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Uster Citizens' Panel for more climate protection

<https://participedia.net/case/8249>

The City of Uster, Switzerland, randomly selected a representative sample of twenty citizens for a Citizens' Panel to discuss how and why the city should protect the climate, consume consciously, and avoid waste, producing forty-four recommendations for municipal consideration [1].

### **Problems and Purpose**

The Uster Citizens' Panel for more climate protection sought to address three crucial problems. At the level of regional government, the Canton of Zurich launched its 'Participation' programme to promote citizens' political involvement, chiefly pursuing community-level engagement in climate protection [2]. At the municipal level, the City of Uster was devising ways through which to address the problem of climate protection, seeking to involve the population where appropriate [3]. Finally, as the first deliberative participatory process with randomly selected citizens in German-speaking Switzerland, this pilot project served to trial a Citizens' Panel in a new space while aiding institutional learning [4].

### **Background and Context**

The Canton of Zurich's Department of Justice and Home Affairs agreed with the City of Uster to host this pilot deliberative participatory process, believing a Citizens' Panel would be an effective and beneficial method to develop, set priorities for, and implement the City's climate action plan [5]. The climate action plan was essential to the democratic context behind the Citizens' Panel. In 2010, Uster's Green Party gained 650 signatures for its popular initiative on climate protection, which was submitted to the municipal council; in the resulting 2011 referendum, with a 39.1% turnout, the initiative lost to its council-written counter-proposal,

nonetheless providing a popular mandate that the City of Uster reform its commitment to climate protection [6]. However, Uster's reforms were minimal until, in 2018, a critical performance motion by the Green Party prompted the City to prepare a suitable climate action plan [7]. Perhaps, where a 2019 student-led individual initiative – a direct-democratic function within the Canton of Zurich which allows citizens to present a measure before the relevant political unit [8] – stressed greater urgency in addressing climate change and reducing energy consumption, the City of Uster recognised the passionate voice of (particularly young) citizens in proposing climate-protection measures [9]. Accordingly, the climate action plan, endorsing greater popular awareness of climate change and wider participation in implementing necessary ameliorative measures, followed citizen-led agency; since, through existing direct-democratic institutions, voters had supported stronger climate-protection measures, a deliberative mini-public became a powerful method to uncover, respond to, and increase discussion of, citizens' concerns [10].

Despite these institutional successes, knowledge on the Citizens' Panel occurring was low; there was little civil society engagement with the introduction, implementation, or recommendations of the Panel beyond infrequent media reports and the limited interjections of the local climate-strike movement [11]. While participant selection took place, the climate-strike movement held demonstrations to sensitise the population to climate protection and protest that the Panel was not powerful enough, demanding its recommendations become binding; however, their activism waned after their incorporation into the process as leaders of an introductory talk for participants [12]. Pertinent to the political context, regional president Jacqueline Fehr argued the Citizens' Panel was a transparent political innovation that represented the people, augmenting democratic participation beyond referendums [13]. Where the 2011 referendum on municipal climate protection saw a 39.1% turnout, the Citizens' Panel attempted to increase popular engagement within local political decision-making by prompting

the thoughtful, informed deliberation of participants and the macro-public [14]. While novel in Uster, deliberative mini-publics had previously been introduced in (French-speaking) Switzerland through Sion's Citizens' Initiative Review on affordable housing [15], and the Canton of Geneva's Citizens' Forum on improving local life while resisting climate change [16].

### **Organising, Supporting, and Funding Entities**

The 'Participation' programme of the Canton of Zurich seeks to promote and diversify democratic engagement by "shaping politics not for the people, but with the people" [17]. Promoting participatory mechanisms to reinvigorate dialogue between policymakers and representative, not self-selected, citizens [18], the programme inspired a deliberative Citizens' Panel for more climate protection [19]. Financing the process, Zurich's Department of Justice and Home Affairs tasked the Zentrum für Demokratie Aarau (ZDA) with organising and scientifically supporting a deliberative process on community-level climate-protection measures [20]. The ZDA's Andri Heimann led four fellow researchers, who were supported by three student assistants and three editors of their interim report.

The charge of the Citizens' Panel – "Protect the climate, consume consciously, and avoid waste: How and why do we want to achieve this in Uster?" – was devised by project managers at the Canton of Zurich, the City of Uster, and the ZDA [21]. Professional moderation was provided by *e7 GmbH – Agentur für Partizipation und Kollaboration*. Local stakeholders, from the trade association and climate-strike movement, provided thematic introductions. Seven experts were selected by the ZDA in conjunction with Dr. Celine Colombo, manager of the 'Participation' programme of the Canton of Zurich, and Sarina Laustela, Head of Waste Management and the Environment in Uster; the experts were not trained to be objective and

independent, but rather represented their environmentalist, sustainability, and political interests.

## **Participant Recruitment and Selection**

Recruitment followed a two-stage selection process to generate a stratified random sample of the population [22]. 2000 addresses of people aged over 16 were selected at random from Uster's residents' register, a database containing both Swiss-born and migrant citizens [23]. In May 2021, the 2000 selected received an official invitation to participate in the Citizens' Panel, signed by Mayor Barbara Thalmann and Councillor Karin Fehr; enclosed was a registration form and an information sheet, informing citizens that participation would be compensated with a 600CHF stipend, while necessary childcare would be organised. 393 citizens replied, with 129 registering for the Panel.

The 129 respondents were invited to the civic lottery held on 23 June 2021, where *Sortition Foundation* software randomly generated 20 representative participants based on gender, age bracket, level of education, political views, and voting frequency [24]. Stratified selection reflected an effort to draw members proportionate to Uster's demographics, thereby increasing and diversifying political participation, and redressing how self-selection typically incorporates more politically active and better-educated citizens [25]. Indeed, the 129 respondents were disproportionately male (Figure 1); aged 40-64 (Figure 2); educated to a degree or higher standard (Figure 3); politically left-wing (Figure 4); and regular voters (Figure 5). Two representative groups of 20 were randomly selected, one randomly chosen as the Panel, the other serving as substitutes [26]. 3 of the initial panel of 20 withdrew. In comparison to the composition of society, the 20 members were representatively stratified by gender (Figure 1) and age (Figure 2), and mostly representative of political views (Figure 4), but disproportionately university-educated (Figure 3) and frequent voters (Figure 5). Therefore,

the ZDA's conclusion that the Panel integrated infrequent and novel participants into the political process must be qualified; only 15% of members had never previously voted and 70% already regularly participated in Switzerland's direct democracy [27]. However, since the ZDA needed to create a representative sample of 20 participants from 129 respondents – indeed, a Jefferson Center handbook recommends ten respondents for each desired juror [28] – stratified selection valuably overcame self-selection biases to produce an adequately representative sample.

### **Methods and Tools Used**

The Uster Citizens' Panel broadly followed the Citizens' Jury model, wherein a small, representative group of randomly selected citizens deliberate to reach collective decisions or recommendations on a given policy issue [29]. The Uster Panel amended the method to improve considered judgement and provide a stronger macro-political output. By meeting over two separate weekends, the process encouraged individual learning and reflection between sessions [30]. Addressing Lafont's critique, that merely providing wider society with the output of high-quality deliberation cannot replicate how a participatory experience forms considered judgements, particularly in deliberatively deficient political contexts, participants' recommendations were made available in a report delivered to all households and could be discussed with the participants at a subsequent Citizens' Café, which utilised the World Café methodology [31].

A variety of tools were used to improve the quality and accessibility of the Panel, inspiring more empathetic, informed, comfortable, and impactful deliberation: participants developed common rules of discussion, which were upheld by professional and neutral moderators; citizens gained knowledge from city officials, local stakeholders, and expert testimonies, ensuring they listened to and could interact with a diversity of approaches;

deliberation took place in small-group and plenary sessions so participants could engage with, and be heard by, their peers; and members utilised both discussion and voting to develop their collective recommendations [32].

### **What Went On: Process, Interaction, and Participation**

The Citizens' Panel took place over the 28-29 August and 11-12 September 2021, in Uster's evangelical-reformist parish church hall [33]. On the first morning, after hearing the rules and processes of deliberation, the participants developed common working principles to guide future discourse, constructing a productive atmosphere which sought to make all members feel welcome and their opinions respected. Thereafter, to provide contextually relevant learning, City leaders introduced the topic, and existing measures, of climate protection, before local stakeholders from the Uster Trade Association and climate-strike movement presented their views and concerns, taking questions to ensure participants' accurate understanding [34]. On the second day, seven experts across waste management, climate protection, and regional food production were divided into two rounds of talks of 3-4 experts each, allowing the members to learn and deliberate in smaller, perhaps more comfortable, environments [35]. Ensuring participants' reflection on knowledge gain, the second day ended with the members in plenary discussing the knowledge transferred. Beginning the third day in plenary, the participants deliberated why Uster should campaign for more climate protection, devising four action areas: information transfer, waste and consumption, urban planning, and mobility. To develop socially diverse, high-quality recommendations within these action areas, the members rotated among small groups, with each group addressing a specific area. Small-scale deliberation helped address multiple themes under limited time, while including those intimidated by large forums [36]. After further deliberation on the fourth morning, the Panel voted in plenary, passing recommendations by a majority [37]. The participants decided to report the voting results, acknowledging the diversity of, and consensus behind, their

collectively developed recommendations; 32 passed unopposed, 6 with a strong majority (over 13 votes), 6 a simple majority, and 3, failing to reach a majority, were omitted. While the design did not stress decision-making by consensus, it is anticipated where open deliberation and voting seek to develop commonly held recommendations [38]. Through delivering these recommendations to the wider public through the report and Citizens' Café, the process supported Uster's climate action plan by raising popular awareness of the issue of climate change and gaining informed citizen opinions on climate-protection measures [39]. However, that just 112 self-selected citizens attended the Café suggests this mode of public interaction only partially inspired maxi-public deliberation [40].

Participant questionnaires, taken after each weekend, surveyed opinions on the quality of organisation, information transfer, moderation, deliberation, and the output, assessed against an arguably subjective and arbitrary metric of 1-11, where 11 generally signified maximum approval [41]. The questionnaires provide perspectives on the process detached from social pressures [42] and served as a limited form of participant evaluation [43]. While no averaged responses fall beneath the midpoint, suggesting no aggregate dissatisfaction, disparities between the two weekends nonetheless denote changing perspectives on the design's success. Scoring the organisation highly, participants attested to an atmosphere which inspired their considered judgement, founded upon understandable and useful information transfer [44]. Reflecting the importance of professional facilitation, participants valued the moderators' impartiality and their ability to establish a constructive working atmosphere which ensured opposing arguments were heard. Regarding discussion quality, and uncovering participants' comfort in the small-group deliberation offered by the Citizens' Panel model, members perceived more opportunities to speak on the second weekend. Yet, simultaneously, participants felt less respect from their peers, and were more unwilling to listen to other opinions, suggesting the difficulty in upholding unprejudiced, attentive dialogue over

protracted periods [45]. Equally, pressures felt toward consensus increased, suggesting certain members were disempowered either by limited attention, fixed values emerging after information transfer, or voice-authority imbalances in plenary discussions. Nonetheless, these pressures remained low, suggesting the Panel primarily fostered open, tolerant, and high-quality deliberation.

### **Influence, Outcomes, and Effects**

The process' outcomes will be evaluated along three lines: potential municipal adoption of recommendations; participants' greater political confidence and thematic knowledge; and broader popular awareness and acceptance of Citizens' Panels. In April 2022, the City of Uster provided its feedback on the Panel's recommendations. Within, the City most regularly claims that recommendations inspire a stronger commitment to already existing foundational policies [46]. The feedback broadly characterises other recommendations as: new projects for city authorities to action; measures held for future consideration; projects dismissed since they do not improve upon existing policies; and measures denied on grounds of feasibility or the city's lack of jurisdiction over the issue area. Commitments to implementation timescales are vague; many measures are considered ongoing, and others are deferred to as distant as 2025. The City keenly echoes one recommendation – that the population reduces and appropriately disposes of their own waste – to call on citizens to make their behaviour more climate-friendly [47]. It remains to be seen whether the City will faithfully introduce the Panel's recommendations to improve measures already implemented; whether new developments will be adopted, particularly those deferred to 2025; and whether the City will indeed petition education systems and corporate actors to adopt the Panel's recommendations. Accordingly, the long-term outcomes of the Citizens' Panel remain unclear.



Where 15 of 18 surveyed participants attested that membership changed them personally, the Panel effected civic and thematic learning through socially diverse political participation [48]. One participant now appreciated “how important it is to overcome prejudice and listen to those groups of people outside one’s own perspective”; another claimed “more accurate knowledge of the facts changed my opinion on some points”; and another praised how “young people (particularly women!)... gave it their all”. Here, members tacitly conveyed considered judgement and opinion change, higher social tolerance, and broadened political participation, which built social capital and community capacity.

The population survey, distributed alongside the Panel’s report, questioned attitudes toward climate change, the Uster Panel, and future Citizens’ Panels [49]. However, without a control group, we cannot understand whether the Uster Panel or its report influenced public opinion. Since just 192 respondents – themselves disproportionately left-leaning, university-educated men aged 40-64 – completed over 30% of the survey suggests answers represent an interested, self-selected population desirous of climate protection (93% considered climate change important for Switzerland and themselves) and welcoming of democratic innovations (82% desire further Citizens’ Panels). Peculiarly, despite 78% of respondents wishing to participate in a future mini-public, just 66% trusted the Panel, with 45% trusting it more than local politicians. Arguably, citizens endorse considered judgement, and think it rational to follow the opinions of their better selves, but struggle to trust the better selves of random, unaccountable others [50]. Perhaps, deliberative democracy must first improve maxi-public political deliberation, should the population not strongly trust a randomly selected sample of representative citizens. Nonetheless, support for future Panels suggests citizens’ willingness to overcome low trust in participatory processes, which a clear relationship between mini-public outputs and long-term political outcomes could enhance.

## **Analysis and Lessons Learned**

Smith's analytical framework of democratic goods helps understand the successes and shortcomings of the Uster Citizens' Panel for more climate protection [51]. To assess diverse democratic innovations across peculiar contexts, four goods probe democratic legitimacy, while two concern institutional feasibility: inclusion, realising political equality through presence and voice; popular control, how participants influence decision-making; considered judgement of technical details and diverse perspectives; transparency to participants and the public; efficiency in the costs of participation for citizens and authorities; and transferability across scale, political systems, and issue areas.

### *Inclusion*

Exacerbated by falling turnout rates, participation is strongly positively correlated to income, wealth, and education; if the politically active participate unequally, diverse interests and opinions will be neglected [52]. Ensuring an equal probability of being selected, the Panel employed near-random recruitment from the residents' register, thereby extending inclusion by potentially incorporating citizens aged over 16 who fell below the over-18 voting threshold. As is inherent when citizen participation is not obligatory, self-selection privileged certain demographics, here, left-leaning, university-educated men aged 40-64 who regularly participated politically; to promote inclusion, two-stage recruitment stratified respondents by gender, age bracket, level of education, political views, and voting frequency. Assessing buy-in, Smith argues a formal invitation from political authorities, an honorarium, and the exclusivity of random selection bolsters inclusion by attracting novel participation [53]. Despite the invitation being signed by the Mayor and City Councillor, a stipend being offered, and exclusivity being communicated, just 7.8% of respondents and 15% of members had never previously voted, against 24.8% in Uster generally, suggesting the limited attraction of novel inclusion [54].

Presence does not guarantee inclusion of voice, and the participatory design must allow citizens equal opportunities to be heard and impact the output [55]. Where, despite stratified sampling, less educated and infrequent voters were relatively under-represented among members, such potentially harmed inclusion regarding the fairness of proceedings and equality of voice; where members perceived intimidation in plenary discussion, empowered speakers seemingly undermined the mutually constructed working principles which considered all individuals and opinions welcome [56]. Indeed, these rules, which aid mutual respect and reciprocity, require careful maintenance [57] and could be better upheld in future Panels [58]. Despite members perceiving more opportunities to contribute in the small-group discussions of the second weekend, plenary debates may be dominated by a few confident, skilled, charismatic, and politically experienced speakers [59]. Pertinently, those members without the education and voting frequency necessary to develop these faculties, whose greater participation was targeted, may have had their voices stifled; acknowledging Pateman's cautionary note, if the democratic arena resembles the partial, fervent character of participatory spaces, then the deliberative exchange of values may be compromised, suggesting how voice imbalances caused by deficient inclusion could consequentially undermine considered judgement [60]. Facilitators must remain cognisant of the inequality and coercion which remain latent in deliberative space, and which intersect with gendered, racialised, and socio-economic stereotypes [61]. Inclusion could have been boosted through attaining critical mass, whereby desired demographics, here the less politically active, are over-represented to inspire their more confident and diverse voice within deliberation, though such a design choice would come at the expense of the deliberative democratic assumption that the participants are an accurate mirror of the population as a whole [62].

### *Popular Control*

Attaining popular control attempts to reconnect citizens to decisions made in their name, taking place across four stages: problem definition, option analysis, option selection, and implementation [63]. Since citizens generally lack a broad overview of potential issue areas, and cannot reasonably be expected to select a charge above the funders or organisers, the Panel eschewed popular control in problem definition, instead seeking a relevant and impactful charge [64]. The charge, designed by the ZDA, Canton, and City, pursued institutional goals of increasing participation alongside educating and soliciting public opinion for local policy [65]. Since environmental concerns profoundly impact communities, and citizen-led direct-democratic initiatives had already defined climate protection as a pertinent agenda, popular control in problem definition was sufficiently attained [66].

To achieve popular control over option analysis, participants should be able to influence witness selection, since expert evidence provides the shared knowledge which frames their decision-making and output [67]. Pertinently, members considered the local introductions incompletely broad, suggesting dissatisfaction with a partial knowledgebase that failed to elucidate citizens' concerns [68]. Future Citizens' Panels may benefit from prior consultation akin to Consensus Conferences, wherein participants gather before deliberation to formulate initial demands and concerns regarding the charge and selection of witnesses, ensuring that unprejudiced, trustworthy speakers meet citizens' expectations of balanced evidence [69]. However, such an amendment would profoundly impact efficiency, perhaps limiting citizens' willingness to participate by prolonging the time costs, and increasing the design costs for funders.

Popular control in option selection was well-supported due to the innovation's design, wherein participants could freely, though based on received information, collate policy recommendations independent from political influence or pressure. However, greater political and media attention may have increased the outward transparency of the process, important

when developing the first deliberative innovation in the region. Moreover, such popular ignorance fails to widen political debate and participation, harming inclusion and buy-in for future Panels [70]. Though City authorities informing participants on existing climate-protection measures meant previous policy influenced options selected, as a trade-off popular control was increased as considered options became more politically viable [71]; while many recommendations accepted in the City's feedback built off existing measures, this commensurability provided the political feasibility necessary to boost popular control through implementation [72].

Regarding such popular control over implementation, without guarantees the Uster Panel's forty-four recommendations would be adopted, the mini-public lacked formal empowerment [73]. The Uster Panel reaffirmed a problem uncovered by Smith, that it is difficult to ascertain the impacts of mini-publics on policy outcomes, where the recommendations compete with other forms of advice and existing policy [74]; it is pertinent that the City's feedback often eschews fundamental change, and instead promotes a wider knowledge of, or role for, existing municipal activities and planned initiatives [75]. Though in the population survey, the recommendations were criticised for lacking binding force, with no clarity on whether, or in what form, they would be implemented, such is a necessary trade-off when there lack bonds of accountability between participants and the population [76]. Though Dahl advocates significant popular control in decision-making, believing the mini-public democratically represents the qualitatively superior will of the demos [77], citizens nonetheless participate as unaccountable private individuals [78]. Popular control regarding implementation was therefore reasonably obtained in the Uster Panel, since recommended measures were openly communicated to the public, and subjected to enactment by accountable authorities [79]. Perhaps, though again entailing efficiency costs, future Citizens' Panels could incorporate forms of participatory monitoring and evaluation to strengthen the authenticity of

implementation and maintain accountability in lieu of direct enactment, important given the long-term, imprecise commitments made by the City's feedback [80].

### *Considered Judgement*

For Schumpeter, citizens' political ambivalence tends toward irrational decision-making, or a reliance on partial heuristics [81]. To reach considered judgement, individuals must receive a rational information base and the social perspectives of diverse interest groups with varied stakes, aiding thoughtful and reflective understanding beyond simple raw preferences [82]. Valuably, participants initially received a clear, reasonable, and sensible charge, and an understanding of the timeframe and processes for deliberation. Where participants assessed the knowledge transferred – in testimonies by municipal authorities, local stakeholders, and expert witnesses – as understandable and useful, their decisions evidenced considered judgement by appropriately reflecting the information provided [83]. With less understandable or useful information, participants' outputs would have inaccurately reflected and represented the informed judgement of average citizens, harming democratic legitimacy [84]. Moreover, that the population survey endorsed the recommendations suggests the Panel reached representative, considered judgement based upon their understanding of complex, scientific information [85]. However, since the population survey was demographically unrepresentative, the extent of public approval must be cautiously summarised. Indeed, approval of the recommendations in the population survey correlated with political leaning, and non-left-leaning respondents were underrepresented [86]. Intriguingly, certain participants questioned the impartiality of experts, arguing they behaved as stakeholders rather than independent, objective witnesses [87]. Given the seven experts were academics or scientists, their information likely reaffirmed the consensus behind the importance of climate change and its mitigation. Reflecting an interesting problem in the interaction of scientific consensus and public opinion, including experts sceptical on the near-term importance of climate protection,

relative to other local political or social concerns, could perhaps have overcome scepticism of subjectivity and aided more even, public-spirited judgements, but at the expense of the scientific accuracy essential to this technical charge. Nonetheless, that the members valued the conditions which generate considered judgement highly, and the recommendations were approved and deemed useful by the interested public, suggests participants wielded a developed capacity to make public-minded and relevant decisions based on their elevated knowledge.

Signifying empathetic, public-spirited considered judgement, participants attested to a high level of respect for dissenting voices and reflected positively on receiving the opinions of diverse peoples, whom they had previously treated with prejudice [88]. However, deliberation often reaffirmed power imbalances among the participants; certain individuals dominated other voices with irrelevant concerns, structural or individual pressures pushed consensus, and a disquiet emerged while the recommendations were being passed. Under a voice imbalance where certain participants could dominate and therefore lead the discussion, privileged perspectives may have directed the output and undermined considered judgement of the common good. Furthermore, that participants felt less respect from, and listened less to, others reaffirmed how the potential instrumental or narrow extent of listening in group environments pushed against the mutually constituted rules of deliberation, risking that the participants' judgement was more irrational than considered [89]. However, participants reflected positively on their output – recommendations reached and crafted through common reasoning – suggesting the attainment of considered judgement, despite perceived social power imbalances [90].

### *Transparency*

Transparency questions whether citizens can scrutinise the participatory process. To build confidence in democratic innovations, particularly important given the novelty of the

Uster Panel, participants must understand why they are deliberating the issue, on whose organisation, and how their output will affect political decisions [91]. Moreover, the maxi-public must have sufficient information on the process and its decisions to imbue legitimacy and trust. Transparency was achieved through four measures: where the randomised selection for the Panel occurred in a public forum, to which all respondents were invited, participants were aware of how, and for what reasons, they had been selected; participants could learn that Uster's climate action plan stipulated the policy issue and advocated popular involvement in climate-protection measures; participants' detailed information sheet, signed by the Mayor and City Councillor, established the intentions, focus, and organisers of the Panel; and city authorities began the process by explaining how members' recommendations would be integrated into existing municipal policies, realising a certain transparency of output [92]. Where one participant criticised that their report remained only theory, perhaps a lack of complete transparency on output consequentially undermined perceptions of popular control in implementation. However, such transparency is difficult to attain given the technicality and unclear political jurisdictions of climate protection; accordingly, the transparency in the relationship between process and output was contextually fair.

Though organisers offered sufficient information on the process and decisions to the maxi-public, external transparency has been limited, particularly since the Uster Panel was the first deliberative mini-public in German-speaking Switzerland [93]. All could observe the Panel, though just six individuals did, of whom two were journalists providing media coverage. With the final report sent to all 18,053 households in Uster, the entire relevant population were informed of the Panel and its recommendations. Citizens could evaluate the Panel within the attached population survey, and scrutinise the process and output implementation in the subsequent Citizens' Café. However, though transparency was offered, its impact was limited by the low penetration of information. With just 112 attending the Citizens' Café, and 192



completing over 30% of the population survey, these citizens reflect an unrepresentative sample of the politically interested. Moreover, that the politically engaged struggled to learn of the Panel reveals flaws regarding openness to the public: at the Café, attendees criticised transparency, claiming they learned of the process too late, and that relevant information was difficult to find; and just 43.2% of survey respondents had heard of the report before receiving it. However, acknowledging respondents to the population survey considered the process generally trustworthy suggests criticisms of transparency reflect low societal acclimatisation to deliberative participatory processes, which an open, committed relationship between output and public policy could improve [94].

### *Efficiency*

Efficiency concerns the cost of participation for both citizens and institutions; whether through anxieties regarding the demands of membership, or reasonable preferences to spend time elsewhere, the perceived costs of political participation are assumed to often outweigh the benefits [95]. From invitation, potential participants were made aware of the time costs; participation would last four days, over two weekends [96]. By holding the Panel on weekends, alongside providing necessary childcare and a 600CHF stipend, the organisers sought to reduce costs of participation. Costs were further relieved since participants considered the Panel a politically and socially formative experience. Essential for further local deliberative mini-publics, since 78% of population survey respondents were keen to participate in future processes, based on their understanding of the Uster Panel, potential future members consider the costs reasonable. However, in recruitment and the population survey, non-participation was most commonly justified by a lack of time; perhaps, without understanding the potential for social and political learning, the perceived cost of participation rises, noteworthy for future organisers engaging less informed groups, and suggesting that improving outward transparency will consequentially alleviate perceived time costs. Moreover, the perceived cost appears

greater for younger or less educated citizens, who, through social or employment demands, are less willing or able to participate on weekends. Organisers must acknowledge how time impacts efficiency and restricts political participation among certain demographics, harming novel inclusion.

At 120,000CHF – covering stipends, logistics and catering, project coordination, professional facilitation, and scientific monitoring – participation costs for authorities were steep, significantly exceeding the OECD’s 66,000EUR estimate [97]. However, the stipends likely aided recruitment; the logistical costs ensured participants’ comfort in the deliberative space; the coordination provided optimal tools for recruitment and organisation; participants ranked the quality of facilitation highly, aiding their inclusive, considered deliberation; and the scientific monitoring served academic learning from this pilot project. Altogether, institutional costs provided participants a professional, comfortable experience, necessary to develop the legitimacy of deliberative innovations. The commissioning and significant funding by the Canton of Zurich evidenced government commitment to developing participatory processes, perhaps toward a greater connection between a deliberative macro-public and proactive authorities [98]. Accordingly, the high short-term costs may ultimately benefit Switzerland’s long-term deliberative democracy.

### *Transferability*

The final democratic good, transferability, assesses the design across different scales, political systems, and issue areas [99]. Since, in the population survey, respondents endorse further Citizens’ Panels on climate change, and argue the federal government should contribute greater to climate protection, the Panel’s design may transfer successfully to a broader scale [100]. However, given Citizens’ Panels’ small membership, and therefore the impossibility of demographically representing large political units, recent national-level deliberative mini-

publics on climate change have occurred as Citizens' Assemblies [101]. While the Citizens' Panel method has already been broadly transferred across Europe and the U.S. [102], the effectiveness of relevant tools in Uster – evidenced by members' surveyed satisfaction with organisational support, impartiality, and moderation – aids transferability across political systems and issue areas for engaging citizens on complex, challenging political decision-making, even under the technical information of a scientific charge [103]. Despite claims that citizens' enhanced voice within Switzerland's direct democracy disparages participation [104], 6.45% of households contacted registered for the Uster Panel [105], corresponding to the 5.56% estimate provided by the Jefferson Center [106]. That 82% of population survey respondents welcomed future Citizens' Panels, particularly in urban planning, encouragingly suggests that the process, novel in this region, would be gladly transferred beyond the issue area of climate protection [107].

### *Conclusion*

To varying extents, the Uster Citizens' Panel attained the legitimising democratic goods. While inclusion could have been differently pursued through over-representing certain demographics, such does not devalue the design choice, which achieved required aims and exposed participants to socially diverse voices. Though popular control could have been extended to selecting the charge, through choosing climate protection, organisers provided a pertinent theme which affected the population directly and inspired behavioural changes. Considered judgement was convincingly attained, though in other contexts peculiar witnesses may have provided broader information. Given the difficulties of generating trust toward a new political process, and in implementing the complex policies of climate protection, transparency was sufficiently attained. In the near term, efficiency and transferability are unclear, requiring future deliberative mini-publics either in this context or utilising this model.

Figures 1-5 present the distribution of criteria across four levels: Population of Uster; Initial Respondents; Selected Persons; Members of the Panel [108].

Figure 1: Gender (male; female)

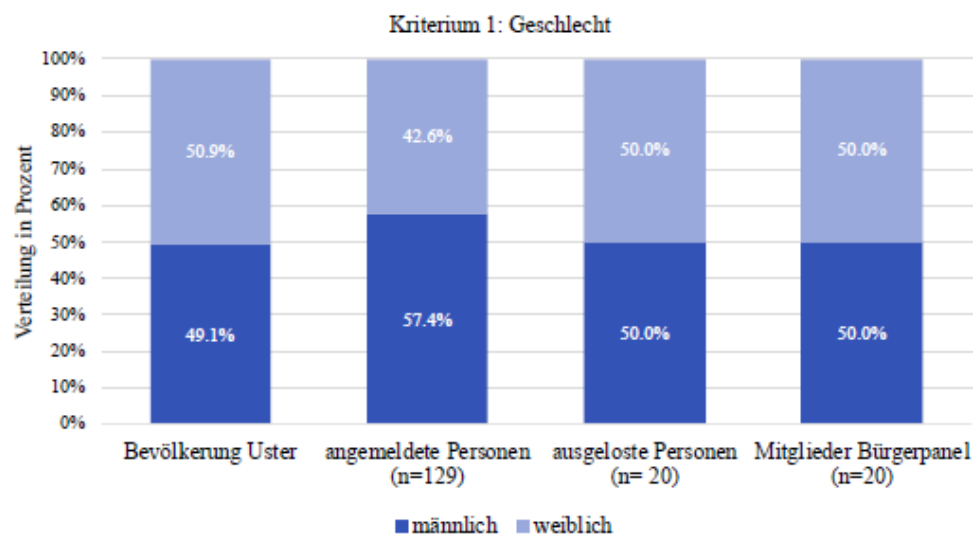


Abbildung 1: Verteilung des Auswahlkriteriums "Geschlecht"

Figure 2: Age

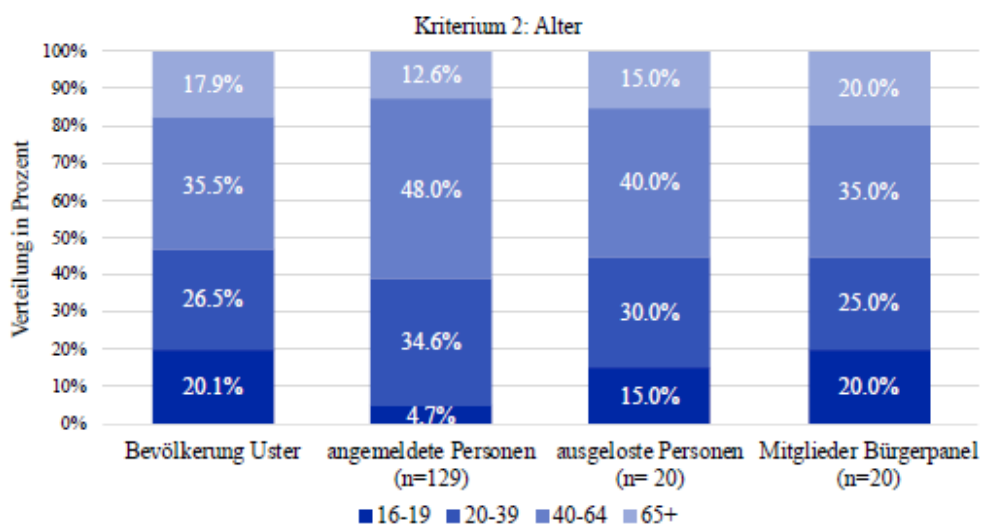


Abbildung 2: Verteilung des Auswahlkriteriums "Alter"

Figure 3: Level of education (obligatory school; apprenticeship/A-level equivalent; higher vocational training; BA/MA/PhD)

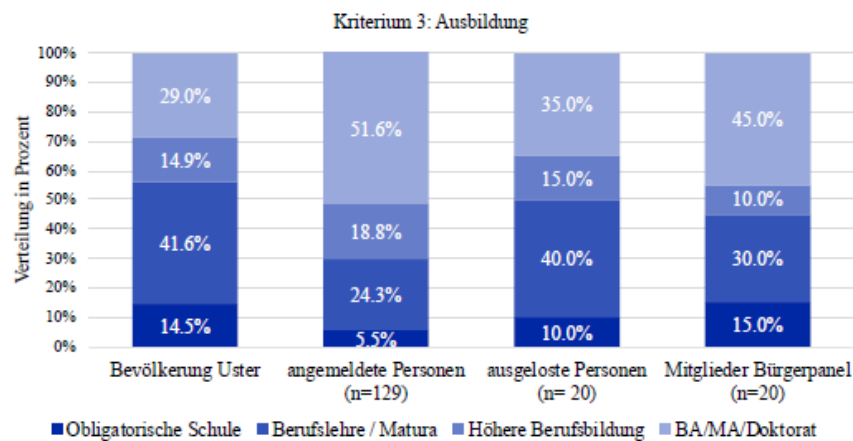


Abbildung 3: Verteilung des Auswahlkriteriums "Ausbildung"

Figure 4: Political views (left; centre; right; unsure)

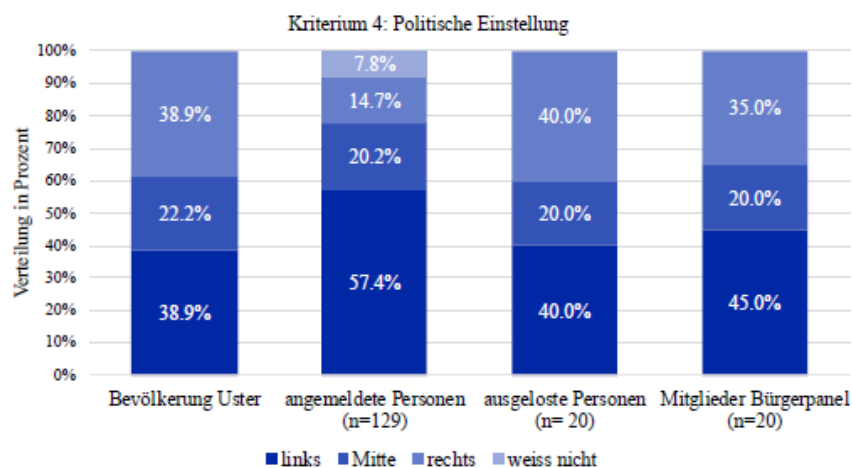


Abbildung 4: Verteilung des Auswahlkriteriums "Politische Einstellung"

Figure 5: Voting frequency (never; rarely; every other occasion; often; always)

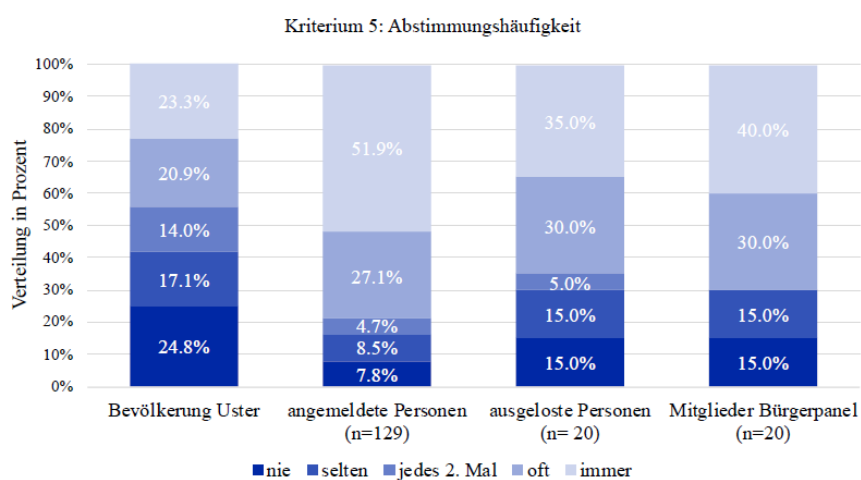


Abbildung 5: Verteilung des Auswahlkriteriums "Abstimmungshäufigkeit"

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