WORKSHOP

ECOLOGICAL DEMOCRACY: always greener on the other side?

20 – 21 February, 2017
University of Sydney, Australia
Ecological Democracy: always greener on the other side?

The role of democracy in the face of global environmental threats has been subject to intense scholarly debate over the past four decades. At times, ecological democracy has had a bright future ahead of it. Yet the ideal of ecological democracy continually faces challenges both to its conceptual foundations and to its practical realisation on national and global scales. This workshop will seek to focus on new considerations and directions for ecological democracy, while looking back to examine the impact and viability of its founding texts as well as empirical studies of the relationship between democracy and sustainability. The aim of the workshop is to critically explore the tensions and synergies between democracy and sustainability on local, national and global levels. The workshop will contribute to the work of the Task Force on the Conceptual Foundations of Earth System Governance, coordinated by the Earth System Governance Project.

Workshop conveners

- David Schlosberg (Co-Director, Sydney Environment Institute and Professor of Environmental Politics, Department of Government and International Relations, University of Sydney)
- Karin Bäckstrand (Professor in Environmental Social Science, Department of Political Science, Stockholm University)
- Jonathan Pickering (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, University of Canberra)

Workshop sponsors

Endorsed by
ECOLOGICAL DEMOCRACY Workshop

Monday 20 February 2017
Holme Building | University of Sydney
9.00 – 4.30PM

9.00 – 9.30 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

9.30 – 11.00 | Session 1: Foundations of Ecological Democracy
Chair: John Dryzek, University of Canberra

Manuel Arias-Maldonado, University of Malaga
‘An Impossible Object? Ecological Democracy After The Anthropocene’

Jonathan Pickering, University of Canberra
Åsa Persson, Stockholm Environment Institute
‘Democratising Planetary Boundaries’

David Schlosberg, University of Sydney
‘Ecological Justice and Ecological Democracy’

11.00 – 11.30 Morning tea

11.30 – 12.30 | Session 2: Rights, Institutions, and Deliberation
Chair: Rosemary Lyster, University of Sydney

Robert Bartlett, University of Vermont
‘A Rights Foundation For Ecological Democracy?’

SKYPE: Laurence Delina, University of Massachusetts
‘Deliberative Exercises For Scaling Micro-Level Climate Actions’

12.30 – 1.30 Lunch

1.30 – 2.30 | Session 3: Democracy and the Nonhuman
Chair: Karin Bäckstrand, Stockholm University

Annica Kronsell, Lund University
‘(Re)Thinking Human–Nonhuman Relations Through Empathic Rationality’

David Takacs, University of California
‘Biodiversity Offsetting And Rewilding: Can Laws That Promote Biodiversity And Ecological Democracy Coexist?’

2.30 – 3.00 Afternoon tea

3.00 – 4.30 | Session 4: Culture & Ecological Citizenship
Chair: David Schlosberg, University of Sydney

Mine Islar, Lund University
‘The Figure Of The Ecological Citizen? : Citizen Municipalism In The Aftermath Of Right To The City Movements In Barcelona’

Anna Kaijser & Eva Lövbrand, Linköping University
‘Ecological Democracy on the Run: Embodied Climate Activism and Story-Telling in the Mobilization for COP21’

Marit Hammond, Keele University
‘The Centrality Of Culture In Ecological Democracy’
ECOLOGICAL DEMOCRACY – SYDNEY IDEAS Panel

Monday 20 February 2017 | 6.00 – 7.30PM
Law School Foyer, Eastern Ave
University of Sydney

Ecological Democracy – Looking Back, Looking Forward
Chair: David Schlosberg

Efforts to reconcile theories and practices of democracy with environmental sustainability have long been central to environmental political thought. Innovative work in the 1980s and 1990s addressed issues of the representation of the nonhuman, the relationship between democracy and ecological ‘limits’, and the design of ‘green’ states. Since this first wave of scholarship on ecological democracy, there have been numerous crucial developments that pose a range of challenges. On the environmental side, we have seen the acceleration of climate change, arguments for setting planetary boundaries around humanity’s environmental impacts, and widespread acknowledgement that the Earth has entered a new epoch: the Anthropocene. On the political side, we have had the growth of environmental and climate justice movements, the proliferation of institutions for global environmental governance, and the anti-environmental and post-truth era.

This panel of distinguished contributors to the ecological democracy debate will examine what theories of ecological democracy have offered, and, looking forward, how (or if) they might respond to the current set of ecological, and democratic, challenges.

Speakers:

- Robyn Eckersley, University of Melbourne
  ‘Democracy And Ecology: Looking Back, Looking Forward’
- Karin Bäckstrand, Stockholm University
  ‘Ecological Democracy In The Anthropocene’
- John Dryzek, University of Canberra
  ‘Ecology And The Crisis Of Democracy: Trees Versus Trump’

8.00 – Workshop Dinner
ECOLOGICAL DEMOCRACY Workshop

Tuesday 21 February 2017
Holme Building | University of Sydney
9.00 – 5.30PM

9.15 – 9.30 WELCOME

9.30 – 10.30 | SESSION 1: Diversity, Culture and Democracy
Chair: Kyle Whyte, Michigan State University

Teena Gabrielson, University of Wyoming
‘Flesh, Race And Agency: Theorizing A More Inclusive Ecological Democracy’

Sharon Adetutu Omotoso, University of Ibadan
‘When The Rains Are (Un)Stopped: African Feminism And The Green Democracy’

10.30 – 11.00 Morning tea

11.00 – 12.00 | SESSION 2: Ecological Democracy and Indigenous Peoples
Chair: Robert Bartlett, University of Vermont

Kyle Whyte, Michigan State University
‘Indigenous Peoples, Ecological Democracy And Climate Change’

Amy Lovecraft, University of Alaska
‘Co-Producing Anticipatory Governance: Scenarios As Social Learning In Arctic Alaska’

12.00 – 1.00 Lunch

1.00 – 2.00 | SESSION 3: Resources, Democracy and the Local
Chair: Mine Islar, Lund University

Delia Paul, Monash University
‘Water Management In Johor State, Malaysia’

Emerson M Sanchez, University of Canberra
‘Oscillating Social Order, Amorphous Roles: Democratising Philippine Mineral Resource Governance’

2.00 – 2.30 Afternoon tea

2.30 – 3.30 | SESSION 4: Capitalism and Ecology
Chair: Christopher Wright, University of Sydney

Matthew Lepori, National University of Singapore
‘Democracy And The Ecology Of Capitalism’

Damian White, The Rhode Island School of Design
‘Design Ecologies, Creative Labor and Ecological Democracy: Thinking the Just Transition beyond Trump and End Times Ecology’

3.30 – 4.30 | SESSION 5: Next Steps

4.30 – 5.30 | Networking Drinks
Manuel Arias-Maldonado, University of Malaga, Spain

'An impossible object? Ecological Democracy after the Anthropocene'.

What does the Anthropocene involve for ecological democracy? That is to say, for the prospects of an ecological democracy -since the green ideal of what an ecological democracy is has been widely theorized but never realized. The Anthropocene poses a challenge for environmental political theory: it is a global state of socionatural relations that seems to confirm the degree to which social and natural systems are coupled and thus constitute a socionatural entanglement rather than two different entities engaged in mutual but limited relations.

This implies two set of initial difficulties for any attempt to design an ecological democracy for the Anthropocene: the elucidation of the demos that belongs to such democracy and that of the decisions that can be meaningfully taken in order to affect such a pervasive political object. The Anthropocene thus involve some of the problems that have been traditionally related to sustainability, such as issues of temporality and scale, that are now however deepened and complicated. At the same time, new issues emerge, such as those concerning agency (a looser distribution of it among a greater number of actors and actants), intentionality (since all kinds of unintended actions and effects can be said to have contributed to the Anthropocene), and responsibility (insofar as such a wider notion can actually prevent the recognition that different actors possess different power and hence disparate responsibilities in “creating” the Anthropocene). At the same time, though, the conversation about the good Anthropocene should be differentiated from the unsustainability issue -since there is not automatically a connection between a state of sustainability and a particular moral type of socionatural relation. This is yet another dimension of an ecological democracy: the public sphere that sustains a debate about how to manage this inherited condition. In this respects, the ideal of deliberation that was taken in the past as an enabler of sustainable outcomes is being undermined by the realization of the rational limitations of human democratic beings -redescribed now as affective, biased, post-sovereign subjects. This paper will argue that a theory of ecological democracy for the Anthropocene cannot ignore this challenges and must accordingly advance towards a clear distinction between technical and normative concerns, i.e. between the feasible and the good Anthropocene. Therefore, an emphasis in public conversation and micropolitics seems advisable, while institutional efforts should be directed towards the opening up of conversational settings that foster the public conversation on the subject. To such end, the distinction between habitation and habitability is proposed as an alternative to the language of sustainability.

Manuel Arias-Maldonado is Associate Professor in Political Science at the University of Malaga, Spain. He has been a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Berkeley, California, as well as a visiting fellow at the Rachel Carson Center, in Munich. He has also researched in places such as Keele, Oxford, and Siena, and taught at the Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales in Madrid, as well as, more briefly, in several European universities. He has worked extensively on environmental issues, from a sociopolitical as well as from a philosophical standpoint. Other research topics include political liberalism and libertarianism, deliberative democracy, social movements, as well as the social and political implications of information technologies. Apart from a couple of books in Spanish, he is the author of Real Green. Sustainability after the End of Nature (Ashgate, London, 2012) and Environment and Society. Socionatural Relations in the Anthropocene (Springer Verlag, Heidelberg, 2015). He is a member of the International Political Science Association (IPSA), the Western Political Science Association (WPSA), and the Spanish Political Science Association (AECPA). He also attends regularly the conferences organized by the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR). Finally, he publishes regularly in several Spanish newspapers and cultural journals.
The concept of planetary boundaries (Rockström et al. 2009) has gained political currency in recent debates over the global governance of sustainable development, including at the Rio+20 summit (Clemençon 2012) and in negotiations on the Sustainable Development Goals (Saunders 2015). These debates could be seen as the latest turn in decades-long contestation over whether environmental protection is compatible with democratic legitimacy and the development aspirations of the global South (Dryzek 2013). Yet seeing planetary boundaries merely as a reheated version of “limits to growth” may unduly constrain assessment of whether the idea of planetary boundaries is compatible with that of ecological democracy.

To conduct such an assessment, we propose a different conceptual starting point along with a different set of historical analogies. Rather than focus on planetary boundaries as an overarching political discourse with specific implied prescriptions for policy and governance, we propose that the idea should be understood in a more disaggregated, open-ended sense: scientific or political actors may in fact be grappling with one or more planetary boundaries even if they do not explicitly use the term, but are seeking to identify “the Earth-system processes and associated thresholds which, if crossed, could generate unacceptable environmental change” (Rockström et al. 2009).

Our conception of planetary boundaries, while broad, does not encompass all forms of global environmental targets. For the activity of planetary boundary-setting is limited in its: (i) scope, which focuses on broader Earth system processes (rather than including, say, pollutants used worldwide that have primarily local effects); and (ii) normative orientation or rationale, namely the perception of an unacceptable risk or danger to humanity or the Earth system.

This understanding of planetary boundaries can help to prise the concept away from its common (although often misunderstood) association with technocratic evaluation. Experts, or indeed any actors, may legitimately propose which planetary boundaries should be set and at what levels. But the formal adoption or institutionalisation of planetary boundaries requires a more inclusive political process involving deliberation (at global but also national and subnational levels) among experts, citizens, other civil society actors and decision-makers.

This understanding of planetary boundaries can also help to evaluate the concept using evidence from past experience. In this paper we draw on deliberative theories of ecological democracy (e.g. Dryzek 2013) to assess the legitimacy of planetary boundary-setting in the ozone and climate change regimes. We argue that what democratic legitimacy requires in boundary-setting may vary across environmental problems. Specifically, input or procedural legitimacy (in particular the inclusion of affected interests in deliberation) may take on greater importance relative to output legitimacy (or environmental effectiveness) where: (i) setting a particular boundary would require wide-ranging societal change; and (ii) there is strong value conflict (rather than purely epistemic disagreement) over where the boundary should be set. Both aspects loom larger for climate change than for ozone layer depletion.

We conclude by arguing the concept of planetary boundaries, suitably interpreted, can enhance our understanding of how the ideal of ecological democracy can be translated into political practice in the Anthropocene (a new epoch marked by humanity’s pervasive impact on the Earth system).

Jonathan Pickering is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Canberra, Australia, based at the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance. He is currently working with Professor John S. Dryzek on an Australian Research Council-funded project entitled ‘Deliberating in the Anthropocene’ (2015-19), which examines the scope and limitations of deliberative democracy in global environmental politics, with a focus on the climate change, biodiversity and ozone regimes.

In 2014 he received his doctorate in philosophy from the Australian National University (ANU). His thesis explored opportunities for reaching a fair agreement between developing and developed countries in global climate change negotiations. Before joining the University of Canberra he taught climate and environmental policy at ANU.

His research has been published in Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy, Ethics & International Affairs, Global Environmental Politics and World Development.

Jonathan is a Research Fellow with the Earth System Governance Project. He co-convenes the working group on Ecological/Green Democracy that forms part of the Taskforce on Conceptual Foundations of Earth System Governance.

Åsa Persson is Senior Research Fellow at the Stockholm Environment Institute and theme leader of the Transforming Governance theme. She currently leads a four-year research project on global governance of climate adaptation, funded by the Swedish research council Formas. Other key topics of her recent research and publications include the Sustainable Development Goals, environmental policy integration,
and the concept of planetary boundaries. She received her doctorate in Human Geography from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 2007. In 2010-12, she was a post-doc researcher at the Stockholm Resilience Centre. Her research has been published in, e.g., Nature, Nature Climate Change, Environment & Planning C, Ecological Economics, International Environmental Agreements, Ambio, Climate Policy.

David Schlosberg, University of Sydney
‘Ecological Practice, Ecological Democracy and Ecological Justice’.

This paper explores the links between everyday practices, conceptions of democracy, and the desire for justice in new environmental movements of what I call sustainable materialism. In movements focused on the material practices around food, energy, and fashion, and on restructuring the flows and systems of their production and distribution, a very engaged and pragmatic conception of political participation is the norm. Core motivations of these activists include this material ‘doing’, as well as resistance to power, ecological sustainability, and environmental justice. Participants in these movements see an ecological democracy practiced through the redesign of material flows of food, energy, and other ‘stuff’ (including sustainable fashion), rather than in more traditional political activities such as protest, consultation, or policymaking. They also have a dedication to environmental justice that accentuates this political practice; this material focus distinguishes sustainable materialist movements from others that focus on more traditional political participation. Finally, the sustainability part of sustainable materialism is aligned with conceptions of ecological justice; activists tie both their material action and political practice to the treatment of, and impact on nonhuman beings and functioning ecosystems.

David Schlosberg is Professor of Environmental Politics in the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney, and Co-Director of the Sydney Environment Institute. He is known internationally for his work in environmental politics, environmental movements, and political theory - in particular the intersection of the three with his work on environmental justice. He is the author, most recently, of Defining Environmental Justice (Oxford, 2007); co-author of Climate-Challenged Society (Oxford, 2013); and co-editor of both The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society (Oxford 2011), and The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory (Oxford 2016). Professor Schlosberg’s current research includes work on climate justice - in particular justice in climate adaptation strategies and policies, and the question of human obligations of justice to the nonhuman realm. He is also examining the sustainable practices of new environmental movement groups – in particular their attention to flows of power and goods in relation to food, energy, and sustainable fashion. And he continues with theoretical work at the interface of justice, democracy, and human/nonhuman relations in the Anthropocene.

Robert V. Bartlett, University of Vermont
‘A Rights Foundation for Ecological Democracy’.

Environmental rights can be conceived of as regions in the policy space where the democratic deficit has not resulted in elite processes going “off track.” As a result of the congruence of elite and mass attitudes, it is increasingly plausible to adopt the label “rights” as a shorthand description of that policy consensus. In this sense, environmental rights function as a sort of a “final vocabulary,” as Richard Rorty uses that phrase. So we see discussed in the environmental liberalism literature, but not so much in the deliberative democratic literature, the notion of rights as constituting the bounds of legitimate democratic discourse. Meyer, for example, suggests that, although liberalism generally prioritizes the right over the good, it has not been necessary for liberalism to be neutral with respect to different goods or differing conceptions of the good. This partially explains a turn toward liberal environmentalism in the last couple of decades—a turn (Meyer and others argue) has involved efforts to identify how a particular good such as environmental sustainability is consistent with, and likely to be fostered by, liberalism. But for deliberative democrats, what does it mean to conceptualize the environment as a (at least small) bundle of rights, rather than as a good? Doing so would move environmental sustainability (or at least some aspects of environmental sustainability) beyond the category of a good. Yet environmental sustainability as a mere good seems to be an implicit assumption of much deliberative theorizing with its focus on method and theory rather than any substantive consensus structures that deliberation might have (or might eventually) reveal. The idea that any such consensus could be fairly characterized as a right (or cluster of rights) is not something many deliberative theorists have considered. The reluctance on the part of many deliberative democrats to use that kind of language derives, perhaps, from the universalist places toward which it may lead. They shy away from such universalism almost as if by instinct. But if their own research eventually reveals an environmental consensus that is broadly based (though narrow in scope), might that result sustain a new rights discourse in environmental politics?
Robert V. Baber is Professor in the Graduate Center for Public Policy and Public Administration at California State University Long Beach. He is currently Senior Fulbright Scholar at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna in Austria. Bartlett is the Gund Professor of the Liberal Arts in the Political Science Department at the University of Vermont. Between them, they have published 13 scholarly books including three together: Consensus and Global Environmental Governance: Deliberative Democracy in Nature’s Regime; Global Democracy and Sustainable Jurisprudence: Deliberative Environmental Law; and Deliberative Environmental Politics: Democracy and Ecological Rationality (MIT Press).

Okka Lou Mathis, Bonn, Germany

‘Beyond “green”: Pivotal democratic institutions for sustainable development’.

The recent adoption of two major global agendas, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, provides a window of opportunity for taking a fresh look at the role of national institutional foundations for implementing the internationally agreed goals and targets. Both agendas are inextricably linked and cannot be fully implemented without one another because climate change is basically a result of un-sustainable development. While democratic political regimes outdo authoritarian regimes in their overall performance regarding climate change policies, it is clear that even this performance is not enough for bold national action to keep global warming below 2°. The spread of democracy, traded by both researchers and politicians as the best political system available, would of course be desirable for this matter; however, global democratization has been facing a backlash in recent years and there is thus little hope for it to help fix the global climate problem. Therefore, focusing on democratic institutions that are already in place and on the question how to expand or adjust them to make democracy fit for sustainable development, is likely a more fruitful approach for researchers. While democracy has been challenged from within in a long tradition of research on the “greening” of states, there is little evidence yet that the claims of researchers in this area have been effectively put into practice. The current momentum after the adoption of major global agendas emphasizing the ecological dimension may be used by researchers to re-open the sacred black box of “democracy” by questioning and evaluating the suitability of traditional and innovative democratic political institutions for sustainable development, including but exceeding ecological issues.

The proposed paper aims to contribute to the debate about the specific arrangements of “ecological democracies” by exploring the following question: What do we know about which political institutions on the national (maybe even local) level of countries are pivotal for ambitious ecological policies, taking the example of climate action? Further, from a development perspective, the paper scrutinizes whether institutional challenges in establishing “ecological” political institutions are fundamentally different in rich, industrialized countries on the one hand and poor countries on the other hand. Ultimately, my dissertation is motivated by the interest in what these (among others) findings may imply for international cooperation in the area of climate change mitigation and democratization against the background of the implementation of big global agendas like the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

My contribution to this workshop is a synthesis of existing concepts and findings by means of literature review as well as the identification of avenues for further research with view to the “ecologization” of democracy and its role for international cooperation in the climate area. I will also argue for the re-conceptualization of democracy along the lines of “sustainability” including social, cultural, and economic dimensions on top of the purely “ecological” sphere, challenging the very title of this research workshop.

Okka Lou Mathis is a researcher and PhD candidate in the department of environmental politics and natural resource management at the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), based in Bonn, Germany. She works in the project "Klimalog" on the links between climate governance and sustainable development from the perspective of international cooperation. Her latest project was the organization of the 2016 Berlin Conference on Global Environmental Change. Okka Lou studied political science and public policy with a master in development studies. Her research focusses on democracy, climate governance and sustainable development.

Laurence L Delina, University of Massachusetts

‘Deliberative exercises for scaling micro-level climate actions’.

The Paris Agreement highlights an urgent need for climate action to achieve a low-carbon future. How could this ambition be achieved while ensuring its democratic quality and wider societal engagement? In this survey paper, I explore and reflect on how deliberative democracy exercises could be used as a mechanism to democratise the processes of transition, why deliberation is necessary, at what level it could start best, and what challenges the exercises need to address to
make them more effective. The paper is informed by theories of deliberative democracy, in particular its contribution to the democratisation of global climate governance (Stevenson and Dryzek 2014, Democratizing Global Climate Governance; also Niemeyer 2013, ‘Democracy and climate change: what can deliberative democracy contribute?’ in Australian Journal of Politics & History).

The paper begins by acknowledging the complex political nature of climate action, which necessitates a multilevel approach that has to be pursued at once. Given that international and national climate action remain lacklustre—meaning targets and actual emission reduction activities are still far below what is required—and some high emission countries continue to stall action on climate, micro-level climate actions may be more important in prompting national and international action.

This paper investigates carefully selected cases of relatively successful and less-successful climate action at the micro-level. These cases include public private partnerships, local government covenants, environmental public hearings, and environmental impact assessments. In these cases, how mini-publics were selected to navigate micro-level low-carbon transitions, what are the elements of their successes or failures, and what challenges and limitations they faced? Going forward, how could these local climate actions be scaled up?

In response, I use the ‘deliberative systems’ approach (Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012, Deliberative Systems) to frame this process of scaling, in addition to some frameworks that link actions at multiple levels (e.g. Chan et al. 2015, ‘Reinvigorating international climate policy: a comprehensive framework for effective non-state action’ in Global Policy; Biermann et al. 2009, ‘The fragmentation of global governance architecture’ in Global Environmental Politics; etc.)

Nonetheless, the paper recognises that micro-level approaches to climate action have its limitations. These include challenges regarding negotiating the presence of local climate sceptics and local vested interests. Also needed to be confronted is the reality that many micro-level actions simply lose momentum—a key limitation given the longer-term low-carbon transitions. Other procedural and administrative limitations related to cost, public interest in participating, enclave and polarised deliberations, disenfranchised non-participants, feasibility, capacity, and applicability are also critically appraised. Yet another is the issue of scalability: whether, indeed, micro-level climate actions can be replicated at the national, even international levels. In closing, the proposed deliberative processes in navigating low-carbon transitions are not panacea to the climate change challenge; it is but one avenue for achieving democratic quality and wide public engagement on climate action.

Laurence Delina is a Post-Doctoral Associate at the Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future. He is also an Earth System Governance Research Fellow, and a Research Associate at the Center for Governance and Sustainability at the University of Massachusetts Boston. His work explores the governance and institutional arrangements in the politics and policy of sustainability, focusing on sustainable energy transitions and rapid climate mitigation. His recent book, Strategies for Rapid Climate Mitigation (Routledge 2016), investigates what can be learned from wartime mobilization to achieve rapid deployment of sustainable energy technologies. Laurence has published on climate finance and multilateral development banking, strategies for the climate action movement, and institutional arrangements for climate action. He held a visiting fellowship at Harvard Kennedy School in 2013 and 2016, consulted for the United Nations and the University of Manchester, and worked as a development banker at Land Bank of the Philippines. In 2017, he will assume a Rachel Carson Fellowship at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich to complete a manuscript on climate justice and the climate action movement. Laurence holds a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and a Master in Public Administration from Mindanao State University in General Santos City, Philippines, an MA in Development Studies from the University of Auckland, and a PhD from the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. He is a citizen of the Philippines.

Annica Kronsell, Lund University

‘(Re)Thinking Human–Nonhuman Relations through Empathic Rationality’.

This paper engages with debates that attempt to (re)think human/nonhuman entanglements and power relations and what this (re)thinking implies for (ecological) democracy. The paper draws on feminist theories, on intersectionality (Lytte 2005) and from the fields of ecofeminism (Plumwood 1993), critical animal studies (Birke 2010) and posthumanism (Alaimo 2010, Alaimo and Hekman 2008). A common thread in this literature is a critique of the predominant, dualistic representation of humans and nature. As ‘human’
and ‘nature’ are made meaningful in relation to each other these categories of difference are embedded in dynamic relations of power that include intersectional power relations of ‘human’ such as gender, class, race and age (Kaijser and Kronsell 2013, forthcoming). Conceptualizing these relations is necessary as ecological justice, equality and equity can be assumed crucial to ecological democracy and the paper contributes to this conceptualization.

Substantial challenges confront democracies if they are to in an inclusive manner, address and take account of these intersectional power relations. This paper suggesting that feminist ethics of care theory can provide an important starting point in developing alternatives (Barnes 2012, Donovan & Adams 2007, Engster 2009, MacGregor 2004, Robinson 2006). Kronsell and Stensöta (2015) have argued that core notions in the ethics of care; interdependence, contextuality and responsiveness are relevant for advancing thinking on the green (welfare) state regarding human relations to the ecosystem, and to future generations. Building on those insights, this paper suggests that ethics of care, informed by an intersectional understanding of human-nature relations, can be a useful normative foundation for democratic governance in the green and sustainable state. Empathic rationality is proposed as an ethical foundation for ecological democracy in the green state. The notion of emphatic rationality it is discussed in relation to other democratic governance strategies like deliberative rationality.

Annica Kronsell has been teaching extensively in the fields of international politics, peace- and conflict studies, environmental and feminist studies. During the fall semester 2015 she taught the course: Gender and International Relations. During the winter and early spring 2016 she is spending research time in Australia, at Monash university, Melbourne and University of Queensland, Brisbane. Annica Kronsell has conducted empirical research on climate, environmental and sustainability governance in the Scandinavian and European context and published several books and articles in this field. She is involved as research leader in interdisciplinary research consortia at Lund university and currently in three larger research projects, relating to the governance of climate and sustainability transitions. She is supervising and has supervised several graduate students in this research field. Kronsell has a theoretical interest in governance related to sustainability transitions, and in feminist institutional theory which she has also applied in research about gender in security and defense institutions published in several articles and books.

David Takacs, University of California, Hastings College of the Law
‘Biodiversity Offsetting and Rewilding: Can Laws that Promote Biodiversity and Ecological Democracy Coexist?’. Laws in over 50 jurisdictions promote and regulate “biodiversity offsetting,” where a developer is allowed to destroy parts of the natural world in exchange for preserving biodiversity elsewhere. Offsetting that follows conservation biology principles may benefit imperiled biodiversity. In Europe, a “rewilding” movement seeks to reintroduce biodiversity (especially charismatic megavertebrates) into locales where it has long been absent, to “help to bring back the Variety of Life, our Biodiversity, so that we can all be able to better enjoy it.”

But who are “we,” and what happens if we want to continue to enjoy local biodiversity where it would be destroyed, or don’t want to enjoy it where it would be (re)introduced? While potentially a boon for the nonhuman world, offsetting and rewilding may present challenges for laws promoting ecological democracy: Who gets to make decisions about what nature goes where? What happens when programs that support biodiversity clash with laws guaranteeing the right to participate in environmental decision making?

What’s best for biodiversity (or for developers that degrade it or the public officials who manage it) may not be what’s best for local citizens. In fieldwork in Australia, South Africa, the UK, and California, I have examined laws that promote biodiversity offsetting, including analyzing the ecological democracy provisions within those laws: Whose voices count? Who gets final say? If local people object either to biodiversity destruction or enhancement, are they legally entitled to political voice or veto power? How do we manage tensions between necessary economic development, prudent biology-based biodiversity conservation measures, and laws guaranteeing ecological democracy rights? In Europe, how does the growing Rewilding movement work under the Aarhus Convention, which guarantees environmental participation rights to member nations’ citizens.

My research is empirical (what do laws demand with respect to ecological democracy rights?) and normative (how should programs of biodiversity offsetting and rewilding balance and maximize both ecological democracy and biodiversity conservation?). My research project examines clashes – and possibilities for synergy – between these movements. What happens when some members of a community wish to revitalize vibrant ecosystems while other members of a community do not? For example, farmers may fear reintroduced predators will kill livestock, and other citizens fear property restrictions if endangered species colonize their land. Whose rights trump?
What mechanisms are emerging to heed the fears of local citizens without giving up the dream of a revitalized, wilder ecosystem?

In previous work, I examined ecological democracy provisions in REDD+ legal regimes, currently the most important laboratory for expanding participation rights in international conservation and development work, drawing illustrations from field work in Vietnam and Cambodia. I concluded that while REDD+ stakeholders are making progress towards genuine ecological democracy, they have far to go to fulfill their legal obligations towards communities in which REDD+ is launching. By examining ecological democracy rights in emerging legal regimes for biodiversity offsetting and rewilding, I will develop (through analyzing current best practices and proposing new practices) law and policy solutions that simultaneously and synergistically maximize the health and potential of individuals, communities, and ecosystems.

David Takacs is Professor of Law at University of California Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, California. I hold a B.S. (Biological Science, Cornell University), M.A. (History and Philosophy of Science, Cornell University), Ph.D. (Science & Technology Studies, Cornell University), J.D. (U.C. Hastings) and LL.M. (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London). My research lies at the intersection of International Environmental and Human Rights Law, with specialties in Climate Change Law, Biodiversity Law, Environmental Democracy rights, the Human Right to Water, and the Public Trust Doctrine. I am the author of The Idea of Biodiversity (Johns Hopkins University Press).

Matthew Lepori, University of Singapore
'Democracy and the ecology of capitalism'.

In this paper, I argue that democracy emerges in the midst of the interrelations that form the ecology of capitalism. By the latter, I refer to an analytical framework and argument that treats capitalism as enmeshed in political, social, and ecological networks, ones which enable capitalism to function and are concomitantly shaped by economic forces and interests in ways conducive to this function. These include the laws, norms, and material resources that provide capitalism its rules of the game, human mental and physical labor, and natural-material inputs and waste sinks. I treat democracy not as a particular governmental system, or set of rules regulating state function, but as a moment of social activity emerging from and in response to asymmetrical power relations, one that speaks in the name of equality and marshals a new vision of the public. I argue that the ecology of capitalism, by housing incompatible logics and power asymmetries, provides continual stimulus for such democratic action.

In this paper, I seek to not only bring together and build upon the ideas of disparate thinkers like Sheldon Wolin, Nancy Fraser, and William Connolly, I also aim to convince scholars of environmental studies of the need to expand our vision with regards to where and how we expect democracy to surface and exert its force. I argue here of the need to look beyond deliberative and institutional accounts of democracy, to treat democracy as an insurgency, and to consider the conflicts inherent in the ecology of capitalism to be catalysts of democratic insurgence. Though this implies a pervasive latent democratic potential, given the width and depth of capitalism’s ecology, it does not necessarily suggest optimism regarding contemporary possibilities for ecological democracy. Democracy, as specific acts of situated actors demanding equality and participation, is inevitably partial and limited. Depending on the public imagined by democratic actors, their action may equally inaugurate new forms of inequitable social life and precarious as inclusion and sustainability.

Finally, I will give these arguments an empirical referent, that of the new food politics. The new food politics emerged as a response to the global capitalist food economy, stimulated by the ways in which capitalist logics impinged upon and reshaped ecosystems, forms of sociality, and modes and outcomes of social reproduction. Activists formed a democratic moment by speaking through ideas of equality (e.g. community, participation) and by challenging boundaries to the existing democratic imagination (e.g. the land ethic). While contesting some inequalities and exclusions, actors in the food movement contributed to the prolongation of other inequalities, demonstrating democracy’s fundamental ambivalence. Though they have created new avenues for public co-involvement movement actors have also maintained certain groups, including agri-food laborers and those who cannot participate effectively in market-based forms of sociality, in isolation. I conclude by arguing that the ambivalences of democracy may be addressed through the comprehension of and resistance to systems predicated on inequality, particularly those that mediate and ramify through political, social, and ecological relations, such as capitalism.

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capitalism and brings this framework to bear upon contemporary environmental discourses, including the Anthropocene, place-based ecology, and the “new materialism”.

Damian White, The Rhode Island School of Design


It could be argued that the project of ecological democracy that emerged from green political theory has been essentially concerned with finding ways to democratically regulate environmental limits. Conversely, theorizations of ecological democracy emerging out of political ecology, critical geography and STS have been rather more interested in finding ways to democratize the making of our hybrid social-natures. Each tradition of ecodemocratic thinking shares a desire to push back against eco-authoritarian ecologies that once had wide purchase on certain survivalist and apocalyptic ecologies of times past. But each tradition has had different foci of concerns generating a certain degree of disengagement and detachment. We find ourselves now in a context where the climate crisis continues, authoritarian populists are on the march and the project of ecological democracy seems ever more distant. The need for a just transition beyond fossil fuels becomes urgent, however an ecology of panic and hopelessness increasingly seems to pervade all manner of environmental discourse.

In this paper I want to explore the role that emerging work in critical design studies might offer, in conjunction with emerging currents of labor focused political ecologies, to recharge the project of ecological democracy thus moving us beyond both end times ecology and Trump-ism. Some of the more interesting currents of critical eco-design studies are attempting to restore a dynamic agent centered focus on creative remaking, directive practice, and re-institutionalization to environmental discourse and transition thinking. Much of this work has productive points of resonance with research in historical ecology and ecological anthropology which has sought to move environmental analysis beyond generic stories of humans as environmental degraders. It is also, I will suggest, work which compliments the return to labor in political ecology and the growing interest in foregrounding creative labor in political theory. The value of this work is that it potentially opens up the workplace and everyday life as key spaces for ecodemocratic transition. It also directly tries to address the crisis of political agency that has long bedevilled green political thought and increasingly looms in transition thinking. However, I will also argue that critical design studies and work in labor focused political ecology is marked by certain limitations with regard to how it connects the workplace and everyday life to struggle for transition occurring in formal political arenas. I will suggest critical design studies and labor focused political ecology may have something to earn from older literatures on ecological democracy emerging out of green political theory.


Teena Gabrielson, University of Wyoming


Growing out of movement politics since the early 1980s, in 1991, delegates to the First National People of Color Leadership Summit authored the “Principles of Environmental Justice” in response to the systematic and disproportionate environmental degradation experienced in low income and nonwhite communities in the US and around the world. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development published Our Common Future, a report issuing a call for global sustainable development that acknowledged the deep structural linkages among poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. While both seek to focus attention on the imbrication of social inequality and environmental degradation, the first does so by explicitly identifying race as central to this problem whereas the second fails to even mention the term. These foundational texts are emblematic of traditional environmentalism’s historical failure to account for its role in racial politics and underscore the critical need to address the intersections of race and environment in contemporary articulations of ecological democracy.

While a growing climate justice movement has done much to bridge the gap that once divided the environmental justice movement from mainstream environmentalism in the United States, significant work remains. Recent research shows that despite significant gains in gender diversity for traditional environmental organizations, government environmental agencies, and environmental grant-making foundations, “racial minorities are severely under-represented in the environmental workforce” (Taylor 2014, 4). In his recent book Inequality, Democracy and the Environment (2015), Liam Downey argues that elite-controlled organizations, institutions, and networks play a
critical role in contributing to environmental degradation across a variety of global issue-areas. Downey's work identifies several specific mechanisms that contribute to this process including the shifting of environmental costs to non-elites and the framing of what is considered to be environmental behavior. However, as an environmental sociologist, Downey focuses on the structural work of these mechanisms rather than on explicating their discursive construction.

Building on Downey's work, I begin from the premise that mechanisms for reinforcing environmental inequalities are embedded in discourses regarding who constitutes an ideal green subject, what is an environment worth protecting, and who deserves decision-making power in this context. Central to this nexus of ideas is the notion of agency. In this paper, I bring the work of critical race theorists such of Katherine McKittrick (2006), Alexander Weheliye (2014), Claire Jean Kim (2015) into conversation with new materialists to rethink the concept of agency—as embodied, distributed, relational, and spatialized—so as to begin to extract contemporary environmentalism from its origins and development as an apparatus of maintaining ethno-class privilege and traditional hierarchies of power. My aim is to push toward a flesher ecological democratic politics wherein the chief aim is not protecting a natural world distinct from society, but empowering collective forms of agency, a goal that necessitates attending to the social-material contexts that foster it.


Sharon Adetutu Omotoso, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

‘When The Rains Are (Un)Stopped: African Feminism And Green Democracy’.

The philosophical principle of the indigenous African environmental management, the paper argues, is ‘act unto the environment what you expect the environment to do unto you’. The underlying basis of this principle is communalism, the doctrine which emphasizes on the activity and success of the wider society rather than, though not necessarily at the expense of, or to the detriment of the individual. Communalism stresses that not human beings alone are in community, but they are also in solidarity with the world of nature and of spirits as well as the ancestors. This made it possible for people to see environmental resources (land, water, animals and plants) as not just production factors but also having political connotations and implications. Rains signify the goodness and providence brought upon earth by nature. They are vitally connected to the survival of ecosystem, lack of which is associated with bad luck in Africa as it results in desertification, pestilence and famine. In some parts of Africa, people are disposed to metaphysical acts of rain-making and rain-holding, which could be used, either to curb famine or reduce flooding. However, the noted African science of rain-making and rain-holding has not been politically harnessed and institutionalized to address flooding problems, sometimes caused by excessive rainfalls, or the problem of desertification, caused by lack of adequate rain-falls, on the Continent. The paper argues that at the root of environmental crisis confronting the African region today is Africa’s lust towards harnessing her science, technology and values for state re-engineering. Given the foregoing, exploring rain-making and rain-holding acts raise questions such as: what is the African ontology of rain-making or rain-holding? who are rain-makers and rain-holders? Could their knowledge be publicly harnessed and politically institutionalized? For what purposes and at whose expense do they operate? How does rain-making, for example, connect with the negative right of some people not to be deprived of closeness to their environment because of desertification? what are the socio-political implications of rain-making and rain-holding and how do they connect with the issue of distributive justice in Africa? These questions are gendered and considered by paying particular attention to women’s roles in ‘rain-making’ and ‘rain-holding’ acts, the work introduces selected African feminist theories to discuss green democracy, iterating that democratic societal discourses must engage structural support which transcends those sufficient for traditional liberal democracy. It establishes that a different complementary attitude of participation and interaction toward both the environment and human nature is urgently required. Given this, it generates a fresh outlook at green democracy in its various interpretations of the dynamics of environmental crisis in Africa. It concludes that if indigenous knowledge and orientations of African Science could be conscientiously politically channeled towards the development of green democracy, it will be a landmark achievement in Africa’s political environment.

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Kyle Powys Whyte, Michigan State University

‘Indigenous Peoples, Ecological Democracy and Climate Change’.

The survival and liberation of Indigenous peoples living within settler colonial societies involves engagement in many democratic, deliberative and dialogic spaces where Indigenous peoples interact with settler states, multinational corporations and many other parties. These spaces range from treaty negotiations to legal processes to direct action campaigns to government to government relations to educational programs, among many other spaces. In engaging these spaces, Indigenous participants use myriad strategies for protecting their communities’ and nations’ cultural integrity, collective well-being and economic vitality. Strategies include, from the literature in Native American and Indigenous Studies, Indigenous diplomacy and disseminle, the politics of refusal, self-recognition, Indigenous mapping, resurgence, among others. I will argue that climate change is transforming these democratic spaces in ways that reinstantiate certain forms of settler colonial oppression. Climate change, in this sense, alters both ecosystems but also the options for how Indigenous peoples can represent themselves in the face of the settler populations, governments and organizations. First, climate change adaptation strategies often require coordination across parties that Indigenous peoples are not accustomed to working with and who harbor racist assumptions about Indigenous peoples. Second, climate change alters longstanding political relationships that cannot be renegotiated, such as agreements made in the 19th century. Third, masculinized climate science, which Indigenous peoples engage with more to prepare for climate change impacts, can continue and expand settler patriarchy by limiting what voices and forms of collective action are respected as having a place at the table. Fourth, Indigenous peoples and collectives in settler states who are not acknowledged as political actors by those settler states will find it increasingly difficult to advance their efforts to be flexible enough to adapt to climate change impacts. Fifth, forms of Indigenous self-recognition that are tailored to particular landscapes will require problematic forms of recognition in order to establish or maintain themselves. This paper will begin by discussing an Indigenous theory of climate justice in which the settler colonial strategies that pave the way for anthropogenic climate change are the same policies that, today, make it more difficult for many Indigenous peoples to adapt. Indigenous peoples have engaged in democratic, deliberative and dialogic spaces as ways of protecting their communities and nations from settler erasure. While there is now a body of work showing how climate change impacts will affect Indigenous cultures, there is a need to show more specific processes of oppression, such as settler erasure in democratic, deliberative and dialogic spaces, are continued or exacerbated.

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Amy Lauren Lovecraft, University of Alaska Fairbanks

‘Co-Producing Anticipatory Governance: Scenarios as Social Learning in Arctic Alaska’.

Scenarios have been a tool of business for half a century. Companies gain the capacity to think ahead in rapidly changing complex competitive environments and make crucial decisions in absence of complete information about the future. Currently, at many regional scales of governance there is a growing need for democratically legitimate tools that enable the actors at local-scales (e.g., counties, boroughs, parishes) to address pressing concerns in the midst of uncertainty. This is particularly true of areas experiencing rapidly changing environments (e.g., drought, floods, diminishing sea ice, erosion) and complex social problems (e.g., remote communities, resource extraction, threatened cultures). Two literature streams have addressed such problems but with little overlap. Resilience theory and deliberative democracy both promote governance by informed actors in an effort to produce decisions that avoid social-environmental collapse. The former focusing on resilient ecosystems, the latter on legitimate societies. However, resilience theory has little in the way of proven tools and deliberative democracy, while many tools have been proposed and used, generally lacks a long-view and capacity to account for ecological uncertainty. Scenario exercises produce neither forecasts of what is to come nor are they visions of what participants would like to happen. Rather, they produce pertinent and accurate information related to questions of “what would happen if…” and thus provide the possibility of strategic decision-making to reduce risk and promote community resilience. Scenarios are forms of social learning and among local-scale
Experts they can enhance a democratic process to make decisions about proactive adaptation, what we call anticipatory governance. This paper represents the first set of results from a three-year National Science Foundation participatory scenarios process with resident experts the Northwest Arctic and North Slope Boroughs (Alaska, USA) with the focal question “What is needed for healthy sustainable communities by 2040?” The goals of this study were (1) to identify key factors of resilience as understood by resident experts of Arctic Alaska in a tightly coupled social-ecological system that has experienced numerous perturbations. (2) to co-produce knowledge with participants about these key factors presently and in the future through participatory scenarios (3) to analyze and return for community use consistent, plausible, and robust futures based on their key factors to narrow the range of uncertainty in regional understanding of complex systems. Alongside the scenarios as results themselves, we find a deep connection between the concepts of well-being, environmental (food) security, resilience, and fate-control. In short, politics matter to community resilience. By using a future studies approach the participants are addressing adaptation from a proactive standpoint thinking long-term about local and regional scale concerns rather than examining global-scale forecasts for near-term decision-making. In this way the results contribute to a truly multi-disciplinary cross-cultural discussion of the importance of innovative Indigenous and local resident thinking in a rapidly changing Arctic.

Amy Lauren Lovecraft is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Alaska. She received her B.A. in 1994 from Trinity University and began graduate studies in Vienna, Austria pursuing her undergraduate focus on international economics and European integration. Unable to resist North America for long she returned to earn her Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin concentrating on American political development, public policy, and political theory. Her dissertation analyzed transboundary water policy between the United States and Canada in the Great Lakes. At UAF her courses include the Law and Society suite — Politics and Judicial Process, Con Law I and Con Law II — and, among others, Public Policy, Political Economy, and Political Behavior. Working to foster interdisciplinary engagement among students and faculty she is active in the Arctic and Northern Studies and the Resilience and Adaptation programs at UAF. In her research, Dr. Lovecraft explores power dynamics in social-ecological systems. Her scholarship has been published as book chapters and in journals such as the American Review of Canadian Studies, Polar Geography, Policy Studies Journal, and the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Recently she is co-editor of the transdisciplinary volume North by 2020: Perspectives on Alaska’s Changing Social-Ecological Systems (Autumn 2011) that developed from collaboration during the International Polar Year. She has been a Dickey Fellow in Arctic Studies at Dartmouth College and a Fulbright Research Scholar in Norway at the Center for International Climate and Environmental Research (CICERO). She has served two terms as a member of the U.S. National Academies Polar Research Board and is he Associate Director of the North by 2020 Forum. Currently, as the Principle Investigator on a three-year National Science Foundation grant, she leads a team working with resident experts in the Northwest Arctic and North Slope Boroughs on scenarios development asking “what is needed for healthy sustainable communities in Arctic Alaska by 2040?”

Delia Paul, Monash University

‘Water management in Johor State, Malaysia’.

Democratic systems are widely believed to form a strong basis for environmental decision making. In particular, stakeholder participation as an essential element of democratic systems is seen as necessary for achieving environmentally sound and socially just outcomes in the management of environmental resources. In the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 6 on water and sanitation privileges stakeholder participation over other aspects of democratic systems, devoting a single target to supporting and strengthening the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.

In Southeast Asia, citizen-led, bottom-up efforts to hold government accountable on environmental issues have frequently failed to garner widespread public support, for various reasons. Conversely, global and regional water policy frameworks suffer from a lack of uptake at the national and local levels, in part due to the problem of scalar disconnect.

These difficulties and limitations are explored in a discussion of the current water crisis in Johor State, Malaysia. With its hinterland of rivers and forests, Johor has many ecological advantages over the neighboring city-state of Singapore, and for many years provided Singapore’s main water supply. Following ongoing water shortages, Johor began buying drinking water from Singapore in 2016. This reversal of positions is widely regarded as a failure of water management in Johor, and a validation of Singapore’s long-term policies for achieving self-sufficiency in water.
The evolution of water management norms and practice in Johor State is analyzed through a democratic lens to explain in what sense, and to what extent, a ‘democratic deficit’ is linked with Johor’s water crisis. In comparison, while common conceptions of democracy, including multi-party elections and a free press are thought to be lacking in neighboring Singapore, this apparently has not hindered the city-state’s uptake of good practice in water management.

Stakeholder participation is placed in context as being only one measure of state openness, and sometimes only tenuously linked with state openness. Drawing on the Johor-Singapore case, it is argued that other aspects of democratic systems – access to information, internal accountability within the public sector, and altruism in human cooperation – have been downplayed in international water policy frameworks, and warrant greater attention.

Delia Paul is a trained journalist and communications specialist who has worked with environment and development agencies in the Asia-Pacific region since the mid-90s. She previously worked in a research and communication roles at the Australian Conservation Foundation and World Vision Australia in Melbourne, and the Mekong River Commission in Phnom Penh. She has undertaken many overseas consulting assignments with organizations including the International Labour Organization, Oxfam Australia, Plan International and WWF. With the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), she regularly reports on UN policy-making processes in Earth Negotiations Bulletin, currently focusing on negotiations toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the creation of the UN Environment Assembly of the UN Environment Programme (UNEA). Her research interests include public participation in environmental decision making, environmental politics in Southeast Asia, and water governance. A Malaysian citizen, Delia is currently a PhD scholar at Monash University.

Emerson M. Sanchez, University of Canberra
‘Oscillating social order, amorphous roles: democratising Philippine mineral resource governance’.

Following the 1996 Marcopper mining disaster in the Philippines, “responsible mining” became the flagship project of the Philippine state and the large-scale mining industry. The mining disaster resulted in a technocratic crisis in Philippine mineral resource governance. The state and the industry tried to regain their authority through the “responsible mining” project. Responsible mining is a co-production (Jasanoff 2004) of environmental knowledge and mineral resource governance using the language of sustainability and democracy.

Looking at the Didipio mine in Nueva Vizcaya province as a case study, the latent perspective of different political actors reveals entrenched adherence to science and experts. The result is an oscillating social order with democratic tendencies and deep-seated technocratic features. This could be explained by claiming that the different actors instrumentalise democracy and technocracy to support their interests. A democratic facade could quell the demands of environmental groups and indigenous communities; a technocratic crutch could legitimise environmental decisions.

This oscillating social order is also an indication that the appropriate roles of different political actors in democratising mineral resource governance is still being shaped. Using deliberative ideals to analyse the case study, I will offer suggestions on how to resolve the challenges in determining the appropriate roles of different actors in Philippine mineral resource governance.

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Mine Islar, Lund University Center for Sustainability Studies (LUCSUS)
‘The figure of the ecological citizen? : Citizen municipalism in the aftermath of right to the city movements in Barcelona’.

This paper aims to explore contemporary political institutions that have emerged after the right to the city-movements in Barcelona and their relationship with ecological citizenship. Claiming the right to the city involves more than issues of access to urban amenities: It is also about claiming the right to participate in the formation and transformation of the city. This emphasis on claiming rights for (trans) formation positions right to the city-movements within the larger issue of citizenship. In this context, this paper explores the citizen municipalism in Barcelona, which has emerged as a municipal platform after Spain’s 15M-right to the city movement. By mobilizing neighborhoods, citizen municipalism aims to initiate a politics of change by reclaiming institutions in order to create an ecologically and socially just society. The case of Barcelona en Comu is a unique illustration of
citizen municipalism in practice as it serves both as an elected institutional body in the municipality and a platform of different social-ecological movements.

By analyzing the case of Barcelona en Comu, this paper explores the concept of ecological citizenship by analyzing strategies and potentials of this initiative regarding socio-ecological change and improvement of citizenship practices. The concept of ecological citizenship has emerged from critiques of liberal democracy, highlighting the limited degree of citizen participation in areas that generate ecological problems, e.g. decisions about consumption, investment strategies, production and technology (Barry 1999, Dobson 2003, Barry and Eckersley 2005). From this perspective, the reconstruction of citizenship as ecological citizenship underlines the responsibilities and obligations of the citizen in the framework of a sustainable society and in relation to unrepresented or underrepresented collectives. The paper explores the role of the citizen in the politics of change towards a sustainable society and asks: How can citizen platforms like Barcelona en Comu foster ecological democratic principles and illustrate its limitations? What types of new policies and strategies does Barcelona en Comu have for social and ecological sustainability? What synergies and tensions occur by institutionalizing ‘right to the city’? The paper concludes that such initiatives can contribute to the development of active and participatory political space and practices of citizenship while enabling institutions and policies for a change towards a more sustainable society. The analysis is based on the empirical evidence derived from semi-structured interviews, media analysis and observations during a fieldwork conducted in Barcelona between 2015-2016.

Mine Islar is an assistant professor at Lund University Center for Sustainability Studies (LUCSUS). She has an interdisciplinary educational background from Political Science and International Relations Department of Bogazici University, Istanbul; Lund University Center for Asian Studies and Centre of Excellence for Integration of Social and Natural Dimensions of Sustainability (LUCID). She has worked with interdisciplinary teams on issues such as environmental politics, politics of renewable energy, resource rights and justice as well as social movements. Currently she is leading a project called “Ecological citizenship and right to the city movements in Southern Europe” which is funded by the Swedish Research Council. The overall aim of the project is to explore the impact of contemporary right to the city movements in Europe on the politicization of citizens and in creating collective practices of citizenship.

Anna Kajiser, Linköping University, Sweden
Eva Lövbrand, Linköping University, Sweden
‘Ecological Democracy on the Run: Embodied Climate Activism and Story-Telling in the Mobilization for COP21’.

In December 2015 the United Nations held its 21st climate change conference (COP21) in Paris. While political leaders and diplomats were spending long hours in the conference hall Le Bourget to negotiate a new climate treaty for the post-2020 era, a diverse landscape of social movements, grassroots organizations and artists assembled in cultural institutions and exhibition halls around Paris to mobilize public support for climate justice. Despite the terrorist attacks on 13 November in Paris, and the subsequent state of emergency and ban on protests, COP21 formed a veritable center of gravitation that inspired citizen groups and social networks to experiment with new forms of climate activism and mobilization. In this paper we draw attention to one example of such non-tradition climate mobilization called “Run for Your Life”, organized by the Swedish touring theater Riksteatern prior to Paris. Framed as a “climate performance” – an art project rather than a political action – this particular initiative mobilized thousands of people to run distances in a relay race for climate justice, starting in Arctic Sweden and arriving in Paris on the first day of COP21. Public events were organized along the way, and the entire race was recorded by video link and broadcasted online, attracting considerable attention. When signing up for distances, runners were asked to submit a personal climate story to be live streamed as the participants ran. Thus, while embodied movement was a key element of the campaign, it took place in the virtual world as much as in the physical. In this paper we examine how the “Run for Your Life” initiative mobilized citizen engagement with the global climate. Drawing upon the archive of personal climate stories assembled by the campaign, as well as interviews with organisers and participants, we ask who were mobilized by this event, what motivated them to take climate action, and how embodiment featured in their personal climate stories. Our findings offer insight into the participants’ emotional, ethical and cultural attachments to the environment. They also illustrate how Swedish citizens imagine the democratic space where just environmental relations and actions may take form.

Anna Kajiser is a Postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Thematic Studies at Linköping University, Sweden. She has a background in Sustainability Science, Gender Studies and Social Anthropology. In her research she has explored power dimensions of environmental issues, engaging feminist, intersectional and postcolonial theory. Her PhD work was focused on environmental politics and popular movements in contemporary Bolivia. In her current project she addresses similar themes in a Swedish context. Anna’s work has been published in the journal Environmental Politics, in the leading Swedish journal on Gender Studies Tidskrift för Genusvetenskap and the Spanish journal Ecología
Política, as well as in several edited volumes. She is frequently engaged to give lectures on her work inside and outside academic contexts.

Eva Lövbrand is Associate Professor at the Department of Thematic Studies at Linköping University, Sweden. Much of Eva’s work has focused on the ideas, knowledge claims and expert practices that inform environmental politics and governance. Climate change has served as Eva’s prime empirical example, but in recent years she has also explored how the Anthropocene is figured and narrated as a political problem. Eva’s work has been extensively published in journals such as Global Environmental Politics, Science, Technology and Human Values, Science, Critical Policy Studies, Review of International Relations and Global Environmental Change. She is co-editor of the volumes Environmental Politics and Deliberative Democracy: Exploring the Promise of New Modes of Governance (Edward Elgar Press 2010) and Research Handbook on Climate Governance (Edward Elgar Press 2015). Eva is also editorial member for the journals Global Environmental Politics, Critical Policy Studies, and Anthropocene Review.

Marit Hammond, Keele University
‘The Centrality of Culture in Ecological Democracy’.

In the debate around ecological democracy, a pivotal point of contention has long been the question why democracy should actually be expected, as some claim, to deliver (more) ecological outcomes. This point is empirical as well as conceptual: it is difficult to conceive why voters would support any policies that – as is often (perceived to be) the case with environmental legislation – would leave them worse off; whilst democracy conceptually must remain open to all possible outcomes rather than being tied to any particular agenda ex ante. Yet both empirically and conceptually, the nature and extent of this key puzzle has always hinged on the particular definitions used. This paper re-considers the link between democracy and ecological sustainability from a cultural angle: I argue that conceiving of both sustainability and democratisation as essentially cultural transformations resolves the puzzle and thus makes a renewed case for ecological democracy.

On the one hand, if sustainability must ultimately include societies’ ability to voluntarily – i.e. with popular support – render themselves ‘worse off’ in conventional material terms, it hinges on a fundamental change in perception of what prosperity means to people; and it is cultural norms and symbols that give such perceptions genuine meaning. On the other hand, if the ecological significance of democracy is its unique openness to precisely the critical interrogations and inclusive dialogue that create such public reflection, it must go beyond an operationalisation in narrow institutional terms, resting instead in the nature and scope of a critical public discourse; yet democratisation in this sense can only evolve as an identity-driven, bottom-up development of a matching political culture.

The realm of culture, as the sphere in society where ‘meaning-making’ and identity formation take place, is then central to both the sustainability transformation and the process of democratisation it rests on. Only as essentially cultural processes – the creation of new meanings of sustainable prosperity in people’s everyday lives, and culturally rather than institutionally based push for democratisation – can these transformations be deep-seated rather than superficial, and thus self-perpetuating rather than merely enforced.

This perspective thus suggests a new conceptual link between sustainability and democracy: the need for an open-ended, critical public reflection on the society’s condition and possible futures that inheres in both. Whilst an ecological democracy, or democratic form of sustainability, can then still not be guaranteed to emerge, its conceptualisation in these terms offers new starting points for a democratic sustainability politics of a less rigidly defined and hence no longer contradictory type. Conceived of in cultural terms, ecological democracy can resolve its key underlying puzzle by highlighting the nature of sustainability as an ongoing process of nothing other than societal meaning-making; whilst thereby conceptually tying it to a definition of democracy that substitutes the rightly criticised rigid forms of the past for new systemically based, genuinely emancipatory approaches.

Marit Hammond is Lecturer in Politics at Keele University. Her research interests include environmental theory, normative democratic theory, critical political theory, and the politics of sustainability. Recent work has appeared in Contemporary Political Theory, Policy Sciences, Democratization, Constellations, and Representation.