

The Future of Democracy in the Face of Climate Change

Paper Two

What is Democracy?

A review of approaches, models and their relevance to an enquiry into 'the future of democracy in the face of climate change'

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Introduction

Democracy is the central concern of our work on ‘the future of democracy in the face of climate change’. But democracy is a contested term, so a review of existing definitions of democracy and associated concepts is a necessary baseline for our work. In carrying out such a review however, we must acknowledge that neither the past nor the present are sufficient guides for the future.

This is the second paper in our project on ‘the future of democracy in the face of climate change’. It highlights a range of definitional approaches to ‘democracy’ and describes some of their underlying assumptions or core concerns. We briefly review some of the relationships between these approaches and dilemmas at the heart of the relationship between democracy and climate change, which were highlighted in *Paper One*.

Our aim in this paper is to capture a sufficiently wide range of approaches to identify underlying patterns. At this early stage in our project, we aim to sow the seeds for imagining future ‘democracies’ and their relationship with climate change; but not to embark on that analysis. We do however want to draw out those underlying preoccupations that might prove critically important as climate change hits democracy and as democracy continues to shape climate change and our human responses to it. We also highlight some of the ways in which approaches to defining democracy are relevant to the central question in our project: *“how might democracy and participatory decision-making have evolved to cope with the challenges of climate change by the years 2050 and 2100?”*

Democracy is inherently dynamic (Sørensen 2008): it is dynamic in concert with changes in society and the implications of those changes for democracy. Democracy in both theory and practice has changed enormously even in the past fifty years. Full rights of adult suffrage have in living memory been elusive in many countries. For example, only in 1971 were women granted the right to vote at federal level in Switzerland. At the subnational level, in 1991 the Canton of Appenzell Innerhoden became the last canton to grant women the right to vote at local level following a Supreme Court ruling (UN Press Release 2003). It was 1994 before black men and women were enfranchised in South Africa; and to this day women have limited rights of suffrage in some Arab states (IWDC 2010).

This paper is intended to be a living document. In a later draft, we will add insights based on a review of the wide body of literature on participatory decision-making and deliberation more generally. We will also review the paper as we develop our scenarios for the future of democracy in the face of climate change to 2050 and 2100, finalising it as we draft the final project report. In the meantime, we welcome comment and feedback.

Getting to grips with the range of definitional approaches to democracy means confronting a bewildering mix of political science, philosophical nuance and high theory. Understandings of democracy are multifaceted. There are for example those that relate to democracy as a political ideology, those that locate it within political institutions and related processes, and those that refer to it within broader social constructs. One might even go so far as to suggest that democracy has gone from being a form of government to ‘a way of life’ (Zakaria 2007).

Our project on ‘the future of democracy in the face of climate change’ is concerned both with democracy as it relates to political institutions and decision-making, and democracy as it relates to a ‘way of life’ in society and in all its organisational manifestations. In the latter form, democracy finds expression, for example, in the call for ‘stakeholder corporations’ or for ‘democratic decision-making’ within the firm.

Haerpfer et al (2009) express another essential distinction when they suggest that “*democracy can be used as a noun [e.g. ‘country A is a democracy’] or as an adjective [e.g. ‘democratic decision-making in parliament’]. When it is used as a noun, it is an abstraction, an ideal of how a country ought to be governed [i.e. ‘as a democracy’]. More than that, it is a highly valued symbol.*”

For the time being, this paper is concerned principally with the *political* dimensions of democracy. At a later stage we will add our thinking on the wider *societal* dimensions of democracy, by which we refer to participatory (or ‘democratic’) participation in decision-making with wider public significance.

The scope of our project, in principle, is global. Yet much of the analysis in this paper is, for the time being, regrettably ‘Northern’ or ‘Western’ in tone. Wider inspiration might come from the field of development studies; a cross-cutting discipline where the idea of participatory learning and action has been developed, and wider approaches to understanding and optimising public participation inform both theory and practice. And since in our project we are concerned with democracy as a lived social experience at least as much as a set of political institutions and procedures, it is valuable to draw inspiration from this and related fields of endeavour too; particularly since they have potential to counter the otherwise heavy bias of the paper to anglo-american and Western thinking and theorising.

In this first draft, however, we are less concerned with detailed analyses of how best to organise decision-making in society (i.e. decision-making techniques for public participation or consensus decision-making) and more concerned with how public participation relates, at a higher level of abstraction, to political institutions and political democracy.

What is democracy?

Classical Democracy

The ‘wonderful thing’ about democracy’, says Indian writer and activist Arundhati Roy, is that it ‘can mean anything you want it to mean’. And whilst this is not quite true, it is certainly the case that democracy ‘has meant different things to different people at different times and places’ (Dahl 1998).

In fact, democracy hasn’t always been associated as an idea with ‘that which is good’. When Aristotle’s *The Politics* was published in the mid-thirteenth century, democracy “*took on a pejorative connotation and became associated with the politics of the rabble; government conducted for the benefit of the poor rather than the public interest; and a form of power... in which the ‘common people’ can become tyrannical, threatening to level all social distinctions and earned privileges*” (Held 2006: 33). Democracy came to be associated with the ‘monopolistic domination of

government apparatus' by the poor. In more modern terms, democracy carries a risk of 'tyranny of the majority' – which Rousseau warned against in the eighteenth century.

Could climate change too give democracy a pejorative connotation? There is a risk that this might happen from two directions: if majority rule were to hold back progressive decision-making; or if majority rule were to cause a less affluent majority to turn on the lifestyles and consumption patterns of a more affluent minority.

The word 'democracy' emerged out of the two words 'demos' (the people, or the community) and 'kratos' (rule by, power or authority). Consequently, it is based on the idea that there is some form of political equality among 'the people'. The essential idea of democracy then is 'rule by the people', and one might then add 'of the people' and 'for the people'. Herein lies a central dilemma of democracy: for who constitute 'the people' in various circumstances? And how might they go about making decisions (and on what)?

Most accounts of the multiple models of democracy begin with ancient Greece; in the Assembly of Athens over two thousand years ago.¹ The classical Greek model of democracy celebrated the political ideals of equality among (some) citizens; liberty and respect for the law and justice. It was marked by a general commitment to the 'principle of civic virtue' – i.e. the dedication to a republican city-state and the subordination of private life to public affairs, all under a commitment to 'the common good' (Held 2006). The citizenry as a whole formed an Assembly, which met a minimum of forty times a year. Decision-making was based squarely in direct democracy, with citizens making decisions directly, rather than via elected representatives. Citizens in principle strived for unanimity in the Assembly, and majority voting was used to address issues in areas where there was disagreement. A Council of 500 citizens organised the work of the Assembly, selected through a variety of methods including election and lots.

The Athenian idea that private life should be subordinated to the common good is one which advocates of sustainable development living in contemporary democracies might envy today. But Athenian 'democracy' was also deeply flawed through contemporary eyes. For example, only Athenian men over the age of twenty were eligible to participate actively (indeed, the responsibility to participate in public life was a key attribute of citizenship) whereas women had no political and limited civil rights; and immigrant and slave populations were highly marginalised. 'Rule by the many' was in reality a rule by the relatively few.

From ancient Greece until the seventeenth century, democracy is commonly understood to have existed only in limited spaces. Where it did, it was essentially an alternative or supplement to monarchic rule linked to spiritual leadership into which the idea of the active citizen was subsumed. For example, the northern Italian City States of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were governed by ruling councils whose members were selected by lot from those citizens eligible to vote. As in Athens the citizenry was formed by an exclusive group of men. This model saw self-government as the basis of liberty together with the right of citizens to participate in the government – which created distinct roles for 'leading social forces' (Held 2006). The community itself was the ultimate sovereign authority, and its various rulers had a status no higher than that of elected officials.

Liberal Democracy

Contemporary notions of liberal democracy are as recent as the eighteenth century, when the ideas of people like Montesquieu and John Stuart Mill began to shape thinking about political life. Nef and Reiter go further in stressing how recently democracy has become a dominant political system. They argue that *“it took major social revolutions ... two world wars and a cold war for the word democracy to become hegemonic”*. But they also note the diverse reach of the idea: *“By the end of World War II, conservatives, liberals, radicals, anarchists and even some advocates of totalitarianism had incorporated democracy as both an ideal and as a benchmark of their respective political projects”* (Nef and Reiter 2009: 20).

With the growth of population and hence citizenry, the direct democracy of classical republicanism had become unmanageable by the eighteenth century. At this point democracy became a good deal more complex; for it acquired more directly a preoccupation with the role of elected representatives; their election, and their accountability. Moreover, a focus on ‘representation’ provided a vehicle through which the idea of democracy could come to hold sway across large territories and interests (Held 2006).

As John Stuart Mill wrote in 1861, *“since all cannot, in a community exceeding single small town, participate personally in any but some very minor portions of the public business it follows that the ideal type of a perfect government must be representative”* (quoted in Dahl 1989: 95). But representative democracy was not without its critics: in the eighteenth century Rousseau argued that only with direct participation in political decision-making could people be free. He potentially argued that *“The English people believes itself to be free. It is greatly mistaken; it is free only during the election of members of Parliament. Once they are elected the populace is enslaved; it is nothing”* (Rousseau 1987: 5).

Contemporary thinking on democracy really began with the work of eighteenth and early nineteenth century liberals. Liberals strived for a rollback of state power and the creation of a sphere of civil society where social relations of all kinds could evolve. Their vision was closely linked to a liberal view of the importance of a thriving private sector; particularly linked to support for a market economy and respect for private property. They also argued, centrally, that state power must be based on the will of sovereign people, and that citizens must be protected from the state – freedom ‘from’ interference as distinct from freedoms ‘to do’ various things (Sørensen 2008).

John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873) was among the most influential thinkers on liberal democracy. His work explored the political preconditions for human excellence, the expansion of individual capacities and moral self-development. Only with freedom, he argued, could humans realise their full potential. Mill saw participation in the political process as a pathway to liberty and self-development, with representative government essential both to the protection and to the enhancement of liberty and of reason (Held 2006; Sørensen 2008).

Even so, he did not go so far as to advocate a universal franchise. For whilst Mill highlighted a need for equality between the sexes as a precondition for human development and democracy; this was not reflected in a comprehensive commitment to universal suffrage. On the contrary, Mill argued

that enfranchisement should be based on a system of plural voting which gives people who are 'wiser and more talented' more votes than the 'ignorant and less able' (Sørensen 2008).

On the crucial question of delimiting the role of the state, Mill asserted that: "...*the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of number is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others*" (1982: 68). This essentially *laissez faire* approach regards restraint on trade as 'bad' because it cannot deliver maximisation of the 'economic good' (i.e. maximum economic benefit for all). In a contemporary context, Mill might have considered the protection of the environment or management of climate impacts sufficiently important to justify intervention to 'prevent harm to others'. Indeed had he foreseen our contemporary context, we might speculate that his vision of democracy might have been quite different.

Mill's conception of political life was concerned not only with individual liberty, but also with government accountability and efficient bureaucratic administration. He saw great threats to freedom in the growth of government; arguing that the greater the number of people (in absolute and relative terms) appointed and paid by government, and the greater the central control of functions and personnel, the greater the threat to freedom; for if these trends are unchecked, "*not all the freedom of the press and popular constitution of the legislature would make this or any other country free otherwise than in name*" (Held 2006: 83). Notably, Mill also considered that the more efficient and *scientific* the administrative machinery becomes, the more freedom is threatened. One can see the signs of a concern that rule must be 'by the people' not by 'bureaucrats' or 'experts'; a concern that arises in relation to climate change and public scepticism of scientific claims about global warming.

Robyn Eckersley (2006) notes three problems with the philosophical justifications of a liberal democratic state: a) it assumes all citizens as equally free, informed and unencumbered agents and thus equally capable of making independent choices; b) it is left to political contingency whether private preferences are publicly criticised regarding the consequences for others; and c) it carries an 'in-built bias' against those affected by decisions but unable to register their preferences (e.g. future generations, nonhumans, noncitizens). She argues that political liberalism therefore provides a 'philosophical justification' for the state not to systematically pursue sustainability. (Eckersley 2006: 274).

Participatory and Deliberative Democracy

One of the most important fault-lines in thinking on democracy concerns the balance between representative and direct democracy of various kinds, and between representative democracy and various forms of public participation and deliberation.

The idea of participatory democracy forms an important subset of liberal democracy. Its core proposition is that an equal right to liberty and human self-development can only be achieved in a 'participatory society' (Habermas 1996; cited in Held 2006). In other words, the potential 'tyranny of the majority' that can result from representative democracy may be made less dangerous if coupled

with structures of participation at local community (society) level and in the workplace. A participatory society could, for example, better enable citizens to hold their representatives to account, and better to evaluate the impact of decisions taken by national representatives on their lives.

Participation of the citizen, many thinkers have argued, is perhaps best achieved on a collective scale that functions independently of the state. Ideas about 'civil society' and the 'public sphere' are important here; for they identify places away from the state where deliberation can occur, critical opinions be created and interchanged, and where states can be brought to account to perform better and more responsibly (Nef and Reiter 2009).

Nineteenth century French political thinker and historian De Tocqueville believed that civil society offered a means to combat individualism and generate an active and self-conscious vibrant political society (1864). More recently, civil society has come to be seen as central in facilitating a more informed, aware, active society that is able to hold its representatives accountable. The term 'civil society' has not acquired a consistent meaning; but it generally includes non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and voluntary associations, as well as individuals acting in their capacity as citizens.

As a practice, participatory democracy is concerned with the problem of ensuring collective, participatory decision-making at all levels through the continuous involvement of the citizen in the governance of society. The idea goes beyond decision-making in the formal realm of representative politics, to address issues of participation in organisations and in particular in the workplace. Participatory democracy therefore has implications not only for the organisation of the state, but also for how society is organised.

Robert Putnam argues that all aspects of civil society, even non-political ones, are vital for democracy. And in turn, new forms of social activism and the renewal of community are necessary for a strong democracy (2001). The idea of 'social capital' is a central organising force for advocates of this line of thinking; and strengthening of 'social capital' is a key tool in efforts to extend democracy beyond the confines of political institutions. Social capital, then, is a critically important asset base for citizens, whether at the level of the household, community or country. Social capital is formed and banked in shared social networks, institutions, decision-making structures, social norms and cultural values; and it is demonstrated by the degree of social mobilisation at any particular level of society.

However much participatory democracy stresses the need for participation, however, it does not generally address how best to ensure that participation is adequately secured. Participation and representation depend for their health on the overall level of informed awareness of the voting population. And even then, there is no bar on irrationality or fecklessness in the expression of preferences; a point which led John Stuart Mill to argue that only wise and talented people should be granted voting rights.

Participatory democracy also remains vulnerable to a criticism potently expressed by Robert Dahl: that most people are uninterested in politics, and that in any social organisation only a small group

of people will take up decision-making. Michael Mason also stresses the central dilemma: *“Most citizens remain uninvolved in public affairs while the state is preoccupied with aggregating the political preferences expressed through voting or lobbying ... the economic sphere also stands insulated from any democratic interrogation”* (Mason 1999: 52). Putnam’s work on ‘social capital’ provides only part of the answer to this problem.

A further key drawback of thinking on participatory democracy lies with the fact that it has generally not addressed what Held (2006) calls ‘deliberative deficits’ or the barriers to participation in political life. In particular, participatory democracy, he says, fails to answer ‘how the conditions of its own existence are to be secured adequately’. This concern echoes the worry of John Stuart Mill and other liberals that socio-economic inequality prevents citizens from obtaining equal political rights in practice.

Held argues that politics must be ‘about the capacity of social agents, agencies and institutions to maintain or transform their environment, social or physical’ (2006). A body of work on deliberative democracy stemming from the 1980s offers important contributions here. Advocates of greater deliberative democracy argue that the conditions of informed participation need to be ‘problematised’. One consequence, writes Held, is that *“the public realm needs to be transformed from a set of mechanisms to aggregate preferences to one for examining them and pursuing those which are fact-, other- and future-regarding”* (2006: 271). From a sustainable development perspective, this offers a close link to the principles of intergenerational and intragenerational equity highlighted in *Paper One*.

Today, ideas about deliberative democracy offer one of the principal alternatives to contemporary forms of liberal democracy. They also inform thinking on “environmental democracy”; a branch of political science whose theorists focus on how best to equip democracy for environmental challenges. For example, Michael Mason advocates new forms of public participation and new arenas for practical deliberation to be determined by the citizens themselves, suggesting that these are the ‘conceptual setting’ for an understanding of environmental democracy. (1999: 53).

In the field of climate change, the idea of deliberation offers a response to the democratic challenge of finding space for expertise, and for science, without compromising ‘rule by the people’. And there is certainly evidence that when people are engaged in a different, much more proactive and deliberative way than is usual on an issue like climate change, very different outcomes and views may emerge when compared to those of traditional opinion polls.²

Deliberative democracy (or indeed the contemporary fashion in the UK for localism and community environmental activism) however remains particularly vulnerable to the assertion, frequently attributed to Oscar Wilde, that ‘the trouble with socialism is that it takes too many evenings’. If deliberative democracy is to play a more significant role in the variety of ways in which democracy functions, it will be important to ensure that at least a significant part of the population is actively interested in playing an active deliberative role. That may in turn require significant changes within established democracies that have become sclerotic; with low levels of formal engagement in political life.

David Held goes beyond deliberative democracy, whilst drawing heavily on its insights, when he suggests that the basic principle of ‘autonomy’ (rather than ‘freedom’) needs to lie at the heart of democracy. That principle may be stated as follows:

“persons should enjoy equal rights and, accordingly, equal obligations in the specification of the political framework which generates and limits the opportunities available to them; that is, they should be free and equal in the processes of deliberation about the conditions of their own lives and in the determination of these conditions, so long as they do not deploy this framework to negate the rights of others” (2006: 264).

In this vision, democracy is both a social and an economic system; for it must be capable of ensuring adequate resources for democratic autonomy. ‘Democratic autonomy’ calls both for an accountable state and for a democratic reordering of civil society: *“It calls for a bill of rights that goes beyond the right to cast a vote to include equal opportunity for participation and for discovering individual preferences as well as citizens’ final control of the political agenda”* (Sørensen 2008: 11).

In this deep form of democratic autonomy, the idea of autonomy extends even into those forms of organisational association that govern economic relations. In particular, Held argues that: *“If democratic processes and relations are to be sustained, corporations will have to uphold, de jure and de facto, a commitment to the requirements of democratic autonomy. What this entails is that companies, while pursuing strategic objectives, must operate within a framework which does not violate the requirement to treat their employees and customers as free and equal persons”* (2006: 285)

Modern Representative Democracy

At its simplest, representative democracy is to do with free and fair elections; it is about the process through which people choose their representatives, and about the accountability and legitimacy of those representatives. But democracy is about much more than the processes of representation. For it is also concerned with opportunities for people to participate in decisions between elections. And it is about how people organise themselves to participate in decision-making on issues of public importance (whether or not elected national, regional and local government representatives are there to represent them).

Democratic *decision-making* may be practised at the level of an organization or association (or a standards-setting process), or at the level of state government. Robert Dahl suggests that five standards or criteria are necessary for a democratic process:

1. *Effective participation* – so that citizens have adequate and equal opportunities to form their preferences, to place questions on the public agenda, and express reasons for affirming one outcome over another
2. *Voting equality* – at the decisive point in relation to a policy decision, every citizen must have an equal and effective opportunity to vote, and be assured that all votes will be counted as equal
3. *Enlightened understanding* –Citizens must have adequate and equal opportunities for learning about relevant alternative policies and choices and working out what choice would best serve their interests

4. *Control of the agenda* – it is the *demos* as a whole that decides how and which matters are to be placed on the public agenda

5. *Inclusion* – all, or at least most, adult permanent residents should have full rights as citizens (source: Dahl 1989).

But Dahl (1998) also distinguishes between the *ideal* and the *practice* of democracy. Large-scale democracy, he argues, requires six political institutions if these five criteria of democratic process are to be realised: 1. Elected officials; 2. Free, fair and frequent elections; 3. Freedom of expression; 4. Access to alternative sources of information so citizens have rights to seek out alternative and independent sources of information from others, and those sources exist; 5. Associational autonomy: to achieve their rights, citizens have a right to form independent associations or organisations; 6. Inclusive citizenship: so no adult permanently residing in a country and subject to its laws can be denied rights that are available to others and are necessary to the previous five institutions.

To this list, we should clarify that it is constitutions or bills of rights that set out the ultimate limits of 'government', and are themselves subject to public scrutiny, parliamentary review and judicial process. In modern democracies, the concept of the 'rule of law' is also vital, for this reflects the essential idea that a regime has accepted limits on its powers and is bounded by *law* rather than *might*.

These approaches leave a great deal of room for variation between states; for example on the role of majority decision-making as distinct from more deliberative or proportional processes; in the way in which elections are carried out; in who may vote, by way of a handful of examples among many. We take up some of these differences in a later discussion on 'democratisation' and measurement of 'democracy'.

The inevitable emphasis on 'representation' in modern democracies gives rise to a number of structural problems which undermine its stability as a dominant political system. First, there is the inevitable fact that in any system which relies significantly on majority outcomes of complex voting systems, many individuals are likely to feel that their individual vote makes little difference. The maintenance of a societal commitment to democracy depends in part on its integration within an overall set of social norms that nurture and sustain democracy. But if the social norms that support representative democracy as an overall decision-making system weaken, the risk is that democracy might have little to offer by way of benefit compared, for example, to rampant individualistic consumerism.

A second built-in structural problem with representative democracy is the in-built 'tragedy' which results from the mathematical realities of highly aggregated voting preferences. This is most curiously and potently visible in "Arrow's Paradox". In his 1951 publication *Social Choice and Individual Values*, American economist Kenneth Arrow proved that in certain circumstances it is not possible to construct a voting system to select between 3 or more choices and simultaneously satisfy a set of four criteria which ought reasonably to be satisfied by any system in which social decisions are based on individual voting preferences. Arrow's four criteria were³:

1. *citizen's sovereignty*: if all members of society prefer one particular option over another, then society should prefer that one too.
2. *non-dictatorship*: the social choice function should not simply follow the preference order of a single individual while ignoring all others.
3. *positive association of social and individual values*: if an individual modifies his or her preference order by promoting a certain option, then the societal preference order should change only by (possibly) promoting that same option.
4. *independence of irrelevant alternatives*: if we restrict attention to a subset of options, and apply the social choice function only to those, then the result should be compatible with the outcome for the whole set of options.

At the highest level of generalisation, Arrow's theory demonstrates that it is impossible to aggregate voting choices in such a way that most people get what they want most of the time. This fact compounds the wider challenges facing participatory and deliberative democracy.

Two further features of modern representative democracies deserve to be highlighted further: the roles of political parties and of the media.

Political Parties

Political parties have been a fact of representative democracy since the nineteenth century. Yet they present significant challenges to the practice of representative democracy. Political theorist Norberto Bobbio presents the essential concern:

"The political promise of modern democracy, as representative democracy, was that those elected to serve the people would be free to take part in rational parliamentary deliberation unimpeded by sectional interests. They would not, therefore, be subject to any binding mandate predetermining their choice in political decision-making ... Yet the liberal ideal of sovereign people composed of free individuals has been comprehensively refuted by historical practice, no more so than in the modern liberal democracies in which party-dominated politics and government reflect more a constellation of organised sectional groupings and sharply asymmetrical power relationships" (Bobbio 1987, cited in Mason 1999: 46).

Political parties help to make the practice of representative democracy more manageable; but among other ills they can also drive a wedge between elected representatives and the constituents whom they serve. Party loyalties linked to the work of so-called 'whips' whose job is to bring elected representatives into line with party positions may also undermine the individual judgment of elected representatives.

The role played by Party allegiances in different democracies varies greatly. It is linked in part (but not exclusively) to the electoral system in force and its propensity to deliver multiparty coalition governments. In the most general terms, two-party political systems (including those of the UK and the US) tend to be associated with majoritarian models of democracy, and (Lijphart, 1999) and

multipart political systems tend to be associated more with more consensual models of democracy which, according to Lijphart (and discussed further below), generally perform better at dealing with environmental issues.

The political scientist Robyn Eckersley echoes some of these findings. She suggests that if notions of social and ecological responsibilities are 'reasonably entrenched' and state institutions are 'reasonably reflexive', changes of government should not lead to decisive shifts in environmental direction (2006). Eckersley cites Sweden as a 'leading green role model'; not because it embodies all the features of a good liberal democratic state but rather because it has evolved beyond them.

The contemporary literature on the practice of democracy includes proposals both in favour of political parties, and against them. The case in favour is made in a 2006 paper by analysts at the UK think-tank the Young Foundation (MacTaggart *et al*, 2006). The paper argues that political parties can "synthesise coherent strategies for the nation, cities, towns and counties"; "provide direct accountability to the public for broad strategy and direct actions"; "help to identify new needs, ideas and issues, and promote them"; "choose and groom leaders"; and offer "ways of achieving change – [as] specialists in mobilising opinion and power and influencing the apparatus of the state".

Michael Mason highlights a very significant drawback of representative democracy which can be linked, implicitly, to a lack of political parties that are capable both of getting elected and systematically prioritising consideration of environmental interests. Mason argues that without consensus on key environmental issues, the long term strength of the environmental agenda within representative democracies is entirely dependent on the general growth in public environmental consciousness. In other words that "*the appeal to common ecological interests by environmental groups demands an energy-sapping continual commitment to agenda-setting in the public sphere*" (Mason 1999: 47).

From a sustainable development perspective, leading UK environmentalist Sara Parkin makes the case against political parties in a 2008 paper (Parkin, 2008). She argues that instead of the current system of electoral politics grounded in political parties, elected representatives should be selected based on job applications made against specific job descriptions. She argues for democratic engagement to be 'as commonplace as shopping'. A compliment to this perspective is Saward's proposal for a new approach to political representation so that it is understood as a process in which the relationship between citizens and representatives is continuous; a 'broader' and 'thicker' conception of political representation (2006).

From a climate change perspective, there is also considerable resonance in Sara Parkin's worry that "*at time of uncertainty, fear and worry, people do two things – they retreat to known territory (the tribal instinct) and become more easily attracted to strong, simple solution-mongers who may or may not be charismatic*" (Parkin, 2008). As climate impacts begin to bite, there is a real risk that the party political system will provide oversimplified bright lines between options for action based on ideological positions that are woefully oversimplistic for the nature of the challenges. This possibility visible in recent media coverage of the views of 'climate sceptics'; and in the hard-to-halt tendency, both in the US and the UK, for responses to climate change, and particularly areas of scientific uncertainty, to become polarised along party political lines.

Democracy and the Media

Aside from the impact of business interests and campaign groups on democracy, no modern description of democracy in practice can be complete unless it takes account of another 'non-voting' actor: the media. *Paper One* outlined some of the ways in which media coverage of climate change issues is exerting an impact on climate policy; particularly as coverage of the views of 'climate sceptics' intensifies.

Whatever its format, the media is a powerful tool as a source of the information and opinion that feeds democratic engagement. The media doesn't 'vote', and yet, whatever the subject, media coverage has helped shape public perception: "*Few things are as much a part of our lives as the news*", argues Lance Bennett in his book *News: the Politics of Illusion*: "*it has become a sort of instant historical record of the pace, progress, problems, and hopes of society*" (Bennett 2002).

Boykoff and Rajan (2007) note in particular the vital importance of mass media coverage of scientific issues. They argue that this in turn affects how science is translated into policy, and that "*[c]onsequently, the intersection of mass media, science and policy is a particularly dynamic arena of communication, in which all sides have high stakes*" (Boykoff and Rajan 2007: 207).

The power of the media essentially lies with how it frames information. In a 2007 analysis of media coverage of climate change issues, Boykoff (2007) finds that the media has consistently framed anthropogenic climate change as contentious. And the climate agenda is now increasingly politicised in the mass media along ideological lines (See also Carvalho, 2007).

In a new major work, *The Life and Death of Democracy* (2009), British academic John Keane argues that the West now finds itself in a phase of 'monitory democracy'. A central feature of this new form of democracy, as Keane sees it, is a process of surveillance and disciplining of politicians and elected power-holders via publicity, civil society campaigning, watchdogs, access to information, and constant news feedbacks.

Even further, Keane argues that what is distinctive is 'the way *all fields of social and political life* come to be scrutinized, not just by the standard machinery of representative democracy but by a whole host of *non-party, extra-parliamentary* and often *unelected bodies* operating within, underneath and beyond the boundaries of territorial states' (italics in original, p. 695).⁴ The media plays an important role in this model; yet as Ben Wilson argues in a review of Keane's book in the *Literary Review*, "*[m]onitory democracy stands a chance of working when it is combined with an active citizenry; yet at no time has civil society seemed so impoverished. The price to pay for all this monitoring is intense loathing of politicians, an incomprehensible babble, and voter apathy*".⁵

As to democracy and climate change; the broad issues at stake in the future impact of the mass media may already have been demonstrated; particularly given the controversy over climate science in the run-up to and immediate aftermath of the December 2009 Climate Summit. But a focus on the mass media is just part of the story. For the past decade has seen a powerful transformation in

citizens' use of the internet. The socio-political implications of this phenomenon are only just beginning to be acknowledged.

There is a very real 'digital divide' between people who are and those who are not able to access and take advantage of the participatory potential of information technology. But social networking and information technology-enabled participatory approaches have the potential to revolutionise democracy. The new 'public spaces' that are created by these approaches are often almost entirely disconnected from the formal processes of representative democracy. Yet they offer arenas where citizens can engage in dialogue, express views, vote on a diverse range of issues and shape the decisions of other actors. The extent to which these arenas come to be absorbed within understanding of formal political processes, or remain as parallel processes in the wider social realm, is one of the key factors determining the shape of 'future democracy'.

Today, 'e-democracy' is rapidly becoming a distinct field of analysis and experimentation. The term is defined by Stephen Coleman, the University of Oxford's first professor of e-democracy, as "*...using new digital technology to enhance the process of democratic relationship between government and governed, representative and represented.*" (Guardian Online article, cited in Parry, 2004). The term "e-democracy" may also be used as an adjunct to a narrow definition of 'democracy', to refer to the use of electronic voting in local and national elections.

'E-democracy' is linked to what has been dubbed 'Politics 2.0' or 'open source politics'. For the time being, this concept remains fittingly best described by Wikipedia: "*Open source political campaigns, Open source politics, or Politics 2.0, is the idea that social networking and e-participation technologies will revolutionize our ability to follow, support, and influence political campaigns. Netroots evangelists and web consultants predict a wave of popular democracy as fundraisers meet on MySpace, YouTubers crank out attack ads, bloggers do opposition research, and cell-phone-activated flash mobs hold miniconventions in Second Life.*"⁶

The promise of Politics 2.0 lies with its potential to bring citizens closer to or even achieve a vision of democracy that involves free and easy access to the political process, greater transparency and accountability, deliberative and consultative democracy, a wider forum for discussion and a smaller space between the individual and political power (Hill, 2010). But there are downsides too: the risk of social and political exclusion resulting from a 'digital divide', and a host of emerging concerns about issues such as 'cyber-bullying' or the risk of 'slacktivism' (in which expressing views on the internet makes the 'slacktivist' feel good in the virtual world, but does nothing to pursue the in the "real" world) are among them. And there is nothing inherently *more* participatory about passive internet-based campaigning in which citizens are little more than the users of computers that allow them to sign on with expressions of support to campaigns developed by unelected policy 'experts'.

Clearly, there are many challenges to be overcome if e-democracy and Politics 2.0 are to serve the interests of sustainable development, or galvanise citizen action to mitigate and adapt to climate change. We consider some of the issues that this raises in a little more detail in *Paper Three* of our project.

Democracy, Capitalism and Markets

The relationship between democracy and markets has been debated for as long as liberal democracy. There are perhaps three broad camps. For neoliberal thinkers such as Hayek, democracy is a means to the end of 'liberty'; which must be protected by *minimal government intervention in civil society and markets*. In contrast, socialists are concerned to combat political and economic inequality and to replace capitalism with socialism. Their goals are democratisation and political and economic equality. Social democracy offers a middle ground. Like socialists, social democrats are concerned to remove the inequalities that they see as inherent in capitalism. But their pathway is state regulation and democratic process. Social democracy, then, is capable of working with the grain of capitalism but is inherently concerned with the social outcomes of democracy.

The relationship between liberal democracy and markets, in turn, presents some very significant challenges for sustainable development. Eckersley sees *"the seeds of the unfolding ecological tragedy ... in the way liberals understand sustainability as a constraint on autonomy, rather than a condition of autonomy"* (2006). She argues that deep-seated tensions between liberal democracy and capitalist markets have ensured that 'historically, environmental protection has remained subservient to capitalist economic growth'. Similarly, Michael Mason argues that the wide-ranging influence of neoliberalism as an economic ideology, and the ways in which it has shaped government choices in 'advanced capitalist countries' have *"directly challenged equality as a social goal, reviving the classic liberal understanding of citizenship as private self-determination with minimal obligations to others"* *"Neoliberalism"*, he argues, *"has no time for environmental democracy"* (1999: 234).

Robert Dahl suggests that democracy and market capitalism are like 'two persons bound in a tempestuous marriage that is riven by conflict and yet endures because neither partner wishes to separate from the other'. He offers five conclusions (1998):

1. Polyarchal democracy (a term which Dahl uses as shorthand for a modern representative democracy with universal suffrage) has endured only in countries with a predominantly market-capitalism economy; and it has never endured in a country with a predominantly nonmarket economy
2. This strict relation exists because certain basic features of market-capitalism make it favourable for democratic institutions. Conversely, some basic features of a predominantly nonmarket economy make it harmful to democratic prospects
3. Democracy and market-capitalism are locked in a persistent conflict in which each modifies and limits the other
4. Market capitalism inevitably creates inequalities in social and economic resources. It therefore violates principles of political equality, and thereby in political resources
5. Market-capitalism greatly favours development of democracy up to the level of polyarchal democracy. But because of its adverse consequences for political equality, it is unfavourable to the development of democracy beyond the level of polyarchy.

There are visions both of 'sustainable development' and 'democracy' which challenge the contemporary market-oriented bias of the latter. The contemporary reality however is that most of the world's existing democracies, however flawed, along with many countries that are not

democracies, are tied into an economic model which places a high value on economic growth and patterns of development likely to maximize the potential for growth. One need only consider policy responses to the recent financial crisis and widespread international recession to see this tendency in action.

Liberal democracy and economic liberalism are closely linked; and in many contemporary democracies a commitment to continuous economic growth has acquired the status of a non-negotiable goal in its own right. Businesses are not citizens (save in the sense that they are often encouraged to become good 'corporate citizens'). Yet they can have a major impact on democratic processes and outcomes, and are frequently treated by elected representatives and bureaucrats as holding views at least as important as those of citizens and voters.

Many liberal commentators suggest that the economic and socio-cultural conditions produced by market capitalism are at the very least highly favourable to the effective functioning of a democratic state. It is even sometimes asserted that economic freedom is a *necessary* prerequisite for liberal democracy. Yet, as Held argues, "*liberalism's thrust to create a democratic state, a diversity of power centres and a world marked by openness, controversy and plurality is compromised by the reality of the 'free market'...*" (2006: 269).

We should not forget however that when 'democracy' is understood in its narrowest senses (as associated with the processes of selecting representatives and managing public votes), liberal democracy in all its forms is by no means the only recently practised model. Neither are all capitalist countries democracies. As John Kampfner (2009) points out;⁷ middle classes and elites around the world seem all too ready to trade economic security or wealth for democracy, and to back a repressive approach to less affluent citizens. There are plenty of countries around the world pursuing an 'economic growth first, democracy second' strategy with the apparent complicity or even consent of these affluent elites.

This approach in which democracy is decoupled from economic liberalism can also be seen, with quite different ideological underpinnings and outcomes, in Marxist thinking. Marxism is centrally concerned to tackle the inequalities that result from concentration of economic power in private ownership of the means of production (Held 2006). But notwithstanding Marxist concern for political inequality among citizens, it is an ideology that has often failed to "*construct political systems that can claim to be more democratic than the liberal democracies based on capitalism*" (Sørensen 2008).

There are exceptions, however. In 1957, Kerala was the first state in the world to elect a communist government. And in a number of other countries around the world, for example in Moldova (most recently in April 2009) and Serbia, citizens have voted communists to power.

The phenomenon of economic interconnectedness that is one feature of globalisation also has significant impacts on democracy. Economic globalisation is reflected in public policies favouring trade and investment liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation, and in the commercial world reflected in globalisation of production, financial transactions and growth in international trade. The path of economic globalisation is far from smooth; and it has certainly been redefined to some extent by the financial and credit crisis of 2008-9 and the prospect of greater regulation of financial

transactions. Economic globalisation weakens the ability of states (which organise themselves around territorial and jurisdictional limits) to control economies in which transnational economic actors (which organise themselves through networks that follow commercial, not territorial, paths) generate significant impacts.

In conclusion: there is no *necessary* link between democracy in its widest sense and economic liberalism. But the connection seems almost unbreakable in *liberal democracies*.

Democratisation

Democratisation of States

Democracy is closely linked to democratisation; the process through which states (or organisations) become democratic (or more democratic).

Democratisation of states is in turn closely linked to categorisations of how to ‘measure’ democracy. This area of work is useful for our purposes because it offers the insight that democracy is not binary; it is not something that either ‘exists’ or ‘does not exist’ (though cf Sartori, cited in Bernhagen 2009). Rather, democracy metrics tend to regard democracy as an ongoing process, often conceptualised in the literature as the ultimate stage in the process of political evolution.

Indeed, one cannot attempt to chart the possible future of ‘democracy’ without considering ‘non-democracy’. Over the 90-year time horizon of our project, combinations of ‘democratic’ and ‘undemocratic’ or ‘less democratic’ characteristics will come together in ways that affect the overall forms and courses of ‘democracy’ in all its guises.

Without replicating each of the dimensions of the earlier discussion of ‘democracy’ in its widest senses, categorisations of undemocratic *states* provide useful, if incomplete, pointers to some of the fault-lines.

Richard Rose argues that democracy at the level of the state has two dimensions: “*The first dimension – governors are accountable to the constitution and courts – makes a state modern. The second dimension – governors are accountable to its citizenry through free and fair elections – is a necessary condition of being democratic*” (2009: 13). Rose goes on to distinguish between these democratic states (‘accountable democracies’); *constitutional oligarchies* (in which the actions of governors are not constrained by a mass electorate, but only by the rule of law); *plebiscitarian autocracies* (in which there are elections with mass participation and a choice of parties and candidates but the rule of law is weak so that elections are not free and fair); and *unaccountable autocracies* (in which power is exercised arbitrarily at the will of the few without a pretence of legitimating power through elections) .

A further demarcation concerns whether it makes sense to apply a scaled approach (i.e. the relative democracy of a country) *only* to those countries that meet some minimum threshold criteria; or whether democracy is *always* a matter of degree. We tend to the latter view as better suited to the long time-horizons of our project on the future of democracy in the face of climate change.

Patrick Bernhagen (2009) helpfully summarises the characteristics of seven of the most commonly applied indicators of democracy. His starting point is a fairly restrictive liberal view of democracy reproduced in *Table 1* below. The corresponding indicators are reproduced in *Table 2*.

Democracy is a political system in which:	Democracy is not:	Democracy's necessary preconditions are:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the government is held accountable to citizens • by means of free and fair elections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • socioeconomic equality • capitalism • small government • property rights • economic efficiency and growth • political/administrative efficiency • freedom of religion • stability • peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the right to vote for virtually all adults • the right to run for public office for virtually all adults • freedom of association • freedom of expression • freedom of the press

Table 1 - Source: Bernhagen (2009: 31).

Researcher(s)	Dimensions	Indicators
Kenneth Bollen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political sovereignty • Political liberty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press freedom • Freedom of group opposition • Government sanctions • Fairness of elections • Executive selection • Legislative selection
Przeworski et al	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contestation of offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election to executive • Election to legislature
Vanhanen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition • Participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined vote/seat share of the smaller parties • Voter turnout
Coppedge and Reinicke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free and fair elections • Freedom of organisation • Freedom of expression • Pluralism in the media
Gasiorowski	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition • Participation • Civil liberties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No separate indicators
Freedom House	<p><i>Political rights:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electoral process • Political pluralism • Participation <p><i>Civil liberties:</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections to executive • Elections to legislative • Fair elections • Pluralism of political parties • Strong opposition • Freedom from domination by the

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom of expression and belief • Associational and organizational rights • Rule of law • Personal autonomy and individual rights 	<p>military, foreign powers, totalitarian parties, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies, or other powerful groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full political rights for minorities • Agenda power of elected officials • Freedom from pervasive corruption • Open and transparent government • Media pluralism • Freedom of religion • Academic and educational freedom • Freedom of opinion and speech • Freedom of assembly • Associational freedom • Trade union freedom and collective bargaining • Independence of the judiciary • Rule of law • Protection from political terror • Freedom from war and insurgencies • Freedom from discrimination • Freedom of abode, travel, employment and education • Protection of private property • Personal social freedoms (including gender equality, choice of marriage partners, and size of family) • Equality of opportunity and absence of economic exploitation
Polity IV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political competition and opposition • Executive recruitment • Independence of executive authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation of participation • Competitiveness of participation • Regulation of chief executive recruitment • Competitiveness of executive recruitment • Executive constraints

Table 2 - Source: Bernhagen (2009: 33-34).

In our project, we are concerned to reflect on how democracy might evolve for the future. The past is one source inspiration, and this must include ways in which historical processes of democratisation have been described in the past. One approach is Samuel Huntington's. He describes processes of democratisation in three 'waves': three major 'long' waves in 1828-1926, 1943-1962, and 1974-; and two 'reverse' waves in 1922-1942 and 1958-1975 (1991).

There are alternative views too. One for example sees a 'fourth wave' beginning with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989-1990. And Dirk Berg-Schlosser (2009) describes distinct long-term 'waves' and briefer turmoils which he calls 'conjunctures'. These are points in time which can become 'fluid', in the sense that possible outcomes can go in different directions.

Drawing on 'Polity III' scores from 1800-1998, Berg-Schlosser suggests *"two (and a possible third) long-term wave and three major positive (and one negative) conjuncture of critical periods of change"* (2009: 43). With caveats in light of the changing meanings of 'democracy' over time; the inability of 'net' aggregated data to capture underlying nuances, and the limitations of a data-set based on analysis of constitutions and legal documents, Berg-Schlosser summarises the overall picture as follows (2009: 44):

"The first 'long wave' [dates from] the early beginnings in the late eighteenth century, the American (1776) and French Revolutions (1789) being the major watersheds accompanied by gradual developments in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, to the end of World War I which significantly changed the European political landscape. At that point, the first major 'democratizing conjuncture' with new states and new democracies emerging within a few years could be observed.. This was soon followed by a 'negative conjuncture'... greatly influenced by the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The end of World War II then brought about a second long wave with the re-democratization in a number of European states, the beginning [of] decolonisation in parts of Asia and Africa and some renewed attempts towards democratic rule in Latin America. This period also showed some intermittent turbulence... in the 1960s with a series of military coups in Latin America but some new, if short-lived, democracies in Africa... events in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond after 1989-90 [mark the] final major 'conjuncture' so far. Whether this will be followed by another 'long wave' or some reversals remains to be seen."

Berg-Schlosser points to the labour movement and to nationalist ideas as playing a major role in establishing mass democracy at national level during the 'first wave'. In the first 'positive conjuncture' of 1918-19 a number of newly independent states emerged. Opportunities for democratisation were opened up in the defeated powers; and women and workers in previously 'incomplete' democracies were able to gain political representation as a result of encompassing mobilisation during the war. But some of the new democracies proved fragile and progress in some countries was countered by authoritarian and protectionist responses to the deteriorating world economic situation.

The second long wave from 1945-88 was marked by processes of de-colonisation in Africa and Asia, alongside the 're-democratisation' of a number of Latin American countries – though many returned to military rule in the 1960s and 1970s. Autocratic regimes also consolidated across large parts of North Africa and the Middle East. And on the international stage, relations were marked by the stagnation of the 'Cold War'. Berg-Schlosser sees the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989-90 as no more than the latest 'conjuncture' (2009).

These are useful pointers to the factors at play in democratic change, though the range of variations in democratic forms within each 'wave' makes the metaphor somewhat dissatisfying. The

categorisations also tend to reflect relatively narrow views of political democracy highlighted in *Table 2* above; views that are inherently poorly suited to capturing some of the core concerns of climate change adaptation and mitigation, and of sustainable development. The shape of the next (or current) wave of democratisation will likely be strongly influenced by a wide range of factors including technological innovation (and the divides and shifts in structures of social representation that it creates); and global economic and environmental challenges.

Today, democratisation is by no means on a steady course towards an eventual state of ‘democracy’ in all countries. China is the most economically and politically powerful country to swim against the tide. More widely, Larry Diamond (2008) writes that *“in a few short years, the democratic wave has been slowed by a powerful authoritarian undertow, and the world has slipped into a democratic recession”*. Launching its 2008 Democracy Index the Economist confirmed a worrying correlation between economic and democratic stagnation:

“... following a decades-long global trend of democratisation, the spread of democracy has come to a halt. Comparing the results for 2008 with those from the first edition of the index, which covered 2006, shows that the dominant pattern in the past two years has been stagnation. Although there is no recent trend of outright regression, there are few instances of significant improvement. However, the global financial crisis, resulting in a sharp and possibly protracted recession, could threaten democracy in some parts of the world” (The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Index of Democracy 2008: 1).

Democratisation from Abroad

Democratisation of states does not only come from citizens at national or local level. Its course can be directed from the outside, by international agencies, foreign governments, or bilateral or multilateral development cooperation agencies. Whether this is inherently a good or a bad thing depends in large part on context and on distribution of power and influence. Henry Kissinger’s famous remark, of the Chilean people’s election of socialist President Allende, that *‘I don’t see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist because of the irresponsibility of its own people’* points to a potentially darker side of democratisation (in Fagen 1975).

One need only think of the process of democratisation by means of the war in Iraq, and the ongoing role of occupying forces in supporting the democratically elected government, to trigger reflection on the rights and wrongs. Where is sustainable development in the process?

Economic development, public institution-building and human rights are certainly visible themes in these models of democratisation. But poverty reduction; protection of the environment; economic development pathways that could lead to non fossil-fuel dependent futures – these themes do not seem to be very visible, at least in the ongoing process of change in Iraq.

USAID , the international development assistance arm of the US government, states that ‘expanding the global community of democracies is a key objective of US foreign policy’ (USAID, 2010). The agency’s stated goals in promoting ‘sustainable democracy’ include:

- Strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights
- Promoting more genuine and competitive elections and political processes

- Increased development of a politically active civil society
- More transparent and accountable government
- Promoting free and independent media.

NORAD, the international development arm of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stresses that 'every country's progress and stability depend on the development of a functioning democracy and respect for human rights' (NORAD, 2002). In Sweden, democracy and human rights are the largest areas for the country's development assistance (21 percent of Sweden's total 2008 development assistance grant). The Danish equivalent, DANIDA, argues that "*the support for democracy and human rights is not only vital to achieve development and reduce poverty. It is also an important means to fight the basis for radicalisation and extremism which can lead to religious intolerance and terrorism. Therefore the government has chosen to highly prioritise democracy and human rights*" (2006). The UK Department for International Development makes explicit in an issue paper its commitment to 'making democracy work for the elimination of poverty'; highlighting civic education; working with the media; the legal and constitutional framework; political parties, and elections (DFID 2010).

One international development agency stands out in its apparently cautious approach; the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA. In a Public Policy Paper, *Between policy and practice: navigating CIDA's Democracy agenda*, author Geoffrey Cameron writes: "*Democracy occupies an uncertain position in Canadian public discourse: we want more of it at home, but we are hesitant to openly promote democratization overseas ... While the United States brazenly asserts Wilsonian 'transformational democracy' as its foreign policy, Canadians are wary of being cast in the same imperialist mould as our neighbour.... Canada's democracy agenda is subsumed beneath a much broader development scheme, and it constitutes an approach to political development that is broad, flexible, and vague*" (2006: 1).

In a collected volume published in 2009, Tom Keating explores the ethical limits of democracy promotion. He suggests that policies that are designed to promote democracy do not always do so. He argues, worryingly for our purposes, that across a range of approaches practised by different countries, there is a strong commitment to recreate democratic models already in existence in the West. Contrary to an inherent assumption that external actors have solutions to the problems of 'democracy', Keating argues that at 'the level of principle', democracy makes sense only if and when local actors assume responsibility for democratic control (2009). A focus on election processes as one of the key credentials of democracy and democratisation can undermine this process. And it is clear that, in foreign policy terms, support for democracy does not mean support for the right of the people to select whomever they wish. Keating concludes that an ethical approach to democratisation would mean not impeding the ability of people to establish their own priorities.

Furthermore, Keating argues that the promotion of democracy too often advocates and practises 'narrowly defined democracy' in relation to the establishment of markets (2009). For international donor agencies such as USAID which prioritise 'democratisation', the existence of a free market may itself be an essential attribute or indicator of a democracy. But for advocates of sustainable

development, many of whom see economic liberalism (and liberalisation) as part of the problem, this is a difficult idea.

One key question for our project on ‘the future of democracy in the face of climate change’, then, is this: how long before sustainable development gets integrated within the practice of democratisation on the ground? And what would democratisation designed with sustainable development in mind look like?

Organisational Democratisation

In practice, it is in relation to the ‘democratisation’ of states that the term is mostly used; and it is important for this reason not to succumb to the inherently narrower definitions of ‘democracy’ from which the available indicators of ‘democracy’ (highlighted in *Table 2*) are derived. There is also however a body of work on ‘democratising the corporation’ (e.g. White 2009⁸) and ‘democratising the workplace’.

In the former case, a recent piece by Allen White of the US Tellus Institute suggests that ‘democratisation’ activities might include not only strengthening stakeholder influence and control, but also ‘democratisation’ of ownership; for example through distribution of shares to employees, or of management; for example through changes in the duties and composition of boards.

White focuses on the ‘accountability’ dimension that tends to dominate narrower definitions of democracy, arguing: *“Framing the corporation as the beneficiary of multiple resource providers opens new horizons for the role of democratic governance. Seeing the organization through the lens of multiple contributors to wealth creation repositions shareholders as one among many worthy recipients of the residual. It suggests that “stakes, not shares” is the appropriate paradigm through which we view corporate accountability*”. He goes on to argue that from a political perspective, democratization is ‘integral’ to obtaining and maintaining the license to operate – that is, the licence granted by a notional ‘social contract’ between corporations and citizens or society at large.

Often, however, the kinds of activities that are encompassed within these expressions are not applied directly in relation to ‘democracy’ but, rather, to distinct activities such as ‘stakeholder engagement’, ‘stakeholder governance’ ‘community consultation’ or ‘voluntary reporting on environmental and social issues’.

These activities can be linked to David Held’s model of ‘cosmopolitan democracy’, and to earlier and evolving thinking on participatory and deliberative democracy. But they also have a life of their own as part of distinct agendas, for example those on ‘corporate social responsibility’ or ‘network and partnership approaches to global governance’. From a democracy perspective they can be understood as tools (means) to the end of ‘democracy’ either generally at the level of entire countries or societies, or more specifically within different kinds of organisations.

Democracy and governance

At its most general, democracy is one way of ordering human relations in society. It is a system of *governance*.

The term ‘governance’ carries a number of different possible meanings. One simple definition is that governance is ‘the art of steering societies and organizations’. An alternative approach describes governance as ‘the traditions, institutions and processes that determine how power is exercised, how citizens are given a voice, and how decisions are made on issues of public concern’ (Institute on Governance)⁹. This focuses on the role of ‘citizens’ rather than ‘consumers’ or ‘individuals.’ In other words, it defines people in relation to their status as ‘citizens’ in the process of ‘governance’.

Governance is not the exclusive preserve of the public sector, nor need it focus exclusively on the roles of citizens. Indeed it cannot be, for power in society is not exclusively exercised by citizens or the private sector. Neither are mechanisms for channelling power exclusively concentrated in the hands of the public sector. This is clear from the following UNDP and World Bank definitions, in which governance is:

- The way “...power is exercised through a country’s economic, political, and social institutions” (World Bank 2009).
- “...governance (as opposed to “good” governance) can be defined as the rule of the rulers, typically within a given set of rules. One might conclude that governance is the **process** – by which authority is conferred on rulers, by which they make the rules, and by which those rules are enforced and modified. Thus, understanding governance requires an identification of both the rulers and the rules, as well as the various processes by which they are selected, defined, and linked together and with the society generally” (World Bank 2009).
- “The exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences” (UNDP in World Bank 2009).

An alternative approach brings the notion of accountability into the definition of governance. Then, governance can be understood as the process through which societies or organizations make important decisions, determine whom they involve and how they render account.¹⁰

For our purposes, the term ‘governance’ can be used as shorthand to refer to the norms, processes, tools and institutions through which the exercise of power in society is channelled to achieve desired outcomes. Governance is about the set of systems that control decision-making; in our case, those that relate to or impact on climate change. In the context of our focus on climate change specifically, relevant outcomes must be assessed in relation to their effectiveness in mitigating and/or adapting to climate change, and to the overall goal of sustainable development.

Governance in its broadest sense is much more about the *way* in which decisions are made (i.e. how, by whom, and under what conditions decisions are made) than the decisions themselves. In this

sense, governance addresses both the formal and informal institutions and processes through which authority is exercised.

Given the 90-year timeframe of our project, the higher level generalisation of ‘governance’ as distinct from ‘democracy’ may be helpful in thinking creatively about underlying shifting patterns of power, voice, responsiveness and accountability over the coming decades.

Literature on *climate change* and *sustainable development* governance is also relevant in our project because it brings potential to shed light on the roles played by different actors in a democracy; on the balance between state, market, citizens and civil society; and guidance on the different levels at which decision-making needs to take place if sustainable development or effective mitigation of, and adaptation to climate change are to result.

The notion of ‘governance’ is itself closely linked to the idea of ‘good governance’ (that is, governance that is normatively ‘good’ or ‘right’). In the approach applied by the UK Department for International Development, this has three dimensions: ‘capability’ (the extent to which leaders and governments are able to get things done); ‘responsiveness’ (whether public policies and institutions respond to the needs of citizens and uphold their rights); and ‘accountability’ (the ability of citizens, civil society *and the private sector* [emphasis added] to scrutinise public institutions and governments and hold them to account). Accountability means being ‘answerable’ for what is done) (DFID, 2006).

There is a tension here between a ‘democracy’ focus on the role of ‘the people’, and the idea that the private sector might also be considered in a definition of ‘accountability’. In a different approach, the notion of public sector ‘accountability’ might have two key dimensions; *answerability* and *enforcement*.

Answerability concerns the norms and processes through which those in positions of public authority, or ‘public power-holders’, explain the actions that they have responsibility for *to citizens*. *Enforcement*, the second key dimension of accountability, concerns the ability of citizens, whether as individuals or organised as groups, to seek redress or punishment, for actions or behaviour that falls below standards that are ‘acceptable’, whether ethically, legally, or in terms of other social norms (adapted from Goetz and Jenkins 2004).

There are also other ways in which the notion of ‘good governance’ incorporates elements of market thinking. For example, the OECD considers that good governance “...encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the relationship between the ruler and the ruled” (cited in World Bank, 2009).

The World Bank’s 1997 World Development Report suggests that mechanisms for assuring good governance have three key elements: *Internal rules and restraints* - for example, internal accounting and auditing systems, independence of the judiciary and the central bank, civil service and budgeting rules; *Voice and partnership* - for example, public-private deliberation councils, and service delivery surveys to solicit client feedback; and *Competition* - for example, competitive social service delivery,

private participation in infrastructure, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and outright privatization of certain market-driven activities (World Development Report 1997).

Not only,

it seems, is liberal democracy closely (though not inevitably) linked to economic liberalisation; so too is the higher level (and, one might expect, more neutral) notion of 'good governance'. And whilst it might be trite to state this explicitly, it is clear that the shifting triad of the relationship between the citizen, state and the market will be centrally important to the future of democracy in the face of climate change.

Democracy and Global Governance

At international level, any taxonomy of democracy needs to be capable of accounting for the overall mix of actors who shape interactions between public institutions, public spaces and markets. Here, even more starkly than at the national level, the impact of external (non-enfranchised) pressures on representative democracy becomes clear.

Until relatively recently, a description of 'international democracy' would have focused on the decision-making processes of state actors on the international stage. Any description, then and now, would immediately have pointed to the central role of nation states as 'bargaining units' and to variations on the broad principle of 'one member', 'one nation' or 'one vote' within the United Nations – itself a very recent creation, founded only in 1945. At the national level, analysis would point quickly to the democratic deficiencies of intergovernmental decision-making stemming from a lack of bargaining power, knowledge or capacity; the lack of connection between 'the people' at national level and positions adopted by international level negotiators; or the challenges presented by different worldviews (those of socialism and capitalism, for example) for decision-making at international level.

Today, enhanced awareness of the processes of globalisation and its impacts, understood broadly as 'interconnectedness', has radically refashioned this lens. 'International democracy' cannot be described or refined only with reference to the extent which decision-making between states upholds principles of 'democracy'.

For the time being, there is no way for people in one country, who are directly impacted by a decision by elected representatives of governments of another country to have a direct say in that decision, other than through the processes of intergovernmental diplomacy, where in principle each nation state has a single vote regardless of the size of its population.

Global governance has not yet caught up with the realities of an interconnected world. Inherently polycentric challenges with global impacts – including climate change, population growth, resource scarcity and international trade – have the potential to affect us all. But it is clear to see (particularly in light of the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Summit) that the available means of making decisions between competing interests are far from effective and rarely democratic in anything other than a narrow, formal sense.

In practice, a variety of negotiated approaches between different interests (including business and civil society as well as governments) have provided one mechanism among others to manage the messiness of the reality of global interconnectedness. A rise in 'codes of conduct' and 'voluntary standards', the increasing emphasis placed on private international standards (such as those of the International Organisation for Standardisation) as a baseline for government policy approaches, and the direct engagement of civil society groups with international environmental negotiations are all manifestations of shifting norms of 'democracy' at an international level.

At the same time, according to Ann Florini, "*groups that can deal successfully with collective action situations have an enormous advantage over groups that fail to do so*" (2005: 48). Multi-stakeholder norm-setting activities based on broadly 'democratic' processes provide a space to house new group identities that have the potential to overcome the outmoded boundaries of the 'nation state'. And they may bring enhanced potential to forge the kinds of links and shared identities that will be needed to overcome formidable twenty-first century environmental and social challenges.

David Held proposes a 'cosmopolitan model' of democracy that brings together the multiple realities of democracy as a political system and as a 'way of life' respectively. Taking account of contemporary globalisation (in the widest sense of 'interconnectedness') he suggests that "*the case for cosmopolitan democracy is the case for the creation of new political institutions which would coexist with the system of states but which would override states in clearly defined spheres of activity where those activities have demonstrable transnational and international consequences*" (Held 2006: 305). Held points to two distinct requirements of cosmopolitan democracy: first, that the territorial boundaries of systems of accountability be restructured (so that issues which escape the control of the nation state can be brought under better democratic control); and second, that the role (and place) of regional and global 'regulatory and functional agencies' be rethought so they provide a more 'coherent and effective focal point' in public affairs.

Other analysts have expressed some of the essential ideas of 'cosmopolitan democracy' in a distinct way; for example by stressing the role of 'global [multi-stakeholder] public policy networks' to tackle the polycentric issues that characterise the contemporary globalised world (Reinicke et al, 2000). In a 2003 stock-take of global public policy networks, a Brookings Institution Foreword quotes Jonathan Lash, President of the World Resources Institute describing "*a shift from the stiff formal waltz of traditional diplomacy to the jazzier dance*" of issue-based networks and partnerships.¹¹ The new tempo is set as part of a larger phenomenon in which participants from civil society, business, international organisations and governments are joining forces in multistakeholder 'global policy networks'.

Changing notions of democracy in relation to global governance mirror the distinction at national level between democracy as an essentially 'political' construct, and democracy as a wider social phenomenon or way of life. An inquiry into the future of democracy in the face of climate change must take account of the possible evolution of both.

Towards a taxonomy of democracy

Classifying the array of democratic models is no easy task.

Most accounts of democracy consider its evolution temporally. For example, David Held's 'Models of Democracy' distinguishes between 'classic' democracy and variants from the twenty-first century. But this is of little descriptive use for our purposes in a 'futures' project, insofar as a temporal description tends to emphasise how definitions may change over time and demonstrates how young, and relatively un-evolved, contemporary democracy is.

More useful is Nef and Reiter's 2009 classification. They distinguish between three models of democracy: minimalist, substantive, and deliberative.

The first set of approaches, the 'minimalist' model, focus rather narrowly on free elections as offering the main criterion through which to characterise democracy. For thinkers falling within the 'minimalist model' (who include Schumpeter, Robert Dahl and Huntington), democracy is present where representatives are elected in free, public elections. Approaches in the minimalist model tend to de-emphasise the role of ongoing direct citizen participation, arguing that it runs the risk of jeopardising political stability.

A second set of approaches, the 'substantive' model, go one step further. They recognise democracy as a 'mode of collective decision-making'. Consequently, they are concerned to diminish the gap between rulers and the ruled, and the ways to achieve this. In this model, free elections alone are not sufficient to define democracy; participation, social justice, equity, governmental *responsiveness* and *transparency* are also necessary.

The third set of approaches, the 'deliberative' democratic model, is concerned with how to integrate deliberative arenas into the institutional framework of contemporary (complex) democracies. These models recognise that civil society and the public sphere more widely are spaces beyond the state where deliberation between people may occur, critical opinions may be created and interchanged, and states held accountable and made to perform better and more responsively.

In this model, the liberal freedoms that together characterise 'liberal democracy' (including free and fair elections and basic liberties) constitute only a small part of democracy. Indeed, in a play on this distinction, Fareed Zakaria points out that Adolf Hitler became German Chancellor via free elections, and around the world, democratically elected regimes, often ones that have been re-elected or reaffirmed through referenda are 'routinely ignoring constitutional limits on their power and depriving their citizens of basic rights'. Zakaria terms this 'illiberal democracy', concluding that whilst "*democracy is flourishing; liberty is not*" (Zakaria 2007: 17).

The flow between Nef and Reiter's three models lies in the depth of citizen engagement in political and public life and the connection between 'rulers' and 'ruled'. In their first model there is a limited connection between 'rulers' and 'the ruled' aside from periodic elections; in the third that

connection is ongoing, concerned with the full variety of 'democratic' life across all public spaces and areas of social endeavour.

A variation on this three-fold theoretical categorisation may be seen in the conclusions of Aren Lijphart's empirically based *Patterns of Democracy* (1999). He examines the performance of thirty-six democracies based on a range of institutional characteristics including the organisation and operation of executives, legislatures, party systems, electoral systems, the relationships between central and lower-level governments, interest groups and central banks.

Lijphart distinguishes between two basic types of democracy: 'majoritarian' democracies (of which the UK is a model) and 'consensus' democracies (with Switzerland and Belgium as models). He proposes that the majoritarian interpretation of the basic definition of democracy is that it means 'government by the *majority* of the people'. In contrast, in the consensus model majority rule is understood as a minimum requirement. In other words, in response to the fundamental dilemma 'in government by and for the people, who will do the governing and to whose interest should the government be responsive?' the answer is 'as many people as possible'. Whilst the majoritarian model concentrates political power in the hands of a bare majority, the consensus model tries to 'share, disperse and limit power in a variety of ways'.

Lijphart's distinction is helpful in reminding us that there is no single model of contemporary democracy. Part of the challenge for the future may be to consider how (or under what circumstances) the different contemporary models of democracy might change in response to climate change.

But Lijphart's review also offers wider insights into our effort to consider the future of democracy in the face of climate change. Assessing the performance of thirty-six democracies Lijphart challenges the conventional wisdom that 'one-party majority governments typically produced by plurality elections are more decisive and hence more effective policy-makers', whereas 'proportional representation and consensus democracy may provide more accurate representation and, in particular, better minority representation and protection of minority interests, as well as broader participation in decision-making'.

Lijphart's conclusion is that consensus democracies clearly outperform majoritarian democracies in relation to the 'quality of democracy and democratic representation' and the 'kindness and gentleness of their public policy orientations'. In particular, he concludes that consensus democracies have a better record with regard to protection of the environment, put fewer people in prison and are less likely to use the death penalty; and those in the developed world are more generous with their economic assistance to developing nations.

The implicit suggestion here could be that consensus democracies are generally more likely to perform well in relation to the social and environmental dimensions of climate change. Conversely, Lijphart's research suggests that they are not inherently to less likely to perform well in relation to the economic dimensions of the challenge.

A correlation, however, is not the same as causation. For example, Przeworski and Limongi (1993) find that whilst ‘politics does matter’ for economic growth, it is not differences in regimes that capture the relevant differences. In other words, they conclude that there is little hard evidence to relate specific forms of government to economic prosperity. We will consider the relevance of these generalised conclusions in more detail at a later stage of our project.

Neither Nef and Reiter nor Lijphart’s categorisations of democracies; nor available tools for measuring the depth and extent of ‘democracy’ at national level, adequately speak to ‘global democracy’ – since the data that they draw on is taken largely from the national level. However, Nef and Reiter’s focus on the depth of citizen engagement in political and public life offers a useful analytical tool at the international level too. Measurement indices for national level ‘democracy’ could be adapted to provide a fairly narrow set of indicators at the international level, but they would be deficient in their focus on the state. And Lijphart’s categorisations could be adapted to provide the basis for an analytical tool for transnational and international level decision-making.

Finally, it is important to stress that whilst a taxonomic overview of democracy provides guidance on how theorists view democracy, it does not provide a window into how people themselves view democracy. Both are relevant.

In a 2007 paper on ‘the meaning of democracy in emerging democracies’, Doh Shin makes use of public opinion surveys carried out in ‘new democracies’ of Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America; concluding that citizens are able to give meaning to ‘democracy’ in their own words. Importantly, in these surveys, one clear message is that citizens think of democracy more in terms of ‘freedoms’ than ‘procedures’. Whilst the connection of democracy to ‘freedoms’ is abundantly clear from the general literature, one might speculate that it is more common for citizens of established democracies to conceive of democracy as at least as much concerned with procedures for ‘democratic’ decision-making as with ‘democratic freedoms’.

Shin’s study is important for our own project because it underscores the idea that perceptions of democracy vary according to spatial and historical contexts. Moreover, the practice of democracy is undoubtedly based firstly on how individuals *conceive* of it, followed by the institutional mechanisms in place to *express* it. And with the ninety year timeframe for our project, we must be concerned with the shape of democracy as a lived experience as much as a theory of organisation and change.

Democracy for Climate Change and Sustainable Development

Taxonomic descriptions of democracy may not go sufficiently far to offer a vision of a fully-functioning democracy able to mitigate and adapt to climate change within the timescale required to prevent catastrophic impacts. An important underlying concern of our work on the future of democracy in the face of climate change is to uncover ideas and practices that could help make democracy ‘fit for purpose’ in relation to mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and the pursuit of sustainable development.

Definitions of democracy are often concerned with democracy as a tool for management of decisions without regard to its ends; for democracy refuses to accept *in principle* any conception of the political good other than that generated by ‘the people’ themselves (Held 2006). Democracy in this sense is simply an approach to making decisions between competing concerns. Traditionally, many thinkers have been inspired by the idea that democracy is the most appropriate way of organising decision-making to reflect ‘the common good’, though often without seeking to optimise democracy to any *particular* vision of ‘the common good’.

Liberal theorists are concerned principally with justifying and defining the value of democracy in terms of its ability to deliver ‘liberty’. The thinking here is that liberty is a necessary prerequisite for ‘the people’ to deliver what is ‘good’. To give a very explicit example, as highlighted earlier, Hayek considers that democracy is not an end in itself; rather, it is a means ‘to help safeguard the highest political end: liberty’.

In contrast, Austrian economist and political scientist Schumpeter argues that whilst democracy could serve a variety of ends, it is important not to confuse these ends with democracy itself. He goes so far as to suggest “*the notion of the common good is an unacceptable element of democratic theory*” (Held 2006: 148). This realist approach sees democracy primarily as a political method in which the role of electors is essentially limited to periodically choosing between possible teams of leaders and curbing their worst excesses. Schumpeter’s is a depressing worldview in which the practice of democracy is a marketplace; a competitive field in which elites vie for dominance. (Held 2006).

Much thinking and theorising about democracy is blind to the applications of democracy to pursue social goals, aside from abstract notions of ‘the common good’ or a commitment to ‘liberty’ or ‘freedom’. Our work to examine ‘the future of democracy in the face of climate change’ inherently considers democracy as a means towards the end of mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and pursuit of sustainable development.

We take a different view to those theorists who reject the idea of a larger vision of ‘the common good’ as the purpose to which democracy must be directed. Our concern to equip democracy for climate change adaptation and mitigation means that we are not primarily concerned to measure democracy against a benchmark of ‘liberty’. In our ideal vision, democracy, understood as ‘rule of the people by the people for the people’, would be configured in the best possible way to deliver effective mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. Our value-laden question is ‘in what system of democracy would ‘rule by the people’ be most likely to deliver climate mitigation and adaptation’?

We must also be wary of the word ‘rule’. For example, Josiah Ober (2006) argues that the word ‘kratos’ in the root of ‘democracy’ originally referred to ‘power’ or ‘enablement’ in the sense of ‘capacity to do things’ not ‘rule’. This reframing, with a focus on the human capability to make good things happen (or to mitigate and adapt to climate change in ways that maximise sustainable development outcome) might be a useful aspirational focus, or at least a notional benchmark, for an evolving democracy as climate change unfolds.

In principle, our approach is not dissimilar to that taken by proponents of what has been termed ‘environmental democracy’; namely the branch of political science whose theorists are concerned to consider the ‘fit’ between democracy of various kinds and various forms of environmentalism (understood as a concern to maintain and improve environmental quality).

There is a diverse range of schools of thoughts here, too. For example, “ecocentrics” and “social ecologists” both place the environment rather than people at the centre of their critical approach to democracy, but differ considerably in their approach to it. Ecocentrics commonly stress a ‘remoralisation’ of democracy and prioritisation of environmental protection. In contrast, social ecologists focus on abolition of concentrations of power, instead favouring direct democracy and a commitment to non-hierarchy. And a third branch, ‘ecosocialists’, stress the need for formal institutions for the survival of participatory democracy (Mason, 1999).

In his model, developed in his book *Environmental Democracy*, Michael Mason describes environmental or eco-democracy as “*a participatory and ecologically rational form of collective decision-making: it prioritizes judgements based on long-term generalizable interests, facilitated by communicative political procedures and a radicalization of existing liberal rights*” (1999: 1).

‘Environmental democracy’ should not, however, be mistaken for ‘sustainable development democracy’. For however socially oriented the sensibilities of its proponents, environmental democracy is principally preoccupied with the environmental pillar of sustainable development, not its economic or social dimensions. For this reason, it offers an incomplete theoretical or descriptive approach for our project.

Drawing on the ideas outlined in *Paper One*, a model of democracy that was properly equipped to tackle climate change would need to be capable of at least the following:

- 1) disentanglement from forms of economic liberalism that idealise continual economic growth without regard for environmental and social limits;
- 2) accounting for the idea of the ‘demos’ in ways that allow consideration of the interests of ‘non-voting’ citizens such as children and future generations;
- 3) effectively responding to the challenges of transforming ‘disenfranchised’ interests such as those of the poorest or most marginalised people in society into effective participants in democratic processes;
- 4) accounting for questions of *scale* and *subsidiarity* in decision-making that is relevant to sustainable development by offering some guidance on how to blend decision-making at different levels from local to global;
- 5) accounting for the temporal dimension of sustainable development (itself a framing concept for action to tackle climate change) by encouraging decision-making that takes account of long-term impacts and the need not only for intragenerational but also intergenerational fairness (‘equity’);

- 6) accounting for how expertise (as distinct from perception or raw opinion) could or should fit into the process of knowledge formation that underlies the policy process;
- 7) describing clearly how trade-offs between competing interests can be managed so as to achieve the outcome of sustainable development; in other words, arriving at a satisfactory accommodation between the risk of a 'tyranny of the majority' and the difficulty of pursuing consensus decisions on hugely complex social and environmental issues.

Arguably none of these conditions are met by the readily available 'metadescriptions' of democracy:

- 1) Arguably to date only socialism has tackled the first condition.
- 2) Robert Dahl's description of 'inclusive citizenship' as one of the key political institutions of modern representative government expands the 'demos' to its modern form, but fails to account for the interests of 'non-voting citizens' or 'non-citizens' in the outcomes of democratic process.
- 3) Deliberative democracy goes the furthest towards addressing the challenges of enhancing human capabilities within democratic decision-making, but it does not sufficiently address the full scale of the issue.
- 4) The fourth condition is partially addressed by all models because of the need to allocate decision-making to appropriate institutional structures; but the problems of scale and subsidiarity are not always closely treated as definitional challenges. One exception is Lijphart's review of democracies in relation to a range of characteristics which include the relationship between central and local government. The climate change challenge in relation to democracy is however deeper than this, because a 'living' approach to democracy must also be capable of describing the problem of scale and subsidiarity in relation to community and citizen-based self-organisation. There is, however, wider literature on transnational governance and regulation (and sustainable development governance more widely) which offers more directly useful insights for purposes of our project on 'the future of democracy in the face of climate change'. For example, this body of literature includes ideas about 'nested', 'overlapping' and 'parallel' governance approaches.¹² We will review some of this literature in our next paper.
- 5) The fifth condition is not generally met by highly aggregated definitions of representative democracy, because the emphasis on regular elections tends to underscore short-termism in the electoral cycle.
- 6) The sixth condition is not formally addressed in the models of democracy outlined here; but the role of informed knowledge is a central theme in deliberative democracy. Equally, it might be said that the essence of democracy is a shift away from rule-making authority based in monarchs, spiritual elites or technically skilled expert elites who treat political decisions as their domain, not that of citizens.
- 7) The seventh condition is in a sense the essence of democracy; but models of democracy do not themselves provide answers on how to manage the specific trade-offs and integrative challenges

of sustainable development, particularly given the close connection between liberal democracy and markets.

These seven considerations are not only widespread ‘gaps’ in the mainstream literature about democracy: they also form defining features in the evolving relationship between democracy and climate change.

In our review of approaches to defining democracy, we have been looking for reasonably static, generalised understandings of what is meant by the term ‘democracy’. Yet democracy is itself dynamic, as this paper has shown. And it is also extraordinarily young. That is both a positive and a negative. For whilst the relative youth of democracy in its current mass industrial form must mean that it has enormous potential for evolution; the tone of much discussion about democracy tends to assume that we have already arrived at some set of final forms of democracy.

Democracy can, will, does and must change. But there is also a degree of political inertia; a path dependency; which results in part from the false sense that democracy is already highly evolved and has arrived at some kind of final state. Absent some significant shock, it is difficult to galvanise significant change in the constitutional order of established democracies. It may be that the shock of the huge social changes that could be wrought by climate change, population growth and resource scarcity offer a trigger to tackle some of the wider structural problems of democracy. But that can only happen if there is a sense that innovation in democracy must be part of the solution.

At the same time, many commentators have pointed out that the relative success of democracy has bred complacency or entrenched economic interests who block innovation and the necessary adaptive reforms worldwide (e.g. JK Galbraith (1992); Colin Crouch (2004)). Here, too, is an inherent structural weakness that may have significant impacts on how those democracies that suffer from these malaises (complacency perhaps the most damaging of all) adapt in the face of climate change. One might postulate, in fact, that it is those democracies that fare the best in established indicators of democracy that might find it most difficult to adapt to climate change, because they have become sclerotic; at once complacent and disaffected; unable to look within for the solutions to their own dilemmas.

It might be fair to argue that it would be impossible for any definition of democracy to tackle *all* dimensions of what Sørensen terms a ‘dynamic entity’ that has acquired different meanings over time. Concepts of environmental democracy address some of the shortcomings of democracy in relation to environmental issues. But what is striking is that a number of the factors that are central to our ‘futures-oriented’ enquiry receive little clarification in the mainstream literature on democracy specifically. One example concerns the role of expertise and scientific evidence in democratic decision-making. Another is the dilemma of determining the level at which ‘democratic decision-making’ should take place as between the local, the regional, the national and the global.

The literature relevant to these and other climate change and sustainable development-related concerns is large and growing, but the general theoretical literature on models of democracy has not caught up, seeing these pervasive societal challenges simply as possible policy outcomes of the different models of democracy. Environmentalist critiques of democracy expose some of the flaws in

these approaches, but they do not go far enough to offer models of democracy designed to deliver sustainable development, rather than environmental quality.

For the time being, *Paper Two* has offered an introduction to the range of thinking on ‘democracy’, ‘democratisation’ and ‘governance’. The next paper in our project on the future of democracy in the face of climate change, *Paper Three*, will review literature on the future of democracy, democratisation, and on the future of ‘decision-making and governance for sustainable development’.

Comments

We welcome comments on this paper. Please feel free to email thoughts or reactions to Halina Ward at halina.ward@fdsd.org

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Endnotes

¹ Though for a counterweight, see John Keane's *Life and Death of Democracy*, Simon and Schuster, 2009. Keane's historic approach delves further into the past, to the popular assemblies of Syria-Mesopotamia some 2000 years earlier

² See for example the outcomes of the WorldWideViews project, which applied deliberative techniques to discussion on climate change involving people from 38 countries: www.wvviews.org.

³ <http://www.nomic.net/~nomicwiki/index.php/ArrowsParadox>

⁴ Quoted in a review of the book in *International Affairs*, March 2010

⁵ Available for download at

http://www.thelifeanddeathofdemocracy.org/resources/reviews/Ben_Wilson_on_John_Keane.pdf

⁶ *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_source_political_campaign, Accessed 20 Jan 2010

⁷ See e.g. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/jul/01/civilliberties>

⁸ See <http://www.cambridge.org/us/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=0521898935>

⁹ See <http://www.iog.ca/>

¹⁰ Incidentally, the idea that 'governance' relates only to 'important' decisions seems rather limiting in the present context, save insofar as it invites consideration of meta-level 'systems' of governance.

¹¹ http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2003/spring_governance_benner.aspx

¹² See e.g. <http://www.princeton.edu/~smeunier/Abbott%20Snidal%20memo.pdf>