consumers, which is very disempowering.

As I show in the following subsections, consciousness is a distinct agency dimension because, while it can be the beginning of a person's involvement in an initiative, it is in constant evolution and can in fact be acquired *after* joining a collective endeavor.

Aside from education and awareness-raising community initiatives (30 of the 104 interviewed initiatives), consciousness was emphasized as a goal by Slow Food convivia (8), farmers' markets with specifically education as a goal (5), and "healthy-food" PCPs (12). The last group is characterized by low levels of political engagement and a high interest in healthy, local food, where discussions often revolved around individual health and nutrition, as opposed to collective aspects of food (which I refer to as "solidarity" PCPs). Transition initiatives and farmers' associations, on the other hand, reported a lesser interest in stimulating consciousness (3 and 2, respectively).

For members of interviewed Slow Food convivia, while consciousness was crucial for individual behavioral change, it was framed as consumer education regarding purchasing options, which may be at odds with a collective agency approach to food democracy: "Our vision is the sustainability of the food system…where consumers are aware, they become co-producers, and they vote with what they consume." This focus on "voting with your fork" ties one's ability to act to one's purchasing power, de facto negating the agency of those without the economic means to "vote." While consumer education for an "informed voting" is done through events and gatherings, it is this self-appointed role of impartial judge that allowed Slow Food to not take positions, as a convivium member suggested: "I don't think Slow Food takes a stance regarding many issues because there is a lot of gray area." Despite its effort to bring varied audiences together to discuss, critics have pointed at the problematic results of their gatherings in terms of equity, including for being insensitive to food justice claims such as farmers' debt and food affordability (Greenaway, 2012) and for implicitly situating European culture and tradition as a superior lifestyle and benchmark (Gaytán, 2004).

Although some are free, not only can events be expensive (sometimes costing up to $200), but convivia can additionally set their own annual membership fees, ranging from $30 for its youth network to $250 for donors. While Slow Food's ability to create a wide range of options for participation was observed in the present study, the emphasis of the organization on consumer, market-based solutions and its inattention to questions of equity meant its approach to food democracy was more related to consumer sovereignty than to the collective agency perspective proposed here.

A different approach to consciousness was highlighted by members of other initiatives that either developed broader messages to discuss food-related issues with their participants (including environmental matters, climate change, and development), or tied food and agriculture to broader issues such as solidarity, gender equality, and capitalism. On one hand, some initiatives reported that instilling curiosity in an audience with related but separate interests (e.g., climate change) can be a first step to convey a message about current food system challenges. On the other hand, tying food and agriculture to wider social or political issues can also provide an opportunity to put ideas in practice, for instance by connecting urban gardening with values such as sustainability and diversity.

In order to convey consciousness in an effective way, community-based and farmers' organizations expressed the need to build relationships with local communities, as expressed by a U.S. community organization:

> If you knock on people's doors and talk to them you'll also build relationships and you'll get to know what's motivating people, if they have a family, or they're sick, or whatever, building that relationship is what's going to allow you to figure out what's motivating them and where are they going to connect to the work that you're trying to do.

Although several initiatives reported using a strategy of "meeting people where they are at" in order to build those relationships, a U.S. farmers' organization described the disconnect between universal awareness discourses and the reality of low-income communities:

> If you have people living in concentrations of poverty, where there is police brutality, they can't find housing, if someone is facing an eviction, trying to connect to a

farm-to-table program is probably not the highest priority…if people are getting shot by police, they probably don't care about having whole foods in their diet.

To address this problem, initiatives reported the need to create an environment where participants can be where they are in terms of consciousness, authentically engaging with them, which in turn involves entering into a dialogue where both parties can change as a result of the interaction.

More informed participation is always good for democracy, even in a consumer sovereignty model. But these experiences show that the foundations for a greater democratic system, beyond ethical consumerism, lie in enabling consciousness through practice in and empathic discussions about values that go beyond food itself, such as community, poverty, or personal relationships. This, however, raises questions regarding how to ensure a transition from practical consciousness to engaged action.

4.2. Individual Voluntary Action

A Berkeley-based agricultural project illustrated this transition as follows:

People come here because they see something good that is aligned with their values, that there are activities that they are drawn to and that they can participate in…but they're not necessarily seeing this as part of a personal agenda to transform the food system.

Enabling IVA means providing opportunities for individuals who wish to turn consciousness into actions for a specific project, promoting involvement through volunteering or attending events. Certain types of PCPs (5) with coexisting agency dimensions (such as CSA networks, which can include both highly engaged participants and casual volunteers), Slow Food convivia (8), community gardens (13), and Transition towns (6) emphasized the importance of welcoming people without prior awareness about issues that those initiatives consider important. For example, while in small consumer groups it is easier to actively engage in organizational activities (e.g., farming, book-keeping, or helping with deliveries), larger networks tend to include passive consumers whose participation is limited to paying a subscription fee and to picking up their food basket.

Similarly, community gardens and Transition initiatives may allow for this kind of passive participation through certain activities that do not require high levels of engagement. In fact, it may be critical for the survival of some of these groups to allow for and indeed encourage both low and high levels of engagement and seek heterogeneity in order to create a "wide door" for participation where anybody can become an actor at their own pace. This, in turn, can help initiatives to survive through participants' evolving motivations, life changes, and asymmetric time commitments.

This "wide door" was also considered by PCPs and community gardens as an asset in avoiding homophily, or the tendency to join groups with similar characteristics to their own (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Political discourses, in this sense, were perceived as both an obstacle and an opportunity. On the one hand, a political stance on capitalism or food sovereignty was reported to be potentially alienating for those without (or with different) political interests: "We know our discourse is not for everyone from the moment we start talking about anti-capitalism," as a member of a Madrid-wide platform put it. On the other hand, Transition towns reported that providing a simultaneously intrinsically motivated and enjoyable way of participating allowed them to remain politically neutral and thereby attract more diverse groups of participants. As a member of a Japanese Transition initiative expressed: "Instead of saying 'let's save society,' we just try to say, 'try growing some rice, it's fun.'"

However, it was also understood by some initiatives that using individual discourses, such as health, as a main motivator can stand contrary to the interests of the broader alternative food movement (see Moragues-Faus, 2017), and may run up against concerns of equity and privilege (Guthman, 2008; Guthman, Morris, & Allen, 2006). As a Spanish CSA member asserted:

For people who have two jobs and four kids and who can buy 3€ chicken nuggets, paying 50€ for a box of veggies that are dirty and full of slugs is not something they want or a high priority for them.

Although this issue remains unresolved, interviewees reported different solutions to the question of how to seek heterogeneity in a more equitable way. These included providing mechanisms so that economic and class status do not become structural, economic barriers to participation; providing realistic expectations about the actual impact of the initiative so that motivations can be sustained over time; developing mechanisms to encourage ownership over the project; and managing varying and evolving motivations throughout participants' lives.

These strategies therefore point at further ways to enact "egalitarian food democracies," that is, developing new ways of being in common by bridging the gap between individual and collective action (Moragues-Faus, 2017, p. 457). Purposefully creating "wide doors" for participation can in turn lead to increased diversity within and across initiatives, an important ingredient of a more democratic food system, by creating spaces for more inclusive practices and attitudes in terms of the political and economic profile of current and prospective participants.

4.3. Cooperative Agency

Recent research has shown that social innovations may first attract members through flexible requests, then

stimulate active participation through building connections with others (Haxeltine, Jørgensen, et al., 2016, p. 15). IVA provides an important steppingstone towards higher levels of engagement such as cooperative agency, as part of the "agency in motion" approach argued here, and this transition was described as a critical step in the ability of initiatives to effect systemic change. Four types of initiatives emphasized cooperative agency: "solidarity" PCPs (such as community-supported agriculture groups) and food cooperatives (17) where members share and often rotate responsibilities, thus acquiring new skills and transferring knowledge to participants exercising other agency dimensions; Transition towns (9), which are often a breeding ground for new initiatives to sprout due to their innovative methodologies, as well as for particularly active individuals who tend to concentrate in these areas and work together; community organizations interested in broader community participation processes (8); and initiatives involved in broader networks (12), a category cross-cutting community organizations, PCPs, and community gardens.

Actors in this study reported that enabling a transition from IVA to cooperative agency requires the development of spaces where conversations about individual *versus* collective choices and coherence in areas beyond food can be held, so that senses of powerlessness can be addressed, as a member of a community garden expressed: "It's very beautiful to see coherence as communicative channels: If you start with food, why not be coherent in energy, in finance, etc.?"

However, there exist barriers at the individual level that inhibit the capacity for a participant who is already engaged in an initiative to think they can influence or change the system through their own behavior, which may in turn lead to apathy and disengagement. Although this question involves psychological and behavioral factors that lie beyond the scope of this article, initiatives used a number of strategies to engage with this issue. Strategies included developing personal relationships with and among participants, designing activities for an active involvement, engaging participants on an individual level, and acknowledging and managing conflict as a natural part of the life of a group.

Although the direction of motion that was most common was from IVA to cooperative agency, it is also possible to transition directly (without going through IVA) from consciousness to cooperative agency. This is particularly true when it comes to individuals who have developed a strong, internalized awareness of the need to act (consciousness), but instead of joining an initiative as a spectator, without a leading role (IVA), they join others to co-develop a project in which to collectively put consciousness in practice (cooperative agency). A member of a Spanish agricultural project explained:

> Maybe at that time, at least myself, I felt like I took part in debates and conferences, and I read a lot, but I needed a project to put all the theory into prac-

tice, a practice with a global ideology but working on something as everyday-like as food, health, the way in which we are a part of what surrounds us, things like that, and we came up with this collective project.

In this line, fostering a sense of collective identity through a shared endeavor, either in a new or an already established initiative, is an important ingredient for enabling a transition towards cooperative agency. If a more democratic food system is characterized by an increased diversity in the modes of engagement ("beyond the market") that are allowed for by social innovations, then these experiences are contributing to a more heterogeneous, democratic food system by enabling cooperative agency, as part of the *agency in motion* approach argued here.

4.4. Agency Feedback Loop

Lastly, agency feedback loop was designed to capture the collective exercise of agency in order to further create new capacities for action, as a feedback loop. These initiatives practice change from below, spreading through emulation or swarming (Pleyers, 2011b), exemplifying what Ling and Dale described as "the capacity to stimulate novel network formations and social innovation" (2014, p. 17). A Belgian community organization believes that supporting other groups can in fact be key for the transition towards more sustainable food systems because of the multiplying effect it can have:

> We started from the evidence that people like food-buying groups and that it's a good thing. From there, we support the creation of those initiatives, but it's just a means, part of the transition, and we see that people who belong to food-buying groups do other stuff and participate in other things, talk about it with their neighbors and inspire other people.

Initiatives operating within this dimension were farmers' associations (3) and community organizations (7) aimed at providing skills or training and at creating networks, and community gardens with a focus on job creation (3). Initiatives that had an advocacy, knowledge dissemination or job creation component, and those that were constituted as a network or a platform were most likely to strive to enable a context for agency feedback loop. For instance, some initiatives targeting specific subsets of the population (farmers of color, low-income youth, or migrant communities) provided economic opportunities for their participants to start their own projects, aimed at enabling other agency dimensions themselves. Similarly, providing training and visibility, stimulating collaborations, and providing logistics or information support were strategies reported by farmers' associations and community organizations to enable agency feedback loop as part of their swarming strategies. For instance, an Italian CSA network reported that, after their creation,

"twenty farms switched to organic, rebuilding some sectors such as bread, which now has the greatest number of farmers and GAS [CSAs] that have joined the food group." Lastly, organizations set up as a network provided support as a platform, forum, or meeting space for initiatives in an area, identifying and relieving member organizations of tasks that could be delegated, and offering a model to help other groups establish their own version of the initiative.

The democratizing influence of enabling agency feedback loop can therefore be seen in the proliferation of new modes of engagement in the food system through the creation of new projects, supporting other initiatives, providing economic opportunities and training, and stimulating collaborations through networks and platforms. Understood this way, agency feedback loop allows for the expansion of food democracy by generating novel forms of collective autonomy and mutual reliance within the food system, thereby allowing more individuals and groups to have a voice regarding the shape of the food system.

5. Conclusion

While the conventional food system, through its consumer sovereignty logic, reduces agency to individual purchasing choices at supermarkets, social innovations recreate and allow for other means of expression, much richer and more complex than purchasing power. If we accept that democracy in the food system must mean more than just choosing what to buy at the supermarket, and that social innovations provide critical ways for collective expression and engagement beyond consumption, then identifying how collective agency is enacted and reproduced by these groups may be critical for furthering our understanding of food democracy as a meaningful signifier.

In this article, I have suggested there are four dimensions of collective agency that social innovations enable (consciousness, IVA, cooperative agency, and agency feedback loop). Substantiating these four dimensions through empirical evidence, I have illustrated the non-linearity of human agency: Participating in a collective endeavor does not follow a pre-charted, linear path. In this sense, this article has shown how social innovations enable a transition from one dimension to another, a phenomenon I termed and illustrated as *agency in motion*. As illustrated in Figure 1, this transition was observed between consciousness and all the other dimensions, between IVA and collective agency, and between collective agency and agency feedback loop. The transition did not necessarily have a strict direction, but the continuous motion that social innovations enabled was a key feature in the strategies examined.

Importantly, this phenomenon of *agency in motion* allows for evolving modes of engagement, reflecting the changing nature of agency throughout the life of a group or an individual. Allowing for and encouraging an *agency in motion* may in fact be critical to the survival of many of these groups. It gives them the flexibility they require to sustain participants' motivations over time and allows them to preemptively account for the varying levels of commitment, (a-)political aspirations, and the economic capacity of their members. This, in turn, can be key for building a more equitable, diverse, and heterogeneous food system truly worthy of being called democratic.

Furthermore, although from the outside, these groups may be seen as distinct categories of food initiatives (e.g., PCPs or community gardens), when looking at them from a collective agency perspective the result can better reflect their needs in terms of policy support. For example, initiatives aimed at enabling IVA may have more in common among themselves, in terms of policy needs, than, for instance, community garden projects, due to their divergent goals. While some members of community gardens use gardening as a teaching experience or a hobby, others may use it to create economic opportunities for disadvantaged communities. Looking at these initiatives from an agency perspective allows for these differing practices to surface, practices that can in turn be publicly supported. When adopting an agency lens for policy, supporting the efforts of social innovations to seek heterogeneity in a more equitable way, through the strategies illustrated in this article, suddenly becomes possible; the capacity of these groups to provide knowledge and opportunities for citizens to change the ways they consume but also relate to food more generally, can then be bolstered. In this way, government institutions can engage in innovative policy-making to reinforce the agency-enabling efforts of these groups, and therefore to support food democracy.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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(NB: Translations provided here are for reference only. They have not been agreed upon by the original authors and should not be reused.)

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COGITATIO

Article

Anti-Democratic Tenets? Behavioural-Economic Imaginaries of a Future Food System

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Abstract
This article makes the central argument that basic democratic values such as justice, autonomy and participation run the risk of being neglected when designing 'nudges' (i.e., indirect suggestions to influence individual behaviour) for sustainable behaviour change in the context of food governance, potentially complicating a democratisation of the food system. 'Nudges' uphold freedom of choice while simultaneously advocating a non-coercive soft force of paternalism to help people realise their preferences, maximise societal well-being and meet macro-sustainability goals. While the promises of the 'nudge' approach are widely echoed, nudging is also being contested because of its possible anti-democratic effects, such as individualisation, depoliticization and the emphasis of the status of citizens as 'consumer-citizens.' From a food democracy perspective, these dangers may undermine efforts to organise collective political action and impede alternative visions of a future food system. Empirically, the article examines specifically how behavioural-economic approaches imagine transitions to a more sustainable food system. By using the "COOP Supermarket of the Future" as a case study, the following analysis will illustrate how private actors are increasingly involved in steering consumer choice towards socially desirable actions. The analysis suggests that the design of choice environments may under specific circumstances increase the susceptibility of individuals to the influence of corporate preferences and simultaneously decrease the prospects for democratic legitimation and decision-making. The article therefore critically assesses whether reforming the food system by altering consumers' choice-sets and the attribution of personal responsibility, may in fact point towards implicit anti-democratic tenets underlying the 'will to nudge' citizens.

1. Introduction

The current politics of food are subject to two simultaneous large-scale tendencies: concentration and decentralisation. On the one hand, the industrial food system is increasingly concentrated in many vital market sectors such as meat, cocoa, tea, bananas, etc. (Carolan, 2012; Clapp, 2016). The manifestation of oligopolistic structures signifies the increasing influence of a small number of transnational corporations over large systems of food production, distribution and consumption. On the other hand, non-governmental actors, grassroots initiatives and social innovators, working towards the regionalisation and localisation of processes within the food system, are enacting alternatives that challenge the industrial food complex and its dominant rationalities regarding productivity, competition and economic growth (de Young & Princen, 2012; Gumbert & Fuchs, 2018; Schlosberg & Coles, 2016). How the global food system develops and takes shape in the future, that is, if socially and ecologically sustainable practices can be upscaled to have systemic impacts, or if the corporate model of cheap labor, cheap food, and global commodity chains is solidified and expanded further, hinges on a number

of different normative assumptions and political values that have to be scrutinized.

This study presents the concept of food democracy as instrumental to analyse these dynamics, as well as contributing towards an understanding of the barriers that are currently in place preventing food systems from moving into the direction of enhanced sustainability and justice. Pathways to a future food system are constantly envisioned and enacted by a range of different actors. Alternative lifestyles and 'food experiments' (urban gardening, food sharing networks, etc.) make sense of how we interact with food by crafting food narratives, and by establishing different material circulations of food commodities and values (Schlosberg & Coles, 2016; Stock, Carolan, & Rosin, 2015). These practices contain a vision of what a fair food system might look like and many actors have started to call on a wider community to recognise problems, to participate in discussions and to be hopeful that a transition is possible. And yet, contemporary policy practices in the field of food governance similarly envision necessary changes to the food system and ways to get there. They too tell stories about the most urgent problems, best practice approaches, most effective solutions and the role of politics and democracy. An increasingly important source of food system imaginaries resides in the political rationality of editing the choice sets of consumers. Behaviour change strategies, widely termed 'nudging', promise to be an effective tool for 'greening' consumption and for encouraging more sustainable lifestyles by incentivising people to behave more rationally and environmentally responsible. For these reasons, nudging has been applied to various consumption-relevant domains, such as food consumption, food purchasing and food waste reduction. The underlying approach of behavioural economics asserts that consumer behaviour is subject to specific biases and irrational character traits. Behaviour change strategies are said to help consumers to correct deficiencies by activating heuristics that steer them towards changing their actions and habits in directions that would benefit them without impacting individual freedom and autonomy. Interventions based on behavioural insights are therefore described as being able to "advance sustainable consumption 'automatically' through choice architecture and behavioural stimuli" (Reisch, Cohen, Thøgersen, & Tukker, 2016, p. 238).

However, behaviour change strategies in the context of sustainability governance are far from being uncontested. Behavioral economics has been linked to the reconfiguration of the state–citizen relationship, the rise of particular forms of neoliberalism and new ways of policy making driven by social-psychological discourses (Jones, Pykett, & Whitehead, 2013). Especially from a food democracy perspective, many inherent political risks and dangers are rarely reflected upon in contemporary discussions. This article, therefore, posits that the rationality of nudging considers sustainability as an allocation of individual responsibilities, raising questions whether collective political strategies are implicitly neglected as approaches to reform the food system and if structural problems can be recognised and addressed at all. Moreover, focusing on individual preferences makes consumers susceptible to corporate interests with possibilities of so-called 'choice architects' (the designers of behaviour change strategies) trying to manipulate consumer preferences for commercial or even personal gain. In the context of steering food consumption and food-related behaviours, supermarkets appear as a nodal point of interacting with consumers to steer responsible food choices. Consumers are thereby increasingly governed through marketized activation policies, instead of including them into a wider public debate on political food issues. These developments exhibit traits of a subtle process of depoliticising citizens, which may ultimately create barriers for organizing more forceful political action and to hold 'culprits of unsustainability' politically accountable. Therefore, the possible effects of the rise of behaviour change as a new go-to strategy in sustainable food governance and its impact on the prospects and limits of democratising food systems, need to be further scrutinised. The consideration of the concept of food democracy is important because it facilitates interconnecting discourses of sustainability, logics of governance and potential social and political (side) effects, as well as to interrogate the processes of meaning-making involved in the politics of food.

The article first covers several key arguments and ideas, starting with a short overview of contemporary debates on the benefits and potential dangers of advancing the behaviour change agenda in the context of governing food choices. In the following, the perspective of food democracy underlying the central argument is developed in connection to the notion of responsibilisation within governmentality studies to map the broader democratic implications of upscaling choice editing. Governmentality approaches are viewed as a fruitful supplement to analyse potential anti-democratic tenets within behaviour change strategies because they focus on the micro-mechanisms of how consumers are made responsible for their own conduct. Following this, the article uses data from participant observation conducted at the Expo 2015 in Milan where the "COOP Supermarket of the Future" was introduced: A store built 'from the ground up' based on behavioural science to advance sustainable food consumption and anti-food waste behaviours. The analysis shows that rather than to help consumers realise their 'true' preferences, choice architects occasionally design particular environments in order to 'nudge' consumers into resembling a 'fit' for overarching policy goals, thereby potentially decreasing the prospects for democratic legitimation and decision-making. Finally, the article concludes with an assessment of potential anti-democratic tendencies that choice architects need to take into account when steering food consumption and food waste behaviours towards sustainable ends.

2. Behaviour Change and Sustainable Consumption

Behaviour change strategies, originally applied in the fields of public health and public finances to steer individuals towards 'better' behaviours such as physical activity and organ donation, is now broadly applied in the field of sustainable consumption to motivate better food consumption, recycling and reducing household food waste production (Mont, Lehner, & Heiskanen, 2014). In this regard, using behavioural insights to decrease food waste has been applied in Norway, Finland, Italy, Hungary and Portugal among other European nation-states, by agents ranging from private companies, supermarket chains and food bank associations to national ministries (European Commission, 2016).

Within political discourse, behaviour change strategies are now widely known as 'nudges' (as well as choice editing, or choice architecture). A nudge can be considered as "any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behaviour in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives. To count as a mere nudge, the intervention must be cheap to avoid" (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, p. 6). The politico-philosophical underpinnings of nudging have been termed by Thaler and Sunstein (2008) "libertarian paternalism," embracing freedom of choice, hence libertarian, leaving individuals in control of their own food choices, and giving them soft nudges to develop their behaviour in a particular (ecologically responsible) direction. While libertarian paternalism provides a justification for behavior change, the actual mechanisms are guided by ideas from behavioural economics and psychology "to explain why people behave in ways that deviate from rationality as defined by classical economics" (Marteau, Ogilvie, Roland, Suhrcke, & Kelly, 2011, p. 228). Thaler and Sunstein (2008) argue that people suffer from systemic biases that lead to limited awareness, limited information-processing capacity and limited self-control. Nudging is seen as an instrumental technique that helps to overcome the hiatus between irrational and rational behaviours: People should be pushed to develop normative desirable behaviours, which in turn can be employed to either reduce, neutralise or even use ('exploit') systemic biases for policymaking. To this end, choice architecture relies on different instruments to induce desired outcomes, such as providing feedback (helping people to make better decisions), structured information plans or simplifying strategies. We see that behavioural policy options work first and foremost through giving people targeted, yet pre-structured information, containing a sometimes more explicit and at other times more implicit idea about appropriate behaviour change directions, which ideally individuals are to follow.

Subtle forms of influencing human decision-making can potentially have important consequences for enhancing sustainability (for a more comprehensive discussion on the role of nudges in sustainability governance and important tensions, see Bornemann & Burger, 2019).

As Sunstein explains: "Consumers can be greatly affected by apparently modest and inconsequential aspects of the social environment[,] [s]mall changes in that environment may have a large impact on consumer behaviour, potentially even larger than that of economic incentives" (Sunstein, 2013, p. 2). However, behaviour change strategies do not solely rely on rationalising consumer conduct through incentives. They also steer consumption choices through pro-environmental norms and the promotion of ethical behaviours, i.e., images of how to conduct oneself in light of a specific issue. The target of such interventions is therefore to simultaneously create rational actors (*homines oeconomici*) and responsible consumers. Hausman and Welch (2010) argue along similar lines that nudging must not be equated with offering information. They reject the idea that informing citizens would be strictly paternalistic, since "providing information and giving advice treats individuals as fully competent decision maker[s]" (p. 127). While there is nothing wrong with informing individuals about the scope of a particular problem and encouraging them to reflect on their own household practices, many nudges aim to "alter people's behaviour by triggering [or blocking] heuristics" (Barton & Grüne-Yanoff, 2015, p. 343), instead of simply providing information. Heuristics can be understood within this context as "strategies of judgment or decision that are fast and use only a few cues (instead of the totality of the available information)" (Barton & Grüne-Yanoff, 2015, p. 343). Consequently, heuristics can be used to make people value issues that they would typically overlook by triggering particular emotions or ethical sentiments that provoke 'good' or 'bad' reactions.

Especially in relation to the use of heuristics, nudging has been criticized on various grounds. Hausmann and Welch argue that conveying information subliminally and not by rational means qualifies as diminishing autonomy (Hausman & Welch, 2010, p. 128), therefore insinuating a state of not fully being in control over one's own actions (Bovens, 2009, p. 4). For example, using emotions and social norms to steer behaviour can lead to the a priori definition of a particular moral template, in which morally correct and wrong conducts are already pre-scripted. This simultaneously raises the question of whether behaviour change strategies are in fact libertarian, or if individual freedom is undermined—or even manipulated. Another line of critical inquiry sees nudges as depriving the subject of the possibility to engage in deliberation or developing the capacity for judgment. John, Smith, and Stoker (2009) assert that given enough time, information and an appropriate environment, citizens may come to optimal judgments for themselves and others, which is considered preferable over an external motivation for the correction of irrational behaviours. Within the literature surrounding the discussion, the worry that choice editing may include implicit anti-democratic tenets is very present. Two important questions remaining are whether these often dormant or invisible possibilities can be further scrutinised, and if so,

how. Therefore, within the following section, using the concept of food democracy as a normative guidance and the notion of responsibilisation as an interpretive tool to understand the mechanisms behind nudge strategies, we may arrive at a more substantial evaluation.

3. Food Democracy and the Dangers of Responsibilisation

The central aim of this section is to link the core concepts of food democracy, sustainability, responsibilisation and behaviour changes to one another. The following argument suggests that although nudges can in principle be designed to enhance democratic capacities of citizens to engage in broader socio-ecological transformations of the food system, more often than not they aim to foster personal pro-environmental lifestyle changes. Thereupon they promote a particular theory of social change and preferred environmental strategies, as well as a specific idea of human nature (Maniates, 2016). While such a focus is not detrimental in a normative sense, it nevertheless establishes a narrow view of how to make food systems more sustainable and runs the risk of undermining pluralist democratic visions of altering current trajectories (Schlosberg, 2004).

As stated in the introduction, the global food system is subject to very different imaginaries of how the structure itself needs to be reformed (or transformed). Across various social movements, we witness the emergence of new practices from food saving, food sharing and urban gardening, which explicitly addresses the negative externalities of material flows and their relation to consumption and wellbeing. They connect diverse social values to the specific materialities of food, deriving a particular political concept from it. For Schlosberg (2004), the appearance of new food practices is of critical importance due to their variety of ethical notions of the good and their application of different principles of justice to a range of situations that require negotiation in a given political context. Meanwhile, behaviour change strategies paint a different picture of future trajectories. Here, the problematisation starts with the inefficiency of the current food system and the irrational decisions of many actors involved, especially individual consumers. Consequently, advised solutions concern the rationalisation of consumer conduct, the adoption of post-materialist values (being ecologically responsible) and the creation of more transparency with the aid of digital technologies. In this sense, these strategies are less inclined to recognise variety and plurality as normative principles for envisioning social change.

The perspective of food democracy advocated in this article does not automatically prioritise either perspective advocated by social movements or behavioural change strategies. Rather these different imaginaries need to be subjected to democratic deliberation, and thereby to democratic legitimation and control. Food democracy is understood within this article as the:

Popular participation of citizens in formulating food-related policies, affecting one of society's most fundamental determinants of wellbeing [which] seeks to respond and contest forces that have managed to disproportionally influence policies to their benefit while curbing the effective participation of other members of society. (Wald, 2015, p. 111)

Such 'forces' can be understood as actors contributing to the spread of economic rationalities within the food system. This threatens the diversity and plurality of autonomous agricultural practices by damaging biodiversity, impacting ecosystem resilience and smallholder subsistence, as well as "the ability of the public to autonomously decide upon possible trajectories toward a future food system" (Fuchs & Gumbert, 2019, p. 273). The concept of food democracy problematises these developments and is concerned with how citizens can be included as political subjects within food politics. It is helpful for analyzing the normative implications of certain food policy choices and the relationships they constitute, whether between individuals and society or the public and the private sphere, as well as possible normative tensions between autonomy and heteronomy.

In order to apply food democracy fruitfully as an analytical perspective, its conceptual dimensions need to be specified. Taking David Schlosberg's (2004) understanding of justice as the conceptual core of food democracy, there are three interconnected dimensions of justice which he highlights: distribution, recognition and participation (pp. 517–522). Distributive justice helps to uncover inequalities and power differentials in the food system, attributing responsibility to those actors who have the utmost privilege and resources to contribute to meaningful changes. Meanwhile, recognition is central for perceiving actors as being part of the decision-making process, rather than external to it. And finally, broad participation of all relevant actors in the food system is necessary to provide them with the ability to speak on their own behalf and ensure self-determination. This is important because the failure to recognise citizens as political subjects may lead to a lack of participation in decision-making, which in turn leads to citizens being excluded from—and therefore not being able to influence—a system of distributive justices. Such a justice-based concept of food democracy validates the call for strengthening deliberative processes in food politics because food futures can only be collectively organised if broad participation is guaranteed with accessible agenda-setting and decision-making. In this regard, we are urged to reflect on the means and not merely the ends of democratic food provisioning, since there is a strong tendency in food governance to focus predominantly on outcomes, such as efficient food supply chains and safe food products. From a democratic standpoint, how these outcomes come about is of equal importance.

The perspective of food democracy developed here is pertinent for evaluating current trajectories towards

more sustainable food systems. Understanding and practising sustainability in matters concerning food-related politics is far from being self-evident (Carolan, 2012, p. 251). Key questions arise concerning whether environmental sustainability should refer to zero or minimal ecological impact, if economic sustainability for companies means profitability or also to reduce economic inequalities, and whether social sustainability should strive for enhancing social capital or social justice. Given the importance and wide-reaching consequences of addressing these issues, the perspective of food democracy suggests that such questions have to be subjected to democratic institutions and public deliberation and to include societal stakeholders beyond the commodity chain in these debates (DuPuis, Harrison, & Goodman, 2011). However, critical studies in political science, and more broadly the social sciences, have suggested that a range of strategies are exercised that hinder particular issues from becoming subjected to democratic debate and negotiation. One important strategy in this regard which is specifically discussed within the scholarship of governmentality is 'responsibilisation' (Dean, 2010; Luke, 2016). The concept assumes that responsibility for environmental issues is today increasingly individualised, privatised and attributed to particular actors (such as individual citizens), which complicates efforts to share burdens and to devise collective political strategies.

Governmentality studies develop the idea that by ascribing responsibility, actors are strategically implicated in logics of governance as they are led to practices of self-responsibilisation. A subfield of research within (eco-)governmentality studies focuses on the state–citizen relationship and the question of specific tactics that strive to achieve self-governance at the level of the governed individual, as a citizen or a consumer. Individuals should realise that they have to take personal responsibility for making the food system more sustainable. Promoting pro-environmental lifestyle change, such as affecting feelings of personal responsibility, is a central goal of nudge strategies aiming to steer food consumption choices (Hargreaves, 2019). Within behavioural economics, choice architects should aim to manage individual choices "by attempting to correct their [individuals] deviations from rational, self-interested, utility-maximising cognition and behaviour" (McMahon, 2015, p. 137). It is however important that individuals do so willingly; while their choices may be steered towards contributing to macro-sustainability statistics—i.e., the sum of sustainable behaviours by consumers, such as green purchasing or anti-food waste practices—it is important to preserve, improve and insist upon individual choice (McMahon, 2015, p. 153) in order to uphold individual freedom and autonomous decision-making as central governing principles (Gumbert, 2019). Accepting personal responsibility functions as a gateway to ensure and control the freedom of active subjects by increasingly directing and regulating individuals' beliefs, desires, lifestyles and actions (Foucault, Davidson, & Burchell,

2008, p. 67). Nicholas Rose (2000) has described these connections as 'ethopolitics,' understood as the government of behaviour, which justifies itself on ethical terms. Instead of merely giving consumers information, "ethopower works through the values, beliefs, and sentiments thought to underpin the techniques of responsible self-government and the management of one's obligations to others" (Rose, 2000, p. 5). Activating responsible attitudes strengthens the effectiveness of nudges because the steering agents (or most external influences for that matter) are removed from sight. Individuals do not directly conform to policy demands but rather to ethical and cultural codes that are understood to be self-evident.

Combining the concepts presented in this section, food democracy and the responsibilisation of individuals to adopt more sustainable behaviours facilitates an evaluation of the dangers inherent in altering individual behaviours to make current food systems more sustainable. Notably: Sustainable goal formation is external to citizens' preferences (denying recognition); citizens should take on personal responsibility for altering personal behaviours (denying collective participation); and citizens take no part in influencing future trajectories of altering food systems (denying the distributive element of justice). In this perspective, it is questionable if behaviour change agendas may contribute to strengthening food democracy, and yet the promotion of individual environmental actions that are straightforward, cost-effective and usually consumeristic is a powerful story of socio-ecological change. Consequently, this suggests that mass action through comparatively simple and small lifestyle changes is key, by ensuring everyone is on board. This has been described by Michael Maniates (in press) as "magical thinking": If small groups of individuals begin to adopt simple lifestyle changes, others will notice and jump on board. Such a cumulative environmental impact of small behaviour changes will become apparent and gain momentum, ultimately leading to pressure on policy-makers and corporations to change policies and produce cleaner and greener products. While this story can be problematised on numerous grounds (Maniates, in press), a few aspects are especially relevant here for the development of the article's argument. Primarily, *if* green behaviour change agendas lead to the spread of this rationality among actors in food governance and consumers alike, it seems plausible to suggest that normative principles of food democracy—such as justice and deliberation—will play a less dominant role as a political means for future food governance. Furthermore, there will be less need to adjust structural background conditions that sustain a "politics of unsustainability" (Blühdorn, 2007), and less inclination to support lengthy, complicated and open-ended democratic processes. In criticism, John (2018) contends how nudging does not necessarily rule out other strategies and that relying on incrementalism (the idea that many small steps may lead to radical transformation) may in fact produce policy responsiveness in

the face of uncertainty. While these are empirical questions to be answered retrospectively, the design principles of these strategies provide us with insights on whether more democratic solutions are envisioned or not, such as consulting citizens and involving feedback as well as encouraging reflective processes instead of exploiting the non-reflective and automatic systems of individuals. This arguably has consequences for the development of alternative conceptions of a democratised food system. Therefore, the next section gives an account of how visions resting on behavioural-economic ideas currently unfold, how they may contribute to 'greening' the food system and how they may simultaneously undermine more democratic solutions.

4. Imagining the Future: The Shopping Floor as a Catalyst for Advancing Food Sustainability?

The following research aims to produce insights on how public behaviour change policies are increasingly imagined as reaching deeper into the everyday food purchasing practices of citizens, and how private actors, such as retailers, are an integral part of these ideas. The case of the "COOP Supermarket of the Future," as part of the Milan Expo 2015, is a promising illustration of these connections since several innovative features are introduced which have the potential to enhance sustainable consumer behaviours. Moreover, it simultaneously signals the willingness of choice architects to instrumentalise the shopping floor as an arena for more effective behavioural interventions. Therefore, it constitutes an example of how food systems are currently imagined as enhancing future sustainability by studying the micromechanisms of steering consumer choice. At first glance, this perspective seems counter-intuitive since behaviour change policies, such as 'nudging,' are being discussed as new public and governmental strategies to steer individual choices and therefore being uninvolved with private sector behavioural interventions (e.g., the activities of supermarkets). In the area of sustainable food provisioning, however, there is an increasing consensus among choice architects that to design effective nudge strategies it is not only important to concentrate on the message given to consumers, but rather *when* and *where* to provide it. In this regard, the European Commission considers supermarkets—in the case presented here, EURO COOP—as natural allies because the success of interventions is directly linked to being able to have immediate effects on consumers before they make a purchasing decision in their local supermarket. Public policy, therefore, relies on the cooperation and 'good intentions' of retailers to enact behaviour change agendas on the shopping floor. It is no surprise that national food waste policy schemes, in the UK and Germany for example, have started to clarify the responsibilities of retailers as helping to inform consumers about food waste, to give price incentives to buy food close to expiring and to support simplified date labelling (Federal Ministry of Food and

Agriculture, 2019; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2018).

These logics were prominently reiterated during the side event "Tackling Food Waste: The Consumer Co-Operative Way" on October 16th, 2015, in Milan. Here, nudging consumers to adjust their food choices was described as modern policymaking by representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Italian Parliament. The regulation of consumption would target everyone, attributing equal burdens while nevertheless focusing on 'irresponsible' consumers who exhibit 'strange psychological behaviours,' such as wanting to buy bananas in a bunch instead of individually, and whose 'emotions and feelings' needed to be 'rationalised.' Businesses, on the other hand, were already aware of food waste and reduction potentials as they had started to self-regulate their conduct. In terms of efficiency, supermarkets were doing what they could, but consumers were described as 'the last frontier' for regulation. For the European Commission and the General Directorate of Consumer Affairs, tackling food waste has become synonymous with advocating more research on causes and impacts, improving surveillance and monitoring (specifically food waste within supply chains) and encouraging innovation (sharing best practices). Yet concrete policy initiatives focus on the field of food purchasing, predominantly targeting the intersection of supermarkets and consumers. The example of the "Supermarket of the Future" provides first-hand insights on how public and private actors may cooperate in the future to enhance the behaviour change agenda in the field of food consumption. The information presented here was gathered by conducting ethnographic research on three consecutive days in the "Supermarket of the Future" in October 2015 and supported by informal communication with workshop participants and supermarket employees. The descriptive section is based on personal field notes that are subsequently analysed and interpreted by drawing on the theoretical concepts outlined in the above section. Following, the argument will be put forward that while including the private sector in public behaviour change objectives does not necessarily foreclose more democratic solutions (John, 2018, p. 99), it nevertheless strongly suggests a preoccupation with enhancing effectiveness through comparatively small lifestyle choices. As a consequence, particular notions of personal agency and social change are reproduced, i.e., the idea that "we can all be productive agents of change without engaging in difficult political struggle" (Maniates, 2016, p. 142). The potential repercussions of the dissemination of this logic in governing food consumption must be acknowledged.

During the Expo 2015 in Milan, the retail and wholesale company Coop Italy presented the exhibition "Supermarket of the Future," displaying a "place where you see how data and information can change the way we interact with food" (Coop, 2015). Information is presented to consumers on interactive tables, and by sim-

ply pointing to a product the tables show "improved labels" (Coop, 2015) by telling the story of a product, its properties and its production chain. On a giant information panel, the real-time data related to the point of sale is presented, such as the number of visitors and the products bought. Here, all supermarket purchases are statistically collected and categorised into fruits, beverages, meats and so forth. Behind food counters robots designed "for a new era of automation" and "with dual arms and the ability to feel and see" (Coop, 2015) improve the safe and efficient handling of food products while 3D printers have the potential to reproduce consumers' favourite food in specific forms and colours, with added vitamins. Rather than being a distant possibility, these technologies are viable working realities that may be introduced in supermarkets for consumer interaction if prices for their implementation reduce and their effectivity is proved. In this regard, the market space is specifically catered to help consumers reflect on their food choices, purchase more rationally and 'eco-friendly' by paying attention to food miles, as well as to reflect upon particular cultural values (e.g., to purchase aesthetically 'imperfect' fruits and vegetables). Many of these efforts explicitly or implicitly contribute to raising awareness for the issue of food waste on the shopping floor level.

During the time of the exhibition, the European Commission conducted a field experiment to analyse how consumers would react to these new and innovative techniques for their use within supermarkets (Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers of the European Commission [DG JUST], 2015; Elsen, van Giesen, & Leenheer, 2015). The study tested if consumers paid attention to price, date labels, nutritional values and environmental information, with a specific interest in consumers' willingness to buy imperfect shaped foods. Although price had a significant effect on consumers' willingness to buy (31 per cent if price reduction would be moderate, 39 per cent if price reduction would be high), when using a persuasive message such as an authenticity (41 per cent) or an anti-food waste message (42 per cent), willingness to buy was slightly higher. However, the combination of both price incentives and an awareness message had an even bigger impact (50 per cent; Elsen et al., 2015). Awareness messages go beyond giving people mere information, because they utilise heuristics to nudge people into conducting certain behaviours, in this case by using cultural values (authenticity) and environmental values (anti-food waste) to motivate purchases.

In order to further understand how the 'Supermarket of the Future' operates, supplementary material is required beyond the official documentation, in particular in relation to how it governs consumer conduct and to assess how a more sustainable food system is imagined through specific technologies and behaviour change strategies on the shopping floor (DG JUST, 2015; Elsen et al., 2015; also material handed to visitors on-site). Three components can be seen as instrumental: cate-

gorising consumers in terms of food choice; displaying specific information based on consumer type; and using information as a tool for comparing individual behaviours with those of other shoppers. If enabled via a smart mobile device, the supermarket can recognise individual consumers when entering the shopping floor. Based on past purchases, it classifies consumers into one of six categories, which can be locally adjusted to match consumer profiles. In the case of the exhibition in Milan, these profiles included 'Italian Food Lover,' 'Green&Ethic Consumer,' 'Foodie Consumer,' 'Wellness Consumer,' 'Easy Consumer' and 'Veggie Consumer.' These categories are all positively connoted to help consumers to identify with a consumption label. While shopping, consumer information on the interactive screens throughout the market is displayed according to consumer type to help the customers make choices according to their preferences (e.g., to prevent them from impulse shopping) and to make them feel positive about their consumption choices in the exact moment the food products are picked off the shelf. Moreover, messages and pictures are displayed above the product congratulating consumers on their choice and confirming their decision. For example, if buyers fall into the 'Easy Consumer' category, messages read: "You've chosen an easy to prepare meal, now you're free to enjoy life!" Such an approach has a range of obvious benefits for supermarkets: First, they have a better understanding of who shops in their market allowing them to adjust their product range accordingly as well as to plan ahead more effectively. And second, it is easier to display specific products directly to consumers, for example products of a higher price segment or specific brands. Since this form of advertising is individualised it is more convincing than information targeted at all shoppers. All purchases that are made in the supermarket are further displayed above the shopping area on a largescale information panel, which lists the number of specific categories of products purchased within a day, a week or a month. Here, consumer types are connected to an abstract social context. Messages are displayed to increase transparency concerning what other consumers have purchased and in which quantities, within the same consumer type. Through this tool, it is not only possible to develop a sense of belonging towards a certain consumer group, but also to distinguish oneself from other groups. For instance, it is readily observable for 'Green&Ethic Consumers' how exactly their eating and consumption habits differ from 'Wellness Consumers' or 'Easy Consumers.' Through the combination of these informational tools, the buyer's choice is designed in multiple ways that are aimed to be beneficial to consumers, retailers and political decision-makers alike. It is easy to envision that supermarkets designed accordingly can make a valuable contribution to the reduction of food waste on the level of the individual store and private households while fostering 'green' purchasing and ecologically responsible lifestyles coherently and continuously.

However, from a food democracy standpoint, as outlined in the previous section, these benefits exhibit dangers for collective and autonomous decision-making in the context of food provisioning. First, we have seen that these nudging strategies do not solely aim to give consumers more information and rationalise consumer conduct, but instead rely on values, beliefs and sentiments to motivate techniques of responsible self-government. Citizens are held responsible as conscious consumers to make continuous pro-environmental lifestyle choices to support food sustainability, which is reinforced by mechanisms of social competition to be regarded as 'better' consumers than others. Consumers that subject themselves willingly to logics of food governance are thereby produced through the interplay of technologies, typifications, the ranking of ethical consumption choices and social comparisons. Individualisation is used as a mechanism to promote more effective reductions, which is in stark contrast to participating in efforts to find common solutions. Second, interventions are designed in ways that steer choices through the use of dominant food discourses and values, such as authenticity and anti-food waste, making them conform to market requirements. Here, the origin of individual behaviour change aims is externally driven and the citizens' perspective plays no role. Even the chance to recognise particular relations in the food system by giving consumers information about the social relationships behind food production is omitted as the information on the interactive screens are mainly concerned with calculating environmental footprints. By doing so, forms of acceptable and unacceptable food subjectivities are produced that develop responsible attitudes without disrupting the dynamics of consumption and the status quo of the current food system (Rumpala, 2011) because the marketplace is reaffirmed as the central impact arena on the food system. Third, consumers that identify with such ethical and sustainable positions and consumption types can be expected to be mobilised more easily to react to new recommendations. Other subjectivities and lifestyles that may contribute to overall reductions in food waste, and more broadly resource use—such as dumpster divers or food redistributors—are excluded from these locations and are implicitly devalued. In contrast, anti-food waste messages could be designed to inform consumers about the background conditions of food waste generation for instance, rather than simply tying consumption choice to a particular product. This means that citizens have little to no influence and control on which ideas and resources are distributed and which values they would prefer. Ultimately, imagining future trajectories for reforming the food system through these techniques enables corporate preferences to influence debates on sustainability within food politics, and may complicate efforts of conceptualising and actualising sustainability more collectively and democratically.

In sum, placing the responsibility on consumers to adopt more sustainable lifestyles through price incentives combined with pro-environmental messages may have positive effects in terms of reduced environmental impact, as suggested by the experiments conducted with shoppers. However, the potential to democratise these nudges by giving information and promoting values beyond greener purchasing decisions has been neglected. While the possibility of more democratic approaches is not foreclosed, nudges sometimes implicitly or explicitly steer in the opposite direction of enhancing dimensions of distributive justice, participation and recognition at the heart of food democracy. The use of flashy digital technologies glosses over the fact that, while it appears that the food system can be more transparently comprehended on multiple screens, the actual relations remain as invisible as before. The concept of food democracy reminds us that in order to arrive at a more just and sustainable food system, the three dimensions of justice—distribution, recognition and participation—must be subjected to the citizens' reflective capacities to counteract the spread of "magical thinking" (Maniates, in press) that green behaviour change agendas will automatically lead us where we want to go.

5. Conclusions

Various authors have asserted that normative political concepts, such as food democracy, contain a "vision for the future while at the same time being rooted in the present and being highly political" (Wald, 2015, p. 123). This article has suggested that current economic and political strategies to steer food-related behaviours towards sustainable ends do exactly the same: They constitute building blocks for a future system and promote particular political solutions that are already widely disseminated in the present. When designing sustainable behaviour change strategies in the context of food governance, basic democratic values such as justice and deliberation run the risk of being thoroughly neglected, which in turn creates serious barriers for a democratisation of the food system. Ultimately, there is nothing wrong with encouraging consumers to reflect upon their food choices and to help them to adopt ecologically responsible behaviours. However, if citizens are constantly addressed as consumers and not as political subjects, and they feel they are doing everything they can to transform the system by buying better products, the collective imagination of how the production and distribution of food is organised is severely narrowed. Understanding food politics in this sense replaces democratic deliberation with expert knowledge, dialogue with behavioural modifications, and persuasive arguments with designed options (Gumbert, 2019). Given that these strategies can be expected to further proliferate in sustainability-related fields to target consumption choices, suggestions to inform policy design are all the more important and the concept of food democracy may very well function as a guiding principle to develop a renewed ethics to ground behaviour change strategies.

Primarily, every consideration should be given to make choice editing as transparent as possible. The call for more transparency, however, does not refer to more and better information about the environmental impact of consumption choices, but behavioural interventions themselves. Citizens must be able to understand who the instigator of an intervention is and what it strives to achieve before making an informed decision on whether they want to comply. This need arises because such strategies are frequently designed to work unconsciously, such as through triggering heuristics that use social and cultural food values or discourses that are rarely consciously reflected upon simply because they are not discussed with others. Instead of relying on these techniques, we should be asking citizens the relevant questions, to engage in dialogue and to give them the possibility of becoming an environmentally conscious citizen, without focusing solely on correcting their irrational, harmful biases. In the short term, the nudge effect may be weaker, but it could contribute to a more comprehensive citizen education in the long run. As a result, nudging could in fact be used to support citizens in "expand[ing] their awareness, experience, and knowledge of the environment in which they live, including their impact on it and its impact on them" (Hall, 2016, p. 604) and promote responsible actions and behaviours beyond the marketplace. For example, nudges may ultimately leave the sphere of consumption behind and focus on social practices (the promotion of collectively engaging with others), the built environment (e.g., better infrastructures for food redistribution) and other material contexts surrounding us. Such strategies have been found to be more apt to promote radical shifts in lifestyles than incremental behavioural changes (Barr, 2015). While this may be viewed as a conventional easy fix it is nevertheless an important step towards democratising nudges.

Second, if questions of when and where to intervene are increasingly important for public policy and the collaboration with private actors as allies is further expanded for greening the food system, this cooperation should be taken seriously. Instead of simply steering consumers towards buying greener products and slightly altering individual lifestyles, the shopping floor could be reimagined as a place for storytelling, for educating people about food worlds and fostering emotions (as part of the system of ethical reasoning; see Nussbaum, 2015) towards appreciating natural resources, soils, and cultivating holistic human–nature relations. It is about recognising diverse agencies which may prompt citizens to participate differently in the future, perhaps away from an individualised approach. That being said, it is equally important that citizens are able to reject such attempts and that the plurality of diverse perspectives is included and justly secured. While this suggestion may seem farfetched—and some will undoubtedly consider it naive, given the power and authority of transnationally operating retailers in the food system—choice architects are absolutely correct to concentrate on the immediate

environment where people make decisions. It is for this reason that alternative concepts for the "Supermarket of the Future" need to be brought into dialogue with existing ones. In this regard, a food democracy perspective can simultaneously warn against the dangers of responsibilisation leading to individualisation and depoliticization, while at the same time being constructively applied towards imagining alternate food futures.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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PART II

EXPLORING AND PUSHING FOOD DEMOCRACY

Article

Empowering People—Democratising the Food System? Exploring the Democratic Potential of Food-Related Empowerment Forms

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Abstract
The current food system, characterised by considerable concentrations of economic and political power, is widely regarded as undemocratic and in many respects unsustainable in its outcomes. To address the democratic deficits in the food system, empowerment has become a central claim and point of reference for actors seeking to transform the system. In fact, numerous venues and practices have emerged in recent years to develop people's capacities to engage with food issues. These range from local food initiatives and health-food movements to food policy councils and government education policies. This article takes a closer look at the theory and practice of democratic empowerment in the food system. It explores whether and how different forms of food-related empowerment have the potential to improve the democratic quality of the food system. Based on a broad analytical understanding of empowerment that is combined with a notion of power-based complex democracy, it is argued that different forms of food-related empowerment promote the development of different types of power, which in turn are constitutive for different functions of the democratic process. From this perspective, the challenge of democratising the food system lies in linking different complementary empowerment practices into functioning configurations of complex democratic governance.

Issue
This article is part of the issue "New Perspectives on Food Democracy" edited by Basil Bornemann (University of Basel, Switzerland) and Sabine Weiland (Université Catholique de Lille, France).

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, food production and consumption have become increasingly globalised and interconnected. Today we speak of a 'global' food system, spanning a plurality of territorially and functionally distinct food systems. While the global food system is providing more food than ever before in human history, it is increasingly subject to criticism. Hunger and undernutrition continue to plague the Global South, while, conversely, obesity and malnutrition are emerging challenges in various regions, including Western industrial societies (International Food Policy Research Institute, 2016). In addition, the complex ecological and social problems of the modern food system are under discussion (Lang, Barling, & Caraher, 2012).

The driving forces behind food system problems are manifold and multi-layered. They range from global environmental change to international market and governance failures to regional shifts in eating habits to local conflicts. From a critical perspective, however, the massive concentration of economic and political power

in today's food system is a significant problem. Few companies hold high market shares in meat, seeds, agrochemicals, food processing and retail (Lang et al., 2012; McMichael, 2013). The concentration of economic power in turn reflects the political power structures shaping the food system. For a long time, food-related policies in Europe and North America have been crafted in relatively closed agro-political circles shielded from public attention and discourse (Skogstad, 1998; Tracy, 1989), recent developments in the direction of a post-exceptionalist and more open agricultural policy sector notwithstanding (Daugbjerg & Feindt, 2017). Furthermore, policy-makers have entirely refrained from intervening in the food system altogether, often in the name of consumer rights and freedom of choice (Korthals, 2001). In this situation, how can the challenge of a concentrated, arguably undemocratic and largely unsustainable food system be met?

A common answer to this and similar questions in the political and scientific discourse is 'by empowering people.' Control of the food system, the argument goes, must be given to the people by improving their capability to decide on food-related issues more autonomously. The hope is that empowerment 'increases the participation and decision-making power of citizens and may potentially lead to transformative action which will change opportunity structures in an inclusive and equalising direction' (Andersen & Siim, 2004, p. 2). Empowerment is thus seen as contributing to a more democratic and sustainable food system (Fernandez-Wulff, 2019; Hassanein, 2003; Lacy, 2000; Petetin, 2016). In practice, we can see that empowerment has become a central claim and reference point for various actors and their actions to transform the existing food system (Moore & Swisher, 2015; Renting, Schermer, & Rossi, 2012). A multitude of venues and practices have emerged in the food system to develop people's capacities for dealing with food issues and change existing food systems. These range from local food initiatives and health-food movements to institutionalised food policy councils and government education policies.

In this article, we examine the relationship between empowerment and democracy in theoretical and empirical terms. We share the common view that empowerment may be key to democratise the food system. However, given the diversity of venues for empowering people on food issues, it remains an open question whether all these venues have the same potential to improve the democratic quality of food systems. This question is all the more important since the supposedly simple relationship between empowerment and democracy has arguably become more complex in advanced Western liberal democracies. While empowerment in the 1970s and 1980s was seen, mainly by proponents of participatory democracy, as a promising approach to the democratisation of liberal democracy (Barber, 1984), both the practice and the debate have changed. On the one hand, the institutional practice of liberal democ-

racies has undergone major changes, recently referred to as post-liberalisation, i.e., a decentring and pluralisation of democratic institutions and practices (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005). On the other hand, the concepts and criteria for describing and assessing democracies in increasingly layered and pluralised governance settings have become more varied and complex (Schmidt, 2013). If the democratic quality of empowerment is to be evaluated under the conditions of contemporary post-liberal and complex democracy, a re-examination of the conceptual relationship between empowerment and democracy is necessary.

Against this backdrop, we ask in this article: What is the democratic potential of different food-related empowerment forms? To answer this question, we provide a novel theoretical conceptualisation of democratic empowerment that combines a broad analytical understanding of empowerment with a concept of power-based complex democracy. On this basis, we offer tentative empirical interpretations of the democratising potential of various forms of food-related empowerment that can be found, especially in the context of Western liberal democracies, in four different types of venues for involving people in food issues.

We develop our argument as follows: In Section 2, we conceptualise empowerment as an analytical perspective composed of several dimensions and reflect on its relation to democracy. Doing so leads to a differentiated conceptual understanding of democratic empowerment. In Section 3, we interpret existing research on four typical venues where people get involved in food issues from an empowerment perspective, drawing a more differentiated picture of food-related empowerment practices in these venues. Section 4 discusses the democratic implications of these different forms of food-related empowerment. In the conclusion, we reflect upon future research on food-related empowerment as a viable strategy for the transformation of the food system.

2. Empowerment and Democracy: A Conceptual Framework

The concept of empowerment is used in different practical and disciplinary contexts (psychology, education, politics) with different meanings (McLaughlin, 2016). Generally speaking, empowerment refers to practices of engaging people and bringing them into positions of agency to articulate their concerns regarding individual or societal goals. Amy Allen (1998), in her account of political empowerment, developed a relational understanding in view of a differentiated concept of power. For her, empowerment is a counter-movement to classical manifestations of 'power over,' understood as the 'ability of an actor…to constrain the choices available to another actor' (Allen, 1998, p. 33). Empowerment, in contrast, refers to a different form of power, called 'power to,' described as the 'capacity of an agent to act in spite of or in response to the power wielded over her by oth-

ers' and to the 'ability of an individual actor to attain an end or series of ends' (Allen, 1998, p. 34). Such a concept is committed to an emancipatory goal: The development of a kind of counter-power that liberates individuals from domination ('power over') by bringing them into positions of agency ('power to'). It should be noted that empowerment as *emancipation* is a self-induced, autonomous process. People cannot be empowered by others; they can only empower themselves (for a discussion, see McLaughlin, 2016, pp. 38–51).

2.1. Dimensions of Empowerment

This rather narrow, normative conception of empowerment stands in contrast to a broader and more analytical use of the term, which refers to various practices by which people actively or passively attain positions of relative power of different kinds (Avelino, 2017). In this article, we use such a broad analytical approach because it allows us to capture the diverse landscape of empowerment forms that can be found in different venues for involving people in food issues. To grasp these forms in a detailed manner, we propose a set of analytical dimensions that frequently appear in the broader empowerment discourse (e.g., Andersen & Siim, 2004; Avelino, 2017; McLaughlin, 2016). These dimensions correspond with a series of conceptual questions to which each empowerment practice relates in some way: Who empowers whom, how, where, and to what ends?

The first dimension refers to the empowerment *actors*. Following a broad analytical understanding, the related question 'who empowers whom?' can be answered in two distinct ways. Empowerment can be understood either as a social act between two actors, i.e., an actor (subject) who empowers another actor (object), or, in an emancipatory perspective, as an autonomous act of self-empowerment of a single actor. While, in principle, different kinds of actors can be involved in empowerment processes, it is important to distinguish between individual and collective empowerment. Empowerment can be understood as an act carried out by individual actors. But we may also think of empowerment as a form of collective action that 'encourages its participants to engage in dialogue with the aim of connecting their personal life experience to broader social-structural phenomena such as relations of oppression and domination, economic structures, cultural forms, and so on' (Allen, 2008, p. 167).

Asking the question of 'how?', the second dimension refers to the concrete *means* of empowerment. Depending on the context of action, we can discern a large diversity of specific empowerment means, each of which refers to different kinds of resources that bring people into positions of agency, including different forms of knowledge and different kinds of actions, through which people acquire power (such as education, participation, disobedience, contestation, subversion, deliberation, collaboration, etc.; for different strategies of food-related empowerment, see, e.g., Tornaghi, 2017).

The third dimension addresses the 'where?' question and refers to the *context* of empowerment. While there are many different venues for (political) empowerment (e.g., various political arenas, institutional settings and levels of governance), a more fundamental distinction in empowerment thinking can be described as 'inside vs. outside the system.' This distinction reflects the fact that actors either seek to attain power by raising their 'voice' from within a given system, or they address change from the outside based on an 'exit' approach (Sørensen, 1997). Sometimes, the contexts of empowerment become means for power contestations; for example, when established institutions seek to co-opt and internalise empowerment actors (Young, 1990, p. 90) or push them outside of the system by calling into question their legitimacy (Bornemann, 2017).

The fourth dimension addresses the question 'to what ends?' and captures the *goal* of empowerment. There are again many different issue-specific interpretations of empowerment goals (e.g., individual freedom, health, happiness). Yet, in view of our broad analytical understanding of empowerment as a process aimed at the development of power, the goal dimension can be related to different types of power envisaged by empowerment practices. While empowerment as developing power in the sense of 'power to' represents the classical emancipatory understanding, which is about challenging existing power structures and promoting alternatives, empowerment can also relate to other types of power. It can involve the creation of collective power that binds people together or enables them to 'act together for the attainment of a common or shared end or series of ends' (Allen, 1998, p. 35; see also Partzsch, 2017). This type of 'power with,' in Allen's terminology, is also referred to as 'generative' power (see Hendriks, 2009). Finally, the objective of empowerment may be the realisation of 'power over.' Although such an understanding clearly conflicts with the narrow emancipatory conception of empowerment, it seems relevant in the context of liberal-representative democracy. With its clear distinction between 'government' and 'the people,' such a model depends on the realisation of 'power over' in two respects. On the one hand, empowerment in the sense of the realisation of 'power over' refers to the government's ability to exercise political power, i.e., an institutionally 'caged' form of power as opposed to non-political coercive power (see Haugaard, 2010). On the other hand, it refers to the people's ability to recognize 'power over' by the government as a legitimate form of political power.

2.2. Democratic Implications of Empowerment

Following these distinctions, empowerment is a multi-faceted concept that refers to a variety of manifestations. But how does the concept and its interpetations relate to democracy? There exist many theoretical and empirical links between empowerment and democracy. From

a historical perspective, Welzel (2013) regards empowerment as the main driving force behind democratisation, as opposed to elite strategies of democratisation. In the context of modern democratic theory, empowerment is discussed as an important prerequisite of the democratic process in that it aims to strengthen people's ability to participate in collective decisions through voice or vote (Sørensen, 1997). Not surprisingly, empowerment plays an important role in theories of participative or 'strong' democracy, according to which the democratic ideal of political equality is realised through maximised participation of the people (Barber, 1984). While the link between emancipatory empowerment and participatory democracy is certainly the most established, an analytical understanding of empowerment entails further connections to normative democracy theory. Deliberative or discursive theories of democracy, for example, can be associated with empowerment in the sense of developing 'power with,' as these notions of democracy presuppose collaboration and communication among basically equal actors (Dryzek, 2000; Hendriks, 2009). Ideals of pluralist, representative and liberal democracy, in turn, seem to focus on 'power over,' as the very idea is to establish processes that enable actors to exercise power over each other without domination (Haugaard, 2010, 2015).

Generally speaking, democracy and empowerment are thus linked by the concept of political power. Democracy, on the one hand, is the exercise of political power by the sovereign people (Mouffe, 2000). It describes a form of institutionalised acquisition, sharing and execution of political power (Haugaard, 2010): A way of managing societal conflict and solving common problems based on the use of (different forms of) political power, seeking to alter and, in view of an ideal of political equality, ultimately level political power relations (Beitz, 1989). Empowerment, on the other hand, refers to the process of attaining political power and can thus be conceived as a pre-condition or enabling force of the democratic process. It is concerned with the development of different forms of political power that, in turn, are related to different democratic principles, such as participation ('power to'), deliberation ('power with') and representation ('power over'). Thus, empowerment is not as such democratic; rather, empowerment is a process of power generation that creates the conditions for democracy.

Drawing on system-theoretical democratic thinking (Schmidt, 2013), these principles and related types of

power can be interpreted as referring to three basic functions of a power-based concept of complex democracy, each linked with a certain type of empowerment (for a theoretical contextualisation, see Bornemann & Haus, 2017; for an alternative interpretation of food democracy along the three dimensions of democratic legitimacy, see Behringer & Feindt, 2019):

(1) On the input side, the democratic process involves opening or breaking an established political order by, for example, challenging the order and promoting alternatives. Doing so requires the development of 'power to';

(2) The throughput function of the democratic process consists of balancing or reshuffling existing power relations by, for example, developing actor coalitions or coordinating strategies, which require the development of 'power with';

(3) The output dimension of the democratic process involves the (temporary) closure of the previously opened and reshuffled political order in order to enable the implementation of collectively binding decisions. This requires empowerment geared towards the development of 'power over,' which refers to the ability to recognise and follow collective decisions (see Table 1).

Such a power-based understanding of complex democracy puts into perspective the widespread idea that especially emancipatory empowerment forms (in the sense of 'empowering to') exhibit a democratic potential. It is also critical of the common view that 'power over' necessarily represents an undemocratic form of power. Instead, it is based on the argument that democracy involves a complex regime of different power types and related forms of empowerment. 'Empowering to' is indeed essential to the democratic process. From the point of view of a complex democracy, however, it is only one element that must be supplemented, on the one hand, by 'empowerment with' in order to enable cooperation between actors, and, on the other hand, by forms of 'empowerment over' to allow for the implementation of collective decisions in a commonly binding manner.

In the remainder of this article, we use these conceptual considerations to analyse the democratic implications of different forms of food-related empowerment.

Table 1. Three dimensions of a power-based concept of complex democracy.

	(1) Input 'Opening up'	(2) Throughput 'Balancing out'	(3) Output 'Closing down'
Required type of power	Power to	Power with	Power over
Empowerment as	Challenging an existing order by developing the ability to promote alternatives	Reshuffling an existing order by developing the ability to collaborate	Establishing (a new) political order by generating the ability to recognise collective action

In the next section, we draw on the first three dimensions of empowerment to examine and compare different forms of food-related empowerment, which can be found in different types of venues for involving people in food issues. In Section 4, we focus on the fourth analytical dimension of empowerment to clarify how different forms of food-related empowerment promote the three types of political 'power to,' 'power with,' and 'power over' that are associated with the concept of power-based complex democracy.

3. Forms of Food-Related Empowerment

In the course of a general process of politicisation, broadly understood as the expansion and intensification of political contestation in hitherto non-political areas, food has increasingly become a reference point in political debates as well as in individual and collective efforts to initiate processes of social transformation (Alkon & Guthman, 2017). This is reflected in the rise of venues in which people become involved in practices of shaping and changing the way food is produced, distributed and consumed (Grauerholz & Owens, 2015). Such practices range from the development of food-related knowledge and skills to become more self-determined vis-à-vis food companies and caring more about one's own health to subversive direct interventions in the food system through urban gardening and practices of food rescue or food sharing; from the consideration of nutritional information and designations of origin in consumer decisions to more institutionalised political participation in food-related decision-making.

While the engagement of actors in different venues is driven by different, sometimes mixed and not always political concerns, the concept of empowerment appears to be an important reference point for both scientific observers and involved practitioners when it comes to determining the objective of these venues (Moore & Swisher, 2015; Renting et al., 2012). Starting from this interpretation, we seek to draw a more differentiated picture of the forms of empowerment associated with these venues. Although our analysis is illustrative and preliminary rather than systematic, we focus on four venues typical of Western societies that bring with them a considerable variety of food-related empowerment forms. Our case selection includes two venues in which people become active from below by engaging in plant-based diets and local food initiatives, such as farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA). We also look at two more institutionalised venues for engagement in food policy councils, as well as in government food education programmes.

3.1. Plant-Based Diets

The first venue of food-related empowerment refers to plant-based nutrition practices, meaning that people exclude animal products, such as meat, dairy, eggs and animal by-products from their diets (Cherry, 2014). Over the past decade, the number of people living on a plant-based diet has multiplied, with growth rates of several hundred percent in some Western countries (Baum+Whiteman, 2018). Many people cite ethical reasons for not consuming animal products. The current food system is largely based on intensive livestock farming and production processes in which the treatment of animals at all stages of production has raised moral concerns (Grauerholz & Owens, 2015). Plant-based diets are also claimed to have a wide range of health benefits, including lower cholesterol levels and a reduced risk of heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, obesity and cancer (Cherry, 2014). The standard American or European diet, which includes animal protein and large amounts of fatty and sugary food, is regarded as unhealthy and has been implicated in many lifestyle diseases in the industrialised world and beyond. Further, the negative environmental impact of meat and dairy production is tremendous, e.g., the production of greenhouse gases in the livestock industry (Grauerholz & Owens, 2015).

The everyday practices of plant-based diet followers in Western societies largely consist of preparing vegan meals as alternatives to commodities derived from animals. Adopting this diet can be interpreted as empowerment insofar as its followers actively reflect on their eating habits and the welfare of animals and the environment, and acquire knowledge and skills that enable them to change their practices. Empowerment may at first result from an individual consumption decision and 'private' activity in people's kitchens, thus representing a form of self-empowerment. At the same time, a community exists to share experiences and tactics for a plant-based lifestyle and to encourage others to adopt that lifestyle. Today, community exchanges often occur via the internet and social networks. The number of vegan food blogs and YouTube channels is tremendous and continues to increase. In the real world as well, relevant infrastructure is growing, with cafés, restaurants, specialised supermarkets and other shops spreading in cities like Berlin and London (Baum+Whiteman, 2018). In addition, campaigns like 'Meatless Mondays' (which encourage people to go meatless one day a week) and 'Veganuary' (inspiring and supporting people to try becoming vegan for January, as a New Year's resolution) are targeted at the greater public. Hence, at first, it is the individual who follows a plant-based diet, but the collective dimension of empowerment plays an important role as well. Some scholars therefore recognise veganism as a social movement (le Grand, 2015).

The everyday practices of individuals following a plant-based diet are intertwined with the broader cultural transformation they wish to inspire. The empowerment of activists occurs by following, and experimenting with, a plant-based diet, understood as an alternative to established ways of food production and consumption. Living on a plant-based diet is not only about eating, but can also refer to lifestyle and ideology, as a way to man-

ifest compassion and prosocial concerns, or as a form of resistance to the mainstream food culture in Western societies (Micheletti & Stolle, 2012). Still, it can also be a practice that remains confined to the individual and thus lacks the supra-individual dimension, e.g., when the person is following a plant-based diet solely to improve personal health.

3.2. Local Food Initiatives

Before the emergence of supermarkets, people in both rural and urban contexts typically produced their own food or bought it from farmers' markets and local vendors. Over time, these practices were pushed to the side, severing the direct connections between producers and consumers (Grauerholz & Owens, 2015; Perrett & Jackson, 2015). Local food initiatives can be regarded as an attempt to restore these connections and establish new social, economic and physical ties against the practices of large-scale food production, which are regarded as destructive (Hinrichs, 2000; Lyson, 2004; see also Hasson, 2019; Prost, 2019). With the shared purpose of favouring local and seasonal over exotic and preserved foods (Hinrichs, 2000), local food initiatives manifest in numerous forms. A typical form is the farmers' market, where local small-scale producers sell their produce directly to consumers—a face-to-face interaction that takes place outside of the established mass food distribution system (Chiffoleau, Millet-Amrani, Rossi, Rivera-Ferre, & Merino, 2019). A second example is CSA. Consumers typically purchase a membership and, in return, receive a 'share' of the farmer's seasonable yield. CSA is based on an agreement between local farmers and local consumers to share the costs, risks and products of the farm. The focus of CSA is clearly on community, going beyond a market relationship and, in this sense, representing a highly embedded agricultural market (Hinrichs, 2000). Further examples of local food initiatives include green box schemes, urban gardening, consumer cooperatives and artisanal foods.

The rise of local food initiatives can be interpreted as a counter-movement to the increasing globalisation of the food system, which leaves a massive environmental footprint and disconnects the consumer from food-related knowledge and the conditions under which food is produced (Grauerholz & Owens, 2015). Local food initiatives represent venues for empowerment of local actors insofar as they are given the power to shape their own food environments rather than being dependent upon large corporations and international markets. Local producer–consumer relations are characterised by positive social ties and high social capital. Implying a local 'moral' economy that represents the antidote to a globalised market economy, in which only the economics of price count (Hinrichs, 2000, 2003), the consumers purchase local produce to support 'their' farmers, while local farmers provide pure, seasonal, healthy and transparent food. Local food initiatives thus involve a reciprocal

empowerment relationship between producers and consumers. By offering locally produced food, producers assume the role of empowering subjects, as they create conditions that allow people to change their food shopping and consumption practices. At the same time, producers are empowered through consumers to actually engage in local food production.

Given the specific economic means of empowerment, which involve practices of selling and buying, this process of mutual empowerment does not always unfold evenly. In fact, local social relations are not immune to inequalities and uneven power structures. For example, farmers may move into new dependencies, especially those types of direct agricultural markets in which relations between consumers and producers are commodified (Hinrichs, 2000, p. 298). This is arguably different in other arrangements that involve relatively stable social ties between consumers and producers, some of which also directly involve consumers in the production process (such as CSAs). Consequently, spatial proximity might confer trust among the local population, but this is not guaranteed (Hinrichs, 2003). In addition, a local community typically mirrors the larger society, replicating or promoting new forms of social and economic exclusion and rendering the notion of the local community as a 'big family' an illusion. Accordingly, local food initiatives that initially intended to empower people by including them in an alternative system are regularly suspected of recreating the established food system or being subject to that system via the reproduction of its dominant economic logic (see also Perrett & Jackson, 2015). Overall, while the 'local' in these examples is commonly associated with the *good*, whereas the 'global' represents the *evil*, some aspects might counter the simple local–global/good–bad dichotomy (Hinrichs, 2003). Essentially, these complexities make it difficult to assess the empowerment qualities of local food initiatives in an unequivocal manner.

3.3. Food Policy Councils

Food policy councils represent a type of institutionalised multi-stakeholder governance arrangement at the communal or regional level (Harper, Shattuck, Holt-Giménez, Alkon, & Lambrick, 2009; see also Bassarab, Clark, Santo, & Palmer, 2019; Sieveking, 2019). The first food councils were established in Canada and the US in the 1980s, and they have since spread to other countries all over the world. Food policy councils engage politically in the food system to improve food governance. Their emergence can be attributed to a critical reflection on contemporary food systems as being highly fragmented and therefore in need of better cooperation and coordination among involved actors (Harper et al., 2009). Generally, food policy councils seek improvement in various ways, such as by addressing the health-related consequences or sustainability of the food system. They do so by way of 'civic engagement into shaping public opinion, culture, institutions and policies by communication, lobbying and polit-

ical activism' (Renting et al., 2012, p. 300). Towards this end, food policy councils typically gather and share information about the structure and functioning of a certain food system at the local or regional level; based on this, they advise policy-makers and political authorities, coordinate food-related actions among involved parties, and develop coordinated strategies to tackle problems in the food system.

Food policy councils can be initiated and institutionalised in different ways: They typically emerge from societal initiatives or movements, but they can also be initiated 'from above' by public authorities and policy-makers. Food policy councils reach out to key actors as well as experts on different aspects of the food system and develop models that are open to all interested people, both stakeholders and citizens alike. As a result, the composition of food policy councils varies, as do the processes of selecting the actors to involve (Gupta et al., 2018).

As such, food policy councils can be interpreted as a specific form of empowerment in the food sector. By bringing together actors involved in the food system, these councils render explicit and transparent the composition of the system and related power positions and relations. Empowerment occurs through the participation and representation in food policy councils of a wide range of actors, as diverse as 'anti-hunger and food justice advocates, educators…concerned citizens, government officials, farmers…food workers, business people, food processors and food distributors' (Harper et al., 2009, p. 16), all of whom have a stake in food issues. Food policy councils have the potential to give voice to a whole range of views and positions, including those not yet represented in the food system. Empowerment also takes place through exchanges between the involved actors, including knowledge acquisition activities among the actors as well as the (collective) framing of problems and agenda setting. These councils seek to gain at least partial control over highly differentiated, sometimes scattered, food-related affairs, which are largely controlled by corporations (Welsh & MacRae, 1998). Therefore, the institutionalisation of a food policy council can be regarded as an act of problematising the organisation and functioning of an existing food system. Finally, by involving various parties in one arena of interaction and communication, existing power positions and relations might be challenged and new ones might emerge. Food policy councils may thus serve as a venue for reshuffling existing power relations.

According to their mission, food policy councils must balance their members' interests with community interests and the broader political context. In particular, the levelling of citizen-led and government-led initiatives can be challenging. This points to a dilemma of 'institutionalised participation' in food policy councils: On the one hand, they create an arena for interaction and an environment for 'food citizenship' to develop (Welsh & MacRae, 1998); on the other, they may be seen as mere vehicles for generating the legitimacy of official policies

(Rosol, 2012). Drawing the line between participation, as a form of empowerment, and the co-optation of stakeholders is not always an easy task.

3.4. Government Food Education Policy

Government policy is certainly not the most obvious thing that comes to mind when one thinks of empowerment. On the contrary, classical command-and-control policies (e.g., food safety regulations), economic incentives (e.g., 'fat taxes'), and also newer types of 'nudging' (such as food labels or food 'traffic light' ratings) are often under suspicion of infringing upon people's autonomy and approving rather than problematising established asymmetrical power relations between the state, food corporations and citizens (Gumbert, 2019; Mazzocchi et al., 2015). In fact, government policies addressing individual consumers are regularly criticised for violating the principle of consumer sovereignty (Korthals, 2001), hence disempowering and paternalizing individuals. Yet, some government policies are presented with the claim of empowering people. These include governmental health campaigns that inform people about healthy diets and the consequences of unhealthy eating (Israel, Checkoway, Schulz, & Zimmerman, 2016). Prominent examples include '5-a-day' campaigns, which advise people to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, as well as national dietary guidelines which aim to foster healthy eating habits and lifestyles (Fischer & Garnett, 2016). Furthermore, food education programmes, such as school cooking, seek to motivate young people to acknowledge the significance of food and the food system more generally (Jones et al., 2012). Public-engagement campaigns drawing attention to food waste behaviour and its consequences are common in many European countries and beyond (Quested, Marsh, Stunell, & Parry, 2013). All these programmes share the goal of informing and educating people about food issues. They aim to develop the individual's capability to change eating habits and make autonomous, responsible and prudent choices. In the broader sense, state education programmes can therefore be seen as a contribution to the formation of a food citizenship that encompasses judgement and action as well as commitment, duty and solidarity (Benn, 2004).

Attempts to empower people through government education are *prima facie* based on a mode of empowerment that presumes a relationship between two different kinds of actors. Acting as an empowerment subject, the government seeks to create capacities on the side of policy addressees (sometimes also addressed as collectives or milieus). The relevant means to do so is through 'education,' i.e., a diverse set of practices that seek to change people's attitudes and/or behaviour by conveying knowledge upon which people can base their food-related decisions. As the above examples suggest, different forms of information transfer accompany different degrees of empowerment. While the mere dis-

semination of information in the form of food-related information campaigns can be considered a form of superficial empowerment (trusting in people's capacity to process this information), other forms aim to actively engage people in autonomous knowledge acquisition (e.g., school cooking). Finally, empowerment in the form of government education implies emergence from within the system, at least in the first place. Government education is not about encouraging people to exit the system, but instead familiarising them with the existing system so their voices can be heard. Yet, longer-term side effects may occur, especially from those forms of education that lead to changes in attitudes and the active acquisition of knowledge, both of which have the potential to transform policy addressees into food citizens who actively engage in the shaping of their food systems.

This overall positive assessment of empowerment through government education notwithstanding, numerous criticisms also exist. Among these are doubts as to whether, and to what extent, information-oriented policies can actually foster (enduring) changes in people's behaviours. Moreover, in a policy field that is deeply entwined with the lobbying interests of powerful agrocorporate actors, it can be questioned whether government education programmes are truly unbiased or concerned with empowering people (Teicholz, 2015). These programmes are sometimes considered merely as symbolic politics; or worse, as deliberate strategies to cover up, and thereby reaffirm, more fundamental power asymmetries in the food system. Government policies that seek to engage citizens are also suspected of (inadequately) shifting the responsibility from actors with 'real' power, such as food corporations, to individual citizen-consumers, who are neither responsible for the problems of the current food system nor in the position to really change anything (Lang et al., 2012). Consequently, the state becomes the protector of the powerful incumbent food regime.

4. Democratic Potential of Food-Related Empowerment

In this section, we further explore the forms of food-related empowerment with regard to their potential to improve the democratic quality of food systems. On the basis of the power-based concept of complex democracy developed in Section 2, we ask whether a certain form of food-related empowerment contributes to the development of one or more forms of political power related to the three dimensions of democracy. Accordingly, we consider empowerment as 'opening up' an existing political order insofar as it can be associated with the development of 'power to.' A practice of 'balancing out' existing asymmetries and inequalities is prevalent when we discern the development of 'power with.' Finally, we can speak of a democratic 'closing down' of a political order when there are indications that a certain empowerment practice creates 'power over.'

4.1. Opening Up

With regard to the input dimension of the democratic process, empowerment is directed towards developing 'power to.' This involves bringing people into positions to challenge the existing political order of a community, i.e., the established structures, norms, discourses and power relationships prevalent in that community. Accordingly, the 'opening' of an existing political order can take many forms, including the questioning of established problem framings, policy boundaries, resource allocation patterns and governance practices, or the problematisation of the legitimacy of incumbent actors and actor constellations as well as their orientations and strategies. On the basis of this understanding, the forms of food-related empowerment described above reveal different aspirations for a democratic 'opening.'

Most clearly pronounced are practices of 'empowering to' in local food initiatives. It is often their ambition to challenge the existing order of food systems and the roles and positions of incumbent actors. By emphasising 'local' autonomy (and identifying the local with the 'good'), these initiatives draw attention to the dominant practice of a 'globalised' (and, therefore, 'evil'), heteronomous system of food production, distribution and consumption (Hinrichs, 2003). Local food initiatives not only render visible and problematise the hidden structures, mechanisms and socio-ecological consequences of the global food regime, but they also offer alternative ideas and practices geared towards the transformation of this regime. As the initiatives provide ideas and infrastructures for approaching food differently, they constitute venues in which people can experience autonomy and self-reliance.

Although there are various reasons for following a plant-based diet, many of the related practices reveal considerable emancipatory claims. Especially when driven by environmental or ethical concerns, plant-based diets question and 'open up' normalities in the food system by calling for alternatives to established ideas and practices of 'good' food production and consumption. By promoting people's awareness about and ability to empower their food-related choices, these practices also involve the development of individual action capacity and autonomy in relation to food-related consumption patterns—with (more or less decidedly articulated) the hope for a transformation of the food system as a whole. Yet the system-related transformation potential of plant-based diets will depend on whether these practices assume the form of individual consumption decisions in the private sphere or are explicitly targeted at a broader community (e.g., vegan YouTube channels with tens of thousands of subscribers).

As compared to these two forms, the emancipatory empowerment potential of food policy councils seems less clearly pronounced. On the one hand, these councils can be interpreted as attempts to question the existing political order of the established food system. The

very establishment of a food policy council can be seen as problematising the organisation and functioning of highly differentiated, sometimes fragmented food systems and their governance, making the composition of the system and the associated power positions and relationships explicit and transparent. Moreover, existing studies have shown that food policy councils bring actors into positions from which they can raise their voices against the existing food system order and formulate alternatives. In particular, open forms of food councils which, in addition to the usual suspects, also involve new actors have the potential to introduce alternative positions that are not yet represented in the food system. On the other hand, the challenging potential of food policy councils is limited when they are embedded in, or even initiated by, institutionalised food governance and actor arrangements. In particular, when set up 'officially' and in a 'top-down' manner, food policy councils are potentially closely linked to incumbent perspectives and practices of food governance. Their potential to develop alternatives would accordingly be limited to moderate visions which maintain compatibility with existing practices.

While food policy councils thus represent forms of 'caged' emancipatory empowerment, the potential of government education policy to develop people's capacities of 'power to' may be even more limited. The very fact that food policy councils refer to a form of external empowerment (by others) calls into question their autonomy-enhancing potential. In the same vein, many government education policies have the stated ambition of developing people's knowledge and skills in the field of food. But it is not always clear whether people could actually be brought into positions from which they could challenge existing food-related practices through the promotion of alternatives. For example, government education is often simply concerned with making people responsible (for their own diet) by informing them about 'good nutrition practices' as defined by experts. This puts people in a position of self-responsibility, but it does not automatically endow them with the skills and resources needed to live up to that responsibility, let alone to challenge the experts' and government's notion of good food. Despite these paternalistic implications, we know from other fields that government education policies may in the long run also raise people's awareness—and contribute to the development of citizenship (Dobson, 2003).

4.2. Balancing Out

With regard to the throughput dimension, a democratic form of empowerment is concerned with reshuffling and modifying an 'opened up' political order in such a way that prevailing asymmetries are levelled out (to some extent). This involves the cultivation of people's capacities 'to act together,' i.e., to engage in, shape and develop mutual exchange and cooperation. Such empowerment in the sense of 'empowering with' can take many forms, including bridging existing conflict lines and adopting co-operative action orientations; the willingness and ability to mobilise political support and form coalitions; and more discursive forms of valuing, engaging with and considering 'the other' by, for example, extending problem framings and goal orientations or reflecting a broader set of concerns.

The idea and practice of empowerment as enhancing people's capacities to act together appear to different degrees in the analysed forms of food-related empowerment, but they seem to be most clearly envisioned in food policy councils. These arrangements are meant to bring different actors together to discuss, deliberate and collaborate on the shaping of the food-related decisions of a political community—that is, establishing forms of 'power with' in food systems that would otherwise be very much characterised by individualised strategies and forms of action. Depending on how the councils are designed in terms of representation, they might also have the potential to bring actors into positions to voice, as well as listen to, previously unarticulated concerns. This might in turn relativize the position of existing powerful actors, allowing for the reshuffling, if not the outright levelling, of existing power relations in food governance.

Also, local food initiatives have considerable potential to develop 'power with.' This is reflected in, for example, their ambition to establish links between local producers and consumers. While these ties are rather loose and non-binding in the case of farmers' markets, CSAs are geared towards creating stronger forms of solidarity and collaborative orientations. By offering opportunities or even encouraging their members to participate in common activities—from agricultural work to participation in discussions and decision-making forums—CSAs can be seen as venues in which people actively develop collaborative skills.

Such cooperative empowerment practices appear to be less pronounced in other venues of food-related empowerment. With their rather individualistic orientation, plant-based diets, for example, tend at first to strengthen the individual's ability to make food-related decisions for themselves. Although they are partly linked to contexts characterised by a certain degree of interaction, they are not specifically geared towards creating 'collaborative' capacities. The same holds true for government food education. These empowerment practices are clearly aimed at individual actors to broaden their knowledge and reflections about food. But government education programmes are generally not about building capacity for joint action and are thus not concerned with developing forms of collective 'power-sharing.'

4.3. Closing Down

The democratic process is not only about 'opening up' and 'balancing out,' but also about 'closing down' a particular political order, at least temporarily. This output function is concerned with the creation of forms of

agency related to the implementation and adoption of collectively binding courses of action and is therefore based on political 'power over.' Accordingly, the underlying empowerment involves the development of people's ability to recognise and acknowledge a form of non-coercive, yet binding, political authority. The development of 'power over' can take many forms, such as defining binding rules and responsibilities within a constellation or community of actors, resolving conflicts and recognising specific positions, creating common identities and values, and fostering ideas and knowledge that motivate, guide and inform collective action.

The potential of 'empowering over' seems to be most clearly pronounced in government education programmes. These forms of food-related empowerment can be seen as an attempt by a political community to develop itself through information and education. Although they do not establish binding rules, government education programmes aim to establish a common knowledge base and standards to influence and guide a society's food-related choices. In other contexts, government education is often seen as an important instrument of citizenship education in terms of developing the capacity to participate actively in political decision-making and with respect to communicating responsibilities, including the willingness to adhere to collectively defined societal values. This includes ideas of 'good,' 'healthy' or 'sustainable' food.

Still present but less pronounced is the potential for 'empowerment over' in food policy councils. These are indeed venues in which new coalitions of actors and joint strategies can emerge. However, to generate commitment among the actors to participate in joint courses of action will depend strongly on the concrete design and culture put into practice in a food policy council. Moreover, the potential to create collective commitment among external actors will depend strongly on the integration of food policy councils into the respective political-institutional context. Food policy councils are not always involved in the official policy process in such a way that they are in a position to shape the food policies of a political community in the sense of 'power over.'

Local food initiatives represent a similarly mixed case. On the one hand, they have the potential to establish new relations between different kinds of food actors and thereby create new forms of order and agency. Insofar as they provide spaces in which these actors can meet and exchange ideas, the initiatives foster the development of local food communities that gain collective agency to shape local food systems and beyond. However, as the venue for collective action is the market or networks outside the commonly acknowledged public sphere, there is limited potential to establish or reinvigorate forms of *political* 'power over' vis-à-vis the political community at large. Still, there are ways to opt out and withdraw from the 'power over' established in these governance arrangements. The same is true for plant-based diets. Although these forms of empowerment may bring people into positions of agency, they do not constitute a kind of collective agency that can enable such people to settle conflicts and resolve problems, or to allocate and redistribute resources in a collectively binding manner.

Overall, our tentative assessment (see Table 2) indicates that the different forms of food-related empowerment we analysed exhibit different democratic potentials. More specifically, we find that different empowerment venues are geared towards the development of different types of power. While some seem to have their strengths in opening up power relations by promoting emancipatory forms of 'power to,' other venues appear to foster the capabilities of actors to collaborate and deliberate on food-related issues, i.e., 'power with.' Still other venues are more about 'closing' and establishing collective agency by developing food-related 'power over.' Against the backdrop of our notion of power-based complex democracy, these different types of power correspond with different functions of the democratic process. This suggests that there is no one form of democratic empowerment, but instead different forms with different and complementary democratic potentials. From that perspective, the challenge of democratising the food system lies in linking different empowerment venues in ways that, together, can form functioning configurations of complex democratic governance.

5. Conclusion

Starting from the observation of a considerable power concentration in the food system and the subsequent emergence of various venues and practices to engage people in dealing with food issues, we analysed the democratic potential of characteristic forms of food-related empowerment. Our analysis was based on a concept of democratic empowerment that combines a broad analytical understanding of empowerment with a power-

Table 2. Tentative assessment of democratic potentials of food-related empowerment forms.

	Opening Up	Balancing Out	Closing Down
Plant-Based Diets	+	0	−
Local Food Initiatives	+	+/0	0
Food Policy Councils	0	+	0/+
Government Education	0/−	−	+

based notion of complex democracy. From this perspective, democracy appears as a configuration or sequence of 'power to,' 'power with' and 'power over,' each of which presupposes a specific form of empowerment.

Our preliminary analysis of four typical venues where people deal with food issues revealed both similarities and differences between them, leading to a more comprehensive picture of these often separately analysed manifestations of food politics. Specifically, our preliminary observations suggest that different venues exhibit different forms of empowerment. The analysis also suggests that different food-related forms of empowerment have different democratic potentials. As they target the development of different types of power, they relate to different functions of a complex democracy.

What are the general implications of our findings for the understanding of food democracy and the democratisation of the food system? Two points stand out in particular. First, venues where people deal with food issues might have the potential to democratise the food system. More specifically, different forms of food-related empowerment have different democratic potentials, i.e., potentials to promote different forms of power corresponding with different functions of the democratic process. However, based on our analysis, we can only identify a potential, but cannot say anything about the actual impacts and their magnitude. Whether and to what extent these venues are actually capable of unfolding their potential is thus an open question.

Second, the analysis of various forms of food-related empowerment through a power-based concept of complex democracy suggests that there is not a single 'golden' path to a democratic food system. Food democracy should be seen as the complex interplay of various forms of political power, which involve different kinds of empowerment practices. For a democratisation of the food system, it would thus be misleading to rely solely on practices of 'empowerment to' and/or 'empowerment with,' as large parts of the food democracy discourse seem to suggest (see Bornemann & Weiland, 2019). These practices play an important role in the democratic process as they serve to open up and balance out existing power relations in the food system. However, they are not sufficient. Food democracy also requires forms of 'power over' in order to make collectively binding decisions possible. A comprehensive democratisation of the food system in an increasingly pluralised governance context, therefore, requires the combination of all three types of empowerment to establish the basis for the complex democratic interplay between 'power to,' 'power with' and 'power over.'

Based on our study, we see several promising avenues for future research. First, more theoretical work is needed to situate and anchor the power-based concept of complex democracy in current normative and positive democracy theory. Such a theoretical investigation must further substantiate that a power-based concept of complex democracy is an appropriate way to analyse

democratisation processes in increasingly complex, plural, and decentralised governance systems. In empirical terms, we see the need for more detailed and focused analysis of concrete cases of food-related empowerment. Such analyses should focus not only on democratisation potential, but also on whether and how this potential is unfolding on the ground. This could also bring mechanisms into view that involve other empowerment dimensions, such as the actors and contexts of empowerment (see Section 2). One question is, for example, what effects the empowerment of individuals vis-à-vis collectives has on the democratising role of empowerment. In addition, more detailed, contextualised analyses can reveal whether and to what extent different forms of democratic empowerment correspond with the democratic expectations and perceptions of the involved actors. More theoretical and empirical attention should also be given to the potential side effects of empowerment practices. For example, it should be analysed where the theoretical and empirical limits of empowerment and possible tipping points to forms of 'responsibilisation' lie.

This points to the more general question of how different venues and practices of food-related empowerment interact in real-world governance contexts. Such analyses could not only shed light on the aggregated effects of different empowerment forms on the democratic quality of specific local food systems. They could also reveal (meta-)governance arrangements that in some way relate different complementary forms of food-related empowerment to one another and point to potentials for the strategic shaping of these arrangements by state and non-state actors towards democracy. Finally, on the basis of more comprehensive assessments of the democratic effects of empowerment, the consequences for a sustainability transformation of the food system can be examined (Lohest, Bauler, Sureau, van Mol, & Achten, 2019). Research can show whether empowerment can actually be seen not only as a means of democratisation, but also as a mechanism for the sustainable transformation of the food system, i.e., as the key to a democratic *and* sustainable food system.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

How Shall We Judge Agri-Food Governance? Legitimacy Constructions in Food Democracy and Co-Regulation Discourses

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Abstract
The food democracy discourse has emerged as a normatively grounded critique of an increasingly transnational agri-food system and its dominant co-regulatory mode of governance, where private and public norms and standards interact with public policy and regulation in complex ways. Analyzing competing agri-food discourses through a legitimacy lens can contribute to understanding how authority is transferred from traditional, hierarchical and state-centered constellations to a range of novel agri-food governance arrangements. This article reconstructs and compares the legitimacy constructions articulated in the co-regulation and the food democracy discourses, generating three key findings: first, there are two distinct articulations of food democracy discourse, which we label liberal and strong food democracy; second, while conceptualizations of legitimacy in the liberal food democracy and the co-regulatory discourse share many commonalities, legitimacy in the co-regulatory discourse relies more heavily on output, while the liberal food democracy discourse is more sensitive to issues of input and throughput legitimacy; third, the strong food democracy discourse articulates a critical counter-model that emphasizes inclusive deliberation which in turn is expected to generate a shared orientation towards the common good and countervailing power.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the governance of the agri-food system has increasingly involved private actors, including food producers, third-party auditors and certifiers, civil society organizations (CSOs), and food retailers. In this shift from public authority to hybrid food governance, responsibilities and interests collide, layer and diverge (Verbruggen & Havinga, 2017). This practice of 'co-regulation' is reflected in an extensive academic and practitioner discourse. Public-private co-regulation has affected the "fundamental ways that people eat, how much they pay for food and how it reaches the dining table, mostly without public knowledge" (Rudder, Fritschler, & Choi, 2016, p. 21). The challenge posed

by global value chains to public oversight is exemplified by a frozen pizza in a supermarket in Ireland which, when tested by public authorities after the horse meat scandal in 2013, was found to contain ingredients from 35 countries that had transited through 60 countries and 5 continents (National Audit Office, 2013). In addition to concerns about how food is produced, distributed and consumed, there are also wider societal issues intertwined with co-regulation, including concerns over workers' rights, migration, ecological sustainability, gender issues, rural livelihoods, trade and global food security (Fuchs, Kalfagianni, & Havinga, 2009).

A body of research and activism has emerged to debate how co-regulation establishes decision-making authority, and if this authority can or should be democrati-

cally legitimized. As Havinga (2018) argues, unlike public bodies who derive legitimacy from democratic mandate, private sector organizations, such as retailers or agribusinesses, must find legitimacy through other strategies, such as claiming to speak for consumers or to deliver public goods. In this way, legitimacy can be created or questioned through discourses which connect norms and values to practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

The need of private actors in particular to "strategically influence the construction of legitimacy" has been widely recognized (Dendler & Dewick, 2016, p. 240). While it is difficult to judge the discursive effects of such strategies (Leipold, Feindt, Keller, & Winkel, 2019), it is worthwhile to reconstruct and critically assess logics of legitimacy, particularly as they deploy democratic norms to build a social license to operate (Suchman, 1995). While earlier research has explored constructions of legitimacy of co-regulation in agri-food systems (Fuchs & Kalfagianni, 2010; Hachez & Wouters, 2011; Halabi & Lin, 2017) and in transnational public-private governance more generally (Flohr, 2010; Uhlin, 2010), our approach links legitimacy analysis of co-regulation to analysis of a discourse which challenges this "corporate system that sells food grown, processed and controlled thousands of miles away" (Johnston, Biro, & MacKendrick, 2009, p. 510): the food democracy discourse.

Since WWII, co-regulation has evolved in several stages in response to major agri-food system changes: liberalization and globalization (Levi-Faur, 2009), advances in science (Winickoff, Jasanoff, Busch, Grove-White, & Wynne, 2005), increases in inequality (Smith, 2009), and awareness of food scandals (Ansell & Vogel, 2006). Beyond food security and availability, new and often interrelated concerns (i.e., food safety, quality, and later, social, environmental, animal welfare and climate issues) have evolved over time to encompass local, regional, national and transnational institutions with overlapping tasks (Feindt & Flynn, 2009). To ensure reliable operation of today's globalized commodity markets, transnational value chains and differentiated consumer demands, a proliferation of private standards and norms has emerged which interact with national regulation and international law (Purnhagen, 2015). This co-regulatory system sits on top of producer-oriented agricultural policies that provide income support and often also legal exceptions for producers in many countries (Daugbjerg & Feindt, 2017). Although private standards are only subject to private contract law, they have become de facto mandatory for many food producers in order to access food retail markets (Fuchs et al., 2009).

Since the 1990s, an emerging food democracy discourse has problematized the lack of public participation and accountability in the agri-food system, with a particular focus on reclaiming power from corporations (Lang, 1992, 1999). In contrast to the co-regulation discourse—which stipulates a cooperative, complimentary and unavoidable nature of public-private co-regulation—the food democracy discourse revolves around a normative model of agri-food governance in which private actors remain firmly subjected to control by the *demos* through state oversight, market competition and civic activism. Thus, the food democracy discourse delineates public versus private control as a key battleground (Hassanein, 2008). Focusing on local consequences of global corporatization, food democracy proponents challenge the legitimacy of private standards and public-private co-regulation. They aim to rebuild legitimacy of agri-food governance by establishing transparent and responsive framework conditions for the sustainable and just production and distribution of food, and for maintaining value for consumers and producers (Anderson, 2008).

Whether and how food democracy constitutes a successful counter-discourse to co-regulation is debated. Critics assert that food democracy may reinforce neoliberal norms of private food control (Johnston et al., 2009; Moragues-Faus, 2016). Alternative food movements that invoke democracy norms may mediate the "legitimation crisis" of corporate governance following food scares, and open "new and lucrative forms of consumption by endowing agribusiness with an image of responsibility and caring" (Guthman, 1998, p. 148). While food democracy proponents take issue with corporate control, many similar tropes and motives (e.g., the inclusion of ethical and sustainability concerns), drive both co-regulation and food democracy. A discursive analysis of legitimacy constructions can help to identify potential overlaps and incommensurability, which is a key step in understanding the contested political arguments embedded in current debates over control of agri-food governance; these debates include whether democracy norms apply to private actors, or whether traditional democracy norms devised for the relationship between states and citizens can be transferred to private organizations and consumers (Steffek, 2003). In examining the potential of a counter-discourse such as food democracy, the degree to which other actors, such as states and civil society, help legitimize private control is also scrutinized. Though scholars of co-regulation (Wolf, 2006) and of food democracy (Anderson, 2008) argue that the state's inability or unwillingness to safeguard food values required more control by private actors, others, such as Sønderskov and Daugbjerg (2010), have found evidence that private standards rely heavily on states for legitimacy. Therefore, this article aims to answer the following research questions: How do dominant discursive and counter-discursive legitimacy constructions interlink or conflict in ways that produce new norms for agri-food governance? Within these constructions, how is democratic authority transferred and distributed across the public, private and civil society sectors?

As the basis for this discussion, we first outline a conceptual typology of legitimacy and our methodology for an analytical literature review. We then present our analysis, which finds two distinct articulations of food democracy, which we label *liberal food democracy* and *strong food democracy*. While the liberal food democ-

racy discourse resonates with legitimacy constructions in the co-regulation discourse, strong food democracy constitutes a pronounced counter-discourse.

2. Conceptual Framework: Legitimacy, Discourse and Power

Legitimacy is considered a crucial element in creating and maintaining the power to govern. Following Weber (1922), legitimacy is rooted in the belief that the exercise of political-administrative power is in accordance with deep-seated normative and cognitive ideas. Legitimacy depends on "the belief in rightness of the decision or process of decision-making" (Dahl, 2006, p. 46). Legitimacy beliefs make it more likely that people adopt desired behaviors and accept decisions that they dislike, thereby decreasing the need to provide material incentives or to threaten the use of force (for a power-based interpretation of democratic legitimacy, see Bornemann & Weiland, 2019).

The cognitive and normative beliefs about legitimacy are shaped by discourse, and in turn guide the design and support the authority of new policies and regulations (Feindt & Oels, 2005; Leipold et al., 2019). A discourse is understood here as "an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices" (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005, p. 175). From a discourse-analytical perspective, policies and regulations are products of "discursive contests over the framing of politics, actors, and underlying societal norms" (Fuchs & Kalfagianni, 2010, p. 67).

Democratic legitimacy is a complex concept. Inspired by Abraham Lincoln's famous description of legitimate rule as government "of the people, by the people and for the people" (Williams, 1980, p. 259), a distinction between input legitimacy (rule by the people), output legitimacy (effectiveness for the people) and throughput legitimacy (quality of the governing processes) has been widely established in theories of democracy (Feindt, 2001; Scharpf, 1999; Schmidt, 2012). Norms of democracy are manifested differently in the agri-food system, e.g., via representation of specified stakeholder groups and forms of participation. For the purpose of our analysis, we have operationalized articulations of input, output and throughput legitimacy as expressed in agri-food governance discourses (see Table 1).

Input legitimacy is based on the belief that all citizens or all those affected have a fair and equal chance to influence authoritative decisions. It is linked to forms of political participation so as to ensure that governing bodies are accountable to those governed (Scharpf, 1999). In agri-food governance, consumers and citizens are used at times interchangeably as proxies for wider public representation (Hamilton, 2005). Participation requires further qualifiers such as inclusiveness and equality (Fuchs et al., 2009). *Output legitimacy* is based on the perceived capacity of a political system to effectively solve collective problems (Scharpf, 1999). The importance of output legitimacy reflects a level of delegated responsibility to experts and representatives (Majone, 1998). However, stakeholders will often prioritize some problems over others, or interpret solutions very differently (Fuchs & Kalfagianni, 2009), so that output legitimacy can be contested. Output legitimacy is not necessarily linked to democratic processes and has therefore been inter alia criticized as an "effectiveness-based surrogate" for democratic norms (Hachez & Wouters, 2011, p. 685).

Tensions between citizen participation and problem-solving effectiveness are frequent (Dahl, 2006). The radical plurality and complexity of contemporary societies

Table 1. Legitimacy types and indicators in agri-food governance.

Legitimacy Type	Norms from democracy theory	Indicators for agri-food governance
Input legitimacy	Participation by the people; demands articulated through formal and informal channels and political mobilization (e.g., protest, demonstrations, activism); inclusion of all relevant knowledge	Inclusive and equal opportunity for all food consumers and producers for regular and protected participation in the articulation of demands, rule-making and monitoring; inclusive representation on regulatory bodies; inclusion of relevant local, practitioner and scientific knowledge
Output legitimacy	Efficiency for the people; effective solutions to collective problems; policies that benefit the majority; protection of minority rights	Perception of the efficient provision of safe, sustainable, healthy, culturally adequate food and diverse food choices for all societal groups
Throughput Legitimacy	Processes with the people; efficacy of participation, accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and openness to interest consultation; reliable procedures; sound reasoning and inclusive deliberation; procedural justice	Institutionalized fair and orderly processes of deliberation, rule-making, implementation and monitoring—transparency, opportunity for meaningful participation processes, inclusive deliberation, responsiveness

makes unanimous assessment of a given output unlikely (normative ambivalence) and causal attribution of systemic effects—such as rising obesity, biodiversity loss or antibiotic resistance—difficult. *Throughput legitimacy* denotes the belief that decisions and outcomes are based on transparent and reliable institutionalized processes. A belief that prescribed procedures have been followed makes it more likely that even undesired outcomes are accepted, e.g., a lost election or court case (Luhmann, 1969). However, compliance in transnational governance is typically less motivated by a belief in procedural arrangements than by substantive reasons and material interests (Mayntz, 2010). Throughput legitimacy has been described as bridging input and output legitimacy through the quality of institutional processes that ensure responsiveness to public demands (Fuchs et al., 2009; Schmidt, 2012). This requires productive, transparent and deliberative processes so that demands are "adequately channeled in societal and administrative decision-making, thereby improving accountability" (Schmidt, 2012, p. 24). The concept can be extended to apply to public-private and even to private agri-food governance. For example, deliberative procedures in transnational private governance would require deliberation between representatives of all affected stakeholders, and responsiveness beyond immediate business interests.

In order to reconstruct legitimacy in each discourse, a review of the research literature on food democracy and public-private co-regulation was conducted. In the next section, we discuss the methodological process of data collection and analysis, followed by the conceptual synthesis of the legitimacy constructions in co-regulation and food democracy discourse.

3. Methodology

As our primary objective is to explore co-regulation and food democracy through the lens of legitimacy, we conducted an analytical review of scholarly knowledge and grey literature in each field. The data collections were performed separately: first, a systematic literature review of food democracy (for a complete overview, see Behringer, 2019); second, we conducted a more focused search of literature on co-regulation and private agri-food standards which yielded both theoretical and empirical commentaries. These sources included peer-reviewed journals, edited book chapters, as well as grey literature on co-regulation prepared for institutions (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], World Bank, European Commission) which comment on historical influences, trends and motivations.

Based on these bodies of literature, a deductive content analysis examined occurrences of the indicators of the three types of legitimacy. For each discourse, we narrowed down the material to three empirical examples that are treated in the literature as representing the diversity of practices linked to each

discourse and which illustrate different legitimacy constructions. For co-regulation, these examples include: (a) GlobalG.A.P., which assembles 50% of global retail and agribusiness value-added, and certifies food suppliers in 124 countries worldwide (GlobalG.A.P., 2019), making this the world's largest implementor of private agri-food standards (Hachez & Wouters, 2011); (b) the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), a collaboration of Unilever and the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF), working since 1996 to end unstainable seafood provision; and (c) organic standards, which originated from organic farmer associations and were later translated into international and regional public standards (Schwindenhammer, 2017). From the food democracy literature, we discuss: (a) community food hubs, which are mainly initiatives by small-scale producers and middle class families in reaction to corporate agri-food systems (Andretta & Guidi, 2017); (b) the non-genetically modified organism (GMO) label campaign in the US backed by Food Democracy Now (Stephan, 2015) with a reported 650,000 farmers and citizen activists; and (c) the People's Food Policy initiative in Canada, led by city and provincial food policy councils.

4. Legitimacy in the Co-Regulation Discourse

In this section we examine how each type of legitimacy (input, output and throughput) is constructed in the co-regulation discourse to legitimize private governance norms and practices.

Input legitimacy in the co-regulatory discourse is mostly linked to the inclusion of relevant knowledge. Standards typically refer to scientific norms. Hatanaka (2014, p. 138) lists scientific norms such as perceived "disinterestedness, replicability and validity" as the foundational elements in establishing and universalizing the legitimacy of private agri-food governance, reflected in the ability to provide food conformity and harmonization despite diverse origins. This also applies to public agri-food governance. Winickoff et al. (2005, p. 92) cite proponents of science-based food regulation, who argue that it "can be, and should be, understood not as usurping legitimate democratic choices for stricter regulations, but as enhancing the quality of rational democratic deliberation about risk and its control." The intended result of the input of scientific norms and knowledge is therefore a sense of trustworthiness which adheres to rationality norms, although it has been criticized that science-based methods of risk management embody Western norms (Hatanaka, 2014; Winickoff et al., 2005).

The focus on knowledge inclusion prioritizes experts, albeit not necessarily scientists, in standard-setting processes. A closer look reveals that private standards are typically not developed by scientists but by sector experts (Fuchs et al., 2009). In GlobalG.A.P., standards are developed in technical committees with experts from retail, producers and traders (GlobalG.A.P., 2019), reflecting their expertise, but also their practical needs.

At the same time, GlobalG.A.P. standards often refer to European public standards, potentially lending input legitimacy from the parliamentary process. However, GlobalG.A.P. extends these standards along the transnational value chains to territories where citizens had no input into the creation of the underlying public standards. Organic standards have been historically based on the principles developed by practitioners organized in organic farming associations and internationally harmonized through their umbrella organization International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, which later informed Codex Alimentarius standards and differentiated regional standards (Schwindenhammer, 2017). To the degree that the organic principles are not strictly based on scientific evidence, they present a different type of input legitimacy that is based on trust in the organic community's origins and values.

A second construction of input legitimacy is the adoption of democratic norms of inclusiveness through practices such as multi-stakeholder participation and representation of public interest. In GlobalG.A.P.'s membership model, for example, retailers and producers each elect 50% of representatives to the board, and additional associate members from food services and agricultural input firms consult in decision-making (Fuchs et al., 2009). Wider stakeholder participation was also introduced through focus groups, online public consultations, and country partners (GlobalG.A.P., 2019), including outreach to smallholder farmers in developing contexts who might be excluded from global value chains (Fulponi, 2006). Given this effort, FAO has deemed GlobalG.A.P. relatively open to stakeholder input (Henson & Humphrey, 2009). Similarly, MSC garners input legitimacy through CSO involvement and government support. The MSC depends on participation of a highly trusted environmental NGO, WWF, and participation of affected stakeholders (Osterveer, 2015). MSC standards receive additional input legitimacy ex-post when they are absorbed into national regulations (Steets, 2011). Together, CSO involvement and government oversight, as Guthman (1998, p. 137) observes in the case of organic food standards, serve to "bolster and legitimize" agribusiness involvement as well as "palliate oppositional movements." Stakeholder participation, though emulating democratic input legitimacy, often remains unequal, privileging powerful retailers and large suppliers, with peripheral roles for consumers or farmers in the Global South (Tallontire, Opondo, & Nelson, 2013). Even with CSO involvement, resource asymmetries prevent equal input from smaller actors and less well-resourced organizations (Steets, 2011).

Output legitimacy is constructed in co-regulatory discourse by emphasizing problem-solving capacity and efficiency to safeguard public goods and ethical concerns, interpreted as safe, abundant, ethical and 'natural' food choices for consumers. GlobalG.A.P., for example, was created in order to restore consumer confidence following state failures of food safety and loss of public trust (Havinga, 2018). Efficient harmonization also reduces costs and allows for process-based market differentiation. Similarly, the global harmonization of organic standards reassures consumers that products from around the globe adhere to the same principles (Schwindenhammer, 2017). The MSC scheme promises to safeguard the public good by prohibiting destructive fishing techniques and management of by-catch to meet WWF criteria, but also allows food retailers and services such as Wal-Mart and McDonald's to distinguish product lines for eco-minded consumers (Changing Markets Foundation, 2018). In essence, the output-based legitimacy of co-regulation has two underlying assumptions: that private standards need to complement public regulation to deliver on new consumer demands, and that these solutions are only sustainable when aligned with business interests. Output legitimacy is here constructed as inextricably linked to market creation because the private standards that complement public regulation enable new markets for emerging, differentiated consumer demands. Thus, the delivery of desired public goods and ethical outcomes synergize with the creation of opportunities for businesses and value chains that address these concerns.

The new consumer preferences, such as those for 'natural' food, in turn provide novel opportunities to increase output legitimacy through co-regulation. The discourse of organic standards, for example, allows value chain actors to construct their products as derived from natural sources. Some consumers perceive co-regulatory standards as the most efficient, convenient means to "make nature safe and available" (Guthman, 2007, p. 150).

Output legitimacy of co-regulation is also constructed as fostering efficiency and innovation. Starting with the British Food Safety Law in 1990, responsibility for the methods to ensure safe food shifted towards the private sector. The European Commission (2017) advocates a "clear allocation of responsibility to food-handling businesses and farmers to comply with EU rules associated with an obligation of self-control." Private standards and arms-length controls are heralded as creating the conditions for a "race to the top" (Levi-Faur, 2009, p. 182), a catalyst for progress and modernization to improve supply chain capacity (World Bank, 2005), and as "more flexible and agile in responding to a wide range of continually evolving consumer preferences" (Smith, 2009, p. 5). Overall, we find that the construction of output legitimacy in the co-regulation discourse is derived from specific capabilities associated with the public, private and civil society sectors. Supposedly, only the interplay of societal demand, public-private co-regulation and business innovation delivers the desired outcome: safe, healthy, ethical and sustainable food on differentiated markets. The co-regulation discourse backgrounds that this system is mostly geared towards marketable features and the desires of a minority, namely wealthy consumers in the Global North (Fuchs et al., 2009).

Throughput legitimacy in co-regulation discourse relates heavily to transparency and reliability processes via adherence with publicized procedures for standard setting, implementation and enforcement (Casey, 2017), traceability schemes and, to a lesser degree, the perception of deliberation among all relevant stakeholders. MSC boasts a high level of transparency via access to minutes of conferences, roundtables and videos (Fuchs et al., 2009). Objections panels provide stakeholders with means of formal complaint (Steets, 2011), while a Board of Trustees provides independent oversight (Fuchs et al., 2009). Reliable procedures "underline the professionalism and independence of the verification process" (Steets, 2011, p. 97). However, the construction of throughput legitimacy runs into limitations because the methodologies used and the results of the certification processes, for example audits of GlobalG.A.P.-certified food producers, are often confidential. Throughput legitimacy is achieved only insofar as internal private auditors provide credible public information, while private auditors may lack motivations for independence (Fagotto, 2017). Deliberation as a pillar of throughput legitimacy construction is emphasized in the MSC model, which strongly rests on its multi-stakeholder identity. At least in principle this allows for deliberation among possibly conflicting interests (Fuchs et al., 2009). The construction of throughput legitimacy in the co-regulation discourse again involves all sectors since private standards may also borrow throughput legitimacy via a level of government oversight or "orchestration" (van der Voort, 2015, p. 17). However, government oversight is inherently limited for any national jurisdiction in the face of transnational value chains.

Overall, our analysis shows a well-elaborated and complex construction of legitimacy in the co-regulation discourse: 1) the input legitimacy construct emphasizes expertise of scientists and practitioners, complemented by, albeit limited, participation opportunities for affected groups and stakeholders; 2) the output legitimacy construct connects effective and efficient provision of safe, healthy, sustainable and ethical food with the creation of differentiated markets through the interplay of public and private regulation; and 3) throughput legitimacy is constructed around notions of reliable, independent auditing, traceability, and varying degrees of transparency and deliberation in rulemaking.

5. Legitimacy in Food Democracy Discourse

We now turn to the construction of legitimacy in the food democracy discourse. Here, regarding *input legitimacy*, we find a strong emphasis on grassroots, community-based participation to re-establish value-based agri-food systems. As Rossi (2017, p. 17) notes, values, knowledge and preferences "lead to the realm of food democracy." Undesired outcomes are explained by lack of value-based democratic participation. For Food Democracy Now (Stephan, 2015), GMOs represent this distinct lack

of values and public input. In the American context, the absence of mandatory GMO labelling is critiqued as denial of opportunities for value expression (Hamilton, 2005). While labelling is generally an element of throughput legitimacy by creating transparency, the absence of labels is seen as compromising input legitimacy by reducing choice options for consumers. With non-GMO activism, as Shiva (2003) argues, grassroots efforts can effectively combat the "denied freedom of information and freedom of choice because of corporate control and dependency." This is echoed by Anderson (2008) who points to the supermarket as a place where shoppers supposedly have unlimited choices, and yet the freedom to make critical decisions, such as avoiding GMO products, was unavailable. Here, input legitimacy in the food democracy discourse is constructed as political consumerism, where everyday food choices express individual ethical values (Andretta & Guidi, 2017), and "each trip to buy food is really a visit to the polling place" (Hamilton, 2005, p. 22).

However, other voices in the food democracy discourse critique this form of political consumerism as a limited expression of self-interests (Hassanein, 2003) which may encourage corporate capture of values for the purpose of expanding new markets (Johnston et al., 2009). In contrast, the food policy council movement emphasizes collective participation in civic life alongside elected representatives in order to counteract a decoupling of states from society (Moragues-Faus, 2016). This is illustrated by the food policy councils where citizen consultation is protected by public act or joint resolutions (Fox, 2010). One of the Toronto food policy council's tasks has been "to propose policy at all levels of government, and to find ways of integrating community experiences" (Welsh & MacRae, 1998, p. 249). Here, input legitimacy is linked to the knowledge and values of citizens and to direct interactions with municipal representatives.

Output legitimacy is constructed in the food democracy discourse by challenging the dominant paradigm of food provision through standardization and economies of scale (Lang, 1999). Pointing to trade-offs between efficiency and control, part of the food democracy discourse emphasizes efficacy of output, described by Hassanein (2008) as the combination of the capacity to act and make an impact. Efficacy is seen as important to maximize protection of the public good, though this is interpreted in different ways. As both Hassanein (2008) and Rose (2017) observe in community food initiatives, the capacity to act and impact is also felt in the hands-on production of food for alternative markets, particularly those which benefit lower-income consumers.

However, alternative constructions of output legitimacy emerge in the discourse that focus more on collective political efficacy than individual choice. From this perspective, individual efficacy may produce a sense of freedom and self-empowerment, but could subdue attempts at higher-level political change (Rossi, 2017).

Output legitimacy then requires reduced individualism and, in its place, work towards the preservation of common pool resources and the adoption of good public policy. Here, the state, pressured into action by active food citizens, becomes the facilitator of a "new collectivism" (Lang, 1999, p. 221). An example for such a discourse that advocates a "people-centered, counter-hegemonic policy-making process" (Levkoe & Sheedy, 2017, p. 2) is the Canadian People's Food Policy. The output legitimacy of food councils in Canada is constructed through strengthening of common resources and a common sense of civic impact (Welsh & MacRae, 1998). This reflects a two-dimensional construction of output legitimacy in the food democracy discourse, with consumer efficacy protecting freedom and choice, but also wider citizen-based structural efficacy. According to Gómez-Benito and Lozano (2014, p. 145):

If there were interest [sic] in highlighting consumers' obligations, the focus would be located beyond the market and would be oriented not only toward individual issues, but also toward structural factors and issues that affect the entire group of citizens.

Throughput legitimacy in the food democracy discourse requires high standards of transparency. This can be obtained through accountability to civil society through consumer information, or by directly empowering open citizen deliberation. In the first perspective, the state has a limited role to facilitate consumer education and to support alternative food movements, for example through financing community food hubs. Emphasis is put on private sector accountability to new consumer demands for transparency, and governance responsibility to address market failures through information asymmetry—e.g., by establishing non-GMO labels that enable consumers to avoid genetically modified products. Labels are also used by community food hubs as a way to self-certify, providing assurance that products are seasonal, non-industrial, and fair, with the result that consumers could buy the product without question (Chiffoleau, Millet-Amrani, & Canard, 2016).

Although labels promote throughput legitimacy via transparency, parts of the food democracy discourse warn that a focus on labels may limit wider deliberation. For the decision-making process to be trusted, there must be the "opportunity to debate, to learn about the local food system and from each other, and to choose collectively what could be focused on and prioritized" (Chiffoleau et al., 2016, p. 10). Hassanein (2008) likewise notes that community coalitions require different interests to be negotiated. There is more promotion of transparent processes which guarantee food citizens a place in policy debates (Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014). These debates, through food policy councils for example, can provide "some credibility in places where none would normally be possible" (Welsh & MacRae, 1998, p. 251). In this vein, a democratic society "must be able to guaran-

tee the meaningful and active involvement of all individuals, groups and institutions in decision-making" (People's Food Policy Project, 2011). This second food democracy perspective promotes inclusive deliberative processes to ensure accountability, and an inclusive and transparent political public sphere that is distinct from markets and not dominated by strategic interests.

Overall, our analysis of the food democracy discourse reveals two distinct articulations of each of the three dimensions of legitimacy:

1) While input legitimacy is strongly linked to value-based knowledge and the application of democracy norms, the emphasis is either on the individual choices of concerned consumers *or* on citizens participating in collective action;
2) While output legitimacy is consistently based on efficacy and protection of the public good, efficacy is linked either to consumer freedom *or* to community resources;
3) Throughput legitimacy is mainly constructed either as transparency based on consumer information *or* as the opening up of wider, deliberative policy processes.

The two strands of the food democracy discourse characterized above resonate with established characterizations of 'liberal' and 'strong democracy' (Barber, 1984). We therefore propose to distinguish two distinct articulations of the food democracy discourse: the first, referred to here as *liberal food democracy*, emphasizes input legitimacy from consumer participation in order to pressure market actors to deliver products and services that correspond to consumers' ethical values. This vision conceives of output legitimacy as market responsiveness and maximized consumer choice, and throughput legitimacy as transparency, traceability and accountability. This form of participation has been criticized over a tendency to water down inclusion and reciprocity and to lose legitimacy due to overreliance on purchasing power (Renting, Schermer, & Rossi, 2012). This aligns with Barber's (1984, p. 4) criticism of a lack of public accountability in liberal democracy, from which "no firm theory of citizenship, participation, public goods or civic virtue could be expected to arise."

The second articulation, *strong food democracy*, emphasizes citizen-based throughput legitimacy by way of processes which counter corporate power with civic power, public accountability, and state oversight (de Schutter, 2017; Hassanein, 2008; Moragues-Faus, 2016; for an example of strong food democracy that emphasizes participation and conflict as constitutive for food democracy, see Friedrich, Hackfort, Boyer, & Gottschlich, 2019). In this articulation, the expected output is a common "ethics of interdependence, sustainability, health and justice over those of profit and individualism" (People's Food Policy Project, 2011). This reflects a call for strong interaction and collaboration, which resonates

with Barber's (1984, p. 207) strong democracy concept where participation and "talk" creates a reciprocal environment, or a "listening citizenry." Its proponents argue that this strong interaction among citizens generates values of mutuality and reciprocity, interweaving inclusive input, participatory throughput and common good-oriented output legitimacy to represent an alternative form of agri-food governance.

6. Discussion

Our analysis reveals a complex interplay between competing concepts of input, throughput and output legitimacy in the co-regulation discourse and the two distinct articulations—liberal and strong—of the food democracy discourse (see Table 2 for an overview). From a reflexive governance perspective (Feindt & Weiland, 2018), all three discourses constitute specific representations of the objects and subjects of agri-food governance, which creates potential barriers to mutual understanding and inclusive compromise. However, there is an observable overlap between the co-regulation and the liberal food democracy discourses; although the first is based on issues of coordination, problem-solving and harmonization and the second on value realization, responsiveness and accountability, both discourses overlap in putting consumer choice at the center of their conception of input legitimacy. Regarding output legitimacy, both discourses emphasize the conditions under which market mechanisms work to solve collective coordination and information problems. The result is a shared focus on procedures that create transparency along complex value chains through a system of standards, monitoring and labelling that evolves in response to changing consumer demands. Public goods can then be realized because consumers want them and 'vote with the dollar.'

Differences, however, remain. In the liberal food democracy discourse, as in classical theories of liberal democracy, fair and open competition is the main mechanism that generates a movement towards the public good and creates benefits for a majority. The role of the state is to guarantee public health and safety and to ensure a level playing field with regard to all other aspects, including that private standards are not misleading or used to stifle competition. From a liberal food democracy perspective, co-regulation in transnational value chains must therefore be linked to oversight through democratically controlled agencies with effective accountability to citizens and their elected representatives. In contrast, the co-regulation discourse accepts dominantly private accountability arrangements as long as coordination problems are solved efficiently and the system is perceived as fair and reliable by market partners and consumers.

In contrast, the strong food democracy discourse emphasizes throughput legitimacy through open, inclusive and deliberative processes aimed at generating consensus and solidarity, and at producing common values and resources. It resonates with an expectation that is central to theories of Habermasian deliberative democracy: that common deliberation will transform participants' preferences and that the deliberating public will educate itself. Citizen-based networks and food councils express the idea that the agri-food system should mainly be governed by the shared deliberation of citizens, including in national and transnational fora, not by the fragmented transactions of consumers.

7. Conclusion

The food democracy discourse has emerged as a normatively grounded critique of an increasingly transnational agri-food system, where private norms and standards in-

Table 2. Comparison of legitimacy in co-regulation and food democracy discourses.

Legitimacy type	Co-regulatory food discourse	Liberal food democracy discourse	Strong food democracy discourse
Input legitimacy	Voting with the dollar; expertise	Participation through consumer choice, based on purchasing power, and representative democracy	Participation of consumers and producers as deliberative citizens
Output legitimacy	Efficiency in satisfying differentiated consumer demand through public and private standards that solve information and coordination problems	Enhanced consumer choice responding to societal demand and values	Efficacy within inclusive agri-food systems; provision of public goods; common values
Throughput legitimacy	Compliance with public regulations; transparency of public and private regulations; traceability, auditing and quality assurance	Accountability through delegated powers of public agencies; state intervention to address information asymmetries	Bottom-up, state-protected networks of inclusive deliberation based on food citizenship

teract with public policy and regulation in complex ways that elude traditional models of democratic accountability. Our analysis aimed to reconstruct the underlying legitimacy constructions supporting co-regulation as well as food democracy conceptions. It generated three important insights: first, it is important to distinguish between two different articulations of the food democracy discourse, which we labelled *liberal* and *strong food democracy*; second, conceptualizations of legitimacy in the *liberal food democracy* and the *co-regulatory discourse* share an emphasis on market mechanisms and private sector initiatives. However, legitimacy in the co-regulatory discourse relies more heavily on output (delivering ample safe, reliable, sustainable and ethical food choices to improve consumer confidence in global food chains), while the liberal food democracy discourse is more sensitive to issues of input and throughput legitimacy such as fair opportunity for value expression and market power; and third, the strong food democracy discourse articulates a critical counter-model that emphasizes inclusive deliberation, which in turn is expected to generate reciprocal norms, a shared orientation towards the common good and countervailing power.

Our analysis contributes to linking two proliferating bodies of literature that address either co-regulation in agri-food governance (e.g., Verbruggen & Havinga, 2017) or food democracy (Behringer, 2019). The focus on legitimacy constructions helps to better understand the contested political arguments embedded in current debates about governance of the agri-food system. Legitimacy constructions provide authority to models of social order embodied in a governance arrangement. Analytical reconstruction renders visible their historical contingency as the outcome of political struggles over power and control. Finding counter-discourses that challenge a dominant governance model and its discursive justification helps to clarify these struggles and the alternative models of authority and control at stake. Via discourses which emphasize the roles of actors other than state and civil society, democracy norms can be transferred to legitimize private authority over food. The presence of a counter-discourse, such as strong food democracy, makes such a legitimacy transfer more difficult and—through its coordinative and mobilizing functions—has the potential to create new tensions and challenges for private power.

This contribution could only outline the competing constructions of legitimacy in agri-food governance. On this basis, we suggest three directions for future research. The first direction links up with political theory and history of political ideas and aims for a more in-depth inquiry into the legitimacy constructions, their historical roots and ideational resonance. The second direction links discourse analysis to a micro-analysis of regulatory practices and aims to assess how the different discourses affect the practice of co-regulation. The third direction takes a comparative approach and aims to understand how different regulatory practices and legitimacy claims interact in different countries and different value chains, and how they evolve over time. The combination of conceptual-argumentative, regulatory and comparative analysis will allow us to better understand whether and how the governance of agri-food systems lives up to democratic ideals and ambitions.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Food Activism and Citizens' Democratic Engagements: What Can We Learn from Market-Based Political Participation?

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Abstract

Food democracy calls for a democratization of the production, distribution, and consumption of food. Researchers and lay citizens are showing a growing interest for initiatives associated with food democracy, yet the specific democratic ideals and involvements that make up food democracy have gained limited attention. Many forms of participation associated with food democracy are market-based, such as buying organic food or joining community-supported agricultural projects. Research shows that market-based logics influence multiple spheres of life and threaten democratic ideals. However, scholars working on political participation have not yet analyzed the influence of market-based logics across forms of participation. This article analyses the action repertoire of food democracy to assess the influence of market-based logics on different forms of food activism. It builds on four critiques of market-based politics to question the relationship between different forms of participation and the market. It addresses three research questions: Which forms of political participation do citizens use to democratize the food regime? Which conceptions of democracy relate to these different forms of food activism? Which critiques of market-based politics apply to different forms of food activism? The article highlights the widespread risk of unequal participation, crowding out, commodification, and state retreat across forms of participation used to democratize food regimes. This study provides insights into the types of democratic renewal being experimented with in the framework of food democracy as well as their limits.

Issue

This article is part of the issue "New Perspectives on Food Democracy" edited by Basil Bornemann (University of Basel, Switzerland) and Sabine Weiland (Université Catholique de Lille, France).

1. Introduction

In the global west, a growing share of citizens buy fair trade coffee, sign up for community-supported agricultural projects, engage in community gardens, or go vegan. Some do it to transform food regimes, others to express their political views or to change their relationship to the prevailing modes of food production, distribution, and consumption. In existing food regimes, power is highly concentrated in the hands of the food agro-industry (Friedmann, 2005; Lang, 1999). Nevertheless, citizens engage in political struggles to make claims about social justice, environmental protection, sustainability, health, and other political issues associated with food. These actions contribute to food democracy, which refers to citizens' attempts to democratize the food system or, in other words, to reinforce their political voices in processes related to the production, distribution, and consumption of food.

Among the different forms of action used to democratize food regimes, political consumerism is the most studied (Koos, 2012; Micheletti, 2003; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). This attention triggered important critiques which point to the far-reaching influence of market-based logics and how they influence prevailing conceptions of citizens' engagements (Alkon & Guthman, 2017; Lewis & Potter, 2011; Mukherjee & Banet-Weiser, 2012). These critiques focus on specific forms of par-

ticipation, namely political consumerism. Similarly, research on food democracy tends to centre on single action forms, for instance, food consumerism (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011), food cooperatives (Zitcer, 2017), or solidarity purchase groups (Forno, Grasseni, & Signori, 2015). Two collective volumes (Alkon & Guthman, 2017; Counihan & Siniscalchi, 2013) bring these research strands together and highlight the links between different action forms. However, to the best of my knowledge, no study underscores the specific kind of democracy that is called for and implemented in different food initiatives.

In recent debates, a key question has been how to scale up attempts at democratizing food regimes (see for instance Mount, 2012). However, it is important to understand the kind of democratic conceptions that shape projects of food democracy before they expand. In this article, I discuss the different conceptions of democracy that form food democracy. This study shows that market-based logics often prevail across different modes and forms of political participation used to democratize the food regime. In so doing, it complements research in different fields that have analyzed how neoliberal capitalism jeopardizes democracies (Crouch, 2004; Merkel, 2014a), how marketization threatens voluntary non-profit organizations (Eikenberry, 2009; Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004), and how corporate food regimes commodify political demands (Guthman, 2002). Here, the goal is to assess to what extent processes of marketization and neoliberal threats to democracies apply to different forms of food activism. Three research questions are addressed: Which forms of political participation do citizens use to democratize the food regime? Which conceptions of democracy relate to these different forms of food activism? Which critiques of market-based politics apply to different forms of food activism?

First, I define food activism and present the different forms of action that it takes. I link these different forms of action to three modes of participation and three conceptions of democracy. Second, I introduce four critiques of market-based forms of participation. Going back to the different forms of action presented in Section 1, I discuss whether and to what extent these critiques apply to all of them. In the discussion, I draw attention to similarities across action forms and create the foundations for a reflection on citizens' democratic involvement. This comparison shows that market-based logics shape market-based modes of action, but also institutional and protest logics. Hence, they question the underlying conceptions of democracy and the prevailing relationships to the market of different forms of food activism.

2. Food Activism: An Action Repertoire with Specific Modes of Participation and Conceptions of Democracy

Food democracy is "the demand for greater access and collective benefit from the food system" (Lang, 1999, p. 218). It requires that "citizens hav[e] the power to determine agro-food policies and practices locally, region-

ally, nationally, and globally" (Hassanein, 2003, p. 79). This means that citizens engage in institutional and protest politics that allow shaping policies, but also practice the changes they are calling for. Citizens use different forms of political participation to democratize food regimes. They constitute the action repertoire of food activism which can be defined, following Reichman (2014, p. 159), as "political action, encompassing a variety of individual and collective efforts to change the world by changing how food is produced, distributed, and consumed." This definition: a) points at the *individual* and the *collective* dimensions of political participation; b) specifies a multidimensional *political goal* (related to food production, distribution, and consumption); and c) is not tied to specific forms of action. This means that food activism is an action repertoire covering actions used to democratize the food regime.

An action repertoire includes different action modes (Theocharis & van Deth, 2018). Action modes, in turn, include several forms of participation which share some specific features. I distinguish three modes of participation presented on the horizontal axis of Table 1: market-based, institutional, and protest. Action forms that correspond to a market-based mode of action are associated with commercial relations: buying, refusing to buy, or seeking alternatives to monetary exchanges. Institutional modes of participation relate to elected representatives and political parties, while protest modes of participation cover collective contentious forms of action. The choice of an action mode provides information about conceptions of democracy: Citizens direct actions on the market, deference to democratic institutions, or protest to express political views and influence political institutions.

Furthermore, democratic ideals rest on different conceptions of the 'right' level of citizens' involvement (Merkel, 2014b). These conceptions shape citizens' democratic involvements. Here, I use them to differentiate food activism according to three conceptions of democracy: representative, participatory, and prefigurative. In Table 1, the vertical axis distinguishes action forms according to these conceptions. In a *representative democracy*, citizens are mostly expected to cast a vote occasionally—the basic idea being that some rule all the time while others are ruled (Barber, 1984/2003). Those who embrace an elitist conception of democracy consider this an ideal democracy (Schumpeter, 1942/2010). On the contrary, *participatory democracy* calls for citizens' sustained engagement in decision-making through deliberative processes (Polletta, 2002). In its republican form, following Aristotle's idea of men as political animals, democracy insists on citizens' devotion to politics. In a more contemporary radical understanding, democracy encourages citizens to experiment with the changes they would like to see happen on a larger scale (Purcell, 2013)—*prefigurative democracy*.

The first column of Table 1 presents the specific forms of food activism that correspond to a market-based mode of participation. *Political consumerism* in-

Table 1. Forms of food activism organized according to action modes and conceptions of democracy.

Conceptions of democracy	Action modes		
	Market-based politics	**Institutional politics**	**Protest politics**
Representative democracy	*Political consumerism* Boycott and buycott	*Electoral politics* Voting	*Everyday politics* Donating money Signing petitions
Participatory democracy	*Food collectives* Food baskets Food cooperatives Participatory supermarkets	*Party politics* Party membership	*Group activism* Street protest Group activism
Prefigurative democracy	*Lifestyle politics* Vegetarianism or veganism Voluntary simplicity Urban gardening	*Political careers* Party staff & elected representatives[1]	*Committed activism* Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) staff[1] Squatting

Notes: [1] These forms of participation involve a professionalization of political activities; these are borderline cases since they are not the action of ordinary citizens which is a key element in the definition of political participation (see Brady, 1999). Furthermore, in the case of professional political actors, they are not prefiguring a form of participation with the aim that it would apply to the whole society. Instead, they correspond to the republican ideal of (a selected elite of) men who live for politics.

cludes "individualized collective action" which seeks to change the market by buying or refusing to buy products for political reasons (Micheletti, 2003). Political consumerism is the ideal-type of market-based activism. It corresponds to a representative ideal of democracy where citizens use their money to make political choices; in the case of food democracy, the choice is to defend values related to food production, distribution, and consumption. In so doing, they delegate their political voices to firms who make a profit while claiming to defend political values. *Food collectives* take the form of food cooperatives (Zitcer, 2017), food networks (Forno et al., 2015), or community-supported agriculture (Dubuisson-Quellier & Lamine, 2004). They involve consumers, food distributors, and food producers. Food collectives often require sustained involvement over time, some, even demand participation in fieldwork or at the supermarket. They correspond to participatory democracy because consumers and producers participate in general assemblies and other deliberative forums where they collaboratively make decisions for the production, distribution, and consumption of food. Finally, *lifestyle politics* constitute a form of prefigurative politics—citizens engage in transformative behaviors in their everyday life, they adapt their lifestyle to enact the changes they would like to see happening in the broader society (Epstein, 1991). It can take the form of vegetarianism (Micheletti & Stolle, 2012), reduced consumption in compliance with voluntary simplicity (Lorenzen, 2012), or gardening for food production (Glowa, 2017). These forms of lifestyle politics require high involvement in terms of time and coherence across life spheres.

Turning to institutional politics, Table 1 presents action forms that can be used to advance food democracy but that are not specific to it, therefore, the forms of actions presented in this case are more general and reach

beyond food activism. *Electoral politics* refers to voting to elect representatives and constitutes the ideal-typical form of representative democracy in institutional politics. Citizens select their representative once every four/five years at the national level. Voting can be based on socialization and habits (Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009), a sense of duty (Blais, Young, & Lapp, 2000), on heuristic shortcuts (Nai, 2014), or on an (overall) assessment of the economy (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000). Citizens can also vote to defend a specific political agenda, such as agroecology or food sovereignty. *Party activism*—for instance being an active party member—can be used to push food-related issues on the political agenda of a party. In this case, participation corresponds to a participatory conception of democracy. Party members meet regularly to discuss the political agenda and the goals of the party. In many countries, institutional participation in its prefigurative form becomes a professional activity and corresponds to a *political career*. This includes elected representatives and party staff. Brady (1999) defines political participation as "actions *by ordinary citizens* [my emphasis] who pursue some political outcome." Hence, strictly speaking, professional political actors are not engaged in political participation. The wages that they receive for their political engagements change the nature of their political behavior. Furthermore, elected representatives and party staff correspond to the idea of political animals, however, in this case, it is not clear whether they truly experiment with a model that they would like to see implemented in society, often they only call for a limited engagement of other citizens. One example of an elected representative engaged in food democracy is the French farmer Josée Bové elected for the European elections in 2009.

Similarly, the actions presented under protest politics can be used to advance food democracy or other po-

litical goals. In this mode of participation, the form or participation corresponding to a representative conception of democracy is *everyday activism* such as donating money to CSOs or signing petitions. These activities require limited commitment in terms of money or time, the most time demanding part of it is the identification of the group or the cause that one wants to defend. As in the case of political consumerism, they correspond to the idea of voting with one's money (donation in this case). Citizens delegate their political voice to specific CSOs that they support financially. Forms of protest politics that correspond to a participatory conception of democracy relate to *group activism*, for instance being active in political groups or participating in demonstrations[1]. Some citizens engage in trade unions active in the food production or service sector (Sbicca, 2012), in anti-pesticide movements (Guthman & Brown, 2016), or movements against genetic engineering (Schurman, 2004). Similar to institutional politics, some actions that correspond to prefigurative conceptions of democracy face a change in nature. A process of activism professionalization is at play with active members becoming paid staff. Table 1 presents squatters as a non-professionalized form of prefigurative participation. Squatters, like vegans, engage in political actions that call for overall changes in their lives. They adapt everyday behaviors across different life spheres (work life, household organization, leisure activities, etc.) to their political values. In so doing, they are prefiguring some of the changes they want to see happening in society.

3. Critiques of Market-Based Politics and Their Relevance for Food Democracy

Reichman's (2014) definition of food activism also points at a transformative goal, "changing the world by changing how food is produced, distributed, and consumed." However, this carries little information about the kind of transformation proposed. In a world where markets reach new segments of society every day, it is difficult to imagine social transformations that reach beyond the market (Gibson-Graham, 2006). In fact, there is a growing literature highlighting the influence of market-based logics on different dimensions of democracy: on CSOs (Eikenberry, 2009), social movements (Purcell, 2008), and democratic core principles (Merkel, 2014a). In relation to food democracy, scholars have analyzed the influence of market-based logics. For instance, Josée Johnston and Kate Cairns (2012) point to the inequalities that shape citizens' ability to take part. Julianne Busa and Rebekah Garder (2015) emphasize the narrow political goals and understanding of local food consumers. Julie Guthman (2002) and Harriet Friedmann (2005) show that the corporate food regime commodifies the demands raised by food movements. And Jo Littler (2012) questions the role of the state.

This section builds on this research and discusses four critiques of market-based activism, sometimes called "ethical consumption" (Lewis & Potter, 2011), "commodity activism" (Mukherjee & Banet-Weiser, 2012), or "politics of consumption" (Alkon & Guthman, 2017). I refer to these critiques as the inequality, the crowding out, the commodification, and the state retreat critique. For each critique, I first discuss their relevance for the study of market-based forms of food activism the first mode of action, as presented in Table 1. Then, I examine to what extent they apply to institutional and protest politics. Finally, I highlight what is at stake for food democracy.

3.1. Inequality Critique

The first critique points to the *inequalities* associated with market-based political participation. Citizens with more limited resources have fewer opportunities to vote with their dollars (Alkon et al., 2013) or to *eat for change* (Johnston & Cairns, 2012) and prevailing prescriptions about food consumption impose white middle-class preferences (such as eating healthy, fresh, light, organic, etc.) onto other social groups (Guthman, 2008; Johnston et al., 2011). Yet, depending on available time, mobility practices, and social networks citizens have varying degrees of difficulty in dealing with these prescriptions (Godin & Sahakian, 2018). There are structural inequalities related to food availability in specific neighborhoods or in specific shops that are unequally established over the city (Block, Chávez, Allen, & Ramirez, 2012). Research shows that political consumerism is more widespread where large supermarkets prevail (Koos, 2012). Similarly, food collectives that correspond to the idea of participatory democracy tend to be a privilege of citizens with high cultural, social, and economic capital. Often food cooperatives do not exist in the less well-off neighborhoods or cities (Figueroa & Alkon, 2017). Unless the community supported agricultural project or the food cooperative is set up explicitly to reduce unequal access to quality food (Gross, 2014) or is able to reduce the cost of food thanks to direct sales (Forno et al., 2015). Finally, for action forms that correspond to prefigurative democracy, inequalities relate to both socioeconomic dimensions and cultural ones. For urban gardeners, the main inequality relates to access to land (Glowa, 2017). However, for voluntary simplifiers, it stems from the social and cultural capital that facilitates access to the narratives and ideals behind voluntary simplicity (Carfagna et al., 2014). Voluntary simplicity requires a radical exit from a work-life model demanding individuals' efforts to earn a lot and spend on social status markers (Schor, 1998). Since these social norms (working hard, earning well, and displaying wealth through consumption) are strongly embedded in society, it requires cultural capital to question them, to resist, and to build alternatives. Furthermore,

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[1] Street protest requires more commitment and rests on stronger convictions because it involves an investment in time and implies visibility. Similarly, active membership in a CSOs or a grassroots movement calls for more demanding commitment. Active members meet regularly, organize events, seek to promote alternative political frames and to mobilize others.

social capital provides opportunities to discuss these ideas with like-minded citizens (Lorenzen, 2012).

Turning to the second column of Table 1, I consider the relevance of the inequality critique for institutional politics. In representative democracies, ideally, all citizens have equal opportunities to have their voices heard (Dahl, 2006). Nevertheless, the main tool of representative democracy is prone to important inequalities. Citizens with fewer resources are less likely to vote. They abstain due to limited political resources (Solt, 2008) but also because the political offer does not respond to their main demands, it fails to represent their interests (Offe, 2013). Inequalities create a vicious circle in electoral participation. Offe (2013) argues that poor and vulnerable citizens do not participate because they understand that their interests are not taken into account, not because they lack political understanding. Moreover, policy designs targeting specific groups of citizens interacting with the state contribute to political learning (Schneider & Ingram, 2005). Citizens learn how the state views them and their passive role in the state-citizen relation. Finally, low and decreasing numbers of party members (van Biezen, Mair, & Poguntke, 2012) contribute to a limited heterogeneity within political parties. This means that forms of institutional participation that correspond to participatory democracy are also prone to inequalities. As they professionalize and reduce mass membership, parties offer less equal access to citizens drawn from various social classes. This limits their ability to represent a wide variety of political interests and preferences. For political careers, the action form that corresponds to prefigurative democracy, inequalities are even more important because they require high levels of qualification.

When parties are not representative of a wide variety of citizens, CSOs might be able to represent the interests and preferences of many citizens. A rich and vivid civil society contributes to a well-functioning democracy (Hadenius, 2001). However, the influence of money is also important within CSOs. Citizens with little resources have limited opportunities to support a cause financially. If they do, they only give little money and they are unlikely to have an influence on the direction taken. On the contrary, important donors (e.g., Bill and Melinda Gates) have a major impact on CSOs. When some private interests have a high influence on CSOs, the directions they take, and their capacity to raise demands of the state, it creates important challenges for democracy. With regard to participation in forms of action that correspond to participatory or prefigurative democracy, such as street protest and group activism, these action forms require time but also specific civic skills (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). All resources that are more limited among social groups with low socioeconomic status.

Across the three action modes, the more demanding the democratic ideal, the more inequality shapes participation. Economic, social, and cultural capital set important barriers to participation. Representative democracy is prone to inequality. People with limited resources

tend to participate less and, when they do, they have a limited influence on agenda-setting and policy decisions. Participatory and prefigurative democracy do not reduce inequality. On the contrary, they increase inequality by further restricting the set of engaged citizens. Participatory, and even more so prefigurative, democracy requires adapting ones' life across multiple spheres. Economic capital is not necessarily the main vector of inequality. Citizens need cultural capital (to make sense of their political engagement across life spheres) and social capital (supportive networks) to engage in participatory and prefigurative actions. This means that access to initiatives that attempt to democratize the food regime is often limited to resourceful citizens. The inequality critique questions the ability of food democracy to advance inclusive democratic ideals.

3.2. Crowding Out Critique

The second critique highlights the *crowding-out* effect. The idea is that small everyday engagement with politics—such as recycling, riding a bike, or eating organic—prevents citizens from engaging in institutional or protest politics (Kenis, 2016). Citizens only have a limited amount of time they can dedicate to politics so when they engage in alternative (easy) forms of participation, they do not participate in electoral or party politics (Simon, 2011). This critique points to a hierarchy of political participation—implicitly prioritizing some forms of participation—and assumes that citizens' participation in one form does not support participation in others. Research shows that citizens who engage in political consumerism also tend to engage through other means (Gotlieb & Wells, 2012; Willis & Schor, 2012; Zhang, 2015). Nevertheless, some point to a core contradiction between consumerism and citizenship (Johnston, 2008). Being a consumer or a citizen appears as irreconcilable ends of a continuum that ranges from maximizing individuals' interests (consumption from the market) to seeking to achieve collective changes (citizenship). Yet, as noted by Schudson (2006), everyone is at the same time a consumer *and* a citizen. People who engage in food activism might withdraw from other forms of engagement. However, it is more likely that interactions within food collectives sustain engagements through other means. For instance, Lorenzen (2014) shows that voluntary simplifiers engage in political discussions to promote their political values.

What is at stake with the crowding out critique is the amount and type(s) of democratic involvement expected from citizens. Dutiful citizens are only expected to cast a vote, pay taxes, and comply with the law (Dalton, 2009). This corresponds to a representative conception of democracy. Yet, Dalton also identifies a younger generation of engaged citizens who value participation in CSOs and commitment in politics beyond voting corresponding to a participatory conception of democracy. The comparison of different levels of commitment shows that the

crowding out critique applies only to forms of participation that correspond to representative democracy. As citizens increasingly engage in market-based, institutional, or protest politics, they tend to participate through multiple means. Party members vote and, eventually, participate in some protest events associated with their parties (e.g., left parties and May Day, Green parties and anti-nuclear marches). Similarly, it is likely that CSOs staff are engaged in politics through other means such as donating money and participating in demonstrations.

The crowding-out effect might take place for action forms that correspond to the ideals of representative democracy in the three action modes. In this case, the action forms share an occasional nature, limited choices offered to citizens, and limited capacity to influence politics. Voting is constrained by a party's offer as well as their political agenda. Donating money depends on existing CSOs and the activities they promote. The existing offer of products constrains boycotts and buycotts. The prevailing challenge is not the risk of crowding out but the limited political influence that citizens have when their engagements correspond to representative democratic conceptions. Action forms that correspond to participatory and prefigurative democratic ideals tend to bring multi-engagement. In this case, the challenge is commodification. The fact that political engagements become career paths. Few forms of action that correspond to prefigurative democracy, such as voluntary simplicity or squatting, experiment with alternatives to market-based logics. In these rare instances, citizens are not acting for a financial return, they are not influencing politics through financial power, and they are not selling goods or services. For food democracy, this means that radical transformations of food regimes require changes at different levels of citizens' life—not only in relation to food but also in relation to paid work and consumption more generally.

3.3. Commodification Critique

The third critique emphasizes processes of *commodification*—a commodification process takes place when something that was not for sale becomes a marketable good. When citizens call on the market to adopt new standards in the production or distribution of food (e.g., organic, fair, local) they open up new avenues for profit (Guthman, 2004/2014). This does not alter core business principles (reducing costs and making profit) and serves the image of the brand (marketing strategy publicizing their [limited] good deeds). Food collectives promote products corresponding to specific social and political goals, be they social justice, environmental protection, or supporting the local economy. They are small niche markets and, like other food distributors, they commodify political values. On the contrary, voluntary simplifiers oppose the commodification of goods and services and, as much as possible, they rely on alternative networks and non-market economies to sustain their

lifestyle (Lorenzen, 2012; Schor, 1998). It is worth mentioning a counter-example as well. Vegan or vegetarians do not (necessarily) oppose the commodification of food. It is important to note here, as well, that not all vegetarians and vegans adopt this practice for political reasons. Some do it for health reasons, others because it is trendy, and still others because they do not like the taste of meat. Whatever the reasons for becoming vegetarian or vegan, they refuse to eat meat or to consume any animal products but they (often) rely on the market to offer alternatives to animal products. They contribute to the commodification of new products which comply with their specific political values.

The commodification critique points to the influence of money in politics and its relative importance compared to other political resources. As political parties become electoral machines, they need funds to support their electoral campaigns and rely on donors to finance such campaigns. Donors use this fact as leverage to lobby the parties which contributes to a commodification of political influence—donations determine policies more than votes do (Bartels, 2009). When they move away from the mass party model, parties serve less as aggregators of various social groups' demands, representing their interests or voicing their grievances and demands (Hutter, Kriesi, & Lorenzini, 2018). As noted above, professional party members constitute an interesting borderline case of citizens' political engagements. Parties offer career opportunities and comply with career-related requirements—elected representatives are their main constituencies and they serve their interests (Green, 1993). Not all party members are paid, those engaged in party politics (corresponding to a participatory conception of democracy) are not, while party staff (prefigurative conception) are. They earn a living from their political commitment. Professionalization of political activities embodies the commodification of representative functions. Rotation among representatives allows non-professional representatives to take up specific civic duties for a certain duration (Sintomer, 2014). These citizens might be paid during their service, but they only serve the community temporarily. They take up civic duties without embracing a career; this shapes a different understanding of democracy.

Commodification also appears in protest politics, increasingly professional CSOs are seeking citizens' financial support. In order to distinguish themselves, CSOs develop new services for sale in the marketplace of charity, humanitarian action, or political activism (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004). Importantly, they transform the idea of civic duty. Donating money replaces citizens' engagement in the life of their community by donating time, contributing ideas, or offering specific skills. As calls to donate money replace calls for civic activism, CSOs compete in an expanding market. The professionalization of CSOs forces them to find new lines of financing to remain active (Gross, 2014). As they seek stable funds, public-private partnerships offer opportunities to stabilize their

resources. This, in turn, contributes to the retreat of the state as discussed below. However, depending on their goals and the targets of their action they may or may not contribute to commodification processes and state retreat. Some CSOs offer services to their members (self-help) that complement the state. When citizens have to pay to access these services, they are commodified. Other CSOs call for state involvement; they lobby the state to maintain or develop services—they oppose commodification processes. Sometimes combining service provision and lobbying, they provide services as a last resort while waiting for the state to step in. Nevertheless, many CSOs exist thanks to the state's limited engagement, they provide services instead of public authorities. Quite on the contrary, squatters oppose commodification processes, they occupy a house refusing to pay rent, questioning the norms of private property and the gain of profit from the housing market.

Commodification processes appear in the three modes of action. Buying for political reasons and donating money to parties or CSOs are clear examples of commodified political values—values defended through financial payments. For voting, commodification also appears when considering the relative influence of voters and large donors. Furthermore, political professionalization is a specific case of commodification—civic duties become paid employment. Increases in the number of professional CSOs' staff attest to such processes. The more professional and the more stable the CSOs become the more means at their disposal for action. However, depending on the types of donor, they can become less prone to support or seek radical change (Jacques, Biermann, & Young, 2016). Similarly, Green (1993) argues that political careers hinder democratic ideals. Political actors engaged in professional careers aim to maintain their income and advancement of their own career by continually performing the functions of an elected representative. Green (1993) maintains that professional representatives are no longer able to represent the interests of different social groups. The commodification of food activism as well as institutional and protest participation pose an important challenge for the democratization of the food regime. When successful, the ideals and projects of food activism become profitable commercial goods. Although social movements are able to raise awareness related to food, their ability to transform the food regime through institutional participation and protest are limited due to the unresponsiveness of professional political actors and political parties. Democratizing the food regime calls for a transformation of existing democratic institutions.

3.4. State Retreat Critique

The fourth critique emphasizes the processes of *state retreat*. Political actions targeting the market alone contribute to a diminishing of the state's regulatory function and a greater level of responsibility being passed to individuals. Some food activists seek changes directly to the market thanks to consumers' economic power, as they call on individual responsibility the state appears useless. As the market steps in, in the form of CSOs offering state-financed services, the state retreats. Privatization processes—another form of state retreat—result in the opening of new services within the market. Political consumerism often bypasses the state and calls for changes directly to the markets. Similarly, food collectives offer alternatives to the dominant model but seldom call on the state to regulate the market. They correspond to an exit strategy that does not involve the state and, therefore, they contribute to its retreat. Vegans are more likely to call on the state to regulate the production of food such as to avoid hidden animal components for instance.

For institutional politics, what is at stake is the state's role in a democracy, which can be limited to core functions or called on to reduce inequalities, redistribute wealth, and provide core public services. Mair (2013) notes that mainstream parties prioritize their responsibility (compliance with supranational rules) over their representative functions (citizens' demands). The more a party is committed to its governing function, the more it aims to comply with supranational agreement (responsibility) and the more limited the importance given to representative functions—aggregating and supporting citizens' demands. In supporting this state of affairs, the political parties themselves contribute to state retreat; limiting the role of the state to its sovereign functions and compliance with supranational rules. Citizens support state retreat when they vote for parties that confine the state's role to its sovereign function (i.e., international relations, border control, law and order) with little or no emphasis on redistributive functions. The state retreat critique partially applies to professional political actors. Representative functions require democratic and public institutions for these professional political actors to pursue their political careers, but the state can be a minimal regulator (limited to sovereign state functions).

Protest politics may target the state, the market, or public opinion. CSOs and protesters calling for new rights or supporting existing rights demand state action (more rights) or oppose state retreat (defending existing rights). In both cases, they value the state's regulatory and redistributive functions. However, protests can also target the market directly (Soule, 2009) or supranational institutions (Imig & Tarrow, 2001). When protests call directly on other institutions, they acknowledge the state's limited power and contribute its weakening. For squatting, the state's role is less clear; the perceived role of the state varies depending on the motives and political ideals defended by the squatters—which often tend to be related to anarchist or anti-capitalist movements.

All forms of action contribute to state retreat when the state is not (one of) the targets of their action. Commodification and state retreat are related processes—action forms contributing to commodification also foster state retreat. Citizens engaged in lifestyle

politics sometimes demand state regulation to support or facilitate their alternative lifestyles but they also directly enact the changes they want to see happening. Food initiatives that experiment with radical changes across life spheres (vegetarianism, urban gardening, or voluntary simplicity) contribute to enriching our democratic imagination (Perrin, 2009). They promote alternatives to the market, they test alternative forms of political participation, and they develop counter-cultural systems of values and norms. They set into practice radical ideals for the democratization of food regimes. However, the envisioned role of the state is not clear.

4. Conclusion

This article has presented different forms of political participation used to democratize food regimes. Action forms have been organized according to their links to market-based, institutional, and protest modes of action, as well as the underlying conceptions of democracy. Then, the article highlighted four critiques of market-based politics: the importance of inequality in political participation, the prevalence of low-cost political action and the crowding-out effect of more demanding ones, the commodification of political values, and, as a corollary the state retreat. These critiques were used to discuss (food) democracy and citizens' democratic role.

This analysis shows that prevailing forms of food activism correspond to the idea that "citizens vote with their forks" (Pollan, 2006). In many initiatives associated with food democracy, citizens engage through consumption choices (i.e., political consumerism, food collectives, and veganism). The prevailing conception of democracy relates to representative democracy—an aggregative understanding of citizens' action, their power relates to their number and their financial capacity. The main difference is that the authoritative figure shifts from the state to the market. Market-based logics constrain attempts to democratize the food regime. Importantly, attempts to democratize the food system through institutional and protest politics are also constrained by market-based logics. Political parties have a limited capacity to represent citizens' voices due to supranational responsibilities, ties to large financial donors, and professional careers. CSOs embrace market-based logics to gain money and finance their activities. The influence of money pervades across forms and modes of action and represents a major challenge for the democratization of food regimes.

Some food initiatives experiment with prefigurative democracy, enacting changes that aim to promote alternatives to market-based logics. In addition to offering alternative venues for consumption, some food collectives question the producer-consumer distinction and engage consumers in the production of food. Urban gardeners produce their own local food. Vegans problematize the commercial relationship with non-human animals and try to set limits on commodification. These movements highlight the limits and failures of the corporate food regime. They experiment with more inclusive and participatory alternative modes of food production, distribution, and consumption. In institutional and protest politics, most of the proposed examples of prefigurative democracy are professional careers or borderline cases of citizen engagement that are subject to commodification. This study shows that it is difficult to advance alternative democratic ideals that seek to empower citizens and to exit market-based logics.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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About the Author

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COGITATIO

Article

Food Democracy for All? Developing a Food Hub in the Context of Socio-Economic Deprivation

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Abstract
This article proposes a localised and differentiated understanding of food democracy, or rather a plurality of localised food democracies. Based on the experiences of developing a local food hub in an area of socio-economic deprivation in the UK using a participatory action research (PAR) approach, it presents local responses to three key challenges derived from the literature. It argues that for civic food networks (CFNs) to contribute to a transition towards a food democracy, they need to address challenges of: 1) balancing ethical aspirations for environmental sustainability, social justice, as well as community and individual health; 2) developing the skills required for participation in CFNs; and 3) achieving wider impact on food system transformation beyond niche solutions. The responses, or tactics, presented in this article include flexible ethical standards responding to community needs, accessible participation focusing on relationships rather than skills, and a focus on local impact while striving to collaborate and network with other organisations. It thus frames food democracy as a plurality of approaches to build and replicate CFNs. The article positions PAR with its democratic and localised approach to address real-world problems as uniquely suited to navigate the challenges of CFNs. It also discusses the role of researchers in initiating, facilitating, and shaping such processes of food system democratisation as engaged actors.

Issue
This article is part of the issue "New Perspectives on Food Democracy" edited by Basil Bornemann (University of Basel, Switzerland) and Sabine Weiland (Université Catholique de Lille, France).

1. Introduction

Civic food networks (CFNs) have emerged as democratic and political initiatives that seek to realise alternatives to the global and corporate food system as well as the unsustainability and injustice associated with the latter (Moragues-Faus & Marsden, 2017). CFNs aim to practice closer producer-consumer relationships and become spaces of democratic decision-making, empowerment and/or collective action to challenge the wider food system (Bornemann & Weiland, 2019; Renting, Schermer, & Rossi, 2012). Food democracy, the conceptual framework underpinning CFNs, envisions "food as a locus of the democratic process" (Lang, 2007, p. 12). For the purpose of this article, I want to highlight three key aspects of food democracy: 1) a strong ethical commitment to en-

vironmental sustainability, social justice, as well as individual and community health; 2) democratic governance through active participation of food citizens; 3) a whole system perspective aiming to transform the entire food system (Levkoe, 2011).

Using this framing of food democracy, this article presents an empirical study of a CFN in the form of a local food hub in the UK in an area of socio-economic deprivation. Food hubs are commonly characterised as a food supply chain management strategy with a specific ethos, as aggregators and distributors for small food producers to allow better consumer access to local, healthy, or sustainably-grown food (Fischer, Pirog, & Hamm, 2015). Food hubs have played a critical role in emerging local food systems in the US (Perrett & Jackson, 2015) and Canada (Stroink & Nelson, 2013) and can be seen as

building on earlier community food projects in the UK (McGlone, Dobson, Dowler, & Nelson, 1999). Drawing on literature from a diverse set of fields, this article takes the debate forward on whether or not food hubs challenge the mainstream corporate food system (Perrett & Jackson, 2015) and are a driver towards food democracy. By looking in depth at the inception of a food hub, it contributes a discussion of three key challenges that CFNs should be aware of and address if they want to contribute to food system transformation. Based on the findings of this case study, this article also contributes responses, or local 'tactics,' to these challenges and frames food democracy as a plurality of localised and networked actions. I use the term *tactics* in de Certeau, Giard, and Mayol's (1998) sense not simply as the means to implement a strategy, but as a way of (counter-)acting in an environment defined by the strategies of a powerful system. As such, the tactics discussed in this article refer to creative ways of navigating the neoliberal environment defined by powerful market strategies.

The three challenges relate to and interrogate the aspects of food democracy outlined above, i.e., they point to the ethics of CFNs, their participatory form, and their transformative potential. First, balancing the ethical commitments of food democracy, particularly social justice, environmental sustainability, and community health, in practice paradoxically often means that high quality and locally-sourced food is only accessible for groups with the necessary economic, social, and cultural capital (Bos & Owen, 2016; Levkoe, 2011). Thus, healthy and sustainable food is reduced to a question of economic access and moral choice (Bradley & Herrera, 2016). Second, the structure and dynamic of many grassroots CFNs require a certain set of skills, engagement, and a willingness to learn in order to enable participation (McIvor & Hale, 2015). Third, the extent to which small initiatives who focus on food itself rather than unjust processes in the food system can actually contribute to system change has been questioned (Guthman, 2011). All three challenges result in practices of CFNs that exclude disadvantaged groups.

This article illustrates how these challenges play out in this particular case study and the local tactics applied in response to them. The study adopts a participatory action research (PAR) approach and methodology. PAR is an iterative process in which the researcher and participants collaborate with equal decision-making power to produce practical responses to the participants' real-life problems (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007). As I will outline in detail later, this particular PAR process involved myself and others as researchers, local food suppliers, staff and volunteers of a local community centre, and the local community. The empirical account spans three iterative cycles in this process and highlights the everyday challenges facing CFNs. Following a discussion of these three challenges in the next section, the findings will present the local tactics employed to address or work with them creatively. These include tactics to work flexibly with social justice, sustainability, and health ethics

based on sensitivity to the community's needs, in order to 'configure' community participation accessible for all, as well as to form collaborations and coalitions to achieve wider impact. 'Configuring' relates to the different forms engagement and interaction can take, who is included, and in which way control is shared (Vines, Clarke, Wright, McCarthy, & Olivier, 2013). Concluding, I will discuss these findings in relation to the challenges to CFNs, arguing for a plurality of localised food democracies, as well as positioning PAR as a responsive approach to develop localised and unique solutions while at the same time building collaborations and networks to move the overall ambition of food democracy along.

2. Literature Review: Challenges of CFNs

This section critically discusses CFNs, and in particular food hubs, through the conceptual lens of food democracy. In doing so, it draws together a diverse body of literature, including food democracy, food justice, alternative food networks, and food hubs. While acknowledging the spectrum of understandings of what food democracy involves, from liberal value-based food chains to radical system transformation (Levkoe et al., 2018; Lohest, Bauler, Sureau, Mol, & Achten, 2019; Werkheiser & Noll, 2014), I point to three key challenges food hubs face in their aim to transform and democratise the food system. To be clear, these challenges are not meant to question the ambitions of food democracy as such, but to highlight some of the practical barriers CFNs are confronted with and theoretical blurs of food democracy.

2.1. The Challenge of Ethics: Sustainability, Social Justice, and Health

The first challenge of CFNs concerns their ethical standards and their tendency to produce high quality, often artisanal and expensive food. In a market economy, this food competes with lower-priced food in supermarkets. The idea of ethical consumerism suggests that by 'voting with their fork' consumers will eventually transform the wider food system through their purchasing decisions. This assumption, however, has been heavily critiqued (Lorenzini, 2019): As Guthman (2011) argues, neoliberal incentive-based regulation, in contrast to state regulation, leads to higher prices for organic and local food *by design*, with those who can afford it being rewarded instead of unhealthy or unjust practices being forbidden. CFNs, therefore, run the risk of reinforcing a two-tier system providing expensive, healthy and sustainably-sourced food for those who can afford it, and cheap and low-quality food for everyone else (Levkoe, 2011).

Other CFNs focus on providing access to and education about 'good food.' This, however, rarely addresses the causes of inequality, which lie elsewhere. It also ignores that what 'good food' is, is commonly being defined by people in relative privilege (food academics and activists). It thus becomes coded as culturally elite

and may not resonate with people of colour or working-class neighbourhoods (Guthman, 2008b). Worse, by reducing eating to questions of access, dietary advice becomes highly morally charged. Such *healthism* fashions 'healthy' people in contrast to 'unhealthy' and thus immoral others (Davenport & Mishtal, 2019). In the context of food justice, Bradley and Herrera (2016) therefore call for decolonising white and middle-class activism and research. CFNs should focus on and challenge the unjust processes under which food is produced to avoid turning food activism into civilising missions (Guthman, 2011). Thus, CFNs require sensitivity to the location and context in which they operate and participatory approaches to avoid excluding disadvantaged groups.

2.2. The Challenge of Participation: Skills and Education

A second challenge to CFNs is the participation of 'food citizens,' who move beyond their passive roles as consumers or producers (Lyson, 2012). Food citizenship encompasses the right and *responsibility* to inform, define, and enact one's food preferences and participate actively in food governance (Gómez-Benito & Lozano, 2014). By participating in CFNs, citizens thus learn not only food-related but also democratic skills. Through, for example, group work and collective decision-making, they learn skills in communication and coordination, build social capital, and increase their levels of political knowledge and efficacy (Kneafsey, Owen, Bos, Broughton, & Lennartsson, 2017; Levkoe, 2006). Indeed, being 'exposed' to alternative forms of food provisioning appears to make people more engaged with their community and more politically active (Carolan, 2017). While this is certainly laudable, there is a risk that, as with other forms of capital, social capital's unequal distribution might be reinforced rather than reduced. For example, many grassroots organisations rely on volunteers and self-exploitation (Tornaghi, 2017) and have organisational practices which exclude and alienate those outside the middle-class (Zitcer, 2015). Moreover, by emphasising individual skills and social capital, this thinking again becomes trapped in a neoliberalist discourse around personal responsibility and initiative and therefore risks being collectively disempowering (Guthman, 2008a; McIvor & Hale, 2015). The challenge of participation for CFNs is, therefore, to move from being a 'schoolhouse' for democracy to what McIvor and Hale (2015) call 'deep democracy.' Instead of focusing on developing skills, CFNs should focus on building relationships. In practice, this means moving away from transactional market models to relational modes which embed food in a cultural and social context.

2.3. The Challenge of System Transformation: Niche Solutions

The third challenge concerns the potential of CFNs to influence the wider food system. CFNs are often small and

operate with limited resources. While they might care about many issues, they often have to focus on one specific issue in order to be effective, which, in turn, means ignoring others (Hassanein, 2003). Therefore, CFNs often operate in niches. For example, by focusing on local food and environmental sustainability, they tend to neglect issues of social injustices in food production, distribution, and consumption (Allen, 2008; Born & Purcell, 2006; Mares & Alkon, 2011). Connelly, Markey, and Roseland (2011) argue that while many food hubs start off wanting to confront root causes and ideologies during the planning phase, it is a challenge to maintain such strong commitment when shifting from planning to implementation, given the economic pressure they experience. Echoing Levkoe's (2011) call for a "whole system approach" to food democracy that includes dimensions of social justice, ecological sustainability, and community health, CFNs need to keep aspiring to and practice all these dimensions equally. But how then can food hubs really make a difference? Reframing this question, Hassanein (2003) sees democracy as the only way forward to bring about real change. To follow a democratic path means that there are no alternatives to incremental change. As such, she calls for a "pragmatic politics of transformation." In practical terms, this means to be willing to compromise. Compromise should, however, not be seen as weakness and surrender, but as a mark of integrity if it moves the cause towards the desired goal.

The three challenges discussed in this section—ethics, participation, and system transformation—are both aspirations and challenges for CFNs under the lens of food democracy. The next section will introduce the PAR project that launched a CFN in the form of a food hub. Following this, the findings from this ongoing process will illustrate the local tactics of the food hub as they respond to the challenges discussed.

3. Methodology

After introducing the location and community organisation, this section will discuss the specific PAR approach taken in this case and outline the first three action and reflection cycles as well as accompanying methods of data collection in this ongoing collaboration.

3.1. Research Context: Meadow Well

The Meadow Well estate is located in the suburban fringe of the Newcastle upon Tyne metropolitan area in North East England. It is inhabited predominantly by British white working-class and low-income families. Decades of neglect by local authorities resulted in a brief period of violent unrest in the mid-1990s. Despite political commitments, little has changed, and today the estate remains among the most deprived 10% neighbourhoods in England in terms of education, employment, income, health, and environmental quality (OpenDataCommunities, 2015). While not classified as a

food desert (having access to a large supermarket within two miles), many residents rely on walking and therefore predominantly access small convenience stores or fast food outlets on the estate. Despite being located immediately next to wealthier seaside towns and Newcastle, social stigma and failed public interventions have led to a heterogeneous mixture of local pride and disengagement with the community and area.

Meadow Well Connected is a charity and community centre on the estate. Established shortly after the unrest to foster community development, it offers a wide range of services around employability, including job coaching, budgeting, and IT training. Community health and well-being being a second core objective, it offers training for people with learning difficulties, alcohol recovery support, cooking classes, exercise groups and an after-school kids club. Besides the large community centre building, the site also includes five acres of land, partly used as a learning food-growing garden. The organisation has a tradition of partnership work with other charities and institutions through complementary and collaborative services: For example, an independent food bank is using part of their premises.

3.2. PAR Approach

PAR is a democratic research approach and methodology that treats participants as competent and reflexive agents. The validity of any knowledge produced depends on whether the resulting action responds to real-life problems and increases community self-determination (Kindon et al., 2007). It thus puts a strong focus on social justice, relationship building, co-construction of knowledge and action, and sees the researcher as part of the field. PAR follows a process of iterative cycles of action and reflection, in which researcher and participants together develop and implement an action plan, reflect upon its implementation, and plan the next cycle (Kindon et al., 2007). This article covers the first three cycles of this PAR collaboration.

While PAR is commonly focused on working with community members, in this particular case the process was initiated by one of the later suppliers of the food hub. A baker and social entrepreneur saw the potential in local food hubs to empower local communities to produce and access good quality food at affordable prices. I, as a researcher, became involved in the project, initially as a facilitator, to bring various stakeholders together, in particular, the community centre. Early on in the project, we decided we wanted to work with an established community-based organisation, as it would already have links with local people. Meadow Well Connected was such an organisation and once the idea had been proposed they decided to collaborate, pilot the idea, and thereafter continue to work with me. While this strong initial focus on the producer-citizen (instead of the consumer-citizen) may seem unusual or even questionable, we argue that a food hub can only be success-ful if it meets the needs of all actors in the supply chain, this includes the supplier's need for viability and in this case the community centre's need to achieve their health and wellbeing goals. The approach and the methods chosen meant that it was possible to work with all food citizens, producers, middle actors, and consumers in this exploratory phase. This being said, the data forming the basis for this article stems primarily from the work conducted with the community organisation and suppliers and as such draws lessons about the challenges of doing food democracy on the ground. As I will discuss later, the partnership has since gone forward based on these lessons with a direct focus on community participation and ownership. The food hub is thus not a solution on its own, but a vehicle to engage local residents and has opened up new action research activities that are beyond the scope of this article.

Acknowledging my own positionality, I as researcher, was also more than just a facilitator and brought my own interests in food democracy and vision of the food hub into the project. My own expertise contributed to shaping it into something that might be different from what commonly would be or has been done in an area such as Meadow Well, e.g., a food bank or a community café. Nevertheless, the food hub development represents a process of negotiation. In each PAR cycle, planning, action, and reflection were carried out collaboratively with equal decision-making power among all participants. Here, the democratic ambitions of food democracy and PAR meet. PAR enables the framing of food democracy as an ongoing negotiation of different ambitions and expertise. The nature of food democracy is therefore not defined by any single participant, and this includes the researcher, but by the product of iterative cycles of action and reflection. (Food) democracy thus becomes the product of a democratic process. Therefore, I argue, along with Hassanein (2003), that a democratic process is the only way to move towards (food) democracy. PAR also allows the process of doing and promoting food democracy in a locally unique way and adapted to specific circumstances. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to food democracy, and following a PAR approach gives participants the tools to develop such a local food democracy.

3.3. Collaboration Process until Now

The PAR process in this article covers three cycles of action and reflection. While the division in cycles is useful to make sense of the process, in practice boundaries were fluid and blurry. The first cycle began in May 2017 and lasted about six months, during which the aforementioned baker, the community centre, and I formed the initial partnership and explored the possibility of developing a food hub in Meadow Well. After this period of relationship building, discussing, questioning, and investigating the concept, we collectively agreed on a pilot to test the idea. In this second cycle, a local organic vegetable farm joined the partnership. A butcher and fish-

monger agreed to supply the food hub, but did not get involved with the partnership beyond that. The food hub thus offered vegetables, bread, meat, and fish. Weekly food orders could be placed via an online shop or in person in the centre. Aggregated orders got submitted to the suppliers once a week, who then delivered in bulk to the community centre. Staff or volunteers bagged customer orders for pick-up from the centre. This setup allowed us to save logistics and delivery costs and to pass on wholesale prices to shoppers. Launched in November 2017, the food hub was initially planned to run for four weeks, but Meadow Well Connected wanted to extend the pilot to allow us to see how it developed over time. After three months, orders began to decline and we decided to stop the pilot to reflect and plan further action. At this point, the baker decided to leave the partnership due to personal differences. During the pilot, I collected data through three methods: 1) field notes from partic-

ipant observations and informal conversations with customers and visitors at the centre; 2) a cultural probing (Gaver, Dunne, & Pacenti, 1999) study with eight participants including consumers, organisers, and suppliers; and 3) a reflection workshop with participants from the cultural probing study. The cultural probing package consisted of a custom-built box with four prompt cards, to which participants could either respond in writing, drawing, or by speaking into an audio recorder, which was also supplied in the box (see Figure 1). In the reflection workshop, the field notes, the cultural probing, as well as the workshop participants' experiences shared in the workshop were drawn together and discussed collectively, resulting in the creation of a vision of a future Meadow Well food hub that builds on the lessons learned from the pilot (see Figure 2).

In the third cycle, we first engaged in planning to relaunch the food hub. The two key insights from the pilot

Figure 1. Cultural probing packages with boxes, filled in prompt-cards, and audio recorders.

Figure 2. Participants in the reflection workshop discussing food hub feedback written on post-it notes.

were the need for direct community engagement and a better food hub identity. These insights led to two distinct activities carried out with Meadow Well Connected: first, a series of three co-design workshops to develop community engagement activities (see Figure 3); second, a workshop and subsequent collaborative process to find a new name, logo, and value statement for the food hub. In parallel, we engaged in negotiations with new food producers to join the partnership and supply the food hub. These activities resulted in the food hub relaunching in November 2018 with more professional branding, streamlined logistics processes, and a partly new set of four suppliers, offering vegetables, bread, mushrooms, and meat. So far, the food hub has attracted about 50 unique customers (one-off or repeat) and is trading on average above £100 per week.

In this article I draw on field notes from participant observation and informal chats at the centre, meeting minutes, e-mails, and the data from the cultural probing and all workshops, spanning all three cycles. I analysed the data using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), identifying three key themes from patterns of codes. The next section will unpack these themes, providing insights into how the food hub responded to and worked with the challenges facing CFNs identified earlier.

4. Findings: CFN Tactics in the Context of Socio-Economic Deprivation

In presenting the findings from the PAR process outlined above, this section serves two purposes. First, it demonstrates how the challenges of ethics, participation, and system transformation played out in the case of the Meadow Well food hub. Second, it identifies the creative tactics of a CFN working in a deprived area to navigate these challenges. Using the challenges as an analytical lens, the three themes presented in this section thus cover tactics to: 1) balance ethics of environmental sustainability, social justice, and health; 2) configure accessible participation; and 3) build collaborations for wider impact.

4.1. Tactics to Balance Ethics of Sustainability, Social Justice and Health

Meadow Well Connected was initially very sceptical of the proposal to work on a local food hub. There was an assumption that in the area people would always go for the cheapest food. This was, however, contradicted with the assumption that people often went for the most convenient option—ready-meals and take-aways—which are more expensive than cooking from scratch. With the aim of challenging the price barrier of middle-class food hubs, the model chosen allowed pre-ordered food to be delivered in bulk at wholesale or discounted prices, without adding any margins. Nevertheless, the partners had to acknowledge that, by providing mostly organic, local, and healthy produce, the food was more expensive than cheap (and low quality) alternatives in the supermarket. Meadow Well Connected, therefore, wanted to communicate the better value for money. For example, early on in the process, the group decided to introduce 'meal boxes,' packages that included a recipe card and the ingredients needed to cook at home. This should not only make it easier for less confident cooks to give it a try, but the meal boxes also served as demonstrators to show that the cost per serving can be as little as £1 when cooking from scratch. Integrating these meals into the cooking classes and selling them cooked in the centre's café should also showcase how tasty and *filling* the food is.

Figure 3. A participant in one of the community engagement co-design workshops explains an idea to the group.

As a customer puts it in the reflection workshop:

> But we found, my partner and I, that this is a bit more than I would normally pay, but we'll give it a go. But we found we didn't need as much because it was much more filling. So, it was value for money. You got more for your money at the end of the day because you could freeze what you hadn't used. (Food hub customer)

Accompanying this, the notion of 'local' which the food hub wanted to communicate was less concerned with food miles, but rather with accommodating for *local taste*. Similarly, Meadow Well Connected decided to downplay health and sustainability aspects of the food, because this is associated with 'posh' (and expensive) food and might deter people from buying.

4.2. Tactics to Configure Accessible Community Participation

The negotiation and questioning of what the food hub is supposed to be is an ongoing process that has been discussed throughout all PAR cycles. It generally varies between being an operation that primarily targets wealthier customers who thus support the community indirectly and a community-owned, independent organisation that benefits the local population directly. Mirroring this, a tension exists between professionalism (ensuring a smooth customer experience) and revealing some of the complexities of a food hub in its early stages and the wider food supply chain. This includes, for example, discomfort with break-downs, such as lack of product availability or technical issues with the online shop. My field notes from a discussion about this with members of staff illustrate such a moment drastically:

> This week was the second time that [the fruit and vegetable supplier] could not deliver oranges and kiwis. The oranges were ordered by a new customer, so [a member of staff] decided to quickly buy some at [a supermarket] to replace the missing items without telling the customer. [Another member of staff] later said especially for new customers they want to provide the best customer experience, they want to look professional and deliver on the promise. I argued that it was not very honest, and we should rather tell them that we can't deliver and offer a refund. But we decided that [the farmer] needs to update his stock [in the online shop] if he can't deliver. (Author's field notes, 24 January 2019)

I want to argue that this reaction does not represent a lack of sense for transparency, but was an act of panic during a process of learning what it means to run a food hub in contrast to, for example, a supermarket with permanent product availability. Meadow Well Connected has not repeated this reaction since and is now transparently informing customers when products cannot be delivered. That being said, the case does illustrate their strong views on how the food hub needs to be accessible for all: Given the complex lives and everyday challenges of the local population, Meadow Well Connected argued that it cannot count on engaged individuals with a high level of 'tolerance' for inefficiencies and break-downs, something that is usually common among early adaptors in processes of social innovation (Manzini, 2015). Participation in the food hub, therefore, needs to be as accessible as possible, allowing for different levels or forms of participation. Through continuous negotiations, the PAR process has begun to introduce more community-based participation. For example, initial approaches to promote and expand the food hub included standard marketing (e.g., leaflets, posters, social media posts) and educational approaches (cooking classes, tasters, sale of cooked meals in the café). Based on the three co-design workshops, we are now recruiting local people into the partnership to co-design a series of engagement activities and eventually to run and steer the food hub. Plans are at an early stage and so far, include food hub 'champions' and various food-related activities that offer social spaces to connect (e.g., a supper club, a baking group, visits to producers).

4.3. Tactics to Build Collaborations for Wider Impact

The community centre has a tradition of collaborative work, to the extent that it hosts several other charities and companies who offer complementary services in the same building. Leveraging these existing links from the start, Meadow Well Connected focused on developing activities through which other organisations' support for the food hub would be mutually beneficial. A member of staff makes this explicit in one of the co-design workshops:

> Well, when it comes to partnership working there's got to be something in it for the other organisation. Whether it's just demonstrating that they're working with another organisation or whether they're looking for statistics or have got a particular interest in the programme or project that we're doing. (Member of staff, Meadow Well Connected)

So far, corporate partners of the centre buy food from the food hub as part of their corporate social responsibility strategy. We also established several new links to the university, for example through having students working on a marketing strategy while they get credits for a career development module. The group is also in dialogue with a local school to devise activities for critical engagement of children with food and the food system, while at the same time promoting the food hub. Moreover, the group is considering activities that could be run in collaboration with the local authority, contributing to its public health policy goals, as well as other third sector or-

ganisations, such as a mental health and an older people's charity. Finally, the group has also successfully leveraged connections to the local branch of the public service broadcaster to produce a radio and online feature about the food hub and its aims. Collaboration also includes working better with existing projects or services offered by Meadow Well Connected directly. The food hub so far provides food for cooking courses and cooked meals in the café. Conversely, the food hub provided the platform for selling produce from the centre's gardens. For each order above £10, the food hub also donates a box of fresh vegetables to the co-located food bank. Most recently, a group of people attending an alcohol 'recovery café' in the centre started becoming involved in co-designing food-related activities that connect with the food hub.

5. Discussion: PAR and a Plurality of Localised Food Democracies

The specific approach taken for the Meadow Well food hub illustrates both how the challenges of CFNs to work towards a food democracy for all, i.e., ethics, participation, and system transformation, can play out and what local tactics as responses to them might be deployed. In the presented case tactics included an attempt to flexibly balance ethically sourced food (environmentally, healthy, and just for producer-citizens) with an offer that is just for consumer-citizens (affordable food with a local taste) and to communicate this value of food. Tactics in regard to participation comprise actions to configure participation in an accessible way given limited resources. Finally, possibly as a way to support the first two, tactics for transformation involve building collaborations with complementary external organisations and within the community centre. Using this set of tactics, the partnership has overcome some of the early challenges of starting a CFN, and especially those exacerbated by working in a deprived neighbourhood. This is, however, not to say that the tactics will prove to be successful in the long run. In this section, I reflect on the tactics that were made visible through the PAR process of developing and launching this CFN in the form of a food hub. I also relate them to the corresponding elements of food democracy—ethics, participation, and system transformation—and how our theoretical framing of food democracy can be sharpened.

5.1. Ethics of Food Democracy: From Balancing Everything to Community Sensitivity

One of CFNs' central challenges is to balance different ethical dimensions of food democracy to avoid producing a two-tier system of ethical consumerism that renders healthy and sustainable food expensive (Levkoe, 2011) or turns CFNs into 'civilising' and moralising missions in which outsiders bring 'good food' into poor communities (Guthman, 2008a). While Meadow Well is a predomi-

nantly white British estate, high levels of socio-economic deprivation mean the food typically produced by CFNs would not be affordable for its working-class population. The food bank just next door to Meadow Well Connected is a visual reminder of this. As with many CFNs, the Meadow Well food hub thus has to balance social justice goals and economic viability, as it operates within a persisting neoliberal system of injustices: It has to compete with low prices of low-quality supermarket food, produced through global exploitative food chains. And it also has to grapple with oppressed people locally, who cannot afford better quality food and might feel too disengaged to care. While food sold via the Meadow Well food hub costs less than food of comparable quality in supermarkets, it is still more expensive than cheap alternatives. Nevertheless, since shopping practices indicate that people do not always go for the cheapest, but also for the nearest and most convenient options which carry higher prices, the food hub's pricing structure becomes more attractive again.

The initial negotiations between researchers and centre staff illustrate their doubts over the local food hub model. The fact that they still decided to join the partnership puts the community centre as an actor in an interesting position. Having been established in the community for 25 years, are they insiders or outsiders? Are they, following their health and well-being agenda, bringing good food to others, or to their own community? There is no easy answer to these questions. Either way, the community centre's aims and approach mean they are not in the position to directly work on structural change, e.g., by advocating for policy change. Instead, a food hub developed based on their sensitivity to the local community, who would otherwise have been alienated, becomes an interesting and viable route to explore. Far from being a solution, aspects like downplaying 'healthy' and 'organic' food and communicating it as 'tasty' and 'local' (as in community-level local) become a creative tactic to do things differently. As such, the food hub is both the local and unique outcome of a PAR collaboration situated in a specific site, aiming to address real-world problems of communities, as well as a reflection of a reality in which small and local charities cannot address the systemic root causes of poverty and diet-related problems. The food hub, therefore, needs to be evaluated in regards to its practical and specific possibilities. Following a flexible PAR approach allowed the development of a CFN shaped by this practicality and specificity. While one might criticise that this outcome does not necessarily constitute food democracy as conceived theoretically and ideally, we argue that by understanding food democracy as a plurality of processes and approaches, this shifts the question to one of where and how to locate a food democracy. Building on Hassanein's (2003) argument of incremental change through compromise, we then see many localised food democracies with varying characteristics and development routes.

5.2. Participation in Food Democracy: From Skills to Relationships

The second challenge of CFNs is the need for skills to be able to participate. The Meadow Well food hub has clearly faced this challenge. Following a PAR approach, the partnership has been democratically run in all phases, including initial discussions, conceptualisation, planning, realisation, evaluation, and relaunch of the food hub. Evaluation data were discussed with participants and decision-making on how to continue in each phase was collective, strongly driven by participants. Collective knowledge production aimed primarily on actionable results, reflecting the overall values of PAR (Kindon et al., 2007; McIntyre, 2008). However, as discussed in Section 3.2, in this exploratory phase the partnership was not able to include many local residents or customers of the food hub in participatory activities. Meadow Well Connected generally attributes this to the different priorities of people with complex lives. Equally, the emphasis on building organisational collaborations with the private, public, and third sector meant there was little contact with the potential users of the food hub as such. The low involvement of citizens reflects the challenges of co-designing responses to real-world problems in an area that has seen many short-lived community engagement *interventions* coming and going over time, leaving many locals relatively disengaged.

This allows for two reflections on food democracy and PAR. For food democracy, this means that skills development (food skills or civic skills) becomes secondary, but that the process of building a CFN begins also where any PAR process begins: by building relationships and trust. While in the first two years of this process, much focus has been on relationship-building with supplier-citizens and middle-actor-citizens, taking this action-research forward, the focus is now shifting to relationship-building with consumer-citizens. The community engagement activities currently being planned do not have an educational but a relational character (McIvor & Hale, 2015). Conversely, for PAR this means going back to its roots as 'engaged pedagogy' (Kindon et al., 2007). The researcher becomes more than just a facilitator, in that they become a resource and capacity, bringing in expertise and new ideas for social innovation. In the spirit of PAR, this 'expert' knowledge enters a dialogue with local expert knowledge held by participants. This does, on the other hand, raise questions about reliance and long-term sustainability. The process can, however, be a trigger and starting point for the formation of engaged publics (Mouffe, 2000). In this way, PAR becomes an enabling approach to collaboratively build a CFN in a context of socio-economic deprivation and exclusion. For food democracy, this means that CFNs are less of a formal 'schoolhouse' for democracy (Levkoe, 2006), but more like an informal get-together, again being made up of many localised differentiations of food democracies.

5.3. Transformation towards Food Democracy: From Scaling Up to Collaborations and Networks

Facing a global food system that continues to be unsustainable and unjust, how can a small initiative in Meadow Well be a driver of food system democratisation? Conversely, how can a food hub, in the spirit PAR and its focus on responses to improve people's everyday life, focus on the root causes of food injustices (Guthman, 2011) without losing its human scale? Drawing on social innovation, I argue that *networks* are a possible way to remain small and local, while at the same time being open and connected (Manzini, 2015). While Meadow Well food hub is an experiment in its early stages, if successful it can consolidate and become a model to be propagated, replicated, and adapted to new contexts. Indeed, the Meadow Well food hub in itself is a local adaptation of the food hub model experimented with and consolidated nationally and globally. While each replication is different, it moves the same idea along and diffuses it, contributing to the diversity and heterogeneity of localised food democracies. We can see the first steps to such a network with Meadow Well linking the food hub with other organisations by finding mutually beneficial action. Research can play a critical role in supporting this process by creating toolkits to support non-expert communities in recognising and applying a collaborative response locally (and by this moving the overall idea of food democracy along). As such, Meadow Well, while not impacting the global food system on its own, can be seen as part of a network that implements, replicates, and connects ideas and agents of food democracy. As such, the question of the impact of small, local, or niche initiatives on the larger food system becomes less important. Instead, we can ask about the local impact and how this connects with other local initiatives elsewhere. Again, framing food democracy as a plurality can help to recognise this contribution of small initiatives to an incremental and heterogenous transformation of the food system. PAR and its approach of enabling local communities to improve their living conditions is again suited to facilitate such a plurality of transformative processes.

6. Conclusion

This article provided an empirical account of an early-stage CFN that aims to improve food access in a deprived neighbourhood. The specificities of the location illustrate the challenges of ethics, participation, and system transformation that CFNs must consider if they are to work towards a food democracy for all, or rather a plurality of localised food democracies. Based on the experiences in developing the Meadow Well food hub, I propose such a localised and differentiated understanding of food democracy. Accordingly, addressing the challenge of balancing environmental sustainability, social justice, and community and individual health, I presented tactics of flexibly realising and communicating value for money

and ethical standards. To address the challenge of either requiring skills to participate in a CFN or focusing on their development, the community centre is sensitive to offer accessible participation and is currently developing community engagement activities that focus on relationship building rather than skills. Finally, the local and specific development of the Meadow Well food hub helps to reframe the challenge for CFNs in achieving wider system transformation beyond niche solutions, to one of how to achieve local impact and connect with other initiatives or organisations to replicate success elsewhere.

As already indicated, this ongoing PAR process is currently developing action to explicitly recruit Meadow Well residents into the partnership. This includes co-designing food-related activities with community members that they deem interesting and beneficial. While activities might simply be a fun way to socialise over food, they might also address immediate needs (such as accessing cheap food) or self-development plans (such as learning how to cook or to start a food business). This process will certainly change what the food hub is, but the fact that it is already going on and is not just a future possibility provides a very tangible and real hook to talk about and imagine future food-related developments. As such, the initial focus on suppliers getting the food hub up and running was not a solution for its own sake, but also a conversation starter for community engagement in a complex setting. In parallel, the food hub is continuing to build networks with other organisations, including corporate partners, a hands-on learning programme with a local school, and engaging in knowledge exchange with other food hubs and national networks.

PAR's democratic and localised approach aiming at addressing real-world problems and improving community self-determination stands out as uniquely suited to help navigating the ethical challenges CFNs face. A process that treats participants as competent agents with local expertise can produce context-sensitive, co-constructed action and knowledge. Researchers as engaged participants can play an important role in triggering, resourcing, and disseminating such initiatives by bringing in their own experiences and expertise. Framing food democracy as a plurality to build and replicate local CFNs, aligns with PAR's own democratic ambitions to enable local innovation.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Building London's Food Democracy: Assessing the Contributions of Urban Agriculture to Local Food Decision-Making

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Abstract
This article presents the contributions of Urban Agriculture practitioners in establishing the local food movement and the foundations of an active food democracy in London. It argues that food democracy is emerging from a set of contestations within institutional channels, but also through the historical struggle of formulating the dominating political discourses, both of which are co-constituted through specific social and political practices. Webster and Engberg-Pedersen's political space framework (2002) breaks up this article in order to describe: 1) How specific institutional channels form different strategies of collaboration and contestation; 2) how these are reflected in political discourses evolution; and 3) what dilemmas and opportunities this evolution in practice entails in relation to responsibilisation and its influence on the possibility of establishing true active food democracy in London.

Issue
This article is part of the issue "New Perspectives on Food Democracy" edited by Basil Bornemann (University of Basel, Switzerland) and Sabine Weiland (Université Catholique de Lille, France).

1. Introduction

The 'food democracy' concept was first coined by Lang (1998) and later expanded by Hassanein (2003) to argue that in their everyday lives people can and should be more actively participating in shaping the food system. This concern towards popular control over food policy is not a new phenomenon and has existed throughout the history of food-related social movements. The resurfacing of the food democracy concern in the late 1990s, however, became characterised by the opposition to a neo-liberal vision in which the market monopolises power with retailers acting as gatekeepers between supply and consumption, and an older welfarist and socialist perspective arguing that food systems should not be abandoned to the market but rather governed by more active political deliberations (Lang, 1998, p. 18). This democratic deficit in our food systems has been explored through other concepts such as food citizenship (Renting, Schermer, & Rossi, 2012) and food sovereignty

(Pimbert, 2009), both arguing that the current food regime is too centralised, perceiving food only as a commodity and only acting through liberal economic rhetoric (McMichael, 2008, pp. 212-213; Pimbert, 2009).

In light of this, urban agriculture (UA), defined as 'the growing, processing, and distribution of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities' (Bailkey & Nasr, as cited in Monardo, 2013, p. 3), appears as a valuable practice because of its contribution to establishing a local food movement for cities, a closeness that enables the formation of an urban form of food democracy. London has one of the largest networks and highest percentage of UA amongst richer nations, but also established some forms of food democracy through different institutional channels. For these reasons, it makes a very interesting case study to assess the influence of UA networks on promoting further urban food democracy. Still, it should be kept in mind that such configuration is far from the norm in the UK and beyond.

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Due to the heterogenous nature of on-the-ground realities behind the promotion of further food democracy in London, this article suggests that a layered framework of political space could help explain the complex and mutually constitutive mechanisms between institutional channels, and their specific political discourses and social/political practices. Overall, this analysis should contribute to precising the knowledge of how UA practitioners contest political space in order to set up a local food movement and the foundations of an active food democracy. And critically, it questions whether an active food democracy entails a pragmatist individual-focus direction for the local food movement, a direction which is not suited to addressing systemic issues in a more radical manner because of its non-political nature (Crawford, 1980; Noll, 2014).

After presenting our methodology (Section 2), this article will focus on institutional channels as spaces that allow and shape different strategies of participation and contestation for food democracy by UA practitioners (Section 3). Then, it will present some of the main political discourses which historically articulated different conceptions of UA to contextualise the evolution of the struggle for this second dimension of political space. It shall also discuss the latest shift of the local food movement towards neo-liberal governmentality, its implications for UA and what impacts this has on institutional channels and social and political practices (Section 4). The last part will explore the dilemmas and opportunities behind this change in practices following the evolution of channels and discourses, especially the debates between mainstreaming or losing transformative potential, the opportunities offered by State withdrawal and responsibilisation approaches versus system-based directions (Section 5).

2. Conceptual Framework and Methodology

Food democracy is about citizens conquering political space to have the power to determine agro-food policies and practices at all scales. Our analysis of UA in London uses the framework of political space as presented by Neil Webster and Lars Engberg-Pedersen (2002). In this work, the authors use this categorisation to highlight the layers on which the urban poor contest political space for poverty reduction. It will be used to look at how the UA practitioner contests political space for UA facilitation. Following this framework, it is argued, will provide a good structure to understand the complexities of the contributions of UA to the local food movement and to the establishment of an active food democracy in London.

Pringle and Watson (as cited in Webster & Engberg-Pedersen, 2002) remind us that interests:

Are constructed in the process of interaction with specific institutions and sites. The policies that ensues depend not just on the constraints of structures, but on

the discursive struggles which define and constitute particular interests and the State at one time. (p. 81)

The idea of space and boundaries helps picture this discursive struggle and is necessary to understand what constrained and enabled approaches towards the advancement of UA, the local food movement and food democracy. This framework enables us to grasp the power relations that help to shape the boundaries of these spaces, what is possible within them, and who may enter, with which identities, discourses and interests.

Hence, this research was organised to follow the three mutually constitutive layers of political spaces:

- Institutional channels that include formal procedures for affecting food policy formulation and implementation such as elections, general assemblies, coordination meetings or hearing procedures and which can be shaped by particular political discourses and practices;
- Political discourses that encompass the ideas central to the formation of popular culture about food such as rights, responsibilities and culpability and which build different approaches towards policy relating to specific institutional channels and political practices;
- Social and political practices, i.e., the specific ways, tactics and strategies of different social groups to attempt to exercise influence on food policy-making, these constitute a collective memory of what has been achieved and how, in relation to new political discourses or institutional constraints.

Concretely, this means the first step to accurately describe UA practitioners' engagement in London's local food policy should start with an analysis of the institutional channels available and to interrogate how these privilege certain priorities, actors and interventions. Looking at power imbalances within these channels and how they contribute to shaping collaborations, legitimacies and representativeness of actors is fundamental. Doing this necessitates a comparative analysis of the two main strategies of UA practitioners shaped by these specific institutional channels, namely contestation and/or collaboration. Information for this part was collected through grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Juliet, 1994) and content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) of secondary data and literature, including journal articles, specialised reports and censuses, organisation and governmental websites relating to London's UA between 1996 and 2018. Looking at the specific examples of the London Food Strategy and the London Plan of 2018, but also the London Food Board and the Capital Growth campaign gives this article a good overview of the successes and failures of the different interventions happening within the institutional channels available for food democracy in London.

The next step is to describe and analyse elements of this discursive struggle between institutional channels, discourses and practices and this starts with an historical depiction of the main political discourses that articulated the practice of UA in London. Once this contextual background is described through a narrative analysis, it would be possible to reflect on the current situation and assess whether the strategies exposed in the first part relate to specific trends of UA in London, trends which may break away from a certain narrative or instead be more of a continuation of what had previously been done. Once these depictions of institutional and sense-giving mechanisms (discourses) are completed, an accurate understanding of the latest narrative in the practice of UA in London and how it contributes to the local food policy discourse becomes possible.

Only then can this article begin to describe the main debates that agitate UA's interventions in local food policy, as it starts to capture how these interventions are not unidirectional but rather a complex web of multi-level entanglements of actors, channels, discourses, and practices. And because discourses and practices depend hugely on our conception of what exists, the two parts focusing on these would require a more epistemological relativism for observation, hence information here was collected between 2017 and 2019 through some participant observation in London's urban farms (including Calthorpe Project, Spa Hill Allotments, Hackney's Back Garden and Growing Kitchen) and some informal discussions with more than 30 urban farmers, community food activists, researchers specialised in the field and municipal rapporteurs. This was also enriched with grounded theory, content and Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault, 1969/2002; Keller, 2011) of organisation websites, reports, and relevant literature dating all the way to the UK's first allotment movement in 1793.

The key finding that ensues raises important questions about the different directions of the local food movement and food democracy in London, and how UA currently evolves within these various possibilities.

3. Institutional Channels Related to UA

One of the first examples of an institutional channel for food democracy in London was the London Food Commission run by Tim Lang under the Greater London Council in the 1980s. Nowadays it is the current Food Strategy—2018—and its predecessor—2006—which act as a Food Charter and govern most food related issues in London. These were informed by the Curry Report—2002—and the need to develop regional food strategies in England which at first was led by the regional Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs offices. Initially, the South East regional strategy was intended to cover London, but this was deemed impractical, so London developed its own. This London Food Strategy, the London Plan—and to a lesser extent London's Environment Strategy—, London's Health

Inequalities Strategy, advocacy work towards the councils, and chairing in the London Food Board can be said to be the main 'Institutional channels through which [food] policy formulation and implementation can be accessed, controlled or contested' (Webster & Engberg-Pedersen, 2002, p. 8) by ordinary citizens.

These current institutional channels seem to allow for two broad strategies that can be combined: direct contestation by community groups during the public consultation on these strategies, and/or implication in the governing institutions implementing these strategies. This part shall briefly look at these two approaches with the help of specific examples and assess their influence on UA promotion and the advancement of food democracy in London.

3.1. Contestation in the Public Consultations

In 2018, a draft of the strategy was submitted for consultation during an eight-week period, these included polling, online surveys, discussion forums and focus groups (Greater London Authority [GLA], 2006, 2018a). A wide range of people responded to this consultation, and responses were split into two main groups: the public and stakeholders, both comprising of UA practitioners (150 stakeholders and thousands of members of the public responded). Here 'stakeholders' means the people that are responding on behalf of an organisation such as charities and NGOs, businesses, membership organisations, professional bodies, local authorities, advertising companies, and healthcare providers or the few individuals with a specific expertise in food (GLA, 2018b, p. 9).

After the consultation, a Post-Adoption Statement (GLA, 2018c) ensures no significant adverse effects are likely especially concerning potential environmental, economic or social impacts. This post-adoption statement is also concerned with Health Impact Assessments because there is a legal (EU) commitment to doing this. Additionally, the Consultation Report (GLA, 2018b) ensures there is no major areas that stakeholders and the public are opposed to in the draft of the strategy. In 2018, the report argued that 'the changes made to the final LFS are mostly minor and strengthen the strategy further rather than changing its content or structure significantly' (GLA, 2018c, p. 13). This statement seems to indicate an alignment of public, stakeholder and governance opinions concerning the direction of London's food systems for the next 10 years. Considering this, it seems that mechanisms of popular control on policy formulation are ensuring some minimum level of food democracy.

Planning being one of the few powers that the Mayor and GLA possess to influence the establishment of the local food movement, looking at public consultation on the London Plan also appears to be particularly relevant. Indeed, this authority over planning has major implications for UA and should be mentioned when addressing the case of London's main institutional channels for food democracy. Interestingly, and because of these pub-

lic consultations, instances like the London Food Strategy and the London Plan become arenas of political struggle or spaces of governance between actors, where the myriad of stakeholders previously described will come to defend their particular interests and voice their concerns. In this arena, forming alliances between various community groups and campaigners, with similar contestations, can be an effective strategy for stakeholders to make themselves more visible, in order to enable their vision to compete with the dominant actors in the debate (e.g., supermarkets, big landowners, etc.).

One good example of this, but which also demonstrates the difficulty in getting UA practitioners' voice heard is the cooperation between Just Space and the Community Food Growers Network (CFGN). Just Space is 'an informal alliance of around 80 community groups, campaigns and concerned independent organisations which was formed to act as a voice for Londoners at grass-roots level during the formulation of London's major planning strategy, particularly the London Plan' (Just Space, n.d.). It has participated in all London Plan examinations in public since 2007 and produced a community-led plan for London in which the CFGN drafted the section on Community Food Growing and Production (Just Space, 2018; Levidow, 2018, p. 370). Groups like Just Space most often draw their political strength and their ability to intervene in the public debate from the direct needs of local community organisations. But we should be wary of how some organisations cease in terms of social participation to be representative of the people they represent. Because of this issue of mainstreaming under umbrella organisations, direct participation of the communities involved could be preferred—we shall come back to the issue of mainstreaming later. Some aspects of Just Space proposals have been incorporated into the London Plan as a result of this participation. It appears however that inspectors have been variable in their willingness to admit community-based evidence (Just Space, 2018) which is not uncommon but, in this case, may be explained by the issues of community representativeness exposed before, or simply by the quality of the evidences provided. It is also argued that:

> While the Mayor has consulted informally with business groups and developers, who together with a range of institutional stakeholders have had an early role in shaping the Mayor's strategic priorities and direction, there has been no attempt to ensure the early participation of community groups. (Just Space, 2018)

This temporal difference in involvement seems to indicate a power imbalance between private and civil society stakeholders, and for this reason, Just Space wants to be effectively involved in the creation of the next London Plan, not just 'consulted' on a draft plan produced in detail in semi-secret (Just Space, 2018). Accordingly, and similarly to the observations made by Bassarab, Clark, Santo, and Palmer (2019) in the US, it seems that only

when there will be this guarantee of equity at all stages of decision-making can real democracy begin to be activated in London.

3.2. Collaboration or Co-optation with Governing Institutions

To have an earlier say in the formulation and implementation process, organisations such as Sustain (the alliance for better food and farming) used a less conflicting strategy of collaboration with governing institutions, what some might critically call co-optation. Sustain's strategy led to the Capital Growth campaign, London's largest food growing network launched for 2012 Olympic games and which is now overseeing most of UA in London.

The impact of this campaign, and ultimately that of Sustain's strategy, is difficult to measure. It is known that between 2006 and 2012 there was a net loss of 14 allotment sites (London Assembly Environment Committee, 2006; Southgate, 2012, p. 6). Allotments are traditional urban farms in the UK managed by boroughs and protected by specific legislation since 1908, which distinguishes them from other food growing projects. This result could indicate that neither the 2006 Food strategy nor the Capital Growth campaign was helpful in preserving allotments. According to 2012 last allotment census for London, there were 1758 registered Capital Growth spaces and 65 Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG) member spaces across London which gives a grand total, including statutory allotments, of 2534 food growing spaces in Greater London (Southgate, 2012, p. 8). But it is necessary to precise that Capital Growth and FCFCG gardens are different to allotments in size, purpose and legal status and should not be seen as replacements for allotments (Southgate, 2012, p. 8).

After 2012, the only available reports on UA in London are the Capital Growth reports which report over 2200 members in their network in 2014 (Sustain, 2014) and 2415 gardens in 2018 (Sustain, 2019a). These numbers seem to indicate that Capital Growth has indeed developed new growing spaces, which is why the campaign is depicted as a success on the Mayor's website, but having no information on non-members of the network, on the length of these projects, or on the size of the growing spaces available it can't really be affirmed that the overall number of growing spaces has risen. This led Chang (2013) to affirm that:

> While Capital Growth as a coordinator of a large number of food-growing projects also played an important role in facilitating discussions about and activities in the re-localisation of London food systems, there was no serious increase of food production from its programme. (p. 103)

Another strategy of collaboration with mainstream institutions is representation within the London Food Board, this is the equivalent of a Food Policy Council as it

puts the Mayor's Food Strategy into practice, by coordinating work and leading debate (GLA, 2006, 2018a). According to Hassanein (2003) or Sieveking (2019), Food Policy Councils offer a concrete example of a deliberate attempt to develop the practice of food democracy, but despite the Mayor of London's aspiration to create a new food system for the city, it lacks power and resources to fulfil such an ambition (Morgan & Sonnino, 2010). Moreover, this relatively mainstreamed nature of London's food policy is juxtaposed by the complexity of the city's local governance structure, consisting of 32 boroughs and the City of London. These borough councils are responsible for running most local services in their areas, and thus there can be significant variation in food policy priorities and implementation (Coulson & Sonnino, 2019, p. 177). Anyhow, the Food Board's membership was partly renewed in March 2017 and this allowed for several community food activists to be appointed by the Mayor among them an activist of the CFGN as well as two representatives from Sustain (Levidow, 2018, p. 371). As a result of this participation by community food activists:

> The Board advocated long-term secure tenancies for more food-growing, as…basis for infrastructural investment and organisational commitments in such spaces…[and] advocated such policies within London's strategies for environment, health and business—more important because these have a statutory basis. (Levidow, 2018, p. 371)

Despite this proposition, there was no change made to the Mayor's previous policies and the draft London Plan (responsible for planning urban spaces) made no commitment to secure food-growing spaces, although it mentioned aquaponics and vertical growing which are more relevant to commercial agriculture rather than community gardening (GLA as cited in Levidow, 2018, p. 372). This absence of a GLA response around their rationale for not including any of the proposed policy changes is problematic when assessing the level of democratisation. It also indicates that even a quasi-insider role within the GLA cannot effectively complement public interventions by the Just Space network in order to facilitate UA, advance its role in the local food movement and set up some aspects of food democracy.

Considering all this, it seems that although the democratic channels such as representation within the institutions or public consultations exist, the policymaking process is still centralised. Indeed, despite interesting collaboration strategies along these channels, civil society seems to not own the first or final say, and therefore remain confined to a consultative/implementing role rather than policy-formulating one. This choice of strategies between contesting the mainstream or trying to change it from within is mutually shaping and shaped by specific institutional channels but also relates to the two other political spaces as we shall continue to observe.

4. Political Discourses Related to UA

Having discussed some of the institutional channels allowing contestation/collaboration for UA in London, we now turn towards the second dimension of political space: political discourses. In London, the political discourses, concerns and motivations relating to UA have been numerous throughout the city's long history of food related social movements, some of these discourses are less central today than they used to be, but a brief overview is still important to understand the specificities of the London context, its chronology, and the recent changes that occurred.

4.1. Overview of Political Discourses Relating to London's UA

Historically, the practice of UA has been linked to claims about the right to land ownership or rights to food by the labouring poor: this has famously been exemplified in London and the UK through the Peasant's Revolt of 1380 and the Diggers movement of 1649 for example (opposed the enclosure of common land), which have been important events that lead to the creation of the allotment movement (Biel & Cabannes, 2009, p. 2; Howkins, 2002; Richardson & Ridden, 1988). This contestation for the right to cultivate land and the commons, involving the urban poor, the landowners, the State and other actors still is an important element of the political discourse surrounding UA today, as it was seen with the example of Just Space campaigns on the London Plan.

Another important element of the political discourse in UA is the relevance of this practice to the issue of securing national food supplies. Indeed, the first allotment movement is linked to shortages due to the Napoleonic wars in 1793 (Burchardt, 2002, p. 10), and the victory gardens and the Dig for Victory campaign during the two world wars are probably the most well-known examples of this phenomenon (Gibbs, 2013). Today, modern debates on national food security, particularly relevant in the context of Brexit (London Food Link & Sustain, 2018; O'Caroll, 2018), discussions surrounding the role of the nation in guaranteeing food sovereignty (Edelman et al., 2014; Schiavoni, 2015), or even interrogations on food democracy from the top-down in this issue (Baldy & Kruse, 2019), are examples of this constant reference to the national scale in local food system transformations. A recent example of this is Sustain's contribution to the Right to Food campaign which seeks to instate into UK law the UN Sustainable Development Goal of ending hunger which would require action both at national and local level (London Food Link & Sustain, 2018).

After WW2 and its successful national campaign for UA, subsequent years saw a decline in use, but in 1974 Friends of the Earth's report called 'Losing Ground' initiated a brief comeback of UA concerns in the 1970s, a period called 'Allotment Frenzy' and that Leapman in his 1976 book *One Man and His Plot* associated with 'the dis-

covery of the allotment by the middle class' (Crouch & Ward, 2003, p. 165). This issue of class and who participates to UA is also of importance in London. As Engel's law demonstrates, the poorer you are, the higher proportion of your income would be spent on food: This also suggests that issues of food democracy would especially be important for the lower classes (Zimmerman, 1932). Historically, UA has been part of coping strategies for the urban poor, and for example in London today a low-income family can save up to £1040 a year with these kind of growing activities (Neighbourhoods Green, 2014, p. 11). However, low income families are now less involved in UA as they are increasingly time poor, and for this reason it should be questioned who actually commits to UA. For example, only 50% of respondents of the capital growth said their motivations for participating to UA was to save money (Sustain, 2014). Hence, the relationship between UA and gentrification has also been questioned in recent times (Horst, McClintock, & Hoey, 2017).

This brief surge of UA in the 1970s also led to an increase in social integration of immigrant communities, who increasingly saw UA has a way to preserve and practice their traditional farming knowledges (Monardo, 2013). This strengthened and expanded the social benefits linked to UA such as community cohesion which had been present since the first allotment movement. This continued to this day and in 2013 Sustain's members main motivations (in order of preferences) were community building, health and wellbeing, followed by learning new skills or helping others to do so, changing the food system, reducing its impact on the environment, saving money and growing food to sell (Sustain, 2014)

As mentioned, the health discourse is important for UA practitioners, but an even more dominating concern in London's governance since the 1970s, partially because the Mayor has oversight on Public Health strategies for London and that the State is constantly looking at ways to reduce the National Health Service budget. Importantly, this relates to the debate around 'Healthism' and of one's individual responsibility to health which tends to ignore social determinants and led Crawford to argue that as long as such approach 'shapes popular beliefs, we will continue to have a non-political, and therefore, ultimately ineffective conception and strategy of health promotion' (Crawford, 1980, p. 365). This link to responsibilisation seems to have been the overall trend in UA in London since the mid-2000s, and that is what this article will turn to now.

4.2. Change in Discourse: A Shift in Responsibility

Since the international food price spikes of 2008, the Growing Food for London conference, and the new approach of Sustain with its Capital Growth campaign, allotments which constituted the bulk of the State involvement in the local food movement seem to have been progressively side-lined in London. This was witnessed by an interview partner from an academic context who partici-

pated to this conference at the time and was also part of the Camden Healthy and Sustainable Food strategy. He remembers to have 'felt very strongly at the time that allotments were being totally written out of history, and this remains a very significant critique of Sustain' (personal correspondence, Biel, May 20, 2019).

Others might argue that rather than being side-lined, the allotments may have benefitted by the increased interest in UA since mid-2000s, which may be exemplified by Islington opening its first allotment in 100 years back in 2008 for example (Edwards & Phillips, 2010). But there is evidence across the UK that allotments are being sold off for development despite government pledges to preserve them. For example, in 1996 there were four people waiting for every 100 plots, but that has risen to 57 in 2014, and about 3000 plots, 2% of the national total, have been destroyed between 2010 and 2014 according to official figures (Holehouse & Graham, 2014). Further evidence demonstrates that the majority of food growing projects created through the Capital Growth Campaign are community food projects rather than allotments (in 2018 only 12% of Capital Growth members are allotments; Sustain, 2019a). This may be explained by the fact that the allotments waiting list are mostly full, some with 10 years waiting lists, and that no space is currently available to create new allotments, at least in Inner London boroughs where is situated most of the demand.

However, and despite this apparent side-lining of allotments, positive changes were made in the institutional channels to one of facilitation for urban food growing (e.g., neighbourhood planning, local green spaces denomination, changes in zoning ordinances). Additionally, many campaigns such as Capital Growth, or Zero Hunger City, guidance on best practices and funding opportunities such as the Big Lottery's Local Food Fund have opened the way to a range of unconventional growing projects in unconventional spaces, including council estate projects (personal correspondence, Biel, May 20, 2019; Sustain, 2019b).

Under those circumstances, this shift in discourse to community food projects may at first glance appear positive as it enables smaller growing spaces to emerge in this very constrained area. Nonetheless, this phenomenon also represents a shift of responsibility for UA provision, a responsibility that is now placed upon the individual, the private sector and civil society instead of the State. This transferal (or downscaling) of State responsibility to (under-funded and under-resourced) multi-sector food partnerships may amount to 'responsibility without power' under the guise of 'food democracy' (Peck & Tickell, as cited in Coulson & Sonnino, 2019, p. 171). Indeed, rather than being evidence of a democratic redistribution of roles within urban food policy, it seems these new food partnerships are instead resulting from neo-liberal austerity measures and reduced local authority budgets, among which cutbacks in public health budgets that had traditionally funded many small-scale citizen type projects.

New practices of public-private partnerships based on civil society not for profit models and even aquaculture and micro-growing are of course interesting projects, but they have not proven to be as resilient as allotments (personal correspondence, Biel, May 20, 2019). This is mostly because they seem to be too financially dependent and legally precarious, but also too fragmented to resist to the pressure imposed by property developers, with Local Green Space denomination offering less protection than allotment status for example.

Still, the recent commercial model emerging from this shift is interesting because a true local food movement and food democracy would extend to involvement in the market. Today, microfarms could be economically viable in London with specific strategies as presented by Chang and Morel (2018) but one of the main obstacles to this is the short-term and precarious leases of the rented plots, a problem which could possibly be solved by returning to the special status of allotment. Under these circumstances, this shift in the socio-technical structure from allotments to community food projects which can be identified in institutional channels, a new discourse of responsibility, and new practices seems to be detrimental to the re-localisation of food production and to the establishment of local food democracy.

5. Social and Political Practices Related to UA

After having presented institutional channels and their specific contestation/collaboration strategies and explaining how these relates to an evolution of political discourses and ideological movements structuring urban food democracy in London, this article now debates the dilemmas and opportunities behind these specific social and political practices. These seem to be the main concern in today's literature on the future of the local food movement in London. We shall look at the collaborative approach of mainstreaming, the implications of State withdrawal and the shift to responsibilisation.

5.1. Mainstreaming and Transformative Potential

As presented in the previous parts, new forms of UA and food re-localisation:

> Have achieved a tremendous 'reach,' extending to many established institutions such as schools, housing associations, community associations, public health bodies and councils, all of whom have, in countless cases, literally bought in to community food projects as a means of delivering multiple requirements. (Reclaim the Fields, n.d.)

This process of mainstreaming with common institutions, however, what we may also refer to as 'anchoring' can unfortunately dilute the transformative potential of certain social innovation oriented towards food democracy (Chiffoleau & Loconto, 2017, p. 315).

The multi-scalar complexity of sustaining food partnerships 'creates a situation where roles, responsibilities and expectations from partners are unclear and continually negotiated, leading to a tendency to work towards consensus politics, rather than embedding notions of dissent and antagonism into these spaces' (Coulson & Sonnino, 2019, p. 176). This tendency implies that the existing structural power relations at both the local and national level remain unchallenged. Some argue that to challenge power relations, and to not be reduced to innovation within niches, new food initiatives should not be striving for this antagonism and radical regime replacement. Instead, networking and institutionalising alternatives within the existing structures remains their best option to achieve transformative change in the dominant socio-technical regime (Levidow, 2018).

Again, Sustain's work is well suited to exemplify this tension with mainstreaming, as they can be seen as both poacher and gamekeeper, both a critical voice but also now embedded in the system delivering many services. In 2008, they organised the Growing Food for London conference which played a significant role in launching some of the ideas which were taken up opportunistically by Boris Johnson (such as Capital Growth) and they have also more recently collaborated with Michael Gove (Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). These collaborations impacted their reputation as a critical voice. But still, UA practitioners who are putting forward a counter-systemic argument at a high standard will hopefully see some of their ideas filtering into public policy, although there are risks of co-optation, and risks of losing their radical edge and getting submerged in the mainstream (personal correspondence, Biel, May 20, 2019).

5.2. New Assemblages beyond State Compartmentalisation

With this in mind, it can be argued that there is trajectory towards a naturalisation of the neo-liberal perspective and of its codes when alternatives are mainstreaming. This can be further exemplified with the appearance of displaceable gardens whom by their very essence of privileging mobility over stability, seem to be the symbol of the acceptance of the primacy of property developments over UA projects, or in other words of exchange-value over use-value.

Nonetheless, London-wide networks are still resisting this recuperation by the mainstream paradigm in many ways. To this end, they are developing original strategies such as:

> Expanding skills for empowerment and social inclusion (beyond a leisure activity), valorising all potential resources as community assets (beyond its financial meaning), promoting a food culture to address a systemic 'food poverty' (beyond a deprived sub-population), establishing place-based identities

for food (beyond organic certification), and creating short food supply chains through social enterprises. (Levidow, 2018, p. 363)

Interestingly, these innovations around food democracy by 'building the asset base and capacity of those involved' can facilitate cross-sectoral activity beyond the siloed mentality associated with top-down governmental programmes (Adams & Hess, as cited in Levidow, 2018, p. 359) and allow for escaping the State's bureaucratic compartmentalisation. These new assemblages that are sometimes referred to as grassroots social innovations because they carry new forms of participation, democratisation, and networking may have a transformative potential to affect the current institutional logics and the level of citizen's involvement.

Perhaps, this new context since 2008 then allows for the realisation of Hassanein's conception of food democracy, one that goes clearly beyond food democracy as only a rights-based concept, but instead stresses active citizenship (Hassanein, 2003, p. 79). These new forms of interactions belong to the realm of experimental politics, and are ongoing methods requiring gradual, participatory, intelligent action on the part of educated and informed publics (Hassanein, 2003, p. 79). But such methods, in building non-conventional food assemblages and rhizomatic connections, may allow for the articulation of the various political discourses and motivations mentioned earlier, or at the very least offer the arena for debate that could enable a more social vision of food democracy.

5.3. System-Based Direction or Responsibilisation

Finally, and to come back to the issue of responsibilisation exposed with the post-2008 trend and with the 'Healthism' discourse, it would be necessary to discuss the links between an active food democracy and the individual as the primary unit of contestation. These links are well explored in Noll's (2014) brilliant work on the relationship between the local food movement and liberalism. On the one hand, she argues that the individual focused food movement is largely compatible with liberalism, as it conceives of citizens/consumers as individuals living out their own conceptions of the good life and thus in accordance with the liberal principle of limited neutrality (Noll, 2014, p. 212). On the other hand, she argues that the systems-based direction is not compatible as it includes within it communitarian critiques of liberalism and brings to the table deeper critiques of the larger structure and our basic relationship with the land, ecosystems, and each other (Noll, 2014, p. 212).

The present direction of London's UA and local food movement seems to be explained by its alignment with neo-liberalism because of its side-lining of the State and more individual focus. Still, responsibilisation is not necessarily negative and Noll concludes that both individual and system-based directions have a place in the larger

system and serve different purposes, which forms a dialectic that increases the social and political sustainability of the local food movement as a whole (Noll, 2014). Indeed, while the systems-based direction could be said to be more radical and revolutionary as it aims to change the way people understand and interact with the world, including other people and the environment. The individual focused direction works more pragmatically within the system to cultivate an awareness of the problems of industrial agriculture and to educate people about the benefits of local agri-food systems (Noll, 2014, p. 221). This direction influences people to make better choices and to support local policies that make a local food system possible, but also shapes the demand and brings money into local communities, which enables more ecologically and socially sound agricultural practices of the companies (Noll, 2014, p. 221).

Hence, the individual direction carries with it the logical reasons and the practical experience gained by trying to live this particular lifestyle of an active food citizen and this in turns could lead to greater numbers of people embracing the more revolutionary aspects of the systems-based direction (Noll, 2014, p. 221). But to come back to Crawford's (1980) point on 'Healthism,' this pragmatist non-political approach will not be enough to address systemic social determinants, and it would not allow for moving beyond the passive and confining roles of consumer, producer or worker (Hassanein, 2003), which will ultimately prove to be ineffective in achieving real active food democracy. Consequently, it can be concluded that for true active food democracy to arise in London there will need to be both individual-focus and systems-based directions to the local food movement, and although there are still some critical voices being heard, the recent direction emphasizing individual responses is to be balanced out by a revival of more radical approaches. This is maybe what we are currently witnessing with movements such as Grow Heathrow or Extinction Rebellion, but it is still too early to conclude anything.

6. Conclusions

In summary, this article has demonstrated that UA contributions to food democracy in London happen within the three mutually constitutive realms of political space. First, it was concluded through our examples that institutional channels for food democracy, be it through contestation or collaboration, do exist. However, UA practitioner's involvement remains mostly consultative and do not hold decisive leverage on policy formulation. Secondly, it was observed that there has been a myriad of political discourses articulating this involvement of UA in food democracy, and that since 2008 the neo-liberal discourse has favoured particular channels and practices which may be detrimental to the promotion of UA. Lastly, three practical dilemmas, opportunities and interrogations behind these new channels and discourses were exposed. In short, mainstreaming is necessary to develop

the local food movement but may impact transformative potential. Moreover, State withdrawal from UA can fragilize the movement but also develop new connections and assemblages. And finally, both the system-based direction and responsibilisation focus for the local food movement can be beneficial if well-balanced.

These conclusions raise further insights for advancing the food democracy debate. Starting with the fact that institutional channels contribute to shaping strategies for food democracy activists, therefore their presence is not necessarily a good sign and the types of participation they entail should be studied, for example, it should be ensured that involvement is not limited to co-optation and that impact on policy formulation is possible. Furthermore, considering the many different motivations behind UA, institutional channels should be decentralised and political practices heterogenous to allow for a more diverse representation of political discourses. The food democracy movement should also be wary of the change in channels and discourses which side-lines the State and privileges public-private partnerships, as neo-liberal rhetoric tends to wrongfully conflate flexibility with resilience. UA practitioners in London should criticise and expose the failures of the 2008 shift to responsibilisation, and lobby for extending allotment's status protections to their community food projects in order to strengthen the local food movement. Finally, advancing food democracy means overcoming the Manichean distinction between pragmatist responsibilisation approaches and system-based critics, ensuring a delicate balance and cooperation between the two sides must be our objective.

Currently in London, but more generally in the Global North, the responsibilisation approach seem to have become predominant and thus a return to a system-based direction becomes necessary as Tilzey (2019) also demonstrated in this issue. Future research on the promotion of such trajectory in this context will be needed. For example, research on the potential of collaborations between London's community groups, social and environmental activists and international advocacy networks to address issues of food justice and food democracy could be very valuable. This could mean assessing the potential for transnational agrarian movements (such as *La Vía Campesina* and their discourse of food sovereignty) to galvanise UA in the Global North by linking urban citizens' struggles to the Global South peasant movements. Additionally, an inquiry on the necessary legislations needed to enable real active food democracy in the context of London, along with a critical analysis of actor's role and representativeness will also be invaluable to advance the debate. Concretely, this could be interrogating the type of institutional channels needed to realise the principles of active food democracy or food sovereignty, which could potentially be achieved through a comparative analysis of some institutional arrangements worldwide.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Conflicts over GMOs and their Contribution to Food Democracy

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Abstract
The use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) embodies a specific vision of agricultural systems that is highly controversial. The article focuses on how conflicts over GMOs contribute towards food democracy. Food democracy is defined as the possibility for all social groups to participate in, negotiate and struggle over how societies organize agricultural production, thereby ensuring that food systems fulfil the needs of people and sustain (re)productive nature into the future. EU agricultural policy envisages the coexistence of agricultural and food systems with and without GMOs. This policy, which on the surface appears to be a means of avoiding conflict, has in fact exacerbated conflict, while creating obstacles to the development of food democracy. By contrast, empirical analysis of movements against GMOs in Germany and Poland shows how they create pathways towards participation in the food system and the creation of alternative agricultural futures, thereby contributing to a democratization of food systems and thus of society–nature relations. Today, as products of new breeding techniques such as genome editing are being released, these movements are gaining new relevance.

Keywords
agriculture; conflicts; food democracy; genetically modified organisms; new breeding techniques; social ecology; social movements; society–nature relations

1. Introduction

Since the 1970s, and even more since the early 2000s, various socio-environmental struggles in policy fields such as climate, energy, mobility and, not least, food can be identified as part of a new movement concerned with the democratization of society–nature relations. Struggles against the implementation of genetically modified plants and animals in agriculture are an essential part of the movement for food democracy, in which "agricultural policy is perceived as a citizens' affair" (Haerlin, 2013, p. 47, authors' translation).

Conflicts over food relations are processes in which participation in policy making and forms of agricultural production and consumption are struggled over and (temporarily) decided. In this study, we focus on conflicts over genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture and analyse their contribution to food democracy. The application of genetic engineering has given rise to a large number of social conflicts, from scientific debates regarding the safety and appropriate use of the technology, to disputes among agricultural producers and conflicts involving consumers (cf. Friedrich, 2015; Levidow & Carr, 2010). In addition to highlighting key is-

sues raised by the development of GMOs these conflicts raise broader questions: regarding what kind of agriculture is desirable, what kinds of food should be produced, what kinds of technology should be used, and who should have access to and control over these technologies, among others. Moreover, laws and other policies intended to resolve these disputes themselves become the object of new conflicts (Gottschlich, Sulmowski, & Friedrich, 2017). Our research question is: How do conflicts over GMOs contribute to a democratization of society–nature relations? How the way these conflicts are dealt with over time shapes specific constellations of society–nature relations that can also be more or less democratic, in the sense that participation becomes more or less possible or that conflicts give rise to outcomes that are more or less sustainable. In the empirical examples below, the focus is specifically on how and to what extent such conflicts enable food democracy. The analytical findings of this study not only shed light on the constitution of food democracy, but can also be helpful for understanding how conflicts in other policy fields, such as energy or mobility, contribute to a democratization of society–nature relations.

After outlining our conceptual framework (Section 2), we describe the context for our empirical case study of the movements against GMOs in Germany and Poland and present the results (Section 3). This is followed by a discussion of our findings regarding the contribution of conflicts surrounding GMOs to food democracy (Section 4). The final section summarizes our argument and considers new issues raised by the further development of GMOs and new breeding techniques (Section 5).

2. Conceptual Framework: Substantive and Procedural Dimensions of Food Democracy from a Critical-Emancipatory Perspective

Food democracy can be defined as the possibility for all social groups to participate in, negotiate and struggle over how societies organize agricultural production, thereby ensuring that food systems fulfil the needs of people and sustain (re)productive nature into the future. We follow Hassanein (2003, p. 83), who argues that "food democracy ideally means that all members of an agro-food system have equal and effective opportunities for participation in shaping that system, as well as knowledge about the relevant alternative ways of designing and operating the system." Hassanein (2003, p. 85) considers food democracy as a pragmatic device for incremental change towards a radical transformation of the food system and places active participation and political engagement (e.g., social movements that exert pressure on existing social structures) at the core of food democracy. Similarly, Petetin maintains that food democracy is about empowering people to influence food systems, leading towards "a more sustainable and just society where the public can actively participate in the decision-making process for foods" (Petetin, 2016, p. 1).

While recognizing the importance of participation, in this study we adopt a broader definition of food democracy. We draw on Fraser's (2009) work on democracy and justice to differentiate between: (1) the procedural dimension of food democracy, i.e., participatory processes leading to the creation of spaces for debate, negotiation and protest; and (2) the substantive dimension of food democracy, i.e., the outcomes and impacts of specific modes of agricultural production.

With regard to the procedural dimension, we agree with Barber (1984/2003) that direct participation is imperative for a 'strong democracy' that goes beyond mere representation (cf. Behringer & Feindt, 2019). Participation may take various forms: from taking part in institutionalized negotiation processes to resistance and civil disobedience. It may also take place on different levels, giving rise to social change through top-down development of policies and associated legislation, or through bottom-up engagement in grassroots activities, including boycotts and protests. Participation is structured by other social relations that determine access to resources or influence the emergence of social inequalities, including class and gender (Fraser, 2009). This emphasis on participation encompasses important aspects of the food sovereignty debate (Carlson & Chapell, 2015). As a "social movement" (Petetin, 2016, p. 1) and "a set of demands from below" (Lang, 1999, p. 218), the political movement for food sovereignty emerged out of struggles to counter neoliberal trade, distribution, land-use and resource regimes that are asymmetrical and limit or exclude large groups of people from participation in shaping the future of food systems (McMichael, 2014). The availability of spaces for public debate and negotiation, for protest and resistance, also constitutes an important condition for food democracy. Demands for both food democracy and food sovereignty go beyond 'voting with your fork,' recognising that achieving sustainable agricultural systems will require structural changes in power relations, decision-making, and in "*how* we do democracy" (Carlson & Chapell, 2015, p. 7, emphasis in original).

At the same time, we maintain that substantive outcomes of the food system are equally important for food democracy. One important substantive outcome identified in debates surrounding food sovereignty and democracy is sustainability (Hassanein, 2003, p. 78; Loos et al., 2014; Petetin, 2016, p. 2; Wittman, 2011). Here, we highlight care and justice as essential elements of sustainability (Gottschlich & Bellina, 2016). Specifically, our understanding of sustainability is based on the concept of a care-centred economy that includes caring not only for people but also for "more than human worlds" (Gottschlich & Katz, 2018, p. 84; see also Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). To maintain and sustain the '(re)productivity of society and nature' (Biesecker & Hofmeister, 2010), caring practices should be placed at the core of democracy (Tronto, 2013). From this standpoint, food democracy includes caring agricultural politics and practices, such as those that ensure soil

(re)productivity and the wellbeing of animals. This is in stark contrast to the dominant corporate-driven agrifood system, characterized by injustice and externalization of the negative ecological and social effects of industrialized, high-input agriculture (e.g., deforestation, pollution, and health risks of pesticides). In this sense, Lang (1999, p. 217) and Petetin (2016, p. 1) distinguish between 'food democracy' and the current system of 'food control.'

A caring food democracy that seeks to overcome externalization has to be oriented towards intra- and intergenerational justice and achieving equal opportunities and dignified living conditions for all. This includes fair labour standards, protecting the health of producers and consumers, and addressing the inequitable distribution of negative social and environmental effects along the lines of class, gender, geography, or towards future generations (Ahlem & Hammas, 2017; Brand & Wissen, 2017; Mcintyre, Herren, Wakhungu, & Watson, 2009). As a corollary of care and justice, the precautionary principle—incorporated in 1971 into the first environmental program of the German Federal Government (1971, p. 7)—is also essential to the substantive dimension of food democracy, in order to leave room for manoeuvre in decision-making for future generations. This goes against the dominant principles and practices of the present-day food system that tend to favour technological innovation, even to the extent of calling the precautionary principle into question (von Gleich & Petschow, 2017).

In this article, our analysis of the interplay of procedural and substantive dimensions of food democracy is informed by a critical-emancipatory understanding of sustainability (Gottschlich, 2017a) which emphasizes the importance of care, justice and the precautionary principle. The question of what constitutes justice and care is always controversial. Therefore, we consider conflicts— i.e., the public expression of contradictory ideas, interests, needs and practices—as central and productive elements of food democracy (and of democratic society–nature relations in general) because they drive change and transformation (for another conceptual understanding of food democracy that embraces conflict and contestation as one dimension of food democracy, see also Bornemann and Weiland, 2019). We argue that conflict-driven forms of politics play a vital role in the creation of food democracy from a critical-emancipatory perspective (Gottschlich & Hackfort, 2016; see also Lang, 1999, p. 217). A critical-emancipatory approach to sustainability calls certainties into question (Gottschlich & Mölders, 2017, p. 37). In conflicts over the future of agriculture, it is precisely such purported certainties (e.g., the positive effects of the industrialization of agriculture) that break down. These (and other) conflicts can be analysed taking different aspects into account, such as the focus of conflict, the actors involved, the type of conflict action, the conflict settlement, and the effects of the conflict (Bornemann & Saretzki, 2018). As explained above, we consider it useful, in analysing conflicts like those

over food democracy, to distinguish the substantive dimension from the procedural one. In our analysis, we consider the question of participation and the actors involved (e.g., movements), the settlement of conflicts by specific policies (e.g., coexistence policy) as well as the material and discursive effects of conflicts (e.g., the introduction of GMOs into ecosystems and the promotion of new kinds of agriculture and their different underlying views of nature).

3. Empirical Case Study

3.1. GMO Policy in Germany and Poland

At first sight, our research question seems to be of limited relevance to Europe, where the use of GMOs is relatively restricted compared to countries such as the United States, Brazil or Argentina. EU policy on GMOs envisages the coexistence, within Europe, of agricultural and food systems with and without GMOs. To date only two genetically modified (GM) crops have been cultivated commercially in Europe: MON810, a GM maize variety (currently cultivated primarily in Spain); and Amflora, a GM potato, which was cultivated commercially in a number of European countries between 2010 and 2011 (International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications, 2017). Apart from these commercial varieties, other GMOs have been released experimentally in Europe since the 1990s. European regulations also allow the import of animal feed containing GMOs. The EU's 'coexistence policy,' first set out in Directive 2001/18/EC on the deliberate release into the environment of genetically modified organisms (European Parliament & Council of the EU, 2001), frames national-level GMO policy in both Germany and Poland. However, there are a number of differences between GMO policies in the two countries. In Germany, where the cultivation of GMOs is regulated by the Genetic Engineering Act (GenTG), MON810 was cultivated commercially between 2005 and 2008 (before being banned in April 2009), and Amflora in 2010 and 2011, in both cases accompanied by protests and conflicts in the localities where they were grown.

In Poland, the release of GMOs for commercial purposes and the marketing of genetically modified feed have both been prohibited (by the Seed Act and the Feed Act, respectively) since 2006. However, although the 2006 Polish Seed Act prohibited the inclusion of GM varieties in the Polish national seed registry and the marketing of such varieties, cultivation for farmers' own needs (e.g., to feed their own animals) and issues relating to the declaration of such cultivation were not covered by the legislation. These legal loopholes allowed farmers to acquire MON810 maize in neighbouring countries and cultivate it in their fields, particularly in southern Poland (Sulmowski, 2017, p. 212). In 2008, the Polish Supreme Chamber of Control ruled that regulations did not yet provide sufficient protection against the uncon-

trolled spread of GMOs. However, this ruling did not immediately bring an end to the 'unofficial' cultivation of GM maize.

In both Germany and Poland, no GMOs have been cultivated (officially) in recent years, with the exception of some research-related experiments. Due to the intense conflicts they provoked, experimental releases of GMOs have also been suspended in Germany since 2014. One important pro-GMO player, the chemical company BASF, justified its withdrawal from the genetic engineering business in Germany in 2012 with reference to the lack of acceptance of the technology among the majority of consumers, farmers and politicians. In 2015, Germany and Poland opted out of future cultivation of MON810, taking advantage of a recent amendment to EU legislation (European Parliament & Council of the EU, 2015) that makes it possible for member states to ban single GMO varieties, either because of their impacts on ecosystems, or in response to political conflicts. This possibility of *opting out* could be an option to strengthen food democracy (see Table 1). The decision by the European Court of Justice of 25 July 2018 to consider organisms produced by new breeding techniques (such as Genome Editing) as GMOs in the sense of the Release Directive 2001/18/EC (European Parliament & Council the EU, 2001) represents a further success for the anti-GMO movement, which had fought for such a classification. However, in the future, both Germany and Poland could conceivably approve other GMOs or new breeding techniques for cultivation, in response to sustained lobbying by powerful interest groups, as well as a resurgence of calls by politicians and economists for existing regulations to be watered down. Thus, the use and handling of GMOs remains controversial.

3.2. Methods

We chose to study movements against GMOs in Germany and Poland as exemplars of West and East European countries. In this article, we discuss the extent to which the movements in the two countries have been successful in creating pathways for participation in the food system and towards the creation of alternatives. When we refer to conflicts surrounding GMOs, the different circumstances in the two countries should be kept in mind. However, our intention is not to draw comparisons between Germany and Poland, but rather to use data and results from these two different countries to develop a more comprehensive notion of food democracy. Our analysis draws on the work of the social-ecological research group "PoNa" ('Shaping Nature,' funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research in the funding priority social-ecological research), which studied the relationship between nature and politics and how understandings of nature and politics are manifested in conflicts, including those over GMOs (Gottschlich & Mölders, 2017). The empirical data consists of: (1) 14 qualitative interviews (Interviews 1–14)

with opponents of GMOs (ten from Germany and four from Poland) involved in local, national or transnational conflicts; (2) transcripts of discussions in two focus groups with anti-GMO activists, including scientists and members of environmental non-governmental organisations and agricultural associations from Germany and Poland; (3) documents from both countries, such as transcripts of parliamentary debates and government regulations (laws, directives, etc.) published in the period 2004–2012; and (4) results of our iconographic analysis of flyers, posters and book covers shown in 2012 on the websites of the parties involved in the GMO debate (Gottschlich & Sulmowski, 2017). This empirical data is supplemented by a review of relevant literature.

In our analysis, we combine a deductive with an inductive methodology. On the one hand, we apply our theoretical understanding of food democracy presented above to analyse anti-GMO movements in the two countries. On the other, we use the results of this analysis to develop and deepen our understanding of food democracy as manifested in conflicts surrounding GMOs.

3.3. Movements against GMOs—Insights from Germany and Poland

In the following section, GMO conflicts are considered as cases to address our research question regarding how conflicts over GMOs contribute to a democratization of society–nature relations.

Although protests against GMOs took place prior to the year 2000, social movements against them have grown significantly in Germany and Poland since the turn of the millennium. At the end of the 1990s, there were still few signs of public opposition to developments in the field of genetic engineering and researchers asked why politicization was not taking place (e.g., Hoffmann, 1997). One barrier to the growth of an anti-GMO movement was that GMO crops were still not being cultivated in Europe, so critiques remained on a conceptual level (Hoffmann, 1997). With the introduction of the coexistence policy in 2001 (analysed in detail below) and the abolition of the EU moratorium on the approval of GMOs in February 2004 (permitting GMO cultivation from 2005 onward), various processes were simultaneously set in motion. First, the focus of conflicts shifted to the level of decisions by individual farmers on whether to cultivate GMOs (cf. Friedrich, 2017; Vogt, 2007). Second, this meant that the debate regarding cultivation shifted to rural areas (cf. Friedrich, 2017; Vogt, 2007). Third, local conflicts that broke out in rural areas gave rise to national and transnational movements against the use and release of GMOs in agriculture (Seifert, 2013). Fourth, these movements criticized the narrow focus on individual decisions and economic impacts and succeeded in placing the issue of food production on the political agenda (Gottschlich, 2017b).

A key target of anti-GMO protests is the EU's policy of 'coexistence,' which allows the cultivation of GM

crops, while envisioning that certain agricultural areas will remain 'GMO free.' This policy, introduced by the EU in 2001, thus attempts to skirt around the controversial question "GMOs—yes or no?" by answering "yes" and "no" at the same time. A notable effect of this policy has been to reduce the conflict over GMOs to the level of economic interests. The only impact of GMO use taken into consideration is the possible contamination of non-GM crops on neighbouring farms and consequent economic losses (since crops grown on these farms can no longer be marketed as GM-free). The policy stipulates that GMO growers should compensate for these economic losses in accordance with the polluter pays principle. The exclusive focus on economic issues is explicit in the legislation. For example, apart from legislation in a few German federal states covering distances between GM crops and nature reserves, liability and distance rules intended to mitigate impacts on 'GMO-free areas' apply only to areas used for the commercial cultivation of food. One interviewee whose private garden was affected by a registered area of genetically modified maize in a neighbouring field (Interview 2), described how he had asked the Federal Office of Consumer Protection to require the farmer to increase the distance between the GM maize and the maize in the garden, in accordance with the provisions of the GenTG. However, the application was rejected on the grounds that the Act only applied to commercial use; since maize in the garden was not grown commercially, it was not protected under the law (Interview 2). Opponents of GMOs fear that, given the systemic nature of the risks associated with the technology, 'coexistence' will make GMO-free agriculture impossible in the long term (Bethwell, Weith, & Müller, 2012,

p. 238; Stoppe-Ramadan & Winter, 2010, p. 121; Winter & Stoppe-Ramadan, 2012, p. 196). While some scientists hold that the distribution of pollen beyond directly adjacent property can be controlled, the effort required to achieve this through changes in agricultural practice and coordination among neighbours is very high. Moreover, such efforts are not always successful (Schimpf, 2008) and, even in cases where cross-pollination may seem unlikely on a theoretical level, the risk of the uncontrollable spread of transgenes is not manageable (Clark, 2004, p. 104).

The movement against GMOs has helped bring about political changes at a local, national and European level. Protesters have transformed public debate by carrying out a wide range of actions (see Table 1) that put pressure on political representatives and economic actors. The anti-GMO actors involved also participate in international groups that attempt to influence European and global political processes (Ansell, Maxwell, & Sicurelli, 2006; Seifert, 2013, 2017).

An analysis of the actions and approaches of the anti-GMO movement in Germany and Poland reveals that the anti-GMO movement uses criticism and direct action to resist the introduction of GMOs. At the same time, it engages in positive action to develop countervailing power structures that promote food democracy (see Section 4). These two forms of action are complementary; both contribute towards achieving the movement's overall goal of GM-free food production (see Table 1).

The systematization in Table 1 highlights the diversity of forms of both resistance and positive action within the anti-GMO movement. It also distinguishes among different 'levels' of action. These can be viewed as represent-

Table 1. Forms of resistance and positive action adopted by the anti-GMO movement.

Level of escalation	Resistance	Positive action
1st Level	**Protest as radical criticism** e.g., flyers, information material, protest bike rides, telephone calls, tractor demonstrations, street protests, petitions, balloon and postcard campaigns, identification of 'crime scenes' (unregistered GMO fields in Poland), critiques exposing the economic bias in the coexistence principle	**Identification of alternatives** e.g., alternative tillage methods and crop rotation, campaigns for diversity in seed supply
2nd Level	**Institutional non-cooperation** e.g., refusal to participate in round tables (justified with reference to the precautionary principle as set out in Art. 20a of the German constitution)	**Institutional innovation** e.g., development of alternative information systems, such as the journal *Unabhängige Bauernstimme* (Independent Farmers' Voice) and the *Informationsdienst Gentechnik* (Genetic Engineering Information Service)
3d Level	**Civil disobedience** e.g., open disregard for laws, for example destruction of GMO crops in fields	**Civil usurpation** e.g., occupation of fields and pre-emptive sowing ('Gegensaat') of organic seeds, new alliances as a countervailing force for a 'bottom-up' agricultural policy

Source: Modified according to Gottschlich (2017b), in line with Ebert (1983).

ing an 'escalation' of the conflict, in the sense that they are expressions of the increasing scope and ambition of anti-GMO protests.

At the first level of conflict, resistance takes the form of creative protests against GMO cultivation. Opposition to GMOs is expressed through the distribution of flyers, stickers and postcards and in various types of demonstrations. Many of these actions target those involved in the cultivation of GMOs, and are often organized by those directly affected, including farmers, gardeners, and beekeepers. One farmer reported that sometimes a phone call from another colleague was enough to dissuade a farmer who had registered an area for the cultivation of GMOs from actually doing so (Interview 3). In some cases, public protest in the form of bicycle tours from field to field prompted individual farmers to rethink their approach (Interview 4). In 2009 high-profile demonstrations carried out by anti-GMO activists in Poland on behalf of Greenpeace (Interview 11) identified 'GMO crime scenes' (i.e., the unofficial, unregistered GMO fields mentioned in Section 2). While the immediate aim of these actions is to dissuade farmers from cultivating GMOs, they also attempt to highlight the importance of GMOs as an issue of public concern. In this sense, activists call for a rejection of the principle of coexistence that, by enabling both the cultivation of GM crops and GM-free agriculture, devolves decision-making on GMOs to individual farmers. At this level, positive action by the anti-GMO movement focuses on promoting alternatives. Examples from our study include proposals for alternative farming methods and for diversity in seed supply.

At the second level, positive action focuses on creating alternative institutions such as information systems, newsletters or journals, while resistance is characterized by institutional non-cooperation. For example, in 2009, in response to increasing conflict, which had led to cultivation of MON810 being banned that year, the German ministries of agriculture and education launched a joint Round Table on Plant Genetics. The Round Table met a total of four times. However, most of its members were representatives of organizations in favour of GMOs. The chairman of the Federal Ecological Food Industry (Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft [BÖLW]) commented: "This round table is…an extremely one-sided event" (quoted in Schmid, 2010, authors' translation). At the third meeting in June 2010, all participating environmental NGOs (Deutscher Naturschutzring [DNR], BÖLW, Naturschutzbund Deutschland e.V. [NABU], Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland [BUND], and Greenpeace) announced their decision to withdraw from the round table. They justified their decision by stating that the answers received from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF, 2010) to their "Nine-Point Catalogue for Ecological Safety Research," submitted before the previous meeting, were unacceptable in both content and form. The NGOs had substantiated their demands in this "catalogue" with scholarly citations, while the BMBF's reply contained claims that were

not supported by a single scholarly source (DNR, NABU, BÖLW, & Vereinigung deutscher Wissenschaftler, 2010, p. 1). The NGOs also responded publicly to the BMBF's assertion that it is "not the task of the state to evaluate the usefulness or desirability of non-hazardous social action, such as research into and use of green genetic technology" (BMBF, 2010, p. 8). The NGOs countered that, according to Article 20a of the German constitution (Federal Republic of Germany, 2019), it is indeed the task of the state to protect the general public against unjustifiable risks and dangers. The precautionary principle and the orientation towards sustainability are laid down in law and should be complied with.

At the third level of escalation in the conflict, civil disobedience in the form of what protesters referred to as "field liberations" (which took place in Germany but not in Poland) is combined with "civil usurpation," i.e., measures to actively promote and implement new forms of agricultural production by sowing organic seeds. At the same time, new alliances provide the impetus for setting up counter-structures for the formulation and implementation of an alternative vision for agriculture. These include alliances that bring together producers and consumers, organic and conventional farmers, and a range of other actors and associations (farmers' associations, nature and consumer protection organisations, political parties and churches). These alliances have the potential to build bridges across long-established political divides. For example, one activist from Poland (Interview 11) reported that she was surprised to see who had supported the protest against the use of GMOs and described how the development of mutual understanding helped open up new possibilities and overcome old prejudices. In her opinion, the campaigns had the potential to contribute to the further development of Polish civil society by overcoming the silence of the media on important issues such as GMOs and bringing citizens and politicians into contact. *GMO to nie to*, the relatively young alliance against GMOs in Poland, called on people to contact their local MPs. The activist commented that, for many people, this was their first direct contact with politicians and their first opportunity to remind them that it was their job to represent the interests of the Polish people (Interview 11).

4. Discussion

How do the empirical findings reported in the previous section contribute to an understanding of how conflicts over GMOs can contribute to democratizing society–nature relations and therefore enable and deepen food democracy? We first discuss some negative effects of the policy of coexistence and then highlight different aspects of the democratizing role played by the movements against GMOs.

The current policy of 'coexistence,' which on the surface appears to be a means of avoiding conflict, has in fact exacerbated conflict, while at the same time creating obstacles to the development of food democracy.

In the short-term, coexistence policy exacerbates asymmetries between industrialized agriculture and alternative agricultural practices, especially in the regions where GMOs are grown (Binimelis, 2008). The use of GMOs in agriculture could be especially detrimental to organic farming, which is expected to be free of GMOs. Contamination with transgenes would mean that products could no longer be labelled as organic and could only be sold at lower prices. This would not only cause economic losses to individual farmers, but also loss of consumer confidence in organic labels. Similarly, for beekeepers, the presence of traces of GMOs in their honey would imply a huge economic loss. In reality, 'coexistence' only guarantees the freedom of choice for GMO-based agriculture, while impeding development of other, more sustainable types of agriculture, such as organic farming.

In the long run it is not possible to avoid contamination in an open system and, once GMOs have been introduced into an agricultural system, it is questionable whether any part of that system can remain truly GMO-free. Given that there is already empirical evidence for the spread of transgenes beyond the areas and regions in which GM crops are cultivated, coexistence cannot be considered a long-term option (Altieri, 2005; Winter, 2009). The disappearance of GMO-free agriculture will favour the prevailing model of industrialized agriculture (cf. Binimelis, Monterroso, & Vilella, 2010, p. 90), consolidating the processes of market concentration and monopolization (cf. Howard, 2009), as exemplified by the merger between Monsanto and Bayer in 2018.

Thus, by granting farmers individual freedom of choice to decide whether to cultivate GM crops, the policy externalizes the negative effects of GM-based agriculture and denies citizens the freedom to democratically decide on the future of food systems. For example, according to the German federal government, in order to achieve certain sustainability goals, the share of organic agriculture should increase to at least 20% by 2050 (German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, 2019). Clearly in a democratized food system the role of organic agriculture (and other alternatives to industrialized agriculture) should be the subject of public debate. Coexistence policy, if widely applied, would unilaterally cut off these alternative avenues towards sustainable food production, and is thus contrary to the principles of both procedural and substantive food democracy.

While potentially making GMO-free agriculture impossible, coexistence policy is designed not only to shut down debate around the key question if GMOs should be used at all, but also to prevent public examination of the societal and socio-ecological impacts of GMO cultivation. Assessment of risks, narrowly defined as technological risks, is carried out by experts, away from the public gaze. This reflects a technocratic interpretation of the precautionary principle, in which non-technical and normative aspects are considered irrelevant to risk assessment. This technocratic approach favours the bureaucra-

tization of coexistence policy in a way that excludes participatory democracy. It denies a voice to the broad majority of consumers who are against the use of GMOs in food production (Growth from Knowledge, 2018).

Regarding the social effects of GMO policy, in some cases the introduction of GMOs led to fruitful processes of politicization, for example in the form of discussions regarding the future of agriculture in the regions where GMOs were grown. More often, however, the implementation of coexistence policy led to the personalization of controversies over economic problems and ecological risks associated with the introduction of GMOs. These controversies were difficult to mediate as political and personal aspects were interwoven (Friedrich, 2017). Coexistence has not given rise to conflict in the sense of broad democratic discussion processes but rather to an individualization and economization of the problem, at the same time as discouraging public debate on wider issues relating to the future of food systems.

Our findings further suggest that top-down participatory procedures like the round tables described above are insufficient, in themselves, for enabling progress towards food democracy. In this case, it appears that the terms of reference for the round tables were designed to exclude in-depth debate and maintain the status quo. Whether or not this was the intention, the views of the members of the round table regarding the topic under discussion, and their expectations regarding the use of participatory procedures to reach agreement, were so different that there could be no consensus.

In contrast to these negative impacts of coexistence policy, our findings indicate that the anti-GMO movements play a democratizing role. As shown in Section 3.3, there are several starting points leading to the development of a range of emancipatory political concepts and practices of resistance, embodying alternatives to procedural and substantive dimensions of the status quo.

The anti-GMO movement challenges the fundamental presupposition of coexistence policy that GMO cultivation is a matter of individual choice. Protests 'in the field' assert the right of neighbours, communities and wider society to have a say in whether or not GM crops are planted in a particular location. Protests against GMOs are combined with promotion of alternative agricultural technologies. By presenting a positive vision for an alternative agriculture future, protesters highlight the fundamental flaw of the coexistence policy: that the 'compromise' it offers is illusory, since it cannot in fact guarantee the continued existence of non-GMO agriculture. Protesters argue that debates about the future of agriculture should not be foreclosed by the use of these risky technologies. Thus, it becomes clear that, with regard to its substantive dimension, food democracy depends on adoption of the precautionary principle as a paradigm for agricultural (and other environmental) policy.

The movement refuses to be co-opted by top-down processes designed to maintain the status quo. It re-

sponds by setting up alternative, transformative processes that aim to broaden participation and to encourage a politicization of the debate. Activists of the anti-GMO movement combine individual-level, consumer-oriented approaches (e.g., boycotts) with demands for a policy environment that guarantees the continued existence of GMO-free agriculture and availability of GMO-free food. This approach recognizes that consumers are key actors in food production systems but insists that consumer responsibility cannot and should not replace state regulation as a guardian of sustainability. Dual strategies such as these are a central characteristic of the movement: Anti-GMO activists combine their critique of current policies with both demands for greater say in decision-making and a vision for an alternative agricultural future. In these actions, the procedural and substantive dimensions of food democracy are intertwined.

Anti-GMO movements challenge the technocratic interpretation of the precautionary principle. This is a key contribution since precaution is a central element of a care-centred understanding of sustainability. From this perspective, precaution encompasses more than risk assessment. In particular, its orientation towards intergenerational justice requires that regulatory frameworks should leave choices open to future generations, even if this means forgoing the use of a technology that offers short-term benefits or that offers benefits only to a segment of the population.

The anti-GMO movement builds alliances for the discussion and implementation of alternative futures for agriculture and food systems. In Germany, non-commercial actors whose interests are ignored by the GenTG organized protests such as demonstrations and even acts of civil disobedience. All these actions contributed to the procedural dimension of food democracy by opening up political spaces for negotiation regarding the (socially desirable) future of nature and agriculture. Although the cultivation of GMOs has not been a concern for a while, the movement has continued to advocate for broad participation of both producers and consumers in determining the future of food systems, for example through large demonstrations organized by the alliance "Meine Landwirtschaft/Wir haben Agrarindustrie satt" (My agriculture/we're fed up with agro-industry) in Berlin since 2011.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

This study has analysed some of the conflicts surrounding the use of GMOs and how the movements against GMOs in Germany and Poland contribute to a democratization of society-nature relations. The results show that the EU's policy of coexistence has not only failed in its attempt to end the conflict over the use of GMOs, but has also provoked new conflicts, leading to an entrenchment of opposing views rather than a constructive debate on agricultural futures. At the same time, the movements against GMOs have opened up a space of negotiation and struggle about agricultural futures, including not only alternative ideas, but also practices.

Pro-GMO policies are not anti-democratic and anti-GMO policies are not pro-democratic per se. However, our research suggests that pro-GMO policies are incompatible with both the substantive and procedural dimensions of food democracy. Any use of GMOs in agriculture appears to be in contradiction to the concept of care and the precautionary principle, which are central components of the substantive dimension of food democracy. Consideration of the potential interests of future generations and the need to leave options open for different modes of agricultural production, including organic agriculture, precludes the use of technologies such as GMOs that may change both ecosystems and socio-economic systems irreversibly.

Conversely, anti-GMO movements contribute to democratizing society–nature relations by challenging the individualization of conflict and the externalization of social and environmental impacts that are the result of giving individual farmers the "freedom to choose" whether to use GMOs. These movements play a democratizing role in GMO conflicts and, to the extent that they are successful, also contribute to the substantive dimension food democracy. This is illustrated by three positive outcomes of anti-GMO protests (described above in Section 3.1): (1) The new EU policy which gives individual member states the possibility of *opting out* of GMO cultivation is, at least in part, a recognition of the multifaceted nature of opposition to GMOs—it acknowledges the need for policy makers to listen to the voices arguing that policy should take into account long-term socio-ecological interests (and not only short-term economic ones); (2) BASF's withdrawal from the genetic engineering business in Germany is evidence of the potential of public opposition to alter the trajectory of agricultural development; and (3) the decision that new breeding techniques such as genome editing should be covered by the same legislation as GMOs in the EU corresponds to a key demand of anti-GMO activists.

Concerning the concept of food democracy that we have introduced above, it becomes clear that although the procedural and substantive dimensions of conflicts around food democracy can be separated analytically, in practice they are intertwined. This is because participatory procedures are not neutral. Powerful interests promote top-down forms of participation because the latter provide a better chance of keeping control of the process and determining its outcomes. Conversely, those opposed to the status quo struggle to gain recognition for bottom-up forms of participation that, by their very nature, challenge vested interests.

Food democracy should both fulfil the needs of people and sustain nature. Achieving this requires decisions about how societies organize their agricultural production to ensure adherence to the principles of care and justice, in both process and outcomes. From this perspective, conflicts over GMOs are about much more than the

use of a specific technology. The substantive dimension of food democracy is broader and more complex than the question: GMOs, yes or no? Other substantive issues need to be considered, especially in relation to the compatibility of agricultural (and associated) practices with the principle of care towards all those involved in the production and consumption of food (e.g., labour standards or the health of producers and consumers). Moreover, food democracy should guarantee the (re)productivity of society and agriculture in the future, thus taking inter- as well as intragenerational justice into account. There is no single type of agriculture that does this, but a range of alternatives are emerging from a broad movement that encompasses many forms of small-scale farming practices, united by their commitment to food sovereignty (such as community urban gardening and other agro-ecological forms of food production).

The movement against GMOs has helped to initiate a wider debate regarding the role that technological innovation can play in achieving a democratic and sustainable food production. Developments in new breeding techniques highlight the continuing relevance—and increasing complexity—of these issues. In particular, new breeding techniques once again raise the question of whether coexistence is a viable model for the future. At present it is difficult to monitor the spread of genetic changes introduced by new breeding techniques. This raises a new question: Is it even possible to regulate the conflict on an economic level through a polluter pays principle, as the policy of coexistence proposes, if the source and even the occurrence of pollution are difficult to verify? Here again, the movements against GMOs are helping to politicize the debate by broadening it out into a wider discussion about food democracy and the future of agriculture. At the same time such debates have given rise to new coalitions that are different from those in previous conflicts about GMOs. For example, sections of the German Green Party, that previously opposed GMOs, are now ambivalent about the use of new breeding techniques. Both opponents and proponents of new breeding techniques justify their positions with reference to sustainability. This serves as a reminder that sustainability itself cannot be defined in technical terms, but is always an aspiration and an ongoing effort, obliged to adapt to ever-changing circumstances. It highlights the importance of a critical-emancipatory understanding of sustainability in providing an analytical and normative framework for food democracy; one that incorporates practices of resistance, continuous public debate and broad participation in decision-making and is guided by the principles of care, precaution, and intra- and intergenerational justice.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

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Article

Land Investments, Food Systems Change and Democracy in Kenya and Mozambique

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Abstract

In Africa, food systems intersect with dynamics such as demographic growth, urbanisation, and climate change, as African food systems are key drivers of livelihood provision, development, and human-environment interactions. The governance of African food systems shapes how food systems are changing as a response to these dynamics, which will have important social, economic, and ecological impacts for generations of Africans. This article positions large land investments in food system changes in central Kenya and northern Mozambique based on a large-scale household survey and interviews, and uses these findings to debate the concept of food democracy. Large land investments contributed to more modern food systems, which impacted land availability, household's engagement in agriculture, and supply chains. These changes shifted power and control in local food systems. But even in the 'extreme' example of land investments, local perspectives challenge what could, and could not, be included in a democratic food system.

1. Introduction

In Africa, food systems intersect with challenges such as demographic growth, urbanisation, and climate change, as African food systems are key drivers of livelihood provision, development, and human-environment interactions. The governance of African food systems shapes how food systems are changing as a response to these challenges, which will have important social, economic, and ecological impacts for generations of Africans. Today, there are strong debates regarding different food governance approaches, each with varying degrees of inclusion and participation, that are likely to result in different food systems. Examples of such food governance debates include food sovereignty and food democracy.

Conventional food governance approaches implicitly contribute to shifts of Africa's 'traditional' food systems to more Western and 'modern' food systems. In traditional food systems, the population engaged in agriculture is high, food production is mostly small-scale and low on external inputs, food distribution is mostly through informal chains, and malnutrition is mostly undernourishment and undernutrition. In modern food systems, most food production is energy and input-intensive, and labour-extensive, while supermarkets have more market share, and overweight and obesity are widespread (Drewnowski & Popkin, 2009; High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition [HLPE], 2017). Shifting from traditional to modern food systems comes not only with wide-ranging economic, social, and ecological impacts, but also with changed power relations between food system actors.

An example of this conventional approach, and one of the most contentious topics in African food systems, is the phenomenon of Large Agricultural Investments (LAIs), popularised as 'land grabs.' The LAIs involve acquisitions of land rights, mostly in developing countries, which has caused debates concerning the advantages

and disadvantages for local communities. While considerable concern was raised concerning the LAI's impact on land, livelihoods, and environment, scant evidence exists on their effects on the structure of the local food systems and the control of local people (Di Matteo & Schoneveld, 2016; Li, 2011; Oberlack, Tejada, Messerli, Rist, & Giger, 2016). The LAIs phenomenon fits a modernistic development trajectory characterised by large-scale monoculture and internationally traded products, and can be a strong driver of local food system change (Borras & Franco, 2012). As LAIs are perceived to modernise the local food systems, they provide a unique opportunity to add empirical findings to discuss the conventional approach to food system change. Furthermore, these empirical findings can be used to reflect on the food governance arrangements, such as food democracy, best suited to respond to dynamics such as demographic growth, urbanisation, and climate change.

In this regard, this article aims to position the concept of food democracy in food system changes in central Kenya and northern Mozambique through the case of LAIs. Based on the analysis of large-scale household surveys and interviews, the following research questions were answered: (1) To what extent, and how, were the food systems of households different, and does the difference relate to the presence of LAIs?; (2) What were the implications for food democracy of those changes? The overall goal was to provide evidence on the direct and indirect impacts of LAIs on food systems in central Kenya and northern Mozambique, and use food democracy to reflect on these changes. In turn, this reflection will show the limitations of food democracy.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 discusses food democracy, food systems change and land investments in Africa. Section 3 describes the conceptual framework, introduces the study areas, and clarifies the data collection procedures. Section 4 presents data of land investments' impact on the studied food systems in Kenya and Mozambique, and discusses the implications for food democracy. Section 5 concludes with recommendations for future research.

2. Food Democracy, Systems Change and Land Investments

2.1. Food Democracy and Systems Change

In the 1990s, Tim Lang coined the term 'food democracy' as a response to the perceived concentration of power and control in food systems by 'Big Food' corporations (Booth & Coveney, 2015), especially in the mid-stream (Reardon, 2015). Food democracy presents an alternative food governance framework centred on societies, communities, and citizens (Goodman, 2014; Hassanein, 2003). At its core, food democracy is:

The idea that people can and should be actively participating in shaping the food system, rather than

remaining passive spectators on the sidelines. In other words, food democracy is about citizens having the power to determine agro-food policies and practices locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. (Hassanein, 2003, p. 79)

Thus, food democracy is a process where people regain control and participate (Booth & Coveney, 2015), with a key role for local spaces (Perrett & Jackson, 2015).

Authors on food democracy identified drivers that led to the loss of control and participation and projected how a more democratic food system would look. Control and participation are declining due to increasing corporate control, limited information to consumers, the dominance of supermarkets, and convenient food products that replace traditional food (Hassanein, 2008). A democratic food system would resist big food corporations and ultra-processed foods, reject genetically modified organisms, produce through sustainable methods, and reconnect producers and consumers (Booth & Coveney, 2015; Hassanein, 2008; Lang, 2005; Levkoe, 2006). Examples of food democracy include community-supported agriculture and local food councils (Hassanein, 2003; Johnston, Biro, & MacKendrick, 2009).

Food democracy is not the only alternative food governance framework that emerged from the 1990s. Although overlapping, food democracy and food sovereignty differ in program and grassroots base. Unlike food democracy, food sovereignty has a program that is strongly focused on agrarian reform, which is partly adopted in legislation of countries such as Bolivia, Mali, and Nepal (Schiavoni, 2017). Food sovereignty has strong grassroots movements, and origins, in the developing world (Edelman, 2014), which results in more emphasis on 'traditional' food systems compared to food democracy. A pan-African food sovereignty alliance is supplemented by national food sovereignty movements, whereas food democracy lacks term recognition and a popular movement in Africa. Now, food sovereignty is challenged for its ambiguity and applicability in more pluralistic, complex, and less rural societies and food systems (Dekeyser, Korsten, & Fioramonti, 2018). The increased complexity of African food systems encourages more attention to food democracy for the analysis of power and control, as citizens' control and participation are more easier to enact than food sovereignty.

In Africa, societies and food systems are transforming towards increased pluralism and complexity. African societies are changing rapidly through demographic changes, economic growth, and climate change (Christiaensen, 2017). The 'traditional' food systems are under pressure from an inroad of supermarkets, land investments, and urbanisation (Gómez & Ricketts, 2013). These pressures result in many food system changes, including shifting malnutrition, more food purchases, and more land competition (HLPE, 2017; May, 2018). Generally, 'traditional' food systems are changing towards more 'modern' food systems (HLPE, 2017). Lang (2005) provides a spectrum

of the modern food system, where one side is 'food control,' with long-distance trade and large farms, and the other side is 'food democracy,' with local trade and small farms. The food control side has lower citizen's control and participation than the food democracy side, in part because of differences in large versus small farms, long-distance food versus local food, hypermarkets versus street markets, and dominance of sugar and fat-dense diets versus nutrient-diverse diets.

It is unlikely that the transition from traditional to modern is linear and uniform, and that citizens' control automatically decreases. For example, Abrahams (2009) found the growth of traditional food distribution alongside a developing modern distribution in Zambia, while policymakers included more farmers into their food distribution policies in Uganda. The aggregated statistics on food systems change rarely capture these competing dynamics (van der Ploeg, 2018). Thus, case studies can provide needed empirical validation on food systems change.

2.2. Land Investments

One of the most contentious topics of change, power and control in African food system is the LAI phenomenon, popularised through the term 'land grabs.' The term LAIs better capture the complexities of the current surge in agri-investments than land grabs (Hall, 2011). Within the wave of LAIs, land rights for more than 42.2 million ha worldwide were transferred between 2000 and 2016 (Nolte, Chamberlain, Giger, & Wilson, 2016), which is a much higher rate of land transfer than those in the past decades (Deininger, 2011). In this article, the LAIs are not only 'transfers of rights to use, control, or own land from smallholder households or communities to corporate actors...through sale, lease, or concession of areas larger than 200 ha' (Oberlack et al., 2016, p. 154), but also refer to the size of capital investment and labour employed (Zaehringer, Wambugu, Kiteme, & Eckert, 2018).

A transfer of ownership is rare; most of these land deals are leases with a duration that is up to 50 or 99 years (Cotula, 2013). Land investment in Africa is driven by the large amount of perceived available land and weak land rights (Deininger, 2011), increased demand and prices for food, energy systems transitions, biodiversity conservation, climate change responses, geopolitics and development strategies (Oberlack et al., 2016). In Africa, LAIs drive specific land-use change, which can shift food crops for self-consumption to cash crops, food crops to biofuels, or convert non-food lands such as forests to food production or biofuels (Borras & Franco, 2012). The LAIs are associated with business models that range from independent farmers, cooperatives, 1000-day speculative farming, asset management, contracting, and agribusiness models (Boche & Anseeuw, 2013). These business models are 'frequently associated with industrial agricultural production methods, dominated by transnational corporations producing for export' (Clapp, 2015, p. 307). The primary types of investor

worldwide and in Africa are private companies (45% of total area worldwide) and stock exchange-listed companies (32%; Nolte et al., 2016).

Within the LAIs debate, proponents argue the opportunities that LAIs can bring to local communities and rural development through a greater access to capital, technology, knowledge and markets, while LAIs projects can contribute to economic growth and national government revenue (Cotula, Vermeulen, Leonard, & Keeley, 2009; Deininger & Xia, 2016). However, whether the recipient countries have the capacity to manage these land deals is doubted (de Schutter, 2011). African land rights are often vague, and local communities might be excluded from the negotiations, which heightens the risk of conflicts between local communities and investors (Cotula et al., 2009). LAIs exacerbate existing tensions as they traverse formal, customary, ethnic and historical relationships within changing rural landscapes. For the local communities, who wins and who loses from LAIs is differentiated by class, gender, education, age, nationality, and religion. In short:

> While, in principle, investments in large production units or higher up in the agricultural value chain can have very positive effects on neighboring small farmers, systematic evidence of the size of such effects remains scant, limiting the scope for evidence-based policy-making. (Deininger & Xia, 2016, p. 228)

3. Framework, Material and Methods

3.1. Framework

This article aims to position the concept of food democracy in food system changes in central Kenya and northern Mozambique through the case of LAIs. The change of food systems by LAIs is approached through a case study design with a counterfactual group. The dynamic of LAIs is used as an 'extreme' case study that could transform local food systems towards more modernity. For this article, there was a focus on the food supply chains, food environments, and dietary shifts (Figure 1). The conceptual framework links LAIs with dietary changes through five hypothesised steps. First, the LAIs would decrease land availability (i.e., the stock of land that is available in a locality) and access (i.e., household's land access), and provide certain off-farm employment opportunities. Second, the decreased land availability and access, and time taken by off-farm employment, would decrease agri-engagement. Third, decreased agri-engagement and time taken by off-farm employment would result in more market dependence for a household's dietary needs. Fourth, in turn, more market integration would lead to more market development. Fifth, as the market would provide different food (e.g., more energy-dense products) than what a household would grow (e.g., more staple crops), the integration and development of markets would lead to dietary changes.
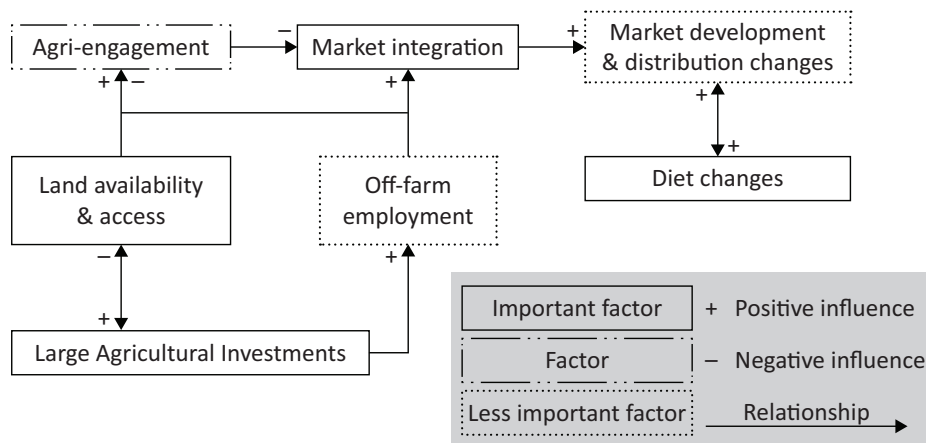
Figure 1. Conceptual framework illustrating hypothesised linkage of large agricultural investments and diet changes.

Food democracy is used to reflect on the changes depicted in Figure 1, which will feed into a discussion on the concept of food democracy. First, Lang's (2005) food democracy conceptualisation, which is characterised by small farms, local food, street markets, and lower prevalence of sugar and fat-dense foods, is used to discuss the shifts in power and control in food systems by LAIs. Thus, this part reflects on the changes in food democracy induced by LAIs through the prevalence of Lang's characteristics. Second, the assumption that increased citizen power and control will lead to a food system with Lang's characteristics is discussed. The outcome of this reflection examines food democracy as an outcome, exemplified by small farms, local food, street markets, and lower prevalence of sugar and fat-dense foods, and food democracy as a process, where increased citizen's power and control is not linked to a particular food system arrangement.

3.2. Study Areas

The study areas were situated around Nanyuki, central Kenya, and in the Gurué and Monapo Districts, northern Mozambique (Figure 2). First, the two countries were selected according to their different LAIs dynamics, such as land-extensive or land-intensive, as this is likely to generate different food system changes. Second, the regions and study areas within each country were selected according to their prevalence of LAIs.

Kenya has a long-standing tripartite relationship between state, agribusiness, and smallholders (Oya, 2012). The sector is dominated by small-scale farmers that provide 75% of all outputs, but the average plot is ever decreasing in size (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2018). Kenya's agricultural sector struggles with shifting weather patterns, population growth, changing demographics, and political instability (D'Alessandro, Caballero, Lichte, & Simpkin, 2015). While British colonial rule (1895–1963) and its grabbing of land created much landlessness, Kenyan political elites used land redistribution after independence to

mobilise communities and to grab land for themselves and their patronage. Land and ethnic linkages are still used for mobilisation (Médard, 2010). The population in Kenya is estimated to double in the next 27 years, pushing the agricultural frontier into more marginal areas and increasing tensions with pastoralists (FAO, 2017). In short, relatively high population densities squeezes land
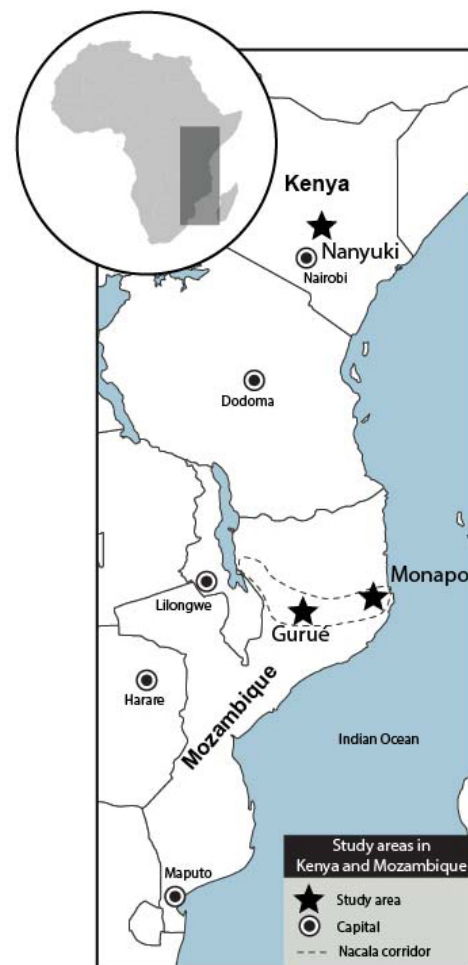
Figure 2. Location of the study areas in Kenya (Nanyuki) and Mozambique (Monapo and Gurué).

availability, which was already skewed by colonial history and post-colonial patronage. This results in farmers occupying small plots of land that perform under their productive potential and contribute to their poverty trap (Deininger, 2011; Ulrich, 2014).

Kenya's LAI potential is characterised as 'little land available, high yield gap' (Deininger, 2011). Generally, Kenyan elites sell former colonial farms to investors, which does not cause land dispossession, and are thus rarely recorded in international land monitoring initiatives (Klopp & Lumumba, 2014).

In Kenya, the 'factual' study area, which contains the LAIs, stretches from Tigithi along Mount Kenya to Timau, and includes the sub-locations Buuri, Tigithi, Kangaita, Nyaringinu, and Naibor. In this area, large farms are the major employers of the region (Ulrich, 2014). Sources of contention related to the large farms were the sharing of scarce water between small and large farmers, the wage of workers on large farms, and the impacts of the floriculture's extensive use of chemicals on the health of workers and surrounding communities (Lanari, Liniger, & Kiteme, 2016). The LAIs types in these areas include floriculture and horticulture. The counterfactual area was Barrier, which lies approximately 10 km from the nearest LAI and has similar demographics as the factual areas.

In Mozambique, about 75% of its 29 million people are involved in agriculture, mostly on small plots. In 2012, 99.8% of Mozambique's four million farms were between 0.1 and 10 ha, and small-scale farmers occupied 90% of cultivated land (Oya, 2012). As a result, small-scale farming is crucial for livelihood provision and food security. However, the average small farm shrank between 2002 and 2014 (Deininger & Xia, 2016). After public consultation, Mozambique adopted in 1997 one of the most progressive land laws in the world. While the state provides formal land rights, customary land rights have full legal equivalence. This provision protects land users in a country with a low degree of formalised title deeds (Cotula et al., 2009). However, practical registration of land rights and enforcement of the land laws are lacking (Tanner, 2010). The Mozambican elites benefit from this lack of implementation to facilitate land dispossession, either for their personal projects or to enable foreign investors to access land (Milgroom, 2015). Mozambique ranks as a top recipient country for LAIs (Nolte et al., 2016). The pull factors for land investments in Mozambique include

high yield gaps, low population density, and 'plentiful suitable' land (Deininger, 2011).

The first Mozambican study area was situated in the Gurué region, which is located in the Zambezia Province. The factual study area was Manlé town, which is about 15 km east from Gurué town. Manlé's adjoining tea plantations were established under colonial rule. With the 1990s civil war, the plantation declined, and small-scale farmers worked the unused land. Recently, the company expanded on their former lands and dispossessed the small-scale farmers. The counterfactual town of Muela was situated south of Gurué with no LAIs present within 20 km. Muela connected to the main road through a dirt path and had similar demographics as Manlé. The second Mozambican study area was situated in Monapo, which is part of the Nampula Province. The factual study area was Monapo town, which adjoins a former colonial sisal plantation. This plantation ceased activity between 1970 and the 1990s, and small-scale farmers cultivated on the idle land. In 2005, a new company bought the former plantation and expelled the small-scale farmers. The counterfactual site was Canacué town, to the south of Monapo town, which had similar demographics as Ramiane.

3.3. Data Collection

The data were collected between February 2016 and March 2017 through a livelihood and food security survey, which was approached differently in the two countries. In Kenya, stratified random sampling selected 488 heads of households, while in Mozambique random sampling selected 376 heads of households (Table 1). In the Kenyan study region, five sub-locations (Buuri, Tigithi, Kangaita, Nyaringinu, and Naibor) around a LAI were selected to represent the business types of LAIs in these areas. Within these areas, 318 households were randomly selected. Another sub-location, Barrier, was selected as a counterfactual area, and 170 households were randomly selected. For each household, a weight was attributed to each household proportionally to the total number of households of the sub-location. As a result, the analysis is representative of the whole studied region (Reys et al., 2018). When weighted, the Kenyan survey represented 6692 households. In Mozambique, two regions were chosen to capture different business models

Table 1. Characteristics of cases and the number of completed household surveys, by category.

	Case 1	**Case 2**	**Case 3**
Country	Kenya	Mozambique	Mozambique
Region	Nanyuki	Gurué	Monapo
Households per category (total)	(488)	(169)	(207)
Employed (E) [a]	48 [b,c]	37	60
Non-engaged (NE) [a]	270 [b,c]	22	29
Counterfactual (CF)	170 [b]	110	118

Notes: [a] LAI area; [b] Weigthed; [c] Aggregated. Source: Afgroland (2016, 2017).

and agro-ecological conditions. In both regions, a factual and counterfactual sub-location were chosen and households randomly selected (Reys, 2016). The households of the Gurué and Monapo regions were not weighted because of the agro-ecological heterogeneity of the different regions.

In both countries, the households within a LAI area were categorised as 'Employed' (E) if minimally one household member worked at a LAI and categorised as 'Non-engaged' (NE) when no-one was employed by a LAI. The households in the counterfactual areas were categorised as 'Counterfactual' (CF). In Kenya, the employed and non-engaged categories were aggregated across the sub-locations. In each country, enumerator teams consisted of trained nationals. The enumerators selected the household closest to each random point and invited the head of the household, or if absent the spouse, for an interview. If both the households' head and spouse were absent, the enumerators moved to the next closest household. This survey was complemented with interviews of actors in the distribution system, decision-makers, and civil society actors. The research design is between-groups analysis, which focuses on examining differences between groups.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. General Characteristics of the Households

In Kenya, the average household had 4.2 (± 2) members with a median age of 24 years, and 22.7% were female-headed. Most households (75.7%) migrated from a nearby area, 9.9% migrated from far away, and only 14% originated from the study area. More households in the LAI area were immigrants compared to the CF area. The main reason for migration was land (80.6%), followed by work (12.3%), and family (6.3%). In the LAI area, work was more important, and land less, for migration compared to the CF area. The main annual crops grown were maize, potato, wheat, and beans. In Mozambique, the average household had 4.7 (± 2) members with a median age of 15 years old, and 12.2% were female-headed. Most households originated from the area (55.9%), 14.9% migrated from nearby, and 29.3% migrated from far away. The family was the main reason for migration (64.7%), followed by work (25.7%), and family (7.4%). In both cases, migration to the LAI areas was more driven by work, and land less, compared to the CF areas. In Case 2, the LAI area had a similar proportion of migrants than the CF area, but in Case 3 the LAI area had more migrants. The main annual crops grown were manioc, maize, beans, and sorghum.

4.2. Food System Changes

The key households' statements and characteristics are presented by case and household's category in Table 2. Overall, the effects of LAI differed by country, case, and category. Notably, other pressures besides LAIs, such as economic development and demographic growth, were prevalent in the study areas. However, depending on the case, there were indications that LAIs impacted land access and availability, migration, agri-engagement, food distribution channels, and food environments. Generally, while traditional dynamics thrived, the households in the LAI areas were more part of a 'modern' food systems than CF areas.

The effects of LAIs on land differed according to the case's country. Between 96.6% and 100% of Kenyan and Mozambican households had access to land, and the total land size per household was generally higher in the CF areas compared to the LAI areas. In Kenya, LAIs had more impact on land access than availability, while in Mozambique, this was the opposite. In Kenya, no LAI caused direct land dispossession, but 48.1% of households in the factual area perceived the LAIs as negatively impacting land availability. In Mozambique, the LAIs dispossessed 26.6% of households in the factual areas of land. In both Mozambican cases, land dispossession was lower for those households that worked at the farms. In interviews, employees of the LAIs indicated an arrangement to continue farming on another part of the LAI's land, while non-employees were expelled. None of the dispossessed households received compensation. Interestingly, 69.4% of households in the factual areas did not perceive the LAIs as impacting land availability, which suggests that, while Mozambican LAIs evict small-scale farmers of the land, other stocks of land was available for farmers.

Overall, Kenya's CF area had less agri-engagement than the LAI area, which was the reverse in Mozambique. In Kenya, interviewees indicated that youth worked at LAIs to raise capital for their own farms. As a result, the CF area had fewer increases in agri-engagement because its youth lacked this opportunity for capital access. In Mozambique, agricultural disengagement was lower in CF areas (0.9% to 4.2%) than LAI areas (9.1% to 30%), possibly because of higher land dispossession and employment opportunities by the LAIs. In Kenya, animal ownership was high (89.5% to 94.1%) for all categories, while Mozambican ownership varied considerably by category, but was higher in Case 2 than Case 3. In Kenya and Mozambique, most of the annual produce grown was kept for self-consumption. However, diets were more sourced from food purchases, such as markets and shops, than self-production. None sold to supermarkets, although few households sold their crops to agribusinesses in Kenya (0% to 2.9%). In Kenya, most of the sales were to middlemen, with few households that sold directly to markets. The households with a LAI employee kept least of their produce and sold most, while the CF area produced more for the diets. In Mozambique, the CF areas sold more of their produce compared to the LAI areas. Overall, the markets, rather than the middlemen, were the most important channels of sale. The diets in the CF area were more derived from self-production than the

Table 2. Selected households' statements and characteristics regarding land, food production, food distribution, the food environment, and diets, by case and household's category. Values indicate the percentage of households unless indicated otherwise.

	Case 1 [a]			Case 2			Case 3		
	E	NE	CF	E	NE	CF	E	NE	CF
Land	(N = 956)	(N = 5056)	(N = 680)	(n = 37)	(n = 22)	(n = 100)	(n = 60)	(n = 29)	(n = 118)
HHs with land access	100	98.5	99.4	97.3	100	98.2	96.7	96.6	100
Total land size	(N = 956)	(N = 5056)	(N = 680)	(n = 37)	(n = 22)	(n = 100)	(n = 60)	(n = 29)	(n = 118)
Mean (ha)	0.8	1.1	1.6	1.9	2.4	2.4	1.7	1.9	2.4
SD	0.7	1.4	1.7	1.8	2.4	2.6	1.7	1.7	2.1
Land loss by LAIs	(N = 956)	(N = 5056)	(N = 680)	(n = 36)	(n = 22)	(n = 110)	(n = 60)	(n = 29)	(n = 118)
% of HHs	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.2	31.8	0.0	23.3	41.4	0.0
% of HHs reporting a perception	(N = 956)	(n = 5056)	(N = 680)	(n = 36)	(n = 22)	(n = 110)	(n = 60)	(n = 29)	(n = 118)
…that LAIs reduce available land	57.9	46.3	9.4	30.6	36.4	1.8	25.0	37.9	0.8
Food production									
Agri-engagement									
over ten years	(N = 956)	(N = 4996)	(N = 680)	(n = 36)	(n = 22)	(n = 110)	(n = 60)	(n = 29)	(n = 118)
More	10.4	4.7	7.1	0.0	9.1	3.6	5.0	3.4	1.7
Less	6.0	14.1	22.9	19.4	9.1	0.9	30.0	27.6	4.2
Animal ownership	(N = 956)	(N = 4996)	(N = 680)	(n = 37)	(n = 22)	(n = 110)	(n = 60)	(n = 29)	(n = 118)
	91.6	89.5	94.1	54.1	18.2	58.2	23.3	31.0	32.2
Food distribution									
Main sale channels for produce [b]	(n = 1419)	(n = 6885)	(n = 960)	(n = 115)	(n = 81)	(n = 397)	(n = 136)	(n = 65)	(n = 340)
Middlemen	43.6	31.6	33.4	1.1	0.0	5.9	7.0	0.0	10.7
No sale	43.3	61.0	51.5	81.1	86.2	56.8	51.2	82.2	42.8
Markets	4.6	1.9	3.3	9.5	10.3	25.2	21.7	13.3	32.4
Agribusiness	2.9	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	5.6	5.5	11.1	8.3	3.5	12.1	20.1	4.5	14.1
Channels to obtain food groups	(N = 956)	(N = 5014)	(N = 680)	(n = 37)	(n = 22)	(n = 110)	(n = 60)	(n = 29)	(n = 118)
Self-production	20.2	18.9	29.5	29.1	32.1	37.0	19.6	20.0	28.0
Markets	42.5	44.3	38.9	40.2	36.4	28.9	55.4	56.5	46.9
Shop	33.7	34.8	29.9	4.7	4.5	5.7	0.8	0.0	1.5
Other	3.6	2.0	1.8	26.0	27.0	28.4	24.2	23.5	23.6

Table 2. (Cont.) Selected households' statements and characteristics regarding land, food production, food distribution, the food environment, and diets, by case and household's category. Values indicate the percentage of households unless indicated otherwise.

	Case 1 [a]			Case 2			Case 3		
	E	NE	CF	E	NE	CF	E	NE	CF
Food environment									
Distance to agri-lands	(N = 956)	(N = 4949)	(N = 676)	(n = 34)	(n = 21)	(n = 108)	(n = 58)	(n = 28)	(n = 118)
With the house	96.9	95.5	95.3	55.9	57.1	63.0	65.5	57.1	64.4
< 30 min	0.0	1.7	3.6	26.5	9.5	17.6	8.6	14.3	5.1
> 1 hour	3.1	0.2	1.2	5.9	14.3	9.3	17.2	14.3	14.4
Distance to markets	(N = 956)	(N = 5037)	(N = 680)	(n = 36)	(n = 22)	(n = 110)	(n = 60)	(n = 29)	(n = 119)
< 30 min	34.7	17.7	15.9	24.3	22.7	0.9	60.0	62.1	71.2
> 1 hour	15.2	25.8	39.4	10.8	18.2	80.	15.0	17.2	11.9
FES [c]	(N = 956)	(N = 5056)	(N = 680)	(n = 35)	(n = 22)	(n = 110)	(n = 60)	(n = 29)	(n = 118)
Mean	43.0	42.1	39.5	73.8	85.1	85.0	80.0	82.2	85.9
SD	23.7	22.3	24.0	24.6	10.6	15.6	22.9	19.1	12.8
Share of self-production in FES									
Mean	24.1	23.5	35.9	56.3	63.5	69.1	43.7	51.1	58.7
SD	16.1	21.0	22.7	25.8	24.7	25.1	19.5	20.3	19.1
Diets									
Days per week consumption of	(N = 956)	(N = 5056)	(N = 680)	(n = 37)	(n = 22)	(n = 110)	(n = 60)	(n = 29)	(n = 118)
…Cereals	5.8	6.3	6.6	4.4	4.1	4.8	4.7	4.0	3.8
…Tubers	4.3	4.0	4.4	4.1	4.2	3.9	3.8	4.2	4.7
…Meat	1.0	0.9	0.7	1.0	1.2	0.7	0.8	0.5	0.9
…Oil and fat	7.0	7.0	6.8	3.3	3.4	3.0	5.1	4.4	4.4
…Sweets	6.0	5.8	5.6	1.9	1.6	1.2	2.4	2.3	1.5

Notes: CF (Counterfactual); NE (Non-engaged); E (Employed); HHs (Households); FES (Food Expenditure Share). [a] Weighted data. [b] Per plot of land. [c] The FES includes the approximate value of self-produced goods that the households consumed in the last 30 days. Source: Afgroland (2016, 2017).

LAI areas, which were more dependent on markets and shops. Case 2 relied less on the markets for their diets than Case 3.

The food environments, particularly the Food Expenditure Share (FES), differed between the cases. In Kenya, about 95% of the agricultural lands were positioned next to the house, which was maximum 65.5% in Mozambique. However, Mozambican households had access to more plots than Kenyan households, so dedicated agri-plots were more scattered. The combination of high self-production and close access to agri-lands created a locally-rooted food system configuration, namely producing most of the household diet on a plot near the homestead. In Kenya, the LAI area was closer to markets than the CF area. In Case 2, the CF area was more isolated from markets, as 80% of the CF area was > 1 hour away compared to 13.6% in the LAI areas. In Case 3, the CF was slightly closer to a market than the LAI area.

The share of food expenses in the household's budget—FES—was similar within the countries, which was between 39.5% to 43% in Kenya, and 73.8% to 85.9% in Mozambique. The high FES of Mozambique showcased the precarious situation of the households, with high vulnerability to either rising food prices, loss of harvest, or declining incomes. In all cases, the CF areas self-produced more of their food budget than the LAI areas. In Kenya, an average CF household produced 35.9% of their food budget, compared to 23.6% in the LAI area. In Case 2, 69.1% came from self-production in the CF area, compared to 59.1% in the LAI area. For Case 3, self-production contributed to 58.7% of the CF's area mean food budget and 46.1% of the LAIs. Some food groups were selected to compare diet composition, as particularly higher consumption of meat, oil, fat, and sweets, and lower consumption of cereals and tubers connects with more 'modern' diets (HLPE, 2017). The differences between food group consumption by case and category were minor. The CF areas consumed less oil, fat, and sweets than the LAI areas, but the magnitude of the differences was small. Overall, no categories differed more than one day of consumption per case.

4.3. Food Democracy between Process and Outcome

The impacts of LAIs on food systems change were complex, context-specific, and operated on a background of other social and economic changes. The analysis shows that the LAIs, depending on the case, impacted land access and availability, agri-engagement, food distribution channels, and food environments. This section has two aims: First, to reflect on the changes in food democracy by the prevalence of small farms, local food, street markets, and lower frequency of sugar and fat-dense foods; and second, to discuss if potentially increased local citizen's power and control would counteract these changes or embrace them. This reflection varies due to the heterogeneity of the cases, particularly between the two countries. The LAIs did 'modernise' the food sys-

tems in which they operated, although competing traditional elements, such as LAI employees that invested in small-scale farming, were as well prevalent. The competing traditional elements illustrate that the modernisation processes were not linear, but hybrid, and results in an unclear picture of how the trajectories of food systems would develop over time. Instead of a linear transition between traditional and modern food systems, a localised hybrid configuration forms with no defined outcome. Agri-policies often overlook the hybridity of food systems, exemplified by 'repeasantisation,' by relying on aggregated statistics (van der Ploeg, 2018).

First, because of historical land relations in the Kenyan study areas, LAIs did not directly dispossess households but decreased the amount of available land. The engagement of households in agriculture was stronger in the LAI areas than in the CF areas, which can be driven by a lack of opportunities to raise capital, which LAIs can provide. In the last years, several supermarkets opened in the Kenyan study area and more shops were present in the LAI areas. However, all categories obtained most of their diets through self-production and informal markets. These informal markets were a crucial livelihood strategy, as high land prices provided an obstacle to small-scale farming. The differences in energy-dense food consumption were small. Thus, the changes in Lang's food democratic characteristics were mostly related to land availability and the development of supermarkets. In opposition to Lang's conceptualisation, increased citizen's power and control are unlikely to lead to the removal of LAIs, as Zaehringer, Wambugu et al. (2018) found that most interviewed farmers in the study area preferred the LAIs to stay. Rather than land, interviewees were displeased with the LAIs about competing natural resources, particularly water, low wages, irregular pay, and the difficulty of taking leave. While citizens' participation could improve the employment issues, it is unlikely that most households would favour LAI-based development to dedicated pro-poor investments, such as in small-scale farmer production. Lastly, supermarkets established themselves in the main town, but sold few fresh fruit and vegetables. Outside of town, the informal chains sold supermarket products in the study areas, showcasing a 'modern-to-traditional' value chain (Gómez & Ricketts, 2013), which diversified food availability and generated employment. However, when supermarkets expand their stock and reach, increased citizen's power is unlikely to allow supermarkets to compete directly with traditional fresh fruit and vegetable markets. Overall, even in the 'extreme' example of LAIs, local perspectives challenge what could, and could not, be included in a democratic food system.

Second, in the Mozambican study areas, LAIs dispossessed households of land and lowered agri-engagement of households. Self-production was more important for CF areas, and the LAI areas were more dependent on the markets for their dietary needs. Generally, traditional value chains were more present than modern chains, as

the area lacked supermarkets and almost all the food trade was informal. The differences in energy-dense food consumption were small, but higher than in Kenya. The changes in food democracy characteristics by LAIs connect to land, agri-engagement, and market dependence, which were all related to LAI's land dispossessions. As Zaehringer, Atumane et al. (2018) noted, most small-scale farmers around the study areas wanted the LAIs to leave. While interviewees were positive about employment generated by LAIs, they were displeased about land dispossessions. In this regard, increased citizens' participation could contribute to the removal of LAIs and provide a bulwark against land speculation and protect small-scale farmers' agri-engagement. More disadvantages were reported because of the stronger power disparities in Mozambique. Reducing these disparities through citizen's participation can change the balance between disadvantages and advantages of LAIs, alike the Kenyan case, where LAIs provide more benefits but are unlikely to be a preferred development trajectory.

5. Conclusion

This study adds empirical findings to the discussion on LAIs' impacts on food systems change and food democracy through case studies in Kenya and Mozambique. This article used Lang's food democracy characteristics to reflect on the food system changes in the study areas, which in turn is used to discuss the concept of food democracy. Particularly, a tension in food democracy as a process of increased citizen's participation, power, and control, and as an outcome related to small farms and local markets is debated. In Kenya, changes include land availability and an influx of supermarkets. Increased citizens' control might not lead to LAI's removal, but better employment and limits on supermarket competition with fresh fruit and vegetable markets. In Mozambique, changes include land availability, agri-engagement, and market dependence. Because of stronger power disparities, more disadvantages were reported in Mozambique, which could lead to the removal of LAI companies when local communities gain more decision-making power. Thus, the outcome of increased food democracy is likely to be different for each case, indicating that even in the 'extreme' example of LAIs, local perspectives challenge what could, and could not, be included in a food democratic system. As a result, a process of increased democracy might lead to diverse local food system arrangements which are different from Lang's food democracy. With more power, local actors can better negotiate the advantages and disadvantages of traditional and modern food systems and shape their own local food system trajectory. Given the increased complexity of food systems, this trajectory is then likely to be more hybrid than lineary traditional or modern. In the end, the reflection of food democracy through LAIs show its multi-dimensionality, with food democracy being simultaneously a process, outcome, set of policies, and a norma-tive framework. Future research that starts from the tensions between these dimensions can further clarify and strengthen the concept of food democracy. This is necessary if food democracy is to be used in policy debates in Africa and beyond.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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PART III

CHALLENGING AND ENLARGING FOOD DEMOCRACY

Article

Food Citizenship and Governmentality: Neo-Communitarian Food Governance in The Hague

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Abstract
This article presents an account of food citizenship based on a governmentality framework. Moving beyond the dichotomy of democratic or neoliberal accounts of food citizenship, a food governmentality framework is presented. This Foucaultian inspired framework conceptualises food citizenship as identity formation in relation to various modes of power that govern food systems and subjects in significantly different ways. The article empirically illustrates how food citizenship relates to food governmentality by focussing on the food-related activities of a Transition Town initiative in the Netherlands (The Hague) called *Den Haag In Transitie* (DHIT). By defining food as a community issue, and employing holistic-spiritual and collaborative knowledge, food citizens in the DHIT case render sustainable food systems governable in radically new ways. I argue that this type of citizenship can be considered *neo-communitarian* food citizenship and moves beyond democratic or neoliberal accounts. Finally, the article reflects on neo-communitarian citizenship and argues for a nuanced understanding of food citizenship, moving away from either democratic romanticism or neoliberal criticism.

Keywords
food citizenship; food democracy; governmentality; neoliberalism; Transition Towns

1. Introduction

Today, an increasing number of citizens are challenging agro-industrial food systems. These 'food citizens' address a wide range of problems, such as the commercial focus of food companies, the poor quality of processed food, environmental harm and unfair food infrastructures (Spaargaren, Oosterveer, & Loeber, 2013). Food citizens typically seek to pursue a more "democratic, socially and economically just, and environmentally sustainable food system" (Wilkins, 2005, p. 271). Growing research on both food citizenship and food democracy has shown how citizens actively participate in challenging dominant food systems and shaping alternative ways to produce, distribute and consume food (cf. Booth & Coveney, 2015). Over the years, different aspects of food citizenship have been studied, including political consumerism, community gardening, and anti-capitalist food activism. In general terms, food citizenship can be considered a socio-political praxis that indicates an effort to make food systems more democratic and sustainable (Bonanno & Wolf, 2017; de Tavernier, 2012). According to Gómez-Benito and Lozano (2014), food citizenship is even considered a precondition for a more sustainable society: "Just as democracy cannot exist without democratic citizens, a sustainable society cannot exist without ecological citizens and sustainable alimentation cannot exist without food citizens" (p. 139). However, critical scholars also raise questions about new forms of power and discipline associated with food citizenship. They reproach the emancipatory potential of food citizens and argue that food citizens are actually enrolled in a broader neoliberal regime of power that foregrounds individual responsibility and ethical food markets within the boundaries of a capitalist society (Drake, 2014; Laforge, Anderson, & McLachlan, 2017; Lockie, 2009; McClintock, 2014). This

critique paints a fundamentally different picture of what food citizenship actually entails in relation to the creation of sustainable food systems.

This article discusses these opposing accounts of food citizenship and presents a different conception of food citizenship, based on a governmentality framework. It does so by critically assessing two food citizenship frames: (1) an emancipatory democratic one; and (2) a self-management oriented neoliberal one. These frames have significantly different assumptions about citizenship, power and agency. A major weakness in both accounts is how they selectively highlight opposing aspects of food citizenship. Moving beyond a democratic/neoliberal dualism of food citizenship, a 'food governmentality' framework is presented in the following section. A Foucaultian inspired approach enables a broader understanding of specific types of citizenship in relation to strategies that seek to govern food systems (Dean, 2010; Fletcher, 2010). Adapting Fletcher's work of environmental governmentality, this section proposes *food governmentality* as a conceptual approach that allows for a nuanced understanding of how food citizenship is enacted and related to different food governing regimes. Importantly, a governmentality approach to food citizenship defines agential power neither as democratic nor as repressive, but as complex identity formation related to different modes of power that render subjects and food systems governable in various ways (Laforge et al., 2017). The article then presents the empirical case of a grassroot initiative in The Hague called *Den Haag In Transitie* (The Hague In Transition [DHIT]), and centre-stages their efforts to create sustainable food networks. As such, the DHIT case empirically illustrates food citizenship from a governmentality perspective. Empirical data is derived from qualitative data sources (documents, interviews, field notes) and reflected upon with the analytical dimensions of the proposed food governmentality approach. By defining food as a community issue, and employing holistic-spiritual and collaborative knowledge, food citizens in the DHIT case render sustainable food systems governable in radically new ways. I argue that this type of citizenship can be considered *neo-communitarian* food citizenship and moves beyond democratic or neoliberal accounts. Finally, the article reflects on neo-communitarian citizenship and argues for a nuanced understanding of food citizenship, moving away from either democratic romanticism or neoliberal criticism.

2. Framing Food Citizenship

This section presents two contrasting accounts of food citizenship, a democratic and a neoliberal one. Even though food citizenship research is vast and heterogenous, I use these accounts and this distinction to discuss two prevalent ways to understand food citizenship and their limitations. First, a dominant focus in food citizenship research is on how civic engagements and active cit-

izenship transform the agro-industry and food retail. This scholarly work underlines the democratic quality of food citizenship, challenging passive food consumerism and centre-staging citizenship as a political force to take control of food systems (e.g., Wilkins, 2005). However, some scholars criticise democratic food citizenship and argue that emancipation through food citizenship actually resonates with a neoliberal discourse of individual moral responsibility and local Do-It-Yourself practices (Schindel Dimick, 2015). They question the very idea of 'democratic emancipation' underlying food citizenship by pointing to their perpetuation of neoliberal regimes of power. In the next section, these two accounts are briefly discussed, with a particular emphasis on how each conceives agency and power.

2.1. Democratic Food Citizenship

Food citizenship can be seen as an emancipatory notion that highlights why and how citizens see food as a democratic issue (Booth & Coveney, 2015; Bonanno & Wolf, 2017). As Renting, Schermer, and Rossi (2012) note, since the notion of food citizenship emerged in North American scholarship it has basically focussed on civic ways to organise food systems. Welsh and MacRae (1998) even indicate that the concept was used to highlight "the need to move beyond food as a commodity and people as consumers" (p. 237). This democratic narrative challenges agro-industrial forces and resonates with the concept of food democracy that also gained currency in the 1990s. Food citizenship is deeply intertwined with food democracy. The latter offers a perspective that underscores how passive and uninformed food consumers turn into active citizens who take (back) control over 'their' food systems (Lang & Heasman, 2015). In recent years, the discursive label of 'food citizenship' even inspired an actual social movement committed to raise awareness and self-organise. As the Foodcitizenship website notes: "Food Citizenship is a growing movement of people acting as interdependent participants in a food system, not just as producers or consumers in linear supply chains" (Food Citizenship, n.d.). This collaborative New Citizenship Project seeks to "catalyse the shift from Consumer to Citizen as the dominant idea of the individual in society: The Citizen Shift" (Food Citizenship Report, 2014, p. 2). Despite some differences in form and scope, it seems that most food citizens enact democratic agency by pursuing radical change of the global agro-industrial complex. Food movements also draw attention to food injustices (e.g., 'food deserts,' excessive 'food miles,' and 'nutritional inequality'). Food, then, serves as an entry point to address larger structures of social and economic inequality. All in all, food is considered a medium for democratic emancipation, as Hassanein argues (2003, p. 83): "Food democracy ideally means that all member of an agrofood system have equal and effective opportunities for participation in shaping that system as well as knowledge about the relevant alternative ways of de-

signing and operating the system." Importantly, transforming local food systems has been at the forefront of many food movements. It includes developing ample local food-related knowledge and skills, while pressuring policy makers into offering systemic alternative food infrastructures (Wilkins, 2005).

This democratic account seems to dominate in food citizenship research. Citizenship is conceptualised as political agency that challenges normalised capitalist subjectivity. As Gómez-Benito and Lozano (2014) argue: "Food citizens involves the pre-condition of the subject's (the citizen's) *autonomy* and ability to define and exercise her food preferences" (p. 150). Even though democratic food citizenship differs from a classical Marxist approach to take over the 'means of food production,' it foregrounds developing radically alternative means to organise food networks. A democratic frame highlights how food citizens employ both radical and pragmatic practices to democratise food systems: protests, demonstrations and boycotts, and community gardening. As such, democratic food citizenship seeks to govern global and local food systems 'from below' by foregrounding a wide variety of civic actions.

2.2. Neoliberal Food Citizenship

The emancipatory democratic commitment of food citizens, however, has been challenged. Food citizenship has been especially subjected to neoliberal critique. Critics highlight the dominance of market forces and an ideology of self-managing individualism. Even though emancipation of consumers and food citizens is considered an asset, they 'tragically' enter a sticky cobweb of power relations. In particular, a neoliberal frame highlights the commodification and individualisation of responsibility of food citizenship. This significantly reduces the ways in which food citizenship is defined and comes into being. Importantly, in the domain of commercial markets and individual choice-making, sovereign power might be absent, but structures of power persist in much more subtle forms (Guthman & Brown, 2016). For instance, uneven socio-economic relations of power can accommodate elitist food citizenship practices, for instance, as low-income groups cannot afford high priced organic foods (Hamilton, 2005). Neoliberal critics note that democratic food citizenship has a blind spot for power relations and unwanted side effects.

A neoliberal understanding of food citizenship, as supported by some scholars, criticises the 'autonomy' of food citizens and its democratic claim in two ways. First, food citizens are considered as political consumers that pursue the purchase of 'eco-labelled' food, and enact their citizenship in a field dominated by market forces. Pursuing a 'radical' green lifestyle within the boundaries of a market system takes pragmatic adjustments as realistic and desirable. The emblematic figure of the 'citizen-consumer' bears witness to an economic subject pursuing ethical food choices in the marketplace (Lockie, 2009).

Second, and related, even though food citizens typically reject central power in the food system, it may fit a neoliberal agenda with a minimal state and austerity measures (Harris, 2009; McClintock, 2014; Prost, Crivellaro, Haddon, & Comber, 2018). This somewhat ironic emancipation underscores how bottom-up food systems resonate with a neoliberal culture of personal and local responsibility (organic farmers' markets and community gardens). Importantly, the apparent 'democratisation' of food citizenship, is considered a form of privatisation of responsibility at best. Schindel Dimick (2015) notes that neoliberal citizenship is conceived "as a private moral obligation rather than as an activity that occurs with others in a political community" (p. 395). So, neoliberal food citizens relate to food governance in roughly two ways: (1) The 'fetish' for market mechanisms (Guthman, 2007); and (2) the privatisation of responsibility. Neoliberal governance feeds on a fine-grained and decentred web of both economic and social power. It is of particular interest in the domain of sustainable food because it moves away from command-and-control rule and classical market logics (Rose, 1999). As many critics of neoliberal governance have argued, this pervasive modality of self-disciplining power undermines the deeply public and political character of food (Goodman, DuPuis, & Goodman, 2012).

3. Beyond the Dichotomy: A Food Governmentality Framework

It seems that both accounts of food citizenship have diverging conceptions of power and agency, and consequently, what it means to be a food citizen. State power plays a different role as different state-citizenship relations are assumed. In a democratic account, the state provides ample regulatory space for all kinds of citizen activities to emerge and develop alternative food practices. The neoliberal account, however, assumes that the state actively accommodates market mechanisms and policy measures that promote individual responsibility. Importantly, whereas democratic food citizenship argues that taking control over food systems is ultimately emancipatory, neoliberal food citizenship notes that this is actually an insidious way for food regimes to extend and refine power. It assumes an underlying conceptual dichotomy between democratic agential power on the one hand and the perpetuation of neoliberal food governance on the other hand.

This dichotomy is problematic. These diverging and dualist conceptions of agency reduce conceptual and empirical understandings of layered and ambivalent forms of power. Alternative food networks are complex and composite, and can be expected to maintain, challenge but also transcend democratic and neoliberal forms of agency (Alkon & Guthman, 2017; Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014). It thus requires a *conceptualisation* of food citizenship that is directly related to food governance beyond the vocabulary of democratic or neoliberal practices.

This broader scope is important because it allows us to understand how specific food citizen practices relate to related regimes of power and governance. It provides more context to the emergence and practice of food citizenship 'on the ground.' As some scholars have argued, generic labels such as 'neoliberalism' can create blind spots that downplay different forms and variations of political governance (Bevir, 2016; Hindess, 2002). Heuristics such as 'food democracy' or 'neoliberal governance' are useful to make sense of specific changes in how citizens and power relate. However, the emergence of new social actors in traditional food systems, the proliferation of alternative food networks, and changes in how food systems are defined, can all give rise to new food governing arrangements. It would be reductionist to downplay these shifts and heterogeneities regarding food governance strategies. Food citizenship research runs the risk of translating new and situated instances of food citizenship as either emancipatory or neoliberal moralisation.

3.1. Governmentality

When moving away from a democratic/neoliberal dichotomy, it is instructive to draw on Foucaultian governmentality scholarship, mainly because it rejects any opposition between emancipation and domination. Michel Foucault introduces the notion of governmentality in his 1978 and 1979 *Collège de France* lectures. Governmentality is based on the deconstruction of opposing hierarchical oppressive (state) power and voluntary human conduct. It focusses on how power uses both coercion and emancipation to shape specific social identities. In general terms, governmentality refers to "rationalities and technologies that seek to guide human beings" (Lemke, 2013, p. 38). This may include a wide range of governing practices and forms of power (such as formal sovereignty, moral discipline). Power, then, is actually not repressive but productive. Power creates specific realities and allows identity positions to come into being and unfold. This is crucial, as it enables a conceptualisation of citizenship that emphasises how regimes of power are instrumental in shaping the identity of citizens. Often, governmentality includes specific rationalities that are messy and even contradictory (Lemke, 2013). As Nadesan puts it: "Governmentality recognizes that social fields—the state, the market, and population—are in fact heterogeneous spaces constituted in relation to multiple systems of power, networks of control, and strategies of resistance" (Nadesan, 2008, p. 10). Significantly, a governmentality perspective moves away from institutional and liberal approaches to power that ask: Who gets what, when and how? Instead, it focusses on *how* power is actually exercised through specific practices and regimes (Methmann, 2011). As Bröckling, Krasmann, and Lemke (2011, p. 11) state: "[T]he main focus here is on the technologies and rationalities of (self-) government in distinct fields. The knowledge incorporated in governmental practices is always practical knowledge." Even though

governmentality researchers often have different definitions of governmentality, they agree on the fact that a governmentality approach is flexible and investigates:

> Mechanisms of conduct of 'people, individuals or groups' (Foucault, 2007: 102, 120-122), extending from management of company employees to the raising of children and daily control practices in public spaces to governing trans-national institutions such as the European Union and the United Nations. (Bröckling et al., 2011, p. 11)

If we zoom in on the domain of food, it suggests that food citizen practices should be understood in how they actually come into being in broader networks of power and governing. The 'heterogeneity of power and resistance' is important, as it allows us to move outside frames that reduce power to either emancipatory or neoliberal power. Food citizens are both 'subjects' and 'objects' of power. Food citizenship, then, is a more complex identity that might, but does not merely fit a democratic or neoliberal mould. Ironically, as Bevir (2016) argues, governmentality research often reduces new modes of governance to neoliberal governance (regarding food issues see e.g., Guthman & Brown, 2016). Occasionally, another form of food governance is discussed, such as food governance through nutritional spirituality and nutritional politics (Coveney, 1999; Swislocki, 2011). But, how should what I call *food governmentality* be understood without linking it directly to democratic or neoliberal modes of power? And how should food governmentality relate to food citizenship?

3.2. Food Governmentality

I argue that food governmentality refers to a heterogenous set of specific practices that renders food systems visible, knowable and governable in particular ways. The relationship between specific forms of seeing, forms of knowing, and forms governing on the one hand, and specific social identities on the other hand, is crucial from a governmentality perspective. For instance, the use of statistical knowledge by state agencies in the 18th century gave rise to the category of 'the population' as an object that could be studied, visualised and governed. From a governmentality perspective, this means that 'food citizenship' emerges through particular regimes and practices. The conceptualisation of governmentality according to Dean (2010) is instructive here, as it is specific and flexible enough to translate into a food governmentality approach. Governmentality for Dean focusses on the "organized practices through which we are governed and through which we govern ourselves, what we shall call here regimes of practices or regimes of government" (Dean, 2010, p. 28). For the sake of analytical clarity and consistency, it is fruitful to characterise food governmentality on the basis of four analytical dimensions as discussed by Dean (2010, see also Haahr, 2004): 1) visibil-

ity of food; 2) knowledge about food; 3) food governing techniques; and 4) food-related subject formation.

(1) Visibility of food: Food is never just food. Food and food systems are seen, sensitised and defined in particular ways. Food can, for instance, be considered as a legal, an economic or a social issue. As regards this dimension of *visibility*, we may ask by what kind of light (drawings, flow charts, maps, graphs, tables, etc.) a field illuminates and defines 'food objects' and with what shadows and darkness it obscures and hides others.

(2) Knowledge about food: Relatedly, food and food systems emerge as particular objects of knowledge. Food systems can be understood and known in particular ways, depending on specific forms of expertise and know-how about food systems. The dimension of the *knowledge* is concerned with the forms of thought, knowledge, expertise, strategies, means of calculation or rationality that are employed in the practices of governing food systems.

(3) Food governing techniques: Certain material practices and instruments are employed to design and steer food systems into a particular direction. The dimension of the *governing technique* asks the question by what means, mechanisms, procedures, tactics, techniques, technologies and vocabularies authority is constituted and the rule of food systems is accomplished.

(4) Food-related subject formation: A fourth dimension concerns the forms of individual and collective *identity* through which governing operates. What forms of person, self and identity related to food are presupposed by different practices of food governing and what sorts of transformation do these practices seek?

Food citizenship, as a particular type of identity formation, directly resonates with the fourth of these dimensions. However, and as argued earlier, food citizen practices are deeply entangled with the other dimensions that make up a broader food governing regime. In this approach, food identities (such as food citizens) cannot be isolated from broader food governing practices. The strength of this approach is exactly its emphasis on how food subjects come into being by being inscribed in broader regimes of knowledge and power.

3.3. Types of Food Governmentality

Unsurprisingly, there is not one type of food governmentality. An interesting contribution that allows for a differentiated framing of food governmentality comes from Fletcher (2010). Fletcher's work focusses on environmental governmentality and different modes of governing the 'environment' (Agrawal, 2005; Fletcher, 2017). Building on Fletcher's typology of environmentality and translating it into the specific domain of food governance, we can articulate four 'food governmentalities' (Fletcher, 2010, p. 177):

(1) Indigenous food governmentality: Holistic connections with food, based on evolutionary and indigenous knowledge;

(2) Disciplinary food governmentality: Creating food subjects, based on diffusing ethical norms;

(3) Sovereign food governmentality: Governing food systems based on legal practices and regulations;

(4) Neoliberal food governmentality: Commodifying food, based on market mechanisms and individualisation.

Fletcher's account of these governmentalities can be characterised along the lines of Dean's (2010) four analytical dimensions (see Table 1). This would provide a systematic typology of different food governmentalities, with their own particular ways of defining, knowing and governing food systems, and—ultimately—creating specific food identities.

The strength of this matrix is that it sensitises both the systematicity and heterogeneity of food governmentality as an analytical approach. That is to say, it allows for an analytical understanding of how food governing logics work in relation to food identities, while specifying a number of prevalent and actual governing logics. These governmentalities are in no way exhaustive or include all modes of governing 'out there.' The added value of a governmentality approach is exactly its focus on change and variety in how food systems are rendered sensible and governable. Furthermore, there is no neat overlap between these modes of food governmentality and citizenship on the one hand, and the two dominating accounts discussed earlier on the other hand (i.e., democratic and neoliberal citizenship). If that were the case, it would not allow for a significantly different conceptualisation of food citizenship. A food governmentality approach redefines food citizenship and puts it in its proper governing context. Yet, it should be mentioned that neoliberal food citizenship resonates to some extent at least with both neoliberal and disciplinary food governmentality (Guthman, 2007; Schindel Dimick, 2015). Food, then, is rendered governable through moral individual responsibility and market-driven mechanisms. In our day and age, neoliberal food governmentality seems to be a dominant way through which food systems are governed and food identities take shape (Bonanno & Wolf, 2017). At the same time, new types of food systems and their governance emerge (e.g., farmers markets and community gardens). It is exactly through a variegated repertoire that different kinds of food citizenship and governance emerge and develop. As such, food citizens have the potential to reconfigure food systems and render them governable in unexpected ways.

3.4. Food Governmentality and Democratic Citizenship?

I do not subscribe to democratic food citizenship as simply an emancipatory force in the ways in which food systems are organised. However, it is instructive to briefly reflect on how food governmentality relates to democratic food citizenship and food democracy more broadly. How are they related? In what way do they conflict or

Table 1. Food governmentalities.

	Indigenous food governmentality 'spirit and soil'	Disciplinary food governmentality 'morals and guilt'	Sovereign food governmentality 'fences and fines'	Neoliberal food governmentality 'markets and lifestyles'
1. Visibility of food	Food as a spiritual object	Food as a moral object	Food as a legal object	Food as a commercial object
2. Knowledge of food	Holistic and 'indigenous' knowledge of food	Morality, ethics, health/medical science	Food regulations, rules, strategic planning	Food markets, consumer preferences, economics
3. Food governing techniques	'Do it ourselves', community engagement	Shame and guilt, scientific reasoning	Fines, rights and obligations	Privatisation, food labels, competition, individual responsibility
4. Formation of food subjects	Spiritual subjects and food communities	Ethical and moral food citizens	Law-abiding food suppliers and citizens	Food consumers, industrial food suppliers

Source: Adapted from Fletcher (2010).

intersect? Instead of considering a romantic image of localism or indigenous food communities ('spirit and soil') as intrinsically tied to democratic citizenship, democratic emancipation does not have a clear place in a governmentality approach. However, as Foucault famously argues "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault, 1990, p. 95). So actually, resisting and redirecting power allows for innovation, creativity and shifts in how dominant (food) regimes and (food) citizen practices are governed (Miller & Rose, 1990). It, then, could be argued that this is precisely what the promise of food democracy and the democratic account of food citizenship entails, as it seeks to reshape the organisation and operations of food systems. It challenges the global agro-industrial powers that be, while seeking new ways to organise food production and distribution (Booth & Coveney, 2015). Importantly, an account of 'democratic citizenship as resistance' moves away from classical liberal or republican conceptions of agency and citizenship that dominate citizenship-related research (Bickford, 1996; Gabrielson, 2008). A more radical understanding of democratic emancipation and food democracy, then, foregrounds how practices of resistance redefine food systems and their governance. Introducing new ways to visualise, know and organise food systems by social actors is how a dominant food governmentality can take shape (Dean, 2010, p. 44). A democratic food citizen in a governmentality approach, then, is not a specific and stable identity that can be attained. Rather, it illuminates the contingency, experimentation and variety of food identities in direct relation to how food systems are governed.

4. The Case of DHIT: Food Citizenship and Governance in The Hague

This section presents food citizen practices of a Dutch Transition Town initiative in the city of The Hague (DHIT).

DHIT is presented as a critical case that serves to empirically show how food citizenship is related to food governmentality (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Empirical materials are based on policy documents and semi-structured interviews with DHIT member and policy makers (see Appendix). DHIT members I interviewed are mostly young people (age 20–40) with a cosmopolitan worldview and commitment to local sustainability. Some have an activist background and/or experience with social movements in the 'Global South.' Virtually all members are committed to healthy and sustainable food. The policy makers I interviewed are related to The Hague's sustainability programme, either strategic policy actors or street-level policy actors that frequently contact citizens groups and local companies. In addition, ethnographic field research has been conducted for 4–6 months in the DHIT network in late 2013 to early 2014. As a participant, I joined dozens of meetings and initiatives organised by DHIT, which provided much information about how DHIT relates to food (as an organisation and as individual members). The empirical materials have been categorised and coded, primarily on the basis of the four analytical dimensions of the proposed food governmentality framework ('selective' or 'theoretical' coding; cf. Saldaña, 2015). Before zooming in on the DHIT case, it is instructive to briefly contextualise it.

For decades, food security has been a key concern in EU countries. Food regulations have set high security and safety standards for agro-industrial food systems. Multinationals and market actors have developed food systems at the expense of food quality and the environment (Spaargaren et al., 2013). Against this background, and climate change more broadly, the global Transition Town movement emerged in the early 2000s. Typically, a Transition Town initiative seeks to develop self-reliant communities that produce socio-environmental goods, such as healthy and sustainable food, and renewable energy. In the Dutch city of The Hague, a Transition Town network called DHIT was established after a movie night

about the Transition Town movement in November 2012. This movie, watched by around 40 people, led to debates about global and local issues related to climate change and the economic crisis. The local production and self-organisation of food plays a pivotal role in the DHIT network, even though DHIT also engages in sustainable mobility, energy and other issues. For the sake of this contribution, food-relates issues are foregrounded in this section. Even though DHIT members do not explicitly describe themselves as 'food citizens', most of their activities express some form of food citizenship.

4.1. DHIT and Visibility of Food

For DHIT, food primarily emerges as a socio-political issue with the potential to shape new communities. Many DHIT members consider industrial food in the Netherlands as unnatural and artificial, analogous to the artificial identity of a passive consumer. During my fieldwork, a DHIT participant said that he was not satisfied with tomatoes from the supermarket, because they "taste different from the ones you grow yourself." Similarly, he argued, home-grown cucumbers have a particular taste: "they are almost sweet, very different, a lot of people don't know this…we lose the original taste and nutritional value of food" (Interview A). DHIT members often argue that our understanding of what kind of materials and fertilisers are used in food are unknown to the wider public. Some DHIT members more generally criticise the food system for its mystification of extracting materials and nutrition in distant places (Interview B). They explicitly politicise the wider economic system and the ways in which sustainability concerns are linked to issues of global inequality and poverty (Interview A; Interview B; Interview C). As one active DHIT member put it:

> [Our society and economic system] is presented as normal, in schools and in our parenting. We are taught that this is the only choice we have…but things are distributed unevenly, everything is unequal. Almost everything we enjoy in the Netherlands has a negative impact on the rest of the world. For example, the amount of land we need for our food consumption actually exceeds the physical space of the Netherlands itself." (Interview B)

DHIT members share knowledge about food and related socio-environmental concerns in many ways. They organise movie nights and have discussions about a range of topics, including the suffering of animals, carbon emissions and litter. Typically, scientific information about the food problem (e.g., statistics about food waste) is interwoven with analysing root causes of the problem and possible solutions. Apart from the initiatives of specific food-related awareness or workshops events, connecting food initiatives is a key focus for DHIT. In some instances, these connections are literally visualised with

the help of other actors. For example, edible plants and fruits in public space are visualised via a digital map (*Edible The Hague*). Policy makers and urban residents can also geographically locate specific sustainability initiatives (e.g., a community garden or an energy cooperative) on an interactive digital map designed by city authorities (*Haagse Krach-kaart*). These maps seem to accommodate ways of seeing sustainable food infrastructures outside the prevailing agro-industrial regime (major food producers and supermarkets). By doing this, DHIT shapes new ways of sensing and foregrounding 'real' or 'forgotten' food, as part of a community-oriented and just food system.

4.2. DHIT and Knowledge of Food

Specific types of knowledge shape this local food community. Non-Western knowledge, spirituality and holistic framings of food are used and play an important role for DHIT members. Some engage in holistic thinking or spiritual philosophies that centre-stage links between physical and mental health, food and the wellbeing of animals. A wide range of ideas combine spiritualism and activist work, such as deep ecology exercises, radical interdependencies (e.g., regarding global food systems and meat consumption), ethical permaculture principles (which is translated in the main DHIT vision) and yoga exercises (creating physical and mental fitness and resilience). For these DHIT members, a human being is a spiritual being intricately linked to social and ecological systems. The body and mind should therefore be respected by eating nutritional, proper and pure food, but also mentally by doing yoga or thinking holistically (Interview D and Interview G). Interestingly, this does not mean that such ways of holistic thinking are not used by traditional policy actors. In fact, many policy actors observed and thought about urban areas and districts in terms of vital and dynamic sites with 'different energies.' Such spaces, from the viewpoint of the municipality, require very little legal regulation but a tailored approach and policy practices informed by "acupuncture" (Interview I). Policy actors in The Hague consider the city in terms of a fluid and 'thermodynamic system.' That is to say, in addition to (or instead of) having formal legal citizenship, some active residents or neighbours are considered potential ambassadors for their street or neighbourhood. This new sense of seeing and knowing flexible food networks is expressed by frequently sharing information and knowledge about new initiatives or events. This knowledge is also produced and exchanged by workshops, events and Do-It-Yourself maps and brochures to let residents take up initiatives themselves (e.g., urban farming, or making one's home energy efficient).

4.3. DHIT and Food Governing Techniques

As a grassroot organisation, DHIT does not rely on formal regulations or classical market-driven techniques to

render the local food systems governable. They actually try to move beyond governmental and commercial approaches to governing food systems. The DHIT network employs a wide range of social practices to establish, support, cultivate and glue together local sustainable food initiatives. Such community shaping practices are enacted via guerrilla gardening, sharing food, volunteering and cooperation with policy makers. These practices move beyond an individualist culture with consumer-based practices of buying processed food, owning stuff for yourself, and living in a 'concrete jungle' on your own. They seem to be accompanied by means to re-connect one's 'outer' and 'inner' world. These self-disciplining techniques include doing yoga, meditation and being vegan. Even though not all DHIT participants employ these methods, they play a specific role, namely to 'purify' oneself and to engage in new types of relations with other human beings, animals and ecologies. Furthermore, DHIT has been thinking and talking about upscaling local food production and urban farming in The Hague for some time (Interview A, Interview D, Interview E and Interview F). Urban farming and growing your own food are advocated and practiced by some, for example, growing tomatoes, cucumber and all kinds of herbs. This kind of food activism challenges large-scale and profit-based food systems that are considered to offer 'cheap, unfair, unnatural and unhealthy' products. DHIT tries to engage in outreach regarding food in different ways. They offer workshops about urban farming to all kinds of organisations, in which they for instance teach others how to grow food even if space is limited to a balcony (using 'balcony farming'; Interview A).

4.4. DHIT and Formation of Food Subjects

DHIT shapes a sustainable food community and social identities in different ways. While some could be considered as actively involved in health or food, other participants were more into organising events, planning meetings and external cooperation. DHIT members are part of a broader active citizenry aimed at making food systems sustainable and just. DHIT members cooperate with a range of local organisations that are also committed to healthy and sustainable food (e.g., Healthy Soil, Food Coop The Hague, Edible Den Haag, Sustainable Studios). They cooperate with other initiatives on the basis of specific food-related events or projects. Given its broad orientation (food and non-food issues), DHIT has particular target groups in mind, which enables a focussed strategy to work together with organisations and to raise awareness about health and sustainable food in The Hague. Cooperation could even develop into a broader regional sustainable food system. DHIT has published a document about how a regional food system could be based on an interrelated network of producers, distributors and farmers markets (Bredius, 2013). Even though market mechanisms are considered relevant here (supply and demand), they are considered ethical as they are locally embedded and create local and community value. The discourse of urban farming has also entered the local political and administrative system. In 2011, four local political parties proposed a so-called 'urban food strategy' for the city of The Hague (Party for the Animals, Labour Party, The Hague City Party, Green Party, 2011). In this document, a number of progressive political parties argue that food and urban farming have many advantages for city life including public health and the regional economy. This document was taken seriously by the local government and translated into an official food strategy in 2013 (Municipality of The Hague, 2013). Interestingly, coordination between DHIT and policy actors is prevalent, as DHIT would accommodate the sustainable development of The Hague "from below," whereas the municipality would do the same "from above," as they put it (Interview H). In recent years, policy actors have become much more invested in city life outside the formal policy domain. In the context of sustainability and food, they attend workshops and barbeques, and sometimes have informal evening calls with small entrepreneurs (Interview H). Such flexible policy actors are actively involved in this food community while navigating between formal procedures and citizen projects with 'good energy'.

5. Towards Neo-Communitarian Food Citizenship

One could read the DHIT case as an instance of democratic citizenship or even see traces of neoliberal citizenship. However, as discussed above, I seek to understand the DHIT case neither as an expression of emancipatory democratic food citizenship, nor as an example of neoliberal citizenship. The democratic or neoliberal frames would only highlight the case in particular ways, and leave out significant aspects. It can be said that the DHIT case resonates with 'indigenous' and 'disciplinary' forms of food governmentality (see Section 3 and Table 1). At the same time, however, DHIT seems to move away from classical state power (sovereign) and profit-oriented market mechanisms and individualism (neoliberal). What is key is the intersection of a holistic approach and diffusion of food ethics and the role of a food community 'in the making.' This is not surprising, as local communities play a significant role in shaping food democracies (Laforge et al., 2017). I argue that the DHIT case centre-stages a community-oriented way of seeing and governing food outside agro-industrial systems. However, this community is not a static network with a fixed number of people and type of community members. Rather, it is better to consider it as a 'community assemblage,' meaning a loosely coupled set of actors, activities and networks entangled with DHIT. They might do different things, with slightly different histories and aims. An assemblage is a useful notion here, inspired by the work of Deleuze and Guattari, as it emphasises "immanent modes of association…that are capable of inventing alternative forms of social interaction" (Krause & Rölli, as cited in Scott-Cato & Hillier, 2010, p. 871). These pragmatic alterations

accommodate complex community-driven power that governs sustainable food systems, while being open to democratic change.

What particular type of food governmentality does the DHIT case express then? I argue that this governing rationale can be called *neo-communitarian* food governmentality. 'Neo' in this neologism signifies a novel and more fluid mode of community relations, compared to communitarianism with its socially shared and geographically bounded traditions (cf. Bell, 2015). Neo-communitarian food governance resonates slightly with a neoliberal frame, as it highlights self-organisation and a sense of actively taking up one's 'own responsibility' in the food system (cf. Schinkel & van Houdt, 2010). However, to argue that the DHIT case fits in the same neoliberal basket as political consumerism does harm to the complexity and range of DHIT activities. Neo-communitarian governmentality conflicts with neo-liberal governmentality, in that, it employs other forms of knowledge, state practices and social norms. State power, for instance, plays a specific role in democratic and neoliberal accounts of food citizenship (see Section 3). Neo-communitarian citizenship assumes a flexible role for policy makers that actively participate in food communities. Furthermore, citizens are not considered as individually responsible for sustainable food practices (typically via the marketplace), but as social beings part of a broader community. More technically, one could say that a neo-communitarian food citizen (different from a neoliberal one) is a political subject shaped by a heterogenous and community-oriented form of knowledge and practices. So, to what extent do food-related activities of DHIT express democratic food citizenship? It highlights the double-edge sword of grassroot food activism as a democratic force and a new regime of self-disciplining power. Even though community-driven efforts to design and organise new food systems can be considered as inherently democratic (Hassanein, 2003), the rise of a food community comes with new and subtle forms of disciplinary authority, linked to spirituality, social norms and pragmatic collaborations. As such, neo-communitarian food citizenship draws attention to the complexity of food citizenship beyond democratic emancipation or neoliberal power.

What does this mean for the key notion of food citizenship? First of all, most DHIT members can be considered as a 'food community making' network. Such food citizens emerge by engaging in producing environmental goods, outside the confines of formal policy making, but by a set of socio-environmental, economic, cultural and even spiritual practices. Importantly, for years, it has been (and still is) a strategic goal of city officials in The Hague to cultivate active citizens who start initiatives with the same goals as specific policy plans (e.g., urban farming or reducing food miles). Related to these food citizens, new institutional identities are shaped. It is clear that policy actors have become increasingly invested in city life 'outside' the city hall. They attend barbeques, have evening calls with citizens and meet with innovative entrepreneurs. Such policy actors navigate between formal procedures and citizen projects with 'good vibes and energy.' So, institutional actors are part and parcel of a sustainable food community that move between practices 'from below' and 'from above'. It challenges the notion of food citizens as clearly separated actors from formal governance actors.

6. Concluding Remarks

This contribution presented an account of food citizenship based on a governmentality framework. By providing a more critical understanding of food citizenship, it sketched a different image of food citizenship, and how it relates to food democracy. A number of conclusions can be drawn. First, the food governmentality framework proves to be quite fruitful in characterising how food citizenship relates to food governance, beyond democratic and neoliberal conceptions of food citizenship. It allows for a broader perspective on how food citizenship relates to different regimes of power. Food citizenship, from a governmentality framework, highlights the inherent fusion of power associated with food citizens: gaining power over food systems and being subjected to power. It is through specific ways of seeing, defining and knowing food (unhealthy/healthy, industrial/real, etc.) and governing food systems (Do-It-Yourself practices, local food networks), that a specific type of food citizen comes into being. Second, the DHIT case illuminates that food citizenship indeed relates to food democracy, as local food networks seek to take control of food production and distribution. However, it also creates new forms of self-disciplining power in the form a new food community. I call this flexible mode of self-governing power neo-communitarian governmentality. So, one could argue that a new form of disciplinary and directive power emerges when critique and experimentation turns into new community norms and knowledge about what entails 'sustainable food,' which partners are 'useful,' and which type of market mechanisms are 'ethical.' In other words, neo-communitarian citizens that shape this governing regime are also shaped by this regime. The consequent power ambivalences should be taken as a modus operandi. Food activism and food democracy can create very specific regimes of knowledge, social norms and social identities. Therefore, we should carefully understand the intricate power dynamics of food citizenship and expressions of food democracy worldwide. Third, neo-communitarian food citizenship should not be considered as a political identity that replaces democratic or neoliberal citizenship in any way. Rather, my account of food citizenship complements these frames and draws attention to the complex political dynamic underlying food citizenship. A more critical understanding of food citizenship and food governance could disclose new theoretical and empirical insights. Research on food democracy and food citizenship could, for instance, explore new food

governmentalities by comparing cases from the 'Global North' and the 'Global South.' Food governmentality, as a complex arrangement of power, could also be conceptualised in relation to issues of food sovereignty and food justice (Desmarais, Claeys, & Trauger, 2017). New research could further illuminate the analytical power and scope of food governmentality, and offer new perspectives on how food systems and power are related.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the anonymous referees for their useful suggestions. Furthermore, the author would like to thank all respondents and DHIT members for their time and openness.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Appendix

Table A1. List of interviews.

	Reference	Affiliation	Interview date	Interview location
1	Interview A	DHIT member	11 January 2014	The Hague, the Netherlands
2	Interview B	DHIT member	29 January 2014	The Hague, the Netherlands
3	Interview C	DHIT member	Personal communication during fieldwork (late 2013 to early 2014)	The Hague, the Netherlands
4	Interview D	DHIT member	Personal communication during fieldwork (late 2013 to early 2014)	The Hague, the Netherlands
5	Interview E	DHIT member	Personal communication during fieldwork (late 2013 to early 2014)	The Hague, the Netherlands
6	Interview F	DHIT member	Personal communication during fieldwork (late 2013 to early 2014)	The Hague, the Netherlands
7	Interview G	DHIT member	Personal communication during fieldwork (late 2013 to early 2014)	The Hague, the Netherlands
8	Interview H	Freelancer, related to municipality of the Hague	8 January 2014	The Hague, the Netherlands
9	Interview I	Policy actor, Municipality of the Hague	14 January 2014	The Hague, the Netherlands

Article

Food Democracy as 'Radical' Food Sovereignty: Agrarian Democracy and Counter-Hegemonic Resistance to the Neo-Imperial Food Regime

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Abstract

This article argues that a thoroughgoing and meaningful food democracy should entail something closely akin to 'radical' food sovereignty, a political programme which confronts the key social relational bases of capitalism. The latter comprise, in essence, 'primitive accumulation,' the alienability or commodification of land and other fundamental use values, and market dependence. A thoroughgoing food democracy of this kind thus challenges the structural separation of the 'economic' and 'political' spheres within capitalism and the modern state (the state-capital nexus), a separation which enables purely political rights and obligations ('political' freedom or formal democracy) whilst simultaneously leaving unconstrained the economic powers of capital and their operation through market dependence ('economic' unfreedom or the lack of substantive democracy). We argue that much 'food democracy' discourse remains confined to this level of 'political' freedom and that, if food sovereignty is to be realized, this movement needs to address 'economic' unfreedom, in other words, to subvert capitalist social-property relations. We argue further that the political economy of food constitutes but a subset of these wider social relations, such that substantive food democracy is seen here to entail, like 'radical' food sovereignty, an abrogation of the three pillars upholding capitalism (primitive accumulation, absolute property rights, market dependence) as an intrinsic part of a wider and more integrated movement towards *livelihood* sovereignty. We argue here that the abrogation of these conditions upholding the state-capital nexus constitutes an essential part of the transformation of capitalist social-property relations towards common 'ownership'—or, better, stewardship—of the means of livelihood, of which substantive food democracy is a key component.

Keywords

agrarian democracy; counter-hegemony; food democracy; food sovereignty

1. Introduction

This article contends that if food democracy is to realize its full potential, it should entail something closely akin to 'radical' food sovereignty. This represents a political programme which, actually or by implication, challenges the essential social relational foundations of capitalism. 'Radical' food sovereignty is here differentiated from 'progressive' food sovereignty, the latter having much in common with 'formal' food democracy and the current discourse of 'food as a commons' in its deficient understanding of, most saliently, capitalism, the state, and class (see for discussion of food democracy and 'food as a commons': Vivero-Pol, Ferrando, de Schutter, & Mattei, 2019; see for discussion of 'radical' and 'progressive' food sovereignty: Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011; Tilzey, 2017, 2018). The key social relational foundations of capitalism comprise 'primitive accumulation'—which entails the commodification of labour power attendant on the expropriation of producers from their means of production—, the alienability or commodification of land and other fundamental use values—the conferral of ab-

solute property rights over land and other fundamental use values necessary for human existence—, and market dependence—dependence on the capitalist market in order to secure the means of livelihood. Our model of food democracy thus throws into question the structural separation of the 'economic' and 'political' spheres within capitalism and the modern state (the state-capital nexus). This duality confers purely political rights and obligations ('political' freedom or *formal* democracy) whilst simultaneously exempting from constraint the economic powers of capital and their operation through market dependence ('economic' unfreedom or the lack of *substantive* democracy; see Tilzey, 2017, 2018, for further details).

We contend that prevalent 'food democracy' (and closely related 'food as a commons') discourse remains limited to this level of 'political' freedom (see for overviews Hassanein, 2008; Vivero-Pol et al., 2019). We suggest that food democracy in this form needs, therefore, to widen its remit to address 'economic' unfreedom, in other words to subvert capitalist social-property relations, if food sovereignty is ever to become reality. We argue further that the political economy of food comprises but a part of these wider social relations. In this way, substantive food democracy is considered here to require, like 'radical' food sovereignty, an abrogation of the three supporting pillars capitalism (primitive accumulation, absolute property rights, market dependence), an integral element in a broader and more coherent movement towards *livelihood* sovereignty (Tilzey, 2018). We contend that the demolition of these pillars upholding the state-capital nexus represents a key element of the transformation of capitalist social-property relations towards common 'ownership'—or, better, stewardship—of the means of livelihood, of which substantive food democracy is a key component. Here we should note that 'stewardship' implies a relation of guardianship towards the means of livelihood, abrogating thereby notions of absolute property rights, or complete dominion, over nature and other members of society.

In exploring the discourse of food democracy, this article deploys a theoretical perspective which integrates political Marxism (Brenner, 1985; Wood, 1995), neo-Gramscian international political economy (Bieler & Morton, 2004; Cox, 1993), regulation theory (Boyer & Saillard, 2002; Jessop & Sum, 2013), and Poulantzian state theory (Poulantzas, 1978). The article also has affinities with the important work on imperialism and sub-imperialism of Ruy Mauro Marini (see Marini, 1972, 1973). This approach stands in contrast to 'populism' in agrarian political theory, represented by McMichael (2013) and van der Ploeg (2008), for example, the latter having strong affinities with 'formal' food democracy. This 'populism,' like 'formal' food democracy, is characterized by an elision of class (particularly in respect of class differentiation amongst the 'peasantry'), a radical under-theorization of the state, and assumptions regarding the full trans-nationalization and unity of capital. This article does concur with agrarian 'populism,' however,

in its concern for the ecological dimension and its advocacy of agroecology (Altieri & Toledo, 2011) and food sovereignty—the latter, though, on its 'radical' definition (see Tilzey, 2018, for full elaboration of an ecological perspective as political ecology). It stands also in contrast to 'orthodox' Marxism, represented for example by Bernstein (2010) and Jansen (2015), characterized by its class reductionism, its instrumentalist view of the state, its reification of developmentalism, and its failure to comprehend the profound importance of the ecological dimension.

Deploying this approach, we suggest that food democracy remains inadequate to its task if it fails to address the social-property relations underpinning capitalist food regimes; and that its singular focus on 'democracy' (the reified sphere of 'politics') rather than addressing political economy (the dialectical relation between the 'political' and the 'economic') is symptomatic of its differential locus in the global North, and its association with 'progressive', rather than 'radical,' food sovereignty (see Tilzey, 2017). The former assumes that food democracy is somehow 'beyond class' other than in terms of the simplistic binary between the 'empire' of the 'corporate' food regime and the 'multitude' of civil society. We emphasize that the term 'class' is deployed in this article, by contrast, in a non-reductive sense, whereby power relations and exploitation may be expressed and take place through class, ethnic, racial, gender, religious, etc. categories. It is also to recognize that 'objective' class position may not translate into 'subjective' class positionality, and that the latter can only be understood through the ways that exploitation and discrimination are *actually* experienced and understood by actors, as expressed in terms of 'cultural politics.' Such a non-reductive understanding of class follows in the political and cultural traditions of Marxian thinking exemplified by, for example, Gramsci (1971) and Thompson (1991). Accordingly, we maintain that 'class struggle' remains fundamental to the dynamics of the state-capital nexus and its food regimes, and to the possibility of its subversion, not by the 'multitude' as a generality, but rather by particular classes which, located overwhelmingly in the global South, have undergone least absorption into the economic and political structures of liberal democracy.

If not the 'multitude' of civil society, then, which social interests and forces are likely to advocate and carry through such a programme of 'radical' food sovereignty (which we might otherwise term substantive food democracy, agrarian democracy, or, more integrally, livelihood sovereignty)? We argue that such interests and forces comprise in the main the 'precariat' of the global South—the middle/lower peasantry, informal sector workers, and indigenous groups. Unlike the majority in the global North (and selectively in the BRICS sub-imperium), whose consumer lifestyles are sustained actually, or integrated normatively, into the capitalist 'imperial mode of living' (a neo-imperial relation with the global South; Brand & Wissen, 2018) and into the

norms of liberal democracy, this Southern precariat increasingly sees little hope of salvation in capitalist 'development' or in the machinations of 'representative' democracy (the term 'neo-imperial' represents the application of neoliberal policies in the global South under the auspices of imperial powers and collaborating Southern elites. The terms 'neo-imperial' and 'neoliberal' can in this article be treated, therefore, as virtual synonyms). It seeks, therefore, an alternative future premised on land redistribution, agroecological production to meet fundamental social needs, and participative democracy (see Intriago, Gortaire Amézcua, Bravo, & O'Connell, 2017; Tilzey, 2019a). Such a view is captured in the Andean concept of *buen vivir* (Giunta, 2014; Intriago et al., 2017). This approach combines the need to address both the discursive and the material (social property relations; the 'political' and the 'economic') bases of oppression and marginalization in order to secure livelihood sovereignty. The approach in this article, then, comprises both analytics of the state-capital nexus and its food regimes through an ontology of political ecology (Tilzey, 2018), and explores reflexive politics as a 'political (agro)ecology of praxis.' The latter is the translation of this political ecological ontology, through agroecology, into a programme political action. This analytical frame and exploration of praxis as counter-hegemonic resistance are examined in relation to Latin America, and Bolivia and Ecuador particularly. In these latter states, the peasantry and indigenous groups were instrumental in overturning neoliberalism in the 1990s and 2000s, only to have their programme of 'radical' food sovereignty subsequently co-opted and subverted by reformist capitalism and liberal democracy. The ongoing dynamics of resistance, and the prospects for substantive food democracy as 'radical' food sovereignty in these two states, are explored in the latter part of the article.

2. The Shortcomings of 'Formal' Food Democracy

The imaginary of 'formal' food democracy differs from the discourse on the Right to Food, from which it in part arises, in its specific identification of the putative causal basis of the lack of this 'right.' This causal basis, it asserts, arises from the fact that capitalist economies, or, more specifically, the 'corporate' food regime (McMichael, 2013), have, since the 1980s, increasingly constrained the democratic capacity of liberal states, and popular demands cannot be reconciled with what is assumed by its proponents to be a state-market duopoly (see Hassanein, 2008; Vivero-Pol et al., 2019; see below for critique of this binary view of the 'state' and 'market'). 'Formal' food democracy 'scrutinizes the constitutional surface of the liberal state' (Holt-Gimenez & van Lammeren, 2019, p. 320) under which 'corporate actors' are assumed to be the primary architects of what elsewhere has been termed the 'neoliberal' food regime (Tilzey, 2019b). In order to address this assumed co-optation of the 'state' by 'corporate actors,' 'formal' food democracy envisions

a broader 'communicative realm' not confined to liberal constitutionalism, but focused rather on the way 'discursive sources of order' can influence governance (Dryzek, 2000). 'Food democracy is about citizens…being afforded an equal opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them' (Hassanein, 2008, p. 287) where these relate to food and food policy. 'Formal' food democracy thus proposes 'discursive democracy' in which 'citizens' or 'civil actors' (part of an undifferentiated 'multitude') democratize governance by contesting established conventions and influencing decision-making bodies through deliberative, rather than electoral, means (Holt-Gimenez & van Lammeren, 2019).

The challenge for proponents of 'formal' food democracy, then, is somehow to *discursively* construct a different food regime, proposed to comprise elements of socialization, de-commodification, localization, 'commoning', etc. (Vivero-Pol et al., 2019), when in reality this requires *material* as well as discursive transformation away from capitalist social-property relations. Moreover, this is supposed to occur within a political structure of liberal democracy that is actually the integral counterpart of capitalist relations of production, founded on individual rights and private property (the state-capital nexus; Tilzey, 2019b). For 'formal' food democracy, it is supposed that the discursive revalorization of food, involving inter alia the ideological rejection of food as a 'pure commodity' (neglecting, thereby, the material and class predicates of food as commodity), enables a diversity of actors to come together so that, once enlightened with the rationale of 'food democracy,' they assume agency as 'food citizens' (Holt-Gimenez & van Lammeren, 2019; Vivero-Pol, 2017). This assumes that agents can engage in 'pure agency' abstracted from their own structured positions and without transforming the social-property relations which underpin the state-capital nexus. A more nuanced approach would be to understand that agents act within and upon pre-given structural constraints and opportunities rather than being somehow autonomous from them. This view is captured in the notion of 'structured agency' (Potter & Tilzey, 2005) and in the 'strategic relational approach' (Jessop, 2005). In its voluntarism, 'formal' food democracy thus dichotomizes 'positionality,' an agent's 'subjective' view on an issue, from 'class position,' an agent's 'objective' capacity or ability to transform structures to conform with this view, the latter in fact no longer recognized as an issue in the post-structural problematic of the 'new social movements.' This is analogous to the difference between a formal 'right to benefit' and a substantive 'ability to benefit' (Ribot & Peluso, 2003).

The shift from liberal constitutionalism to the reflexive agency of civil actors embodied in 'formal' food democracy is illustrated by the proposal for 'tricentric governance' whereby 'self-regulated, civic collective actions for food' acquire increased purchase over 'state' and 'market' (Vivero-Pol, 2017, 2019). Tricentric governance putatively rebalances the relative influence between 'state,' 'economy' and civil actions through the re-

appropriation of public space from the first two in favour of the third, with civil actors assuming an agency of their own. In this way, a 'mounting force of citizens' actions to reclaim food' pressurizes the 'state' to shift from facilitator of capitalist 'accumulation through enclosure' to regulator of the same, and provider of enabling frameworks for food citizens. Thus, during this envisioned transition towards a new food regime, the 'state' is enjoined to provide incentives and enabling frameworks, such as basic food entitlement and food security floors, support for alternative initiatives for food production and food sharing at local scales, all effectively scaling back the jurisdiction of both 'state' and 'market' (Holt-Gimenez & van Lammeren, 2019; Vivero-Pol, 2019). According to this 'tricentric governance' model, self-organized groups under self-negotiated rule develop 'food democracies,' operating through 'nodes' of connected but autonomous food centres, attaining free association between producers and consumers (Caffentzis, 2010). At this point, the role of the 'state' as regulator and provider of enabling frameworks can diminish and both 'states' and 'markets' are demoted to simply one of many ways of allocating resources.

The concept of tricentric governance within 'formal' food democracy thus deploys an imaginary in which the valuation of food as a common good unites otherwise disparate actors within and across nation-states and the global North–South divide (the 'multitude'), elevating food, in effect, above the capitalist mode of production in which it is currently embedded (Vivero-Pol et al., 2019). This narrative thus proposes that, were food *considered* to be subject to this deeper discursive democracy, the global food system, together with capitalism, *would* change (Vivero-Pol, 2017). In other words, the extraordinary agency for change assumed by food democracy advocates arises from the 'unforced force of the better argument' alone (Habermas, 1996, p. 306). Thus, it is asserted that the ideational power of discursive democracy alone is a sufficient propellant to reconfigure the neoliberal food regime's governance structure.

Salient amongst the shortcomings of 'formal' food democracy as described above is the assumption that discursive, deliberative democracy alone will engender a transformation towards more socially and ecologically sustainable forms of production, with the principal political agent here being the global Northern 'eater' or food citizen (Hassanein, 2008; Holt-Gimenez & van Lammeren, 2019). Symptomatically, it is democratic force of argument alone, dissociated from questions of the ownership of, and access to, the means of production or of the necessary redistribution of these means, which is identified as the means to secure transformational change. This assertion is in itself an inherently liberal and 'postmodern' conception, drawing on the favoured 'post-Marxist' thinking of Polanyi (1957; see Tilzey, 2017, for extended critique of Polanyi) and Hardt and Negri (2000). As we shall suggest below, it is no accident that this particular imaginary of change should be associated with

the global North, where affluence, increasingly dependent on exploitation of the South, permits the educational, employment, welfare, and wider citizenship benefits which permit positionality to be (relatively) divorced from class position and from the wider material predicates that enable such 'reflexive citizenship.' In other words, affluence may afford the insulation from the 'dull compulsion of the economic' which enables agents to (relatively) divorce their views as 'citizens' (positionality) from their immediate interests in the capitalist mode of production from which that very affluence derives (class position). By dissociating discursive democratic change from the need to address social-property relations upheld by the state-capital nexus, 'formal' food democracy effectively leaves much of capital's power intact (Holt-Gimenez & van Lammeren, 2019). By the same token, this elevation of citizen positionality at the expense of class position as in the notion of the 'multitude,' obscures difference and embedded asymmetries, serving only to reproduce them. This is particularly true of the profound asymmetries between North and South, which asserted commonalities of 'citizen interest' serve to disguise and therefore perpetuate.

In short, 'formal' food democracy remains ensnared in a symptomatically Northern preoccupation with 'right to benefit,' thereby ignoring the material predicates of the 'ability to benefit' (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). In other words, abilities to benefit from institutions and resources are shaped by class and wider social-property relations instantiated in the state-capital nexus. Recognition of this fact requires a shift from 'formal' to 'substantive' food democracy. Such 'substantive democracy' has certain similarities with Bornemann and Weiland's discussion of different and complementary forms of empowerment which are 'concerned with the development of different forms of political power that, in turn, are related to different democratic principles, such as participation ("power to"), deliberation ("power with") and representation ("power over"). Thus, empowerment is not as such democratic; rather, empowerment is a process of power generation that creates the conditions for democracy.' (Bornemann & Weiland, 2019, p. 108). 'Formal' food democracy, by contrast, conflates discourse, democracy, and equality, obstructing their strategic relational assessment. Subverting the neoliberal food regime requires the de-commodification and dismantling of the key *structural* (not merely discursive) underpinnings of capitalist social-property relations (see below). In other words, constructing an anti-capitalist food regime, or 'substantive' food democracy, will be predicated on 'class struggle' (Federici & Caffentzis, 2014; Tilzey, 2019b).

The deficiencies of 'formal' (or 'progressive,' rather than 'radical') food democracy may thus be summarized as follows:

First, it reifies the 'political' and focuses on discursive elements, while neglecting the social-property relations underlying capitalism—i.e., it focuses on the 'demo-

cratic deficit' to the neglect of 'relations of production and exploitation.'

Second, it has no, or an inadequate, theory of the state, this being seen in essentialist terms usually as an institution opposed to the 'market,' reflecting simplistically the 'will of the people,' rather than as a 'social relation reflecting the balance of class interests in society.'

Third, and relatedly, it has no, or a deficient, understanding of 'class' and 'class struggle,' it being assumed that somehow 'civil society' and 'democracy' have moved 'beyond class' in the manner of the 'new social movements.'

Fourth, again relatedly, it holds a binary view of contestation between the 'multitude' of civil society versus the 'corporate' food regime, in which the 'state' is called upon to 'regulate' the latter and 'protect' the former in Polanyian fashion. This reflects an undifferentiated view of what is actually class-bound society, an inadequate theory of the state (see above), and a simplistic view of capital as being undifferentiated and wholly transnational in orientation.

Fifth, it demonstrates an almost complete lack of awareness of the differentiation of the capitalist world system into an imperium (the global North) and a periphery (the global South), whereby the former, particularly under the 'new imperialism' of neoliberalism, is able to sustain consumer, welfare, and liberal democratic benefits at the expense of the latter, whence the bulk of primary commodities and surplus value is now extracted as 'cheaps.' By contrast, it is commonly assumed by 'progressives' and advocates of 'formal' food democracy, that the 'multitude' in general, North and South, is equally subject to the predations of the 'corporate' food regime and requires a similar response by the 'state' or by 'supra-state' institutions.

Sixth, it elevates initiatives in 'food democracy' to the status of serious challenges to neoliberalism/capitalism, when more frequently these merely subsist in the interstices of capitalism and may, indeed, conform to the process of neoliberal 'de-statization,' whereby the state-capital nexus encourages the devolution and divestment of former state responsibilities to community-led schemes.

3. Defining a Theoretical Basis for 'Radical' Food Democracy (as Food Sovereignty) and Understanding the Causal Basis of 'Formal' Food Democracy

In order to define both the 'political' and 'economic' bases for 'radical' food democracy, we need to understand the nature of the entities which require subversion to achieve this end, together with the nature of the (class) agents/agency that might be able to bring this about. This requires us to develop a much more sophisticated understanding of capitalism, state, and class than is deployed by proponents of 'formal' food democracy. In terms of capitalism and the modern state, we need to understand the twin aspects of this relation

that enable us to make sense of both entities in their dialectical co-constitution: The 'separation in unity' of the institutional spheres of the 'economy' and 'polity,' and the complementary accumulation and legitimation functions of the state in relation to capital as defined, helpfully, by regulation theory (Boyer & Saillard, 2002). 'Progressives' and 'formal' food democracy advocates deploy a dichotomous, rather than dialectical, understanding of the state-capital relation, with both entities reified and de-historicised. We suggest that an understanding of the state-capital relation needs to go far deeper than this, however. Following Poulantzas (1978), it is more helpful to see the state, given the lack of 'extra-economic' influence that individual capitals can exert, as providing the *essential* institutional space for various fractions of the capitalist class, in addition possibly to other classes, to come together to form longer-term strategies and alliances whilst, simultaneously, the state disorganises non-capitalist classes through various means of co-optation and division. The state, also for reasons of legitimation, must, additionally, be 'relatively autonomous' from the interests and demands of particular fractions of capital, and even from capital 'in general.' So, as Poulantzas (1978) suggests, the state represents the condensation of the balance of class forces in society. For advocates of 'formal' food democracy, by contrast, capital is a unitary entity, bereft of specific class and class fractional content. This is counter-posed to a 'state,' a content-less abstraction which apparently represents, without mediation, the position of a generalised counter-movement. This aligns with a Polanyian (Polanyi, 1957), indeed neoclassical, conception of the state and capital as essentialised and opposed entities.

We suggest, therefore, that the modern state is better conceptualised as itself a social relation. That is, an arena or container (the state-capital nexus; Taylor, 1994; van Apeldoorn, de Graaff, & Overbeek, 2012), within which class contestation and compromise is played out, principally to secure the material and ideological reproduction of the hegemonic fractions of capital, even where these may be transnational in orientation. Thus, within capitalism, the institutionally separated spheres of the 'political' and the 'economic' are *dialectically* cognate and implied, with their very 'separation in unity' a consequence of the commodification of labour power and the establishment of absolute property rights in the means of production. At the same time, the modern state acquires a strategic 'political' role which the individual capitalist cannot fulfil. The state was instrumental in effecting the process of 'primitive accumulation' which created a proletariat 'free' to sell its labour power to the capitalist (Perelman, 2000), in other words, of founding the material and class relations (social-property relations) on which capitalism is founded. Once capitalism was installed, the state deployed its power further to maintain and guarantee absolute property rights by the capitalist class, and to institute and support regimes of work discipline required by this new mode

(Wolf, 1982, p. 100). The modern state also assumed the essential role of arbitrating and managing contestation between fractions of capital (inter-capitalist competition), and between capitalists and its labour force, and of representing the interests of capital in the international arena.

This also points to the vital importance of class interests in the dynamics of food regimes, one which confounds the 'formal' food democracy assumption regarding a simple binary of 'civil society,' acting 'beyond' class, in opposition to 'corporate' interests. The reality is that the interests being deployed in food system dynamics are much more differentiated and class-bound than is implied in this binary assumption. In fact, the prime mover in the formation and reproduction of food regimes is the social-property (class) relations in the hegemonic state (in the world system) and the international articulation of these relations with receptive and complementary class interests in other states (Tilzey, 2019b).

This understanding of the capital-state-class relation makes it clear that liberal democracy, or even deeper forms of democracy where confined to the discursive or 'political' level, mask more profound forms of unfreedom based in capitalist social-property relations. This 'citizenship illusion' arises from the reified structure of capitalist social relations itself. It comprises an 'objectified illusion' which reveals and conceals simultaneously: It 'reveals' certain limited rights and freedoms in the 'political' sphere whilst concealing the class inequalities of the 'economic' sphere (Wood, 2005). As a reified social form, liberal democracy both constrains certain types of social action or existence, such as the ability to freely access the means of production or subsistence, whilst enabling others, such as being 'free' to compete in the capitalist market. The structural separation of the 'economic' and 'political' spheres within the modern state was thus intended to constrain actions which might impinge on the economic powers of capital (such as free access to the means of subsistence), whilst enabling purely political rights and obligations (Mooers, 2014; Wood, 1991). We suggest that 'formal' food democracy remains in important respects ensnared in this 'citizenship illusion,' the latter designed to conceal the deeper contradiction between politico-legal equality, on the one hand, and class inequality and exploitation, on the other. As we shall argue below, even the conferral of such constrained, liberal citizenship rights has been contingent on imperialism and the territorial form of the state, defining those substantively included in citizenship rights (the majority in the global North) and those substantively excluded (the majority in the global South). This is why Marx (1981) insisted that political emancipation embodied in abstract citizenship remains only a partial victory, and one rendered more partial still because of its reliance on the 'spatio-temporal' fix that is imperialism. This is why, we argue, 'formal' food democracy remains inadequate to the task of fulfilling the mission of 'radical' food sovereignty—radical egalitarianism (Patel,

2011)—, since this requires the abrogation of the key social-property relations underpinning the capital-state nexus (see below).

Liberal democracy, deployed by the state-capital nexus, has been a powerful means of co-opting non-capitalist classes and deflecting attention away from the exploitative and class-based nature of capitalism. This ability to co-opt and deflect resistance has been differentially located in the global North, however, based in hegemony (as domination through consensus) founded on material rewards (consumerism), nation-building, and the bestowal of politico-legal rights that follow from citizenship. This liberal democratic consensus attained its apogee during the Keynesian era, but has been under increasing strain during the course of neoliberalism. In the face of increased neoliberal class exploitation, attempts to sustain this class compact in the global North have been undertaken increasingly by means of imperial relations, both 'informal' (economic) and 'formal' (politico-military) with the global South. Resurgent neoliberal primitive accumulation, with the state acting as an organ of the expropriators and agro-exporting fractions of capital, has served to undermine the legitimacy functions of the state-capital nexus throughout much of the global South. The outcome of this new imperial relationship between the North and South is that citizens of the former are accorded economic and political privileges denied to those in the capitalist periphery. These privileges form the unacknowledged basis for the imaginary of 'formal' food democracy, tied implicitly to this 'imperial mode of living.'

This legitimacy deficit in the global South, together with the 'formal' rather than 'real' subsumption within capital of the semi-proletarian majority, carries with it the increased likelihood of challenge to the state-capital nexus by counter-hegemonic forces. Attempted re-appropriations of the state and subversion of capitalism are implied, comprising re-assertions of national, and possibly post-national forms of sovereignty, including 'radical' food sovereignty, or 'substantive' food democracy (Tilzey, 2018). Such 'radical' counter-hegemonic forces potentially challenge, then, the essential foundations of capitalism, propounding a more Marxian (reversal of primitive accumulation) than Polanyian ('embedding' of capitalism) or 'formal' democratic, imaginary of social change (Tilzey, 2017). Thus, peripheral forms of capital accumulation, upon which the affluence and 'reified' discursive democracy of the North is premised, are generating more fundamental resistances to the state-capital nexus by 'radical' and counter-hegemonic food sovereignty movements in the global South. These are potentially most disruptive to the neoliberal food regime because it is in the global South, as a periphery for the Northern core, that the contradictions of capital accumulation are greatest and the legitimacy of the state is lowest. Consequently, it is in the South that the potential for transformations towards 'radical' or 'substantive' food democracy appears greatest. In the next section, we explore the dynamics

of these counter-hegemonic resistances in relation to the Latin American states of Bolivia and Ecuador.

4. The Prospects for Food Sovereignty as Counter-Hegemony: Experiences from Latin America and Lessons for 'Food Democracy'

Counter-hegemony is here taken to mean opposition to, and autonomy from, the state-capital nexus—that is, from capitalism and its material and discursive supporting structures within the modern state, as 'modern sovereignty,' including that of 'formal' democracy. 'Radical' food sovereignty, as the ability to produce essential use values unmediated by the capitalist market, comprises a foundational element of such counter-hegemony, as agrarian democracy. Crucial here, then also, is how we choose to define capitalism and its relation to the modern state because this definition will influence deeply how we envisage counter-hegemony as emancipatory politics. The essential point here is that participative democracy should be integral to, not independent from, the process of fundamental change away from capitalist social-property relations. In other words, 'political' emancipation will be less than meaningful unless undertaken in conjunction with 'economic' emancipation.

The definition of such counter-hegemony preferred here derives from the school of so-called 'political Marxism,' exemplified in the work of Brenner (1977, 1985), Wood (1995, 2009), and Mooers (1991), particularly. This approach has much in common with Gramscian and Poulantzian theory (see Poulantzas, 1978), with an emphasis on class dynamics and social-property relations within the state as key explanatory factors, whilst seeking to situate these dynamics within the wider enabling and constraining political economy of the world capitalist core-periphery structure (see Tilzey, 2018, for full delineation of this approach). Following 'political Marxism' (see Tilzey, 2017, 2018; Vergara-Camus, 2014), we can understand capitalism as the contradictory combination of a set of social relations characterized by:

- The separation, wholly or partially, of workers from their means of production;
- Market dependence of producers (the compulsion to depend on a competitive market for the reproduction either of the worker [and family] or of the capitalist enterprise);
- The dominance of absolute private property (the extirpation of common rights in land, and the determination of the right to land only through the capitalist market and, therefore, the alienability of land through its commodification);
- The compulsive imperative of competition among producers (both workers and capitalists);
- The separation of the 'economic' from the 'political' in the form of the modern, capitalist state;

- Commodity fetishism and the compulsion to produce ever more commodities, with severe adverse implications for biophysical fabric of the planet;
- The predominance of exchange value over use-value since surplus value extracted from workers is contained in commodities sold on the market.

The loss of the labourer's control over his/her labour power that is entailed in the expropriation of labourers from their means of production through the process of 'primitive accumulation' is, as we have seen, the absolutely key element in the emergence of the above characteristics. It is the obstruction or reversal of this process of primitive accumulation that comprises, as suggested, the absolutely key demand and desire of counter-hegemonic peasant forces in the global South—this demand and desire persists because the majority of subalterns in the global South are semi-proletarians, still retaining some access to land, however inadequate this may be (they are *formally*, rather than *really*, subsumed within capitalist relations of production, the latter condition applying to proletarians). Such direct access to non-commodified land exemplifies a form of production in which the labourer (semi-proletarian) still controls his/her labour power and, to some extent, the degree and form of integration into the market. Thus, semi-proletarian peasants, even those who depend on the market for the fulfilment of a significant element of their subsistence needs, have more room for manoeuvre (more 'autonomy'), through the adjustment of production and consumption, than their fully proletarianized counterparts (Vergara-Camus, 2014). Under the prevailing conditions of precarity and 'jobless growth,' such autonomy, even if partial, is greatly valued. Unsurprisingly, the aspiration of many under such circumstances is to secure greater autonomy from the capitalist market, in other words, to secure greater access to land in order to achieve self-sufficiency in the production of basic use values such as food. The aspiration, in other words, is to secure a relation to the market that is one of *opportunity*, not of *compulsion*. Such a condition might be described variously as one of radical food sovereignty, agrarian democracy, or what we have elsewhere termed livelihood sovereignty (Tilzey, 2018).

The desire for agrarian democracy has indeed become ever more insistent as the contradictions of neoliberalism have mounted and the proletariat has increasingly acquired the status of a precariat. Access to land, however limited, often provides, under these conditions, the only real element of livelihood security. Thus, struggles in the countryside and in the city often have an essentially peasant character due to the incapacity of 'disarticulated' development (de Janvry, 1981) to provide salaried employment (real subsumption) as a viable alternative to secure the means of livelihood. Both peasants and workers seek refuge in the peasant situation, therefore, that is, in the auto-production of use values, to the greatest degree possible, to meet funda-

mental needs. The rise of indigenous and ecological con-sciousness since the 1990s, and the simultaneous de-legitimation of capitalist modernism, have served only to reinforce the hunger for land and aversion to full prole-tarianization (Moyo & Yeros, 2005). Thus, the resolution of the unresolved agrarian question of the peasantry in much of the global South, particularly in the current eco-logically constrained and increasingly volatile conjunc-ture, seems more than ever to be, of necessity, agrarian and peasant in nature. In this, the potential for mass mo-bilization on the part of the middle/lower peasantries, the precariat, and indigenous groups, for an agrarian so-lution to the contradictions, 'political' and 'ecological,' of capitalism (expressed in ongoing primitive accumula-tion) does not seem unrealistic. Indeed, the history of 'peasant wars' (Wolf, 1999), including the recent wave of anti-neoliberal uprisings in Bolivia, Ecuador, Nepal and elsewhere, indicate ample precedent for this (Moyo & Yeros, 2005).

The point to be emphasized here is that, because of the operation of the 'imperial mode of living,' radi-cal change is most likely to occur in the 'peripheries' of the capitalist world system. No inevitability or teleology is implied here, of course, and this assertion is most def-initely not a manifesto for 'sitting back and waiting' for radical change to emerge from the global South. It is simply to identify where the potential agents of radical change are differentially located, and the great difficulty in getting radical messages to resonate with the major-ity in the imperium, where this majority's livelihood and imaginary are so deeply embroiled in a normalized 'impe-rial mode of living,' including that of liberal democracy. Indeed, the capacity of the state-capital nexus to sub-vert counter-hegemony, both through consumerism and 'formal' democracy, is amply demonstrated even in the global South, where we may point to the experiences of radical food sovereignty movements over the 'progres-sive' cycle of the Latin American 'pink tide' states.

Thus, the 1990s and 2000s saw widespread resis-tance in Latin America to the socially polarizing conse-quences of neoliberalism and to the progressive loss of national sovereignty (including sovereignty over food) that accompanied neo-imperial dependent 'develop-ment' (Veltmeyer & Petras, 2000). Bolivia and Ecuador are exemplary 'pink tide' states where 'radical' forces, comprising middle/lower peasantry, semi-proletarians, proletarians and landless, and indigenous people, en-gaged in what proved to be a fateful alliance with 'pro-gressive' national bourgeoisie and upper peasantry to displace neoliberalism, only to install national-popular regimes of reformist capitalism (note that our class an-alytical frame does not homogenize the peasantry, as does the 'populist' framework of McMichael, 2013, and others). Both states have a new commitment to greater state guidance and interventionism in the economy, to national food sovereignty (albeit largely rhetorical), for-mal democracy, and to the introduction of social pro-grammes to alleviate the severe income disparities of the

neoliberal era. Funds for the latter, however, are predi-cated on the proceeds of the 'new' extractivism of min-erals, fossil-fuels, and agri-fuels, offered by the emer-gence of sub-imperial states, notably China (Veltmeyer & Petras, 2014). These funds have been deployed to sub-sidize welfarism and infrastructure projects, placating counter-hegemonic constituencies, whose demands for radical land redistribution and land rights remain largely unmet. These 'national-popular' regimes have expanded and deepened liberal democracy, at least temporarily, but have failed meaningfully to challenge capitalist social-property relations (Tilzey, 2019a).

Thus, in Bolivia, a broad coalition of peasant, in-digenous, and worker organizations (*Pacto de Unidad*) succeeded in overthrowing the neoliberal regime in 2003 and installing Evo Morales' MAS (*Movimiento al Socialismo*) party in power from 2005. Inter alia, these organizations sought an 'agrarian revolution,' entail-ing massive redistribution of land away from the oli-garchy and in favour of the peasantry. The success of MAS was also dependent, however, on the support of the national bourgeoisie and the upper peasantry, and it was these constituencies which came to de-fine MAS policies as national-popular capitalism, rather than an (agro)ecologically-based socialism. MAS came to be a regime which pursued a sub-hegemonic, or populist, programme of capitalist reformism, placating its counter-hegemonic constituency through welfarism, anti-imperial rhetoric, and the conferral of enhanced 'formal' democratic rights, and soothing the landed oli-garchy through accelerated agri-food extractivism and ef-fective exemption from agrarian reform (McKay, 2017; Tilzey, 2019a; Webber, 2017; see Catacora-Vargas et al., 2017, for status of agroecology in Bolivia).

The experience of Ecuador is very similar. The period leading up to 2006 saw counter-hegemonic social move-ments presenting a powerful challenge to neoliberalism. These movements, comprising the *Mesa Agraria*, signed an agreement with the future president Rafael Correa (a middle-class populist), in which he gave a commitment to initiate, upon election, an 'agrarian revolution' based on the peasant/indigenous movement demand for 'rad-ical' food sovereignty. This was to be centred on the democratization of land access, and on state resources for the revival and stimulation of the 'peasant' econ-omy (Clark, 2017; Giunta, 2014). Again, like Morales in Bolivia, however, it was never Correa's intention to chal-lenge capitalist social-property relations. As in Bolivia, this was to be a national-popular, capitalist-reformist regime. Its populism pivoted on the nationally-focused bourgeoisies' and petty bourgeois class fractions' easy co-optation of the 'progressive' tendency within the food sovereignty movement, and the neutralization of the 'radical' tendency through social welfare payments, con-struction projects funded by extractivism, and a preoccu-pation with formal democratic process. The regime also placated the landed oligarchy by effectively exempting it from the 'agrarian revolution,' a revolution which, how-

ever, has largely failed to materialize (Henderson, 2017; Intriago et al., 2017; Tilzey, 2019a).

These states, in their ability to subvert counter-hegemony through consumerism, welfarism, and formal democracy, thus represent, in microcosm (albeit as a pale reflection of), the 'imperial mode of living.' Nonetheless, this ability to subvert and co-opt is time-limited, being dependent on the non-renewable character of neo-extractivism and the ecological despoliation that this entails. With counter-hegemonic demands for an 'agrarian revolution' unmet, the exhaustion of resources and soils through extractivism will presage dwindling funds for the 'compensatory' capitalist state, the unravelling of fragile populist alliances, and a resurgence of 'radical' resistance. This time around, the scarcity of 'ecological surplus' from extractivism will severely curtail the ability of the state-capital nexus to deflect counter-hegemonic forces from seeking an agroecological and peasant-based resolution of the agrarian question—a reversal of 'primitive accumulation' to address both rural and urban precarity through 'livelihood sovereignty' (Tilzey, 2018, 2019a).

The experiences of the MST (*Movimiento de Trabajadores Rurales sin Tierra*) in Bolivia are exemplary in this regard and may constitute a model which has the potential to be 'scaled-up' in the event of (and, of course, to contribute to), the demise of the state-capital nexus. The dynamics of this movement help us to identify a strategy of emancipatory rural politics whereby counter-hegemony, as food and livelihood sovereignty (agrarian democracy), may be implanted at 'local' level as a form of 'autonomy' (confronting 'capitalism from below'), whilst, simultaneously, recognizing the need to engage the state ('capitalism from above') to secure a more generalized form of autonomy. The MST seems to embody a 'dual strategy' approach, exploiting current opportunities for autonomy where possible, whilst amplifying the struggle for deeper and wider transformation through appropriation and subversion of the state-capital nexus itself. It also seems to represent the kind of 'radical' food sovereignty, or agrarian democracy, which we have identified in this article as counter-hegemony. Thus, the MST has embraced radical, participatory democracy, advocating collective ownership of land, and drawing on, while 'reinventing,' communal traditions inspired by the pre-Columbian *ayllu* (Fabricant, 2012). This, in short, entails a *decommodification* of livelihoods, most importantly by subverting, *materially* as well as ideologically, capitalist social-property relations. The reversal of primitive accumulation, through access to land, represents the preeminent prerequisite of this. This, in effect, is to invoke a Marxian, rather than a Polanyian, response to capitalist social-property relations through decommodification (see Vail, 2010, for more general discussion).

The MST has built an organizational structure that is democratic and participatory, capable of creating order and holding leaders and rank-and-file to account through collective governance (Fabricant, 2012). This is a form of grassroots citizenship, inspired by, but also reconfiguring, Andean principles of autonomy, self-governance, and participatory democracy. This stands in contrast to liberal citizenship as individualism, 'given' to members as a right by the state. The Andean ideal of the *ayllu*, imagined as community-held land and collective forms of governance and control, has become the principal framework for governing MST settlements. These modern *ayllus* are characterized by nucleated settlements, communal landholdings, rotational political and administrative offices, land redistribution, and rural tax collection. The MST has adapted the *ayllu* model to structure their political organization at the community, regional, and national levels. The state has fractionalized land and territory through a model of citizenship that has assigned absolute property rights to individuals, thus dichotomizing the 'political' and the 'economic' (Hylton & Thomson, 2007). The MST asserts, by contrast, that complete dominion over land by an individual or group is itself illegitimate. Rather, land is a collective right and should entail *stewardship* rather than absolute dominion. The occupation of land signifies reclaiming and re-territorializing indigenous/peasant control and autonomy over land and other critical resources (Fabricant, 2012). The dynamic relationship between territorial autonomy and the ability to provide a political infrastructure that sustains humanity is designated by indigenous conceptualizations such as *buen vivir*, a reintegration of the 'political,' the 'economic,' and the 'ecological' (Tilzey, 2017). The MST's idea of food sovereignty and agroecology is deeply embedded in collaborative and collective forms of production. The MST has revived and politicized essentialized notions of Andean rural culture by establishing *ayni* (reciprocity) and *minka* (exchange) as forms of resistance to the capitalist, large-scale, agro-industrial production of the oligarchy (Fabricant, 2012). In their re-appropriation of this cultural model as antithetical to capitalism, the MST affirms the social, collective, and reciprocal forms of production, in which all members of the community benefit from family farming.

The MST has, however, been successful in establishing such settlements only in a small number of cases by exploiting a legal loophole which enables squatters to file a petition for ownership where the land in question is not being put to socially productive use (Fabricant, 2012). The MST is painfully aware, however, that such autonomy as exists in these small number of successful cases is founded on a fragile legal loophole within a more generalized system of absolute property rights which the capitalist state is committed to uphold (Tilzey, 2019a). It recognizes, therefore, that a far greater, and more thoroughgoing, transformation of social-property relations is required if its model of *ayllu*-inspired autonomy for the landless and land-poor peasantry is to be more widely implanted. This serves perhaps to highlight the limitations of autonomism (and 'formal' food democracy) as a doctrine that assumes that real change can occur 'without taking power' or, in other words, with-

out addressing the causal basis of poverty, marginalization and ecological despoliation generated by 'capitalism from above,' orchestrated by the state. This is recognized by the MST. While seizing all the opportunities available at the local level to secure access to land and institute collective ways of life as food sovereignty, the MST recognizes that the limits to this strategy are defined precisely by the forces of unsustainability that need to be confronted. This confrontation can occur only if the struggle is taken to the state by means of a dual strategy designed fundamentally to transform capitalist social-property relations.

5. Conclusion

The experiences of Bolivia and Ecuador serve to demonstrate just how challenging it is for counter-hegemonic social movements to displace the state-capital nexus, even where these movements comprise the majority of the citizenry, possess clearly defined and feasible objectives for 'radical' food sovereignty, and are offered relatively insecure and inadequate welfare/employment benefits in 'compensation' for the thwarted 'agrarian revolution.' How much greater, then, are the challenges for counter-hegemony in the global North, where such movements are much more marginal, comprise a small minority of the citizenry, face severe structural obstacles to 'radical' alternatives (that consequently appear utopian), and where the aspiration and tangible reality for the majority, at least in the shorter-term, is one of relatively secure employment and consumerism within the 'imperial mode of living.' This is not to trivialize the important efforts of 'food democracy' movements in the global North, such as those involved in food cooperatives and community-supported agriculture, but merely to point up how much more work and effort are required: First, to 'visibilize' and 'de-reify' the 'imperial mode of living'; second, to avoid co-optation into the material rewards of consumerism and the ideological obfuscations of nationalism (for example, Brexit and Trumpism); and, third and perhaps most important, to address the immense structural constraints presented by deeply entrenched private property rights, the separation of the citizen majority from the means of livelihood, and the commodification of those means of livelihood (notably land) such that they are unavailable other than to a wealthy few. Part of this work is to politicize, rather than to construe as 'evolutionary' inevitability, the phenomenon of primitive accumulation (that is, the historical and forced separation of the majority from their means of livelihood), and to lay bare the 'predication' of the imperial mode of living, and the preoccupation with formal rights and democracy, upon the perpetuation of this phenomenon throughout much of the global South today. This is simultaneously to reformulate the problem of 'food democracy' as an issue, not merely of deepening and extending democracy around principle of 'right to food,' but also of challenging the capitalist social-property relations which underlie social inequality and ecological unsustainability. This, ultimately, is a question of redressing primitive accumulation, through 'radical' food sovereignty as agrarian democracy.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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COGITATIO

Article

The Role of Knowledge in Food Democracy

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Abstract
If food democracy is about who gets to determine the food that we eat and the character of the underlying food system, then we must examine not only who gets to make decisions that impact on food but also on what evidence, or knowledge, these decisions are made. This article argues that widening the democratic scope of knowledge on which our decisions on food are based is an essential component of food democracy. Food democracies do not just call for citizens to be knowledgeable about the food system but for all stakeholders to actively contribute to the holistic understanding of the food system. Four dimensions of knowledge democracy are set out: The co-production of knowledge with stakeholders; harnessing non-cognitive knowledge represented in arts and culture; knowledge as a tool for action; and the open access and sharing of knowledge. This framework is then used to explore how knowledge is currently already produced and used in a way that enhances food democracy, including through Participatory Action Research with peasant farmers, using the arts to create a 'contemplative commons' about food and the unique dialogue process through which the social movement *La Vía Campesina* operates. Based on these, and other, examples the article concludes that universities, and other recognized centres of knowledge production, need to focus not only on creating new knowledge partnerships but also on finding spaces to challenge and shift accepted ways of knowing in order to better promote food democracy.

1. Introduction

At the core of food democracy is the idea that people can and should actively participate in shaping the food system (Hassanein, 2003; Welsh & MacRae, 1998). Solutions to ecological, social and economic problems in the food system, it is argued, must be determined through meaningful civic participation and political engagement by informed citizens (Hassanein, 2008). The importance of individuals having equal opportunity as well as the knowledge necessary to effectively participate in decision-making is often recognized in both democratic theory as well as the literature in food democracy (Hassanein, 2008). However, the production and use of knowledge in the food system is not evenly distributed through society: Powerful economic interests seeking to maintain control over the agri-food system have limited the availability of such knowledge though intense commodification of food that distances consumers from producers (Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, & Stevenson, 1996). At the same time, knowledge on the food system is also produced and held by recognized centres of knowledge production, such as universities and research institutes, that have traditionally held a kind of knowledge monopoly in society (Biesta, 2007). Efforts to democratize the food system, therefore, bring to the fore questions of 'whose knowledge is to be recognized, translated and incorporated into action' (Nowotny, 2003, p. 151). Democratic principles hold that all persons should not only have access to knowledge,

but also be able to inform and shape what is considered relevant knowledge for decision making. In a world in which knowledge shapes power and voice, and vice versa (International Social Science Council, Institute of Development Studies, & UNESCO, 2016, p. 275), food democracy does not just call for informed citizens but for them to actively contribute to the holistic understanding of the food system.

Since the 1980s and 1990s the global food system has been characterized by the consolidation and concentration of commercial food related activities to a relatively small number of (multi-national) corporations (Murphy, 2008; Pulker, Trapp, Scott, & Pollard, 2018). This new era of corporate power has affected the way knowledge about the global food system is generated and distributed in society. For example, supermarkets have become the main point of contact between the public and the food they eat, which has distanced consumers from producers as well as the link between that food and the earth (e.g., by making certain seasonal food available all year around). Related to this, a few multi-national companies have a disproportionate hold over how issues around food are framed in the public debate (e.g., presenting supermarkets as guardians of the consumer and efficient actors in the food system; Pulker et al., 2018). These multi-national companies also hold a huge amount of data on the food system (e.g., on consumer purchasing patterns through loyalty cards), which is not released into the public domain. In addition, global patent laws such as Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights restrict access to knowledge to companies with access to patent courts (e.g., Monsanto owns over 90 per cent of genetically engineered seeds in commercial use; Financial Times, 2006, as cited in Murphy, 2008).

Other more recognized centres of knowledge production and transfer (such as universities, higher education and research institutions) have also had a profound impact on the production and transfer of knowledge about the food system. Specifically, these institutions have traditionally played an instrumental role in determining what counts as relevant, or scientific, knowledge. While these knowledge institutions can no longer be regarded as having the monopoly on knowledge (as seen above in the huge data sets held by private food companies), there is still a strong tradition in which knowledge from the university is understood as being of a special kind—more true, more real, more rational than other types of knowledge from outside the hallowed halls of academia (including traditional, lay or corporate knowledge; Biesta, 2007). The upshot of this interpretation is that there is only one way to see and understand the world that is valid.

The concept of knowledge democracy, in contrast, involves the acceptance of a diversity of different forms of knowledge including lived experience and every day practice as well as artistic or other forms of representations that are accessible to a lay person (Santos, 2006). Over the last few decades there has been a growing awareness that there is an inequality in the world of knowledge: 'Certain dominant knowledge institutions and knowledge perspectives have been shaping the global socioeconomic order' (Tandon, Singh, Clover, & Hall, 2016, p. 21). Gaventa and Cornwall (2006, p. 122) argue that knowledge and power are closely intertwined and knowledge production, use and dissemination determines what is 'conceived as important, as possible, for and by whom...Asymmetric control of knowledge production, of 'others' can severely limit the possibilities that can be imagined or acted upon' (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006, p. 122). This suggests that scientific knowledge, although vital, is not the only relevant knowledge that is important in decision making (Blowers, Boersema, & Martin, 2005). According to Freire (2000), knowledge democracy focuses on demystifying power in the process of knowledge creation, dissemination and use to bring liberation of both the oppressed and the oppressor. From the point of view of food democracy, embracing a plurality of perspectives by, for example, opening up the process of 'doing science' and by bringing consumers closer to the producers of the food that they eat, is a moral imperative to include subaltern forms of knowledge into decision making. It is, however, also a practical necessity as it ensures the production of holistic and pluralistic knowledge that is better able to address complex problems, such as food insecurity that cut across a number of economic sectors, levels of governance as well as involve a wide array of actors both inside and outside of government (Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2001; Pereira & Ruysenaar, 2012).

This article brings together literatures on knowledge democracy and food, including literatures on food sovereignty (e.g., Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2014), food governance (e.g., Matacena, 2016), alternative food networks (e.g., Harper, Shattuck, Holt-Giménez, Alkon, & Lambrick, 2009), and agro-ecology (e.g., Méndez, Bacon, & Cohen, 2013). It does so in order to illustrate how widening the democratic scope of knowledge on which our decisions on food are based is an essential component of food democracy. According to Tandon et al. (2016), knowledge democracy is best understood as an interrelationship of phenomena, which they set out in four dimensions, namely: Cognitive justice and the co-production of knowledge; multiple representations of knowledge; knowledge as a tool for action; and knowledge sharing. While the boundaries between these four dimensions of knowledge democracy can be somewhat blurred in practice, the different dimensions provide a useful lens through which to unpack the role of knowledge in food democracy. In the next four sections of this article each of these dimensions of knowledge democracy is explored and illustrated with examples of how knowledge is already beginning to contribute to the pursuit of food democracy around the world. Where possible the examples are taken from the literature. Examples are also reported from the author's experiences of the food security research in South Africa. In the final and

concluding section the role that universities and other recognized sites of knowledge production could play in further encouraging food democracy through deepening knowledge democracy is discussed.

2. Cognitive Justice and the Co-Production of Knowledge

The concept of knowledge democracy not only recognizes the right of different forms of knowledge to co-exist but argues that this plurality must be actively recognized and embraced (Visvanathan, 2009). This idea of 'cognitive justice' presupposes that knowledge is embedded in ecologies of knowledge 'where each knowledge has its place, its claim to a cosmology, its sense as a form of life' and cannot be abstracted from its culture (Visvanathan, 2009, p. 22). Opening up what is understood as 'the truth' to include non-cognitive knowledge embedded in the stories, culture, ceremonies and day to day experiences of the majority of the people of the world is a moral imperative to address inequalities in the dominant Western paradigm of scientific knowledge (Oswald, 2016; Hall & Tandon, 2017). It is also essential to counter the tight grip on knowledge held by multi-national corporations, especially in the agri-food system. Furthermore, opening up the scope of what is considered valid knowledge is also pragmatic: Pluralistic knowledge regimes also provide diverse 'communities of problem solving' to find workable solutions to some of society's most complex problems (Visvanathan, 2009). In addition, knowledge created with the involvement of the ultimate users and/or beneficiaries of that knowledge is more likely to be seen as legitimate and relevant (Oswald, Gaventa, & Leach, 2016).

Rather than shifting the prioritization from one form of knowledge to another (whether indigenous or experiential etc.), realizing cognitive justice calls for the co-production of knowledge—a collaborative process bringing together multiple kinds of knowledge and perspectives to construct an understanding based on a plurality of situated knowledges (Oswald et al., 2016). According to Nowotny et al. (2001) in *Re-thinking Science: Knowledge and the Public in an Age of Un-certainty*, this process moves beyond producing merely scientifically reliable knowledge towards socially more robust knowledge that is repeatedly tested and modified in the real world through the perspectives of an extended group of experts including lay people (i.e., outside of science). Expertise is therefore spread throughout society and democratized rather than in the hands of the elite (Nowotny, 2003) either in universities or large corporations.

Transdisciplinary and participatory research approaches that value and integrate different types of knowledge systems have become particularly associated with research into ecosystems management and sustainable food production. Farmers across the world are continuously adapting and developing their knowledge to cope with local manifestations of global environmental change (Tengo, Brondizio, Elmqvist, Malmer, & Spierenburg, 2014). Consequently, the importance of indigenous knowledge has come to the fore, for example, when thinking through climate change adaption strategies in traditionally rain fed agricultural regions (e.g., Food and Agriculture Organization, 2009; Ncube, 2018). Similarly, agro-ecologists, since the 1980s, have valued and sought to better understand the experiential knowledge of farmers as a necessary component to develop a more sustainable agriculture (Méndez et al., 2013). According to the 'Réseau Semences Paysannes' in France, agro-ecological knowledge production 'can be carried out only in liaison with peasant movements which use agroecology' (Réseau Semences Paysannes, 2008, as cited in Levidow, Pimbert, & Vanloqueren, 2014, p. 1134, emphasis added). This type of transdisciplinary agro-ecological research fits well with participatory approaches and an increasing number of agroecological studies in the last decade have used these approaches in different ways (e.g., Altieri & Toledo, 2011; Bacon, Méndez, Gliessman, Goodman, & Fox, 2008). Levidow et al. (2014) argue that going beyond the linear transfer of research and technology from science to farmers to a more balanced farmer–scientist alliance based on the co-creation and exchange of knowledge is critical in agroecology moving beyond being just a scientific discipline to a transformative role in the food system).

Beyond food production, the co-construction of knowledge in other components of the food system (such as processing, distribution, retail, consumption and waste) has commonly been employed for problem solving that directly or indirectly feeds into policy formulation. For example, Food Policy Councils (FPCs), seek to convene and leverage off the collective knowledge of a wide variety of food systems actors and stakeholders (Haysom, 2014). FPCs can be defined as structures that bring 'together stakeholders from diverse food-related areas to examine how the food system is working and propose ways to improve it' (World Hunger Year, 2008, as cited in Kent, 2011, p. 142). Information exchange and the sharing of perspectives across different sectors and parts of the food system are important activities of these councils (Schiff, 2008) contributing to their role of creating 'democratic spaces for convergence in diversity' and sites of social learning (Harper et al., 2009, p. 7). However, because FPCs aim to identify and propose innovative solutions to improve local or state food systems, they often engage in food system research in order to make their policy recommendations. One of the first activities of many new councils is to participate in collaborative efforts to generate and publish some type of food system assessment (Harper et al., 2009; Schiff, 2008). FPCs also commonly publish information brochures and food guides to educate the public and other government officials (Schiff, 2008).

The co-production of knowledge for food policy can also come from more ad hoc fora. For example, the Western Cape Food and Nutrition Strategic Framework

(Western Cape Government, 2016) in South Africa was drafted on the basis of a series of stakeholders meetings steered by a team of local food security researchers and policy. Rather than relying on a purely academic (or policy) driven approach, the strategy's themes and underlying actions were developed through a dynamic participatory process. This was designed to create opportunities for stakeholders to put forward their perspectives of the food security problems and possible solutions on the ground in a 'very wild and woolly process with all kinds of emergent stuff happening' (personal communication with a policy official, Cape Town, May 15, 2017). The role of the science and policy team was to collect as many ideas as possible in 'a living breathing document' (personal communication with an academic, Cape Town, November 1, 2017) with '[t]he hope…that by enlisting people that were embedded in the various parts of the system…that they would…be more knowledgeable about the topics that we were going to include into the policy' (personal communication with a policy official, Cape Town, May 15, 2017). Thus stakeholders were not just consulted on a draft policy, as is legally constituted in South Africa, but participated in the co-production of knowledge of the food security policy problem and possible solutions in their local area.

3. Multiple Representations of Knowledge

The concept of knowledge democracy defines knowledge in broader terms than just peer-reviewed journal articles and books to include not only the 'facts,' but also the feelings, experiences and consciousness or familiarity linked to activities of our daily lives and often articulated in the arts (Tandon et al., 2016):

> Knowledge is created through research, through the experience of the wise, through the act of surviving in the world, and is represented in text, poetry, music, political discourse, social media, speeches, drama and storytelling. Knowledge is linked to practical skills, to our working lives and to universal and abstract thought. Knowledge is created every day by each one of us and is central to who we are as human beings. (Escrigas, Sanchez, Hall, & Tandon, 2014, p. XXXIII)

Clover (2006, 2012) cited in Tandon et al. (2016) argues that the arts are well placed to facilitate knowledge mobilization due to a number of characteristics of the arts: For example, the versatility of art genres, which allows flexibility in revealing and representing a wide range of issues and also the universal nature of the arts so that every people and culture around the world has their own types of artistic expression and custom. In addition, the arts allow the imagination to soar above the, often mundane, constraints of the everyday so that the world can be imagined and re-imagined in new ways creating new forms of knowledge. Clover goes on to argue that the symbolic and metaphorical nature of art allows meanings that go beyond the limitations of mere words and language and so helps to make fresh connections between ideas and understanding.

Beyond the arts, Tandon et al. (2016, p. 26) argue that 'knowledge is also created, represented and shared through age old practices such as ceremonies of indigenous people, and the sharing of stories that keep alive cultural practices and ways of knowing that would otherwise be erased.' While the representation of knowledge through stories and customs is often associated with the indigenous knowledge of marginalized communities, ethnographic studies of workplace practices show organizational knowledge can also be represented and shared in similar ways and that this knowledge can play a significant role in (situated) institutional learning (Brown & Duguid, 1991).

Capturing and integrating this non-cognitive knowledge within the current scholarly knowledge system is problematic. One approach is to employ Visual Participatory Methods for science-community engagement. For example, in the 'Heart of the Matter' project community members from Delft township in Cape Town were trained in photo-voice techniques in order to exchange perspectives on food preferences and habits with disease research scientists from nearby Stellenbosch University (Sustainable Livelihood Foundation, 2016). Photovoice is a qualitative method in which participants are asked to express their points of view and/or represent their communities by photographing and interpreting scenes that highlight research themes. The photovoices were published as a report along with the scientists' reflections on the interaction. The scientists felt that they had learnt from the experience, which had given them 'a new perspective,' 'a great learning experience,' and 'insight that the laboratory cannot offer' (Sustainable Livelihood Foundation, 2016, pp. 51–53). This enhanced understanding included both cognitive and non-cognitive knowledge: The photo-voices illustrated the complexity as well as the constant negotiation process involved in food choice and health on a daily basis that 'involves consideration of budget, contingency, health, safety and convenience' (Sustainable Livelihood Foundation, 2016, p. 53). One scientist explained how they had been 'really impressed by how the photographers succeeded in portraying something really complex by means of what on face value appears to be a very simple and straightforward image' (Sustainable Livelihood Foundation, 2016, p. 53). The scientists also connected emotionally with the photo-voices: 'When looking at the photos and the narratives, I felt as if I was transferred into their lives at that moment, which was a truly moving experience' (Sustainable Livelihood Foundation, 2016, p. 53). The use of these visual methods therefore allowed deeply personal stories to be articulated using non-verbal expression of emotional truths that are difficult to communicate in words. In turn, this provided the scientists with a deeper human understanding of the problem that their research was attempting to address.

Other examples of the use of the arts to engage with non-academic communities on food issues often aim to mobilise knowledge by using art to stimulate or provoke different kinds of dialogue and modes of engagement. For example, the 'Food (R)evolutions' exhibition, which travelled to several African and European cities, blended photography and videos, narrative theory and contemporary perspectives on African food systems (Meyer & Lindow, 2016). Similarly, the 'ARThropocene' project engaged in 'artful science and scienceful art' by encouraging participants to view an art exhibition before taking part in a dialogue, facilitated in part by the artists, in order to provoke different kinds of encounters and collaboration on the topic of food (Preiser, Hamann, & Biggs, 2017). The intention was for the 'alternative' mode of ('artful') inquiry would help the participants 'flex/stretch their imagination as transformative capacity towards anticipating alternative Anthropocene futures' (Preiser et al., 2017).

Drama and poetry can also help create 'a contemplative commons' to develop the worldviews, mindsets, and social practices supportive of the social change. A play commissioned by the Centre of Excellence for Food Security in South Africa entitled *Another One's Bread* and performed in theatres in Cape Town and Johannesburg tied together issues of food, funerals and feeding schemes in the townships by embedding them in cultural context and humour 'that tows along facts and ideas in its wake' (Stones, 2018). Similarly, a collection of poetry and prose about food entitled *Cutting Carrots the Wrong Way* explores the social meanings of food and the ways in which these meanings are lived out through individuals, culture, the media and traditional systems. Such meanings, the editor of the volume argues, can 'better be explored through a multi-disciplinary humanities approach' that views food systems as sites of cultural performance, social resistance and aesthetic expression (Moolman, 2017, p. 7).

4. Knowledge as a Tool for Action

Another central tenant of knowledge democracy is harnessing the powerful agency of individual realization that 'their knowledge' counts (Tremblay & Jayme, 2015). Hall (2011) refers to knowledge democracy as a 'global knowledge movement' that is action-orientated and recognizes, gives visibility to and strengthens the knowledge that is created in the context of people trying to 'change the world.' Knowledge is therefore seen as a powerful tool for taking action in social movements and to deepen democracy in order to build a fairer and healthier world (Tandon et al., 2016). For some commentators, knowledge democracy for community transformation is best brought about through collaborative research approaches such as Community Based Participatory Action Research (Openjuru, Jaitli, Tandon, & Hall, 2015). However, Hall (2011, p. 4) reminds us that knowledge for action does not have to happen within the

context of formal research (collaborative or otherwise) but instead can be driven by the people themselves 'who are seeking recognition of their rights, their land claims, access to jobs, ecological justice, recovery or retention of their languages.' Knowledge within such a movement formation is most likely place-based and rooted in the daily lives of people who increase their knowledge of their own contexts and 'by sharing what they are learning with allies and others like themselves moves…towards being agents in the naming of the world' (Hall, 2011, p. 4).

Such (re)appropriation and sharing of indigenous knowledges to activate a potent movement is notable in the knowledge strategy of *La Vía Campesina*—the most prominent member and driving force of the food sovereignty movement. According Martínez-Torres and Rosset (2014), the *La Vía Campesina* has utilized a process called *Diálogo de Saberes* in Spanish, which roughly translates to 'dialog among different knowledges and ways of knowing,' to harness the diverse knowledges of its large grassroots membership. *Diálogo de Saberes* begins with the recognition, recovery and valorisation of local and or traditional knowledges (Leff, 2011, as cited in Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2014). In the dialogue process 'different visions and cosmovisions' are shared on a horizontal equal-footing and one knowledge is not imposed on others (Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2014, p. 979). This process is distinguished from stakeholder mediations where the goal or outcome is a compromise solution whose mid–point position reflects the geometry of power (Massey, 1991). Rather than finding a midpoint, *Diálogo de Saberes* allows 'new theoretical and political discourses to be invented that interweave, hybridize, mimic and confront each other in a dialogue between communities and academy, between theory and praxis, between indigenous and scientific knowledge' (Leff, 2004, in Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2014). *Diálogo de Saberes* has therefore allowed for areas of internal consensus to be reached, often in the form of new 'emergent' proposals and ideas, which help steer the conceptualisation and strategic direction of the food sovereignty movement as well as maintain internal cohesion (Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2014). According to Martínez-Torres and Rosset (2014), the dialogue process has in this way accelerated the recent shift in the movement toward the promotion of agro-ecology, which is simultaneously seen as a field of academic research, a set of practices and a social movement (Wezel & Soldat, 2009).

5. Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge democracy is also about open access for sharing knowledge so that everyone that needs it has access (Tandon et al., 2016). Since the creation of Oxford University and other early tertiary education institutions in Europe some 500 years ago, access to knowledge has been limited (Hall & Tandon, 2017). The creation of the university system had the effect of 'enclosing knowl-

edge…exerting a form of control over knowledge and providing a means for a small elite to acquire this knowledge for the purposes of leadership of a spiritual, governance or cultural nature' (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 8). The walls of the universities quite literally came to demark the 'knowers' on the inside and the 'non-knowers' on the outside (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 8). Western research is steeped in a monolithic understanding of knowledge that assumes individual ownership of knowledge enabling exploitative practices that can co-opt and distort indigenous ways of knowing (Oswald, 2016). Traditional or lay knowledge, in contrast is often communally owned seeing knowledge as a common good (Lucio-Villegas, 2016). Although universities, and other research centres, still play an important role in the definition of what counts as 'scientific' knowledge, they no longer hold the monopoly on research or data (Biesta, 2007). Nowadays, research is conducted and data collected in many places outside of the University. For example, the private sector increasingly (and tightly) holds huge volumes of data on purchasing patterns of their consumers.

One way to break down the walls between 'expert' and 'lay' knowledge is through Communities of (food) Practice made up of networks of individuals, organisations and institutions that come together to share knowledge and experiences on an ongoing basis (Wenger, 2000). Communities of (food) Practice can fulfil a variety of related functions. They can: connect people who might not otherwise have the opportunity to interact; provide an opportunity to share information; help people organize around purposeful action, stimulate learning through the transfer of knowledge from one member to another; and generate new shared knowledge that helps people transform their practice (Cambridge, Kaplan, & Suter, 2005). Like FPCs, Communities of (food) Practice are particularly useful in linking multiple levels, economic sectors and actors that have (an often hidden) influence on food in our society. In contrast to most FPCs however, Communities of (food) Practice do not aim to directly inform decision making and policy as their informal make up rarely carries any mandate from a government body neither do they claim legitimacy to speak on food issues for a certain community or geographical area. Rather the participants learn from the different experiences and perspectives of other Communities of (food) Practice members creating a unique opportunity to inform their food related practice beyond the Community of (food) Practice (Food Secure Canada, 2011).

Knowledge exchange and collective learning can also take place in informal knowledge networks that are not deliberately constructed and labelled as such. For example, Alternative Food Networks (such as veggie box schemes, farmers markets, and cooperatives) help to generate knowledge exchange in a process that brings consumers, producers and other food actors closer together. Whereas the corporate control of the food system brought about through increasing commodification as well as vertical and horizontal integration limits infor-

mation availability to consumers about the products that they buy, Alternative Food Networks tend to shorten the distribution channels (Hassanein, 2008). This can be used to make sure that the products reach the consumers with information so that they can find out where their food is produced, by whom and how (Darlot, Lamine, Brandenburg, Alencar, & Abreu, 2016). Alternative Food Networks can also link producers in a given geographical area generating a collective learning process that leads to a rapid diffusion of knowledge, best practice and innovation while also providing avenues to retain traditional knowledges (Beckie, Kennedy, & Wittman, 2012). Many Alternative Food Networks also attempt to (re-)educate consumers so that they can 'resist accepting and conforming to the offer of the conventional system' (Darlot et al., 2016, p. 2). The standardised industrial food system, it is argued, has deskilled and pampered the consumer through a proliferation of packaged convenience food often available out of season (Darlot et al., 2016; Matacena, 2016). By re-embedding food production, distribution and consumer practices in a social and spatial sense (Matacena, 2016) these networks can not only promote a new social economy of food that will make a difference to only a handful of people, but disseminate new ways of knowing, growing and organizing food using horizontal networks of knowledge sharing and learning (Goodman, DuPuis, & Goodman, 2012).

Cultivating knowledge networks is all very well when the holders of relevant knowledge are keen to collaborate and engage in collective learning. However, private companies, and even the parts of governments with which they engage, are not always ready to share information that they regard as economically sensitive. In these cases, a different approach is needed to promote greater transparency and debate on the food system. For example, the Land Matrix launched in 2012 as an open data tool to monitor land deals around the world. It is intended to enhance governance decisions on land resources through raising awareness and public empowerment. The online tool is facilitated by a partnership of academic and development organizations but aims to also involve the public in building a constantly evolving data-base through crowd-sourcing (Anseeuw, Lay, Messerli, Giger, & Taylor, n.d.). The data come from a variety of sources that include media reports, reports by international organizations and non-governmental organizations as well as academic research based on field research projects (Anseeuw et al., n.d.). By providing access to previously hidden data and restricted sources on large scale land acquisition the Land Matrix is hoped to enhance the quality of land governance via the empowerment of populations: Transparency and information openness is intended to help local populations identify projects, see how funds are spent and learn about the purpose, costs and results of land acquisitions. The chance of damaging activities being uncovered is also hoped to incentivize companies and governments to adapt their practices (Anseeuw et al., n.d.).

6. Conclusions

At the core of food democracy is a criticism of the dominant role of large corporations play in food and the idea that all people should have the power to help shape the food system (Hassanein, 2003; Norwood, 2015). Viewing the food system through the lens of knowledge democracy (where knowledge is seen as a kind of power), this article argues that not only do citizens need access to knowledge in order to make decisions about the agro-food system but they also must be able to inform and shape what is considered relevant knowledge for decision making. This ideal is far from the current state of knowledge in the food sector, where consumers are distanced from producers and where universities traditionally act as gate-keepers on what is considered as scientific (rational) knowledge. However, Hassanein (2003, p. 78) reminds us that 'there are already spaces of resistance and creativity in which people themselves attempt to govern and shape their relationships with food and agriculture.' This article attempts to unpack some of these spaces by examining the role of knowledge and giving examples of how opening up the scope of knowledge is already starting to assist citizens to determine policies and practices that shape of the food system in their communities, regions and countries.

Goodman et al. (2012) argue that shared knowledge and mutual understanding between producers and consumers are the foundation of alternative food systems. However, more inclusive knowledge processes will not automatically result in consensus on what kind of food system we should aim towards, nor how best to get there. It is unlikely that common ground will easily be found across cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, political persuasions and differential power relations. Accepting a diversity of knowledges on equal terms means embracing a dialogic process, characterized by an intense (perhaps endless) conversation between proponents of different knowledges and ways of knowing (Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2003, p. 187). Facilitating these conversations requires creating a 'new architecture of knowledge' (Dolan et al., 2016) that makes spaces to shift accepted ways of knowing and embraces new knowledge partnerships.

Universities are ideally placed to help create this new architecture of knowledge since, in contrast to private companies, they have a civic role in producing knowledge for the good of society rather than for competitive advantage in the market place. The idea that universities should play a role in democracy and democratisation goes back to the Enlightenment and the beginnings of the modern nation state (Biesta, 2007, p. 478). Under this traditional model the civil role of universities was that of knowledge generation and transfer (Weymans, 2010). In contrast, the examples given in this article illustrate the many non-traditional knowledge roles universities are now playing in relation to food and agriculture. Cultivating research partnerships, sharing knowledge and data, as well as and the coproduction of knowledge with a variety of actors outside of science are at the heart of universities' emerging contribution to deepening food democracy. This 'challenges universities to be of and not just in the community; not simply engaged in "knowledge-transfer" but to establish a dialogue across the boundary between the university and its community which is open ended, fluid and experimental' (Watson, 2003, as cited in Millican & Hart, 2011, p. 3). Universities then become sites of public discourse rather than sites of exclusive expertise (Delanty, 2003). According to Lucio-Villegas (2016), encouraging this kind of grass-roots activity that aims to make connections between different types of knowledge can bring the university down from its ivory tower. Universities must start to think, 'not only about justice in the larger world, but also about their own distinctive role in shaping cognitive justice and knowledge democracy' (Gaventa & Bivens, 2014, p. 149).

Individual researchers can also reflect on their own role in creating knowledge. Oswald (2017) argues that researchers are in a privileged position because they can set the research agenda, ask certain questions, and involve certain people. If we are all experts now, the ordering of this brave new world of pluralistic expertise will be played out and negotiated in these new (knowledge) spaces (Nowotny, 2003). In these 'problem-generating and problem-solving' environments competing experts, institutions will vie with each other, as well as 'variously jostling publics' to bring their knowledge to bear on decisions (Nowotny, 2003, p. 156). Negotiating shared knowledge and meaning in these spaces as we collectively produce, disseminate and use new knowledge to inform decisions about our food systems will no doubt be a messy and, at times, chaotic process, but it is an essential part of food democracy.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Making Taste Public: Industrialized Orders of Sensing and the Democratic Potential of Experimental Eating

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Abstract
Existing discussions of food democracy focus on people's freedom to choose healthy, sustainable, or otherwise 'good' foods. Such foods are supposed to be unrestrained by oligopolistic structures of food supply, economic inequality, misinformation, or the misleading lobbying campaigns of the food industry. Our article aims to broaden the discussion about food democracy: focusing on people's freedom to choose the food they want, but also on people's freedom to engage with what they eat and how they want to eat it. This thematizes collective orders of sensing and, more specifically, taste. Based on pragmatist and praxeological studies we pose that tasting food is a matter of historically grown collective practices. In a second step, we assert that the reflexive shaping of such practices is currently dominated by the food industry and related forms of sensory science. Democratizing taste is a matter of people's capacity to self-govern how they experience and enjoy food. To this end, we suggest the approach of 'experimental eating' as a way to question and reflexively engage with embodied forms of tasting. We report on the development of methods that, in a next step, are to be combined for a participatory exhibition inviting people to experimentally reconfigure their habitual tasting practices and experience agency in matters of shaping taste. The exhibition makes taste public by demonstrating the construction of sensory experience in eating practices. It positions taste as a collective issue which every human being can experiment with—and thus to contest the governance of taste as currently exercised by industrial corporations and scientific experts.

1. Introduction: Towards Making Taste Public

In 2005 Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel curated the exhibition "Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy" (Latour & Weibel, 2005). It comprised works of artists, scientists, sociologists, philosophers, and historians who were invited to explore questions of politics and representation. "Making Things Public" asked how conceptions and practices of democracy ought to include engagements with processes of thing-making. We allude to this attempt at widening the realm of politics and democracy. We also seek to include dimensions of collective life conventionally treated as natural, unchangeable, and therefore indisputable. 'Making taste public' contends that the constitution of taste is another dimension of collective ordering. As it stands the constitution of taste is reflexively shaped overwhelmingly by the food industry and its experts. 'Making taste public' suggests methods for how this can be shifted towards shared and public experimentation.

While "Making Things Public" demonstrated the ongoing construction of objects and their effects, 'making taste public' needed to demonstrate that people's ways of sensing, experiencing, and aesthetically judging are

also continuously being constructed. Steven Shapin, in his presidential address to the Society of the Social Studies of Science in 2011 took up the same challenge. He suggested that one should challenge that the "modern sciences of subjectivity" embedded within "the aesthetic–industrial complex" should "go on their way, largely unattended to by people like us" (Shapin, 2012, p. 179).

The historical construction of embodied sensory and aesthetic dispositions has long been known, for example, through Elias' and Bourdieu's studies of a culturally acquired habitus (Bourdieu, 1990, pp. 52–66; Elias, 1997a, pp. 76–82; Elias, 1997b, pp. 326–331). It is only fairly recently though that studies have shown the potential dynamics of *ways of tasting* (Hennion, 2004). For scholars such as Hennion, such ways of tasting are relationally constituted in practice, and may also reflexively be engaged with and experimentally shaped during the course of life. In Hennion's studies, such reflexive engagement with one's own ways of tasting can be observed in the experimental practices of dedicated amateurs. Other studies draw attention to the ways in which the food industry, supported by the sensory sciences, shape the collective orders of taste. As these practices aim towards creating standardized and globally saleable products, they tend to have a far broader reach and impact on the everyday practices of eating (Lahne, 2016, 2018). The resulting diagnosis is that taste is not unchangeably inscribed in our bodies, as if biologically evolved or as a habitus determined by social structure. As a practice, it can also be shaped reflexively. The actual capacities to do so, however, are unevenly distributed between corporate actors and consumers. This is the starting point for us to ask how the reflexive shaping of taste practices can be democratized. The line of inquiry presented in this article explores how the construction of taste can be demonstrated experientially and how people's capacities to engage with it can be nurtured so that they can challenge the dominance of industry and experts in these matters.

A key problem is that taste is not primarily articulated in discourse and material artefacts. It exists in embodied patterns of sensitivity, attention, affection, and experience. Turning taste political thus requires not only the deconstruction of stories and hacking of objects but also that one's own embodied ways of sensing is made amenable to reflexive engagement and contestation. Linguistic reflection, rhetoric, and argumentative reasoning, however, come to their limits when we turn to subjectivized and embodied rather than objectified orders of collective life. Autonomously and creatively engaging with collective orders of tasting is, first of all, a matter of stepping out of habituated ways of sensing (Hartmann, 2003). Acquiring critical capacities in matters of taste thus hinges on doing and experiencing, and on learning new ways of being attentive, new skills, and new techniques, rather than on symbolic (de-)construction, formal education or object-oriented expertise (Schwarz, 2013). It is here that democratizing taste fundamentally challenges conceived ways of understanding politics and democracy. This links up with a wider turn to performative, aesthetic, and affective dimensions of 'politics beyond words' (Butler, 2015; Dewey, 1934/2005; Marres & Lezaun, 2011; Rancière, 2000/2013).

The Latin word *sapere*, defining us as *homo sapiens sapiens* and having fuelled the early modern democratization of state power with the slogan of "sapere aude!" (Kant, 1784/1963), not only means to know, in a figurative sense. It originally meant to taste, smell, find out differences and make a judgment. Instead of translating it as 'dare to think,' we could rather translate it as 'dare to sense.' Calling into question the primacy of consciousness, ideas and abstract reasoning after Plato, Descartes and Kant, it challenges us to bring sensory and aesthetic practice back into the public realm and to reinvigorate it as a capacity of collective sense-making (Rebentisch, 2012). Exploring food democracy may be an occasion to start from this other dimension of *sapere*.

We take some advice from precursors in feminist politics, specifically the seminal book *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, which focused on experimental sensing and affective expression as a medium of re-doing embodied constructions of selves (The Boston Women's Health Book Collective [BWHBC], 1973). This book and others enabled reflexive engagement with the ways in which male-dominated medicine shaped perceptions of the female body. Seeking ways to democratize taste we follow the lead of these earlier attempts to renegotiate the sensing of one's body with the help of experimental methods. We look for methods not to educate people about the nefariousness of the food system, but to engage people in creatively exploring new ways of tasting or what we call methods of 'experimental eating.'

Such methods complement theoretical and empirical analyses of the dynamics of taste as a collective practice. They directly address the non-reflexive and embodied nature of tasting habits, by not only discursively questioning them, but by creating occasions for people to materially experiment with their own ways of tasting. These methods allow people to sense how their ways of tasting could be different, and to get an experience of being able to shape their ways of tasting. This is a precondition to ensure people do not simply subject themselves to established patterns of tasting (wherever they may have come from), but to subject these patterns to their own active interrogation, contestation, and engagement. We suggest, therefore 'experimental eating' as an approach for democratizing taste, and we will discuss preliminary steps towards developing it for deployment in a participatory exhibition set up in the course of a citizen science research project. This, we argue, is a necessary precondition for democratizing taste. It is a precondition for making taste public and for opening tasting up for contestation (for an extended discussion of pragmatist concepts of democracy see Butler, 2012; Dewey, 1927/2012; Latour, 2007; Marres, 2012).

We proceed by giving a brief overview of the state of research on taste as a collective practice in Section 2.

We show that collective orders of tasting are dominantly shaped by business strategies, science, and governmental policy following an industrial logic. This leads us to ask in Section 3 how the shaping of how we collectively taste could be democratized. We face here the challenge of turning taste, and the ways in which it is being shaped, into an issue of public concern. This goes beyond discursive contestations with a view to the making of rules (by states) but has to work directly through the medium of sensory experience with a view to nurturing people's capacity to practically engage with their own ways of tasting. Building on such conceptual considerations we discuss in Section 4 the development of methods of *experimental eating* as components of a participatory exhibition to demonstrate, by means of sensory experience, how people can become agents in shaping their own ways of tasting. We conclude the article with a recapitulation of the challenge of deepening food democracy by opening up the dimension of taste, of how people sense food and how they want to eat, for wider public engagement by the people themselves.

2. Tasting Like Industry and the Aesthetic Governance of Food Systems

To understand the conditions of shaping taste and how it can be opened up for wider public engagement, we need to understand first how taste happens. How does a sensory experience come about as food meets the body? We base our considerations on recent social and anthropological studies of taste, which attend to the practices of sensory experiences. This leads beyond a conception of taste as the passive and individual perception of objective features of food, as proposed in psychological stimulus–response models or phenomenological accounts of interpretive sense-making. Taste instead is evinced to be an active and collective way of doing sensory experiences (Counihan & Højlund, 2018; Hennion, 2004; Sutton, 2010; Warde, 2008). It is then not something that one has, but something that one does, together with others—a pattern of movement someone participates in. This opens up the question of how such patterns emerge, if they are reflexively problematized and how, as well as whether attempts are made to shape them, by whom and with what effect.

As such, taste also becomes a potential political issue, a question of how collectives want to do taste— and a matter of questioning the democratic quality of how decisions are made that shape how collectives taste. Understanding taste as a practice thus opens taste up for inclusion in broader debates about food democracy, because it breaks with naturalized, individualized, or reified structural accounts of taste as an indisputable condition of life. In the following, we briefly recapitulate the basic premises of taste as practice and discuss how it allows us to account for the industrialization of food as it is experienced and desired.

Studies of taste as practice are part of a broader field of social studies focusing on practices as the constituting units of social life (Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, & von Savigny, 2001). Practices can generally be understood as patterned ways of doing something. They consist in relations of human bodies (with certain incorporated experiences, skills, and predilections), meanings (socially communicated knowledge, definitions, framings, norms, and values), and materialities (both designed artefacts and architecture as well as 'natural' materiality; Reckwitz, 2010, pp. 190–192; Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012). Compared to alternative accounts of social life, practice studies seek to decentre the intentional individual as a source of patterned social activities. Instead, practice theories acknowledge that practice is relationally constituted by heterogeneous elements. Recursive relations between elements such as human bodies, meanings, and materialities grant practices a life of their own. As dynamic compounds in themselves, practices recruit individual bodies into their processual logic and shape their subjectivities, including their cognitive and sensory dispositions.

The practice-oriented approach suggests that how we sense and experience is not a property of us as individual human beings or of the encompassing social structures, but that it is a property of specific practices in which we participate and train our bodies in specific ways. Other than in biological and psychological theories the senses are not assumed to work as fixed transmitters of information from the environment to the body (for an early critique see Dewey, 1896). Rather, sensing is actively practised in specific ways. It entails specific ways of being attentive and perceptive, letting oneself be affected, and making sense of affections (Hennion, 2004, 2015; Teil & Hennion, 2004).

Turning from this general understanding of sensing as embedded in practices to the tasting of food as being embedded in practices of eating we recognize that it can be done in very different ways, depending on situational circumstances. Eating itself has been analysed as a "compound practice" usually linking up with other practices (Warde, 2013): Eating may occur in the context of daily life (as a rushed breakfast in the morning, a family meal at night, a snack on a journey), it may occur in the context of work, or it may occur in the context of a celebration, a religious ritual, a fitness programme, a medical treatment, etc. Specific ways of sensorially perceiving and evaluating food are integral to any of these varieties of eating and are shaped in relation to several other elements that make up these eating practices. As such tasting may happen in the background, with little intensity, serving instrumentally as a gatekeeper for accepting the intake of food in our bodies. But eating may also be done as a dedicated sensory practice, when the tasting of food moves into the foreground and when sensory perception and affection become the actual purpose of eating (Hennion, 2015; Reckwitz, 2016). This often happens in professional taste practices, but can also be observed in amateurs, for example, in the case of wine lovers who taste wine (Gomart & Hennion, 1999; Teil & Hennion, 2004).

Historically, how we taste has evolved as has how we eat, which is connected with how we cook, produce food, and celebrate meals. All of this, of course, is embedded within regional, ethnic, religious, class, gender, and other patterns in which practices are clustered. However, a practice-oriented view refrains from reifying any of these patterns as structural determinants. It seeks to stay close to the actual doing and how it is constituted and changed by situationally specific constellations of its elements. Any specific configuration of taste can thus potentially become a matter of concern and reflexive engagement, opening it up for experimental exploration into how it could be done differently.

Understanding taste as practice positions people as agents with regard to how they taste. Yet, this is not what people in Western societies have been enculturated with. They learned to understand taste as both a bodily trait and an outcome of learning to eat the industrial foods on offer. Following Scott, we might call this 'tasting like industry' (Scott, 1998). Tasting like industry is guided by a basic interest in centrally governing eating practices, rather than allowing people to experiment with taste and food. The possibility of re-inventing and playfully shaping one's own ways of tasting is left out, as is getting together with others to collectively explore and articulate dissident ways of tasting. Tasting like industry has dominantly been shaped by the sensory sciences that emerged alongside the food industry (Lahne, 2016; Shapin, 2012; Spackman, 2018; Tracy, 2018; Ulloa, 2018). The food industry has approached taste with a view to determine and control it for epistemic as well as economic reasons. Guided by an interest in the general validity of knowledge claims and in the optimization of food products for large markets, science and industry approach taste with a framework to ascertain preferences as normal averages that are stable across situations. Industrialized taste in this sense has become performative (cf. Callon, 2007). It becomes enacted in the design and operation of consumer testing and marketing strategies. These, in turn, inform the configuration of products, packaging, retail environments, advertisement, dietary information and education materials, public discourses, policymaking, and regulations of how people interact with food.

Normalizing and passivizing people as tasters has enabled efficiency gains through industrialization and has become inscribed in the design of products and services through which people practically experience and learn to taste in their daily lives. More and more people learn to taste with food products optimized for industrial production and global marketing (Carolan, 2011/2016, pp. 1–7, 12–14, 16–42). Even seemingly non-processed foods such as milk (Atkins, 2016), vegetables, and fruits are industrially reprocessed, regulated, and standardized (Demortain, 2009; Frohlich, 2017). Alarming reports have highlighted that food corporations have attempted to strategically cultivate a way of tasting to make people crave ever more of their most profitable products,

even baby food (Moss, 2013; Nestle, 2013; Schatzker, 2015). Contemporary consumers have been turned into a collective of "bodies tuned to fast food" (Carolan, 2011/2016, p. 4) which, with time, have developed an "industrial palate" (van Esterik, 2018, p. 21). Conversely, public health campaigns typically fail when they call on consumers to heroically resist such a performative shaping of their tastes by abstaining from embodied eating habits.

This does not mean that industrial food practices do not also expand the taste experiences of modern consumers, by inventing new kinds of foods and making them ubiquitously available. But most of it happens within a specific ontology of taste as a matter of passive bodies reacting to objective qualities of food products. Even in less alarmist language, we can diagnose a path-dependency, and a locking-in to global industrialized foodways, not only in the dimensions of investments, technology, and institutions, which are usually looked at in studies of industrial transformation but also how people have come to know and do taste.

The industrial way of knowing taste is even further reified by public problem analyses and measures for education and governance which presume respective models of eating behaviour (cf. Schneider & Ingram, 1990). Examples in this regard are health education programmes promoting dietary techniques for regulating bodily desire or ecological food policy controversies hung up on the question of how rigidly the state may, for matters of reason, rein in the pleasures of its citizens (Mol, 2009). Even counter-discourses and practices denouncing fast food and industrialized eating habits largely confirm the difficulty of changing tasting habits. They usually do not address taste, but seek to foster better ways of eating (slow, together, handmade, organic, regional, seasonal…). Such better ways of eating are then again addressed as a matter of education and individual responsibility for making conscious choices to regulate desires that are understood as given (Biltekoff, 2013; Guthman, 2011). What is cultivated in all these instances is a way of understanding and practising taste that is deeply aligned with industrial methods of food production and marketing which rely on knowing objectively, universally, and predictably what people like and what they want.

This way of shaping taste by enacting it as indisputable subdues the agency of people in shaping it and brackets taste out from politics and contestations of the governance of food systems. It must, therefore, be regarded as a fundamental form of power. It is a power at work along with the power of market shares, production empires, property and financial resources, favourable laws and promoting institutions or supporting discourses of food security and efficiency. It is a power resting in fixing what people *want* to the given ways in which their bodies desire. This is what we may call the *aesthetic governance* of food systems.

In these ways, the industrial mode of managing food systems narrows down pathways of development, possi-

bilities for mobilization and transformation. It is very difficult to convince people to eat foods they do not like. Examples here are the challenge of establishing insects as a sustainable protein source or development aid workers trying to 'help' people with foods that fall outside their taste preferences. This is also true the other way round: It is very difficult to prohibit food that people do like, see for example the failure of prohibition laws, the campaigning disaster of the Green Party in Germany announcing a veggie day, or the fights around unpasteurized cheese (Paxson, 2010).

Just as the successes of industrial modernization are tied up with specific enacted ontologies of tasting, so are their repercussions. Responding to them, therefore, requires engagement with how we know and do taste. Democratizing taste then means questioning the genesis of learned ways of appreciating, enjoying, or being disgusted by food. Democratizing taste means devising methods to work against the naturalization and reification of taste and to question existing ways of tasting like industry. It suggests equipping people with the means to explore and develop alternative ways of sensing food. Learning to taste differently is a political practice because it practically contests the dominant ways how collective patterns of tasting are being shaped. This is a precondition for taste to become a public issue and an arena of more people-led negotiations of collectively practised aesthetic orders.

3. From Acknowledging Aesthetic Governance to Democratizing Taste

How can we engage with ways of knowing and doing taste in the context of current industrialized food systems? How can we redress the dominance of production and marketing interests in the aesthetic governance of food systems? How can we open up the shaping of collective taste practices for a broader and more inclusive engagement with the public? These are key questions for overcoming aesthetic path dependency and enabling innovation in food systems, but they can also be framed politically, as key questions for democratizing the aesthetic governance of food systems. They aim to open up the shaping of taste practices for more inclusive engagement with the people who perform them. In the following, we discuss how these questions can be taken up in concrete activities for democratizing taste.

A pivotal step is to de-naturalize tasting habits by demonstrating and experiencing how tasting could be otherwise. This breaks with understanding taste as structurally given, only to be decrypted by science, and impossible to shape, because this understanding effectively shields the shaping of tasting practices from equal engagement and public problematization. To democratize taste, we thus need a different way of knowing taste.

For taste to become amenable to democratic engagement, it must be conceptualized in a way that does not position citizens as either biological or cultural dopes who simply execute structurally determined sensory dispositions and desires. Rather, citizens should be considered to have reflexivity, discretion, and agency in matters of their own tasting. This shift is very different from critiquing established taste practices as false or underdeveloped and heralding an improvement in tasting, in the sense of making individuals more discerning. This would merely amount to a strategic reverse engineering of Bourdieu's habitus concept. Rather, democratizing taste requires people to be aware of what happens when they taste and be capable to act on it. Only then will they engage with the politics of taste on their own terms, rather than the terms of some expert's political project.

The previously reviewed sociology of the senses already points towards a democratization of taste by such a break with established ways of knowing taste. This literature provides alternative ontological and theoretical frames, research designs, and methods. These make visible and enact a different reality of tasting as *potentially* diverse, dynamic, and shaped by eaters who reflexively and collectively develop their own ways of tasting. As discursive and conceptual work such new ways of doing research on taste are key to the democratization of taste. Yet, there is still a gap to be bridged between *observing and theorizing* how people may taste differently in certain settings and *enabling people to actually* taste differently. It is a performative inconsistency of the literature on sensory sociology that its main output is a theoretical text or an empirical description. As a text, it operates in a mode that practice-oriented studies analyse for its shortcomings in capturing social life as it unfolds. It implies that readers would change their habits by cognitively understanding the argument of the text and based on this cognitive understanding being subsequently willing and able to autonomously modulate their sensing practices and ultimately their bodily dispositions. But practice theory, in sync with public health, has shown that this is precisely not how humans work. People do not start eating worms and crickets because they have been told that they could learn to enjoy them.

To overcome this performative shortcoming and to actualize the potential agency that recent studies of taste attribute to people, the challenge thus is to look out for approaches of knowing and doing taste differently that are themselves practical, bodily, affective, and sensory. Unleashing alternative forms of *knowing taste in practice* thus appears as an approach which deserves to be explored. Before we get there, however, we discuss how not only taste needs to be understood in different ways to open it up for democratic engagement, but also how our understanding of democracy has to move away from conventional modern ways of knowing democracy in terms of state government, party competition, elections, parliamentary debate, open and transparent stakeholder negotiations, and occasional referenda (e.g., Held, 1987/2006).

The main point here is to go beyond discourse and institutions as the medium within which governance,

politics, and, correspondingly, democracy is thought to play out. Traditionally the knowing and doing of governance has focused on the making of formal and informal rules. Institutions, norms, and laws have been foregrounded as relevant dimensions of collective ordering that were to be reflected, problematized, and collectively shaped in contestations over how they could best serve the public good. Since the 1970s the "cultural turn" has contested how we conceive of collective ordering processes (Bachmann-Medick, 2011; Nash, 2001). The cultural turn shifted attention to deeper dimensions of collective ordering beyond explicit ruling and political debate. It brought into view the implicit world orders, the ontologies that are enacted as collectively binding in the ways in which normal life is performed: Some research has focused on the use of language and the practicing of certain forms of rationality (Governmentality Studies, e.g., Foucault), some on scientific knowledge production and the design of technology (Science and Technology Studies, e.g., Latour), and others on gender relations and the construction of embodied subjectivities (Gender Studies, e.g., Butler). Against this background, the doing of politics and governance could no longer be restricted to rule-making in or beyond the state. Rather, it had to include processes which shape the very categories with which we communicate and think, the methods by which we observe and structure reality, and the ways in which we comport our bodies and our senses. This conceptual broadening of analytical perspectives on governance and politics has continued to problematize the collective ordering taking place in practices of sensory perception, affect, and creativity (Howes, 2005; Rancière, 2000/2013; Reckwitz, 2012/2018; Voß, Rigamonti, Suarez, & Watson, 2018).

This cultural turn has been accompanied by a wave of activist projects and movements that have begun to question the power relations embedded in everyday and professional practices. In the 1970s and 1980s, people started to develop practices of lay experimentation in order to challenge received expertise. These practices emerged in a variety of fields such as science shops, community arts and architectural self-build movements, as well as feminist body and health practices (Guggenheim, 2010). The latter, in particular, provide a relevant precedent for our interest in the democratization of embodied sensory orders.

Our analysis above has pointed to the ways in which tasting itself as a bodily practice has been shaped by the food industry. It is a fundamental bodily function which people assume to be normal without considering that it has been shaped by specific industries. The history of feminist body practices can give us insight into precursors of how to understand and unlearn similar ways that bodies have been taken for granted. In the case of feminist body practices attention was obviously not focused on food and taste, but on the ways that a male-dominated medicine conceived of the female body. Women began to understand that how they understood

their bodies was framed by medical discourse and practices. Women began to claim that the medical profession, at that point overwhelmingly male, gave accounts of their bodies that they found wrong and harmful. But to understand the ways in which these accounts of and practices with female bodies were wrong, it was not enough to simply read and write against them. Rather, it required women to unlearn and re-learn their own bodies in action.

The publication of a course manual *Our Bodies, Ourselves* in 1971 defined a new way of writing, understanding, and experiencing the body (BWHBC, 1973). It was translated in many languages and sold millions of copies. *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was unusual, because it sought to challenge the medical authority over women's bodies not just by replacing received medical knowledge with other knowledge, but by encouraging a new, democratic, experimentalized and political relationship to bodies. A complex recursive relationship was already present in the writing, where the writers were a collective that wrote about their own bodies. The book itself was based on close observation and comparison of the authors' bodies. But at the same time, these authorship practices extended to the readers: "readers were addressed as 'we,' encouraged to identify with personal narratives, and invited to use the book as a prop for exploration of their own bodies" (Wells, 2010, p. 11). As Michelle Murphy explains, the invitation to experiment with bodies created a form of "affective entanglements":

> A moral economy of affirmation—of the happiness of knowing oneself through bonding and of recognition of oneself in others as a politicizable collectivity. At the same time, objectivity was reassembled as a project of self-knowing only possible in politically and affectively charged relations with other subjects. (Murphy, 2012, p. 90)

Importantly, there is a connection here between self-experimentation as a new way to explore one's body, and knowing that such self-experimentation leads to the formation of new collectives.

There are obvious links here with how we conceptualize the challenge of democratizing taste. Focusing on taste, however, broadens the scope of engagement from the body itself to situations in which the body encounters food, and in which we eat and taste. This also implies that experimental explorations require engaging with the complex interplay of one's own body, a multiplicity of highly diverse food items and their relational embedding in specific eating situations (where, when, with whom, in which atmosphere, which furniture, utensils, etc.). Democratizing taste then is not merely a matter of experimenting with one's own body, but about reorganizing the situations in which eating and tasting happens (see Derschmitt, 2017, for an example of how to experimentally politicize eating situations with public "permanent breakfasts").

Some approaches of food politics, like the one pursued in the Slow Food movement, already take steps in this direction by arranging workshops and meetings which allow participants to explore and learn attentive and conscientious ways of eating and tasting (Panagia, 2010, pp. 123–148). They engage with food systems as sensory orders and practice a sensory mode of political mobilization by affectively attracting interest and collective identification. With regard to the democratization of taste, however, they fall short when compared with the women's collective 'Our Bodies, Ourselves' and the later gender studies and queer movement in the ways in which they opened up embodied cultural assumptions. By focusing on pleasure and responsibility without questioning culturally constructed taste as a framework for experiencing pleasure the Slow Food movement is, like early feminist struggles for women rights, limited in its effectiveness to what is possible within the historically established sensory order. There is also a reflexive debate emerging, however, with regard to the relative conformism of the movement and how it reifies established taste patterns of white middle-class aficionados as good taste (Hayes-Conroy & Martin, 2010). Thus, instead of fighting for a specific taste we suggest moving to the *queering* of taste by experimentally opening up the practical and embodied ways in which people collectively experience taste.

We have started to work on methods of 'experimental eating.' Such methods create an occasion and provide a setting for stepping out of habitual ways of eating and tasting and invite people to explore new and different ways of eating. The basic approach for methodically triggering experimentation is to withdraw or exchange constitutive elements of the usual way of doing eating and tasting. We begin by disassembling established practices (Roehl, 2012, pp. 118–119) or by disrupting typical practice (Garfinkel, 1967). This is achieved, for example, by requiring that eating is done with the fingers, after some physical exercise, alone or under observation, or eating as if one knew that the food was poisonous or from most expensive delicatessen, as if one were a giant or a rabbit, or by eating a meal composed of ingredients that have randomly been brought to the table. In any case, it is left up to the people who use the method to reassemble the situation by re-relating other elements with the deliberately altered element so as to find a way of doing taste under these changed circumstances. It is here that experimentation comes into play. Because people cannot rely on their habits anymore, they invent their own ways of tasting. Experimental eating methods thus make people become creative agents in matters of doing taste. They make them experience how it feels to be a creative agent who invents and explores other potential ways of tasting.

We are currently developing such methods in a citizen science research project, together with a diverse set of twenty interested amateur researchers and with expertise mobilised from a variety of academic disciplines and arts (Schmeck!, n.d.). The further aim is to arrange a participatory exhibition with a parcours of about ten stations. At each of them, a different component of established eating practices is experimented with. Over the course of the parcours, each participant explores experiential effects that arise from shifting and modulating components of their eating practices across the dimensions of the body, meaning, and materiality. In the end, participants eat a self-made meal in a self-defined situation, exploring how it shapes their sensing and tasting. They thus experience how reassembling and reinventing taste works, that it is possible, perhaps fun, and maybe even delicious. While such exercises in experimental eating are research, providing insights on how ways of tasting can change, they are also political interventions for democratizing taste. In the next section, we give more detail on the design of such methods and how they work.

4. Devising Methods for Experimental Eating and Tasting

A number of pre-tests with methods of experimental eating have been carried out. The first by Michael Guggenheim at the launch of a special issue on "The Raw and the Cooked" of the cultural studies and science and technology studies (STS) magazine *Avenue* (Avenue, n.d.), followed by Michael Guggenheim and Laura Cuch at the European Association for the Study of Science and Technology (EASST) 2018 conference in Lancaster (Guggenheim & Cuch, 2018) and finally by Jan-Peter Voß and Daniel Kofahl with participants of the *Sensing Collectives* workshop held in the autumn 2018 in Berlin (Voß, Rigamonti, Suarez, & Watson, 2018). The details of the report below are based on the second of these events. The pre-tests were carried out with academics (at EASST and Sensing Collectives) and readers of a cultural studies/STS/history magazine in the case of *Avenue*. In each case, the participants self-selected by answering calls for each event. What is relevant is not so much the outcome of the specific experiments, but the logic and feasibility of the experiments as testing grounds for setting up a public exhibition for wider participation in reassembling taste.

The goal of these pre-tests was twofold. The first goal was to trial various experimental methods that each address a different element of eating practices in how they affect taste, such as political or religious framings, different knowledge of ingredients, or different kinds of utensils. The second goal was to explore the sequencing of such methods as a way to create new dishes. With this latter goal, we relate to the diagnosis that many people have lost experiential knowledge of how tasting results from the composition of ingredients, bodies, mindsets, tools, and atmospheres—and how it can be shaped by tinkering with different components (e.g., Carolan, 2011/2016; Flammang, 2009). Abstract advice to 'enjoy eating' or 'eat healthier' would thus need to be complemented by practical experience of how it can be done and what it does. The goal of this sequencing was to

make people understand that eating situations comprise more than dishes and meals and that they can be de- and re-assembled in search of new taste practices.

In each case of our pre-tests with experimental eating, with slight variations, participants were given a sequence of exercises and experiments that led to the construction of a dish. Participants were asked to bring two random ingredients. They then shared them with four other people at their table, so that each had six ingredients in front of them. The randomizing of ingredients demonstrated that it is the cook's logic and creativity that creates a dish, rather than preconceived logic of what goes with what. It laid the basis for giving the participants the powers to design a dish from constituent taste experiments. They were then asked to select random ingredients for each other, blind taste each ingredient and take notes of the tasting experience. Each ingredient had to be tasted differently. The note taking was a crucial element, as it forced the participants to reflect on the tasting experience. The first ingredient was simply tasted as is. This served as a benchmark for the following tasting experiments. The second was tasted as if it were something else, say an apple (this is based on the Fluxus artist and folklorist Bengt af Klintberg's event score No. 8; Klintberg, 1967, p. 7). It highlighted the idea that tasting as a social practice is informed by pre-existing bodily practices and *expectations* of how we eat what. The further tastings were sociological variations of this event score: The third was tasted as if the taster were a mouse or some other animal. This moved the focus away from the tasted object to the body of the taster. The fourth was tasted as if the ingredient had no nutritional value. The fifth was tasted as if it were a divine gift, and the last as if it were dangerous, infected by a parasite. These latter two focused on how cultural meanings of food products inform the way we eat and taste.

After having tasted each ingredient, participants were instructed to build a dish out of these ingredients according to at least one guiding socio-logic, such as Gender, Ecology, Politics, Health, Humans/Non-Humans, Technology, or Religion. That is, they had to define a logic which would structure how ingredients relate to each other and which quality of each ingredient they would make relevant (taste, colour, social meaning etc.). They were asked to construct a story that connects the different ingredients and at the same time arrange the ingredients, their tastes, meanings and qualities into a dish. Each participant had also been asked to bring an eating utensil (a knife, fork, plate, piece of plastic or wood that would serve as either plate or cutlery) and to explain how this utensil fits into the logic of the dish.

Participants in the exercise had various tools at their disposal to prepare, cut, slice, arrange, and measure the ingredients. Finally, they were asked to define a consumption situation (where, when, how?) that would suit the dish. Through all these steps they were induced to move from the taste experiences in the first part to compositional logic. They were encouraged to invent a dish based on their taste experiences. To eat, they were asked to share their dish with their neighbour and explain the logic of the dish. Thus, each person at the table would create a different dish, enabling different tasting experiences and enacting different socio-logics from the same set of ingredients.

From this short explanation, the following elements of each of these exercises become apparent: Each exercise sensitized the participants to the food they were eating. The sensitization happened because an arrangement was created that slowed them down and directed attention to their own bodily experiences. This was first prompted by participants being required to take notes for each tasting. We prepared a notation sheet, which encouraged each participant to record their results and thoughts. Second, the heightened attention came from enticing participants to taste in ways they would normally not taste. In this sense, the tasting experiments were a kind of breaching experiment (Garfinkel, 1967; for a similar translation of breaching into design see Stuedahl & Lowe, 2013). Harold Garfinkel invented breaching experiments as a way to demonstrate unwritten rules of ordinary interactions by disturbing these interactions without announcing this to the participants beforehand. For example, he would send students home and asked them to pretend not to know their parents or he would point out during interactions with strangers that he was recording the interaction. In each case, the startled reactions would demonstrate the underlying rules of interactions and the repair work people engage in to rectify the situation. Other than Garfinkel's breaching experiments, our experiments were not (cruel) acts to which others were unwittingly exposed, but shared experiences collectively undertaken in order to demonstrate what happens in ordinary taste practices and to create new taste experiences. The breaches were bodily and practical, as the tasting was not merely a breaching of normative expectations and cognitive routines, but of practical, bodily and sensory ways of relating with food, how to eat and how to experience eating.

For example, tasting an ingredient as if it were divine makes the taster attentive to how social meanings, which are often latent, form the practice of tasting. People *experience* that ingredients are never just ingredients; their taste is imbued with social expectations and consumption contexts. Tasting an ingredient as if one were a rabbit makes the taster aware of their own body and how it helps constitute what they eat. While we cannot become rabbits, eating as a rabbit forces us to change the way we practically eat, which in turn changes how we taste. These are just a few examples of how such exercises stimulate the development of new eating and tasting practices and indeed differently bodily and sensory experiences of food.

The experiments also made taste an issue of *collective* attention, communication, and negotiation. They made taste public, even if initially only on a limited scale. In every step, the doing of taste and the experience it

created did not remain individual but had to be shared. Strangeness, novelty, and surprise became a matter that could be discussed. Participants were invited to talk and write, but also watch and listen to how others go about tasting. Within the group of experimentators tasting thus became an issue of public deliberation, of judgment and exchange.

Importantly, these novel experiences of eating and tasting could not simply be attributed to the organizers of the experiments, because every single dish was mediated through each participant's own way of doing each exercise. The participants created and owned their own dish. They were the cooks, the choreographers, and the tasters, the sociological analyst and eaters folded in one. They were those who conducted an inquiry into their own taste and a more collective understanding of how tastes come to be and how novel tastes can form.

These pre-tests are first attempts at materializing conceptual considerations of the democratization of taste. They serve to illustrate the general approach of experimental eating with concrete examples of how methods could be devised that can make people experience themselves as agents in matters of tasting. In our current work, we set out to build on and develop this approach into a set of methods to be systematically combined to provide a parcours for a participatory public exhibition of tasting practices. Conceptually, we think about a set of methods to experimentalize tasting and eating in its various constitutive aspects, broadening out from a focus on the cooking of dishes to the composition of situations. Linking up with practice-oriented studies of tasting we seek to devise methods systematically addressing constitutive components in the dimensions of bodily dispositions, meanings, and materiality. The goal is to compose a set of methods that create a parcours which, by passing through them one by one, would allow taste to be sequentially unravelled and recomposed as embedded in specific situational arrangements of eating. It would induce people to experience the construction of taste from its various components. It would offer each of these components as a starting point for opening up, experimentally exploring possibilities, inventing new ways of tasting and thus, eventually, engaging with the ongoing shaping of collective orders of tasting. The development of such a set of methods is itself a matter for experimentation which we are carrying out together with a wider group of amateur researchers and disciplinary experts in the context of a citizen science research project. In upcoming publications, we will be able to describe the specific set up of the exhibition and report on how it was adopted by
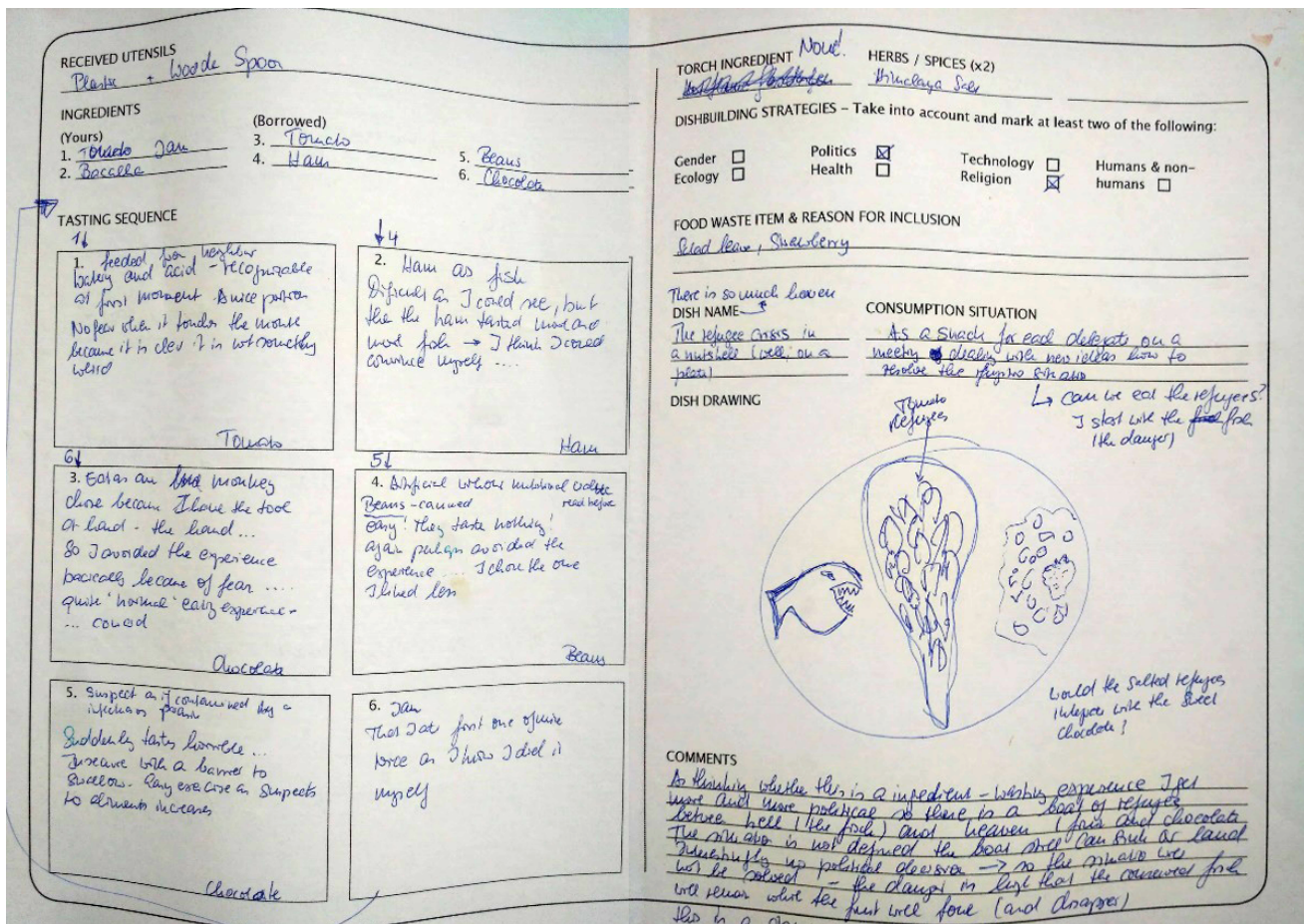

Figure 1. Participant's notes from a pre-test with experimental eating methods at EASST 2018 in Lancaster. Source: Michael Guggenheim.

a broader public, and to what effect with regard to sensorially opening up eating and making taste a public issue.

5. Conclusion: The Challenge of Democratizing Taste

We began this article by arguing that taste matters when it comes to democracy. That is, to understand the governance of food systems, we also need to understand and intervene in the ways people have learned to taste. The ways in which collective taste has historically taken shape, however, are clearly dominated by interests in industrially optimizing and controlling the production and consumption of food. Diagnosing the aesthetic governance of food systems highlights that it is corporate agency, not citizens, that has power. How people taste is widely understood as being structurally given and unchangeable and therefore not worthy of debate. Appetite and desire, or aversion and disgust can at most be tamed and regulated. Collective patterns of tasting are key stabilizers of an industrial path of food system development, alongside more frequently analysed political-economic, institutional, technological, or epistemic patterns. Here is an important additional dimension where "profit-oriented multinational corporations as well as international networks of scientific and administrative experts…are making critical decisions regarding the food system" (Bornemann & Weiland, 2019, p. 2). We could add that these companies and experts also make critical decisions about how food is collectively tasted and enjoyed or dismissed. We thus suggest that we should shift the discussion about food democracy, from a focus on the freedom of the people to choose the food they want, to the freedom of the people to engage with what and how they want to eat.

The current way of knowing taste effectively prevents this from becoming a public issue. It prevents taste from becoming politicized that is, from contesting the question of 'how do we want to taste?' As long as taste is understood as determined by biological or social structures, something people have, rather than something people do in certain ways and via interaction with others, it is effectively shielded from contestation and the articulation of alternatives.

At the start of this article, we alluded to "sapere aude!" (Kant, 1784/1963) as a slogan for the enlightenment movement. Kant introduced it as a response to his diagnosis that people would follow interpretations of the world established by authorities rather than daring to think on their own, thus remaining captured in self-imposed immaturity. We can take issue with how he charges citizens with laziness and timidity, thereby individualizing the responsibility for their subjection. Yet, in subsequent years it became an opener for the articulation of contesting views and the rise of public debate about how collective life should be governed. This ultimately led to a gradual democratization of governance by formal rule-making. In tune with the original Latin meaning of *sapere* in 'sapere aude!' the enlightenment

movement, however, by focusing on words and thinking, liberated people from self-imposed immaturity only regarding a limited part of their existence. But *sapere* originally meant to taste, and then, more broadly referred to a capacity to make differences and judgments. If we relate this to how people currently do taste seemingly by expertly deciphered irreversible biological and social imprints, then it would seem that we are still in a pre-enlightened, pre-democratic state of self-imposed immaturity. Food democracy is unlikely to come into being under such circumstances.

It was a key issue for the enlightenment movement to argue that the subjection under existing orders is not required by destiny, divine will, or the natural orders of class, sex, or race. In the same way, it is a key issue for democratizing taste to demonstrate and *make sensible* how subjection under existing orders of taste is not a given. These orders can be engaged with by exploring our own ways of sensing.

Recent anthropology and sociology of sensing and taste provide a conceptual starting point. We can learn that the ways in which human beings sense is not universal and naturally given, but is historically shaped in interactions and resides in collective practices rather than individual organisms. Perception, affect, and taste thus come into view as another dimension of collective ordering and as another medium of politics and governance. So far, however, this comes into view only through the classical enlightenment path of thinking. What we identified as a challenge for democratizing taste is to avoid believing that sociology as a purely cognitive critique will affect tasting practices. We know from both empirical studies and the insights of practice theory that abstract knowledge does not easily translate into practice. People do not stop eating unhealthy food, even though they know from public health campaigns that it is unhealthy. Rather, we suggest exploring more comprehensive capacities of sense-making to help people realize agency in matters of taste. This is a key challenge for democratizing taste. Working towards the democratization of fact-making by making things public was effective within the visual and textual environment of an exhibition accompanied by a catalogue. If we conceptualize knowing as embodied and resting in practices, then making taste public poses the challenge that we have to engage with these bodily practices themselves.

We need to focus on the ways in which we can collectively find new ways of tasting. The approach of experimental eating which we have outlined and illustrated by reporting these pre-tests is a concrete attempt at articulating food democracy in practice. By this we move from analysis, stating that tasting is cultural and currently dominated by industrial food production and science, to finding ways of opening up collective orders of tasting for engagement by those who live them. If taste itself is to become a matter of democracy, we need to think about appropriate methods that allow us to develop capacities to intervene in the collective formation of taste.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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