

Reinventing Democracy

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One of the ironies of politics in the early twenty-first century is that widespread apathy about electoral and representative democracy is accompanied by creative and original thinking about how democracy might be reinvented to meet the types of major challenge outlined in chapter 4. In this final chapter we explore possible democratic futures by scanning a selection of today's most discussed democratic innovations – *deliberative, direct, cosmopolitan, ecological, 'politics of presence', associative and party-based models*. These models are not entirely new, of course; they build upon earlier narratives of democracy by adding new twists to familiar plot-lines. Indeed, these innovative models can best be understood if we focus on exactly where and how they depart from the familiar narratives. This is the approach I adopt.

The scope of the analysis is broad, but it is also restricted in the following ways: the six innovative ideas scrutinized arise from, and largely (though not exclusively) address, countries of the rich North rather than the developing South; they do not exhaust the range of current innovations in democratic theory; and they are based largely in English-language sources.

Six dimensions of democracy

When we look at ideas that are put forward as new or innovative, we have to ask 'new or innovative with respect to *what?*' So before we turn to the new ideas, let's establish a kind of baseline against which we might assess some of their features. I suggest that there are six key *dimensions* of democracy. A model or theory of democracy will have something to say on most of these dimensions, making the latter a useful tool for comparing different models, etc. The dimensions are expressed below in the form of questions. For ease of reference, they are designated 'A–F', below and subsequently. To help fix our bearings, I offer brief illustrative comments for each question or dimension, showing how the main narratives of democracy which we examined in earlier chapters might respond in terms of these categories.

Dimension A – space and belonging

How ought the political unit and political community in which democracy is to be practised be understood, in terms of geography, population size, terms of membership (or citizenship) and degree of cultural homogeneity?

Both Schumpeterian and participative narratives unquestioningly regarded the nation-state as the basic political unit for democracy. Participationists went further, emphasizing the importance of smaller 'political units' within nations, such as the workplace. In both narratives culture was rarely mentioned, with the implicit assumption being one of national cultural homogeneity. Marxists and feminists, on the other hand, have stressed solidarity of working classes and women across geographical borders.

Dimension B – rights

What constitutional constraints should democratic majorities face, if any? What rights, if any, should be guaranteed to members or citizens of a democracy?

Schumpeter himself stressed citizen obligations rather than rights, though later accounts (such as Dahl's and Lijphart's) redressed this balance somewhat. Participative theorists stressed participative rights. Neither narrative highlighted the importance of limiting national majorities, particularly. Marxists looked beyond the issue of rights, seeing them as tokenistic, towards a more substantial right to the fruits of one's labour. Feminists have emphasized the ways in which liberal rights have constituted an image of the individual which is that of the independent *man*, ignoring the gendered nature of these seemingly neutral concepts and categories.

Dimension C – group autonomy

To what degree and over what concerns should distinct sub-groups; functional or territorial, possess rights to autonomy or collective self-determination?

Post-Schumpeterian narratives came to take territorial decentralization seriously, especially in Lijphart's work; participationists were keenly concerned with the need for a degree of functional group autonomy in order to empower people where they worked in particular. Marxists always took a broader view, stressing how class groups were the most basic in society, and that the working class possessed interests which in reality dwarfed their division into nations and other territorial or cultural units.

Dimension D – participation

What is to be the balance between different forms of popular participation in the making of collective decisions, in terms of both (a) the balance between direct and representative institutions and (b) the balance of variation within each of these two basic forms?

Schumpeterian narratives do not encompass any need for direct democracy; indeed, the emphasis on quite strictly indirect democracy working through elections and representative institutions was close to being a *defining* feature of such narratives. Even the participationists did not write much about direct democracy, with the partial exception of C. B. MacPherson (1977) and, later, Benjamin Barber (1984), preferring the broader participatory label. Some Marxist traditions have emphasized local and direct forms of democracy and participation, picking up, for example, Marx's own writings on the Paris Commune of 1871.

Dimension E – accountability

How are relations of accountability to be structured, how are 'accounts' to be given, by whom and to whom?

Accountability in these narratives concerned *electoral* accounts. The participatory narrative stretched to accountability within functional groups (such as those working together for one company, or members of a political party). But either way accountability was understood as a formal process centred upon election. For Marxists and feminists, formal modes of 'bourgeois' or 'patriarchal' accountability were limited and tokenistic in the face of fundamental social power imbalances.

Dimension F – public and private

How are the respective roles of the public and the private spheres, and formal and informal modes of political activity, to be understood, and which is taken to provide what in terms of the requirements of a healthy democratic structure?

Schumpeterian narratives confine their concerns about democracy largely to the public sphere, that is the sphere of government and the state. Participationists stretched it outside the state and into civil society in the form of the economic sphere especially. Marxists had long started the other way around, seeing the formal structures of the state as super-structures arising from the real engine-room of society, the economy and the class structure that sprang from it. Feminists later placed this issue at the heart of democracy from another angle, digging further into the 'private' to suggest that 'the personal is political', thus encompassing, for example, the politics of sexuality and the family.

The orthodox line?

To reiterate: these are the dimensions along which different visions of democracy vary. They represent a set of issues on which any self-respecting model or theory of democracy will take a position. Would-be innovative theories may, for example, shift emphases within a dimension; downgrade the importance of any one dimension and highlight the importance of others; or fundamentally reinterpret how a given dimension ought to be understood. We shall see instances of all three strategies with respect to the ideas discussed below.

Of course, responses to these core issues historically have varied enormously. Nevertheless, and with special reference to thinking associated with Schumpeterian narratives, certain lines of liberal democratic orthodoxy – a kind of 'default mode' democracy – are reasonably clear. We can say, without doing too much violence to a complex subject, that the dominant modern narrative of democracy has been characterized by the advocacy or acceptance of primarily *representative* institutions [D]. Allied with this, politics and therefore democracy has been conceived as occurring largely *within the formal structure of the state* [F]. The formal range of the jurisdiction of that state has been defined in terms of national *territorial* units [A] on the basis of *majority rule* [B] constrained largely by guaranteed rights to expressive, associative and basic political freedoms only. Elected and appointed officials exercise considerable policy *discretion* in the context of lines of *formal and hierarchical accountability* [E]. Distinct territorial sub-groups would have tightly *circumscribed autonomy* (if any) from the central state within a specific scope [C].

I put this sketch of orthodoxy forward as a baseline for considering my main focus – the key democratic innovations for the twenty-first century.

New directions for democracy

Full-blown accounts of each of these innovations can be found elsewhere (see the references below, and in the Guide to Further Reading). Here I confine myself to brief indications of how and where the key innovations arise.

Deliberative democracy

The deliberative model of democracy has been the dominant new strand in democratic theory over the past ten to fifteen years. It has had a great impact on how we think about the various dimensions of democracy – perhaps most notably on the question of accountability [E]. This model arose (variously) out of concern that dominant 'aggregative' conceptions of democracy, which focus on voting and elections – essentially, counting heads – were deeply inadequate. Instead, democracy must involve *discussion* on an equal and inclusive basis. This discussion

should deepen participant knowledge of issues and awareness of the interests of others, and help to instil the confidence to play an active part in public affairs. Deliberative democracy looks to *transform* people's (possibly ill-informed) preferences through open and inclusive discussion, not merely to design electoral procedures to *reflect* them. It seeks to go beyond the 'mere' design of mechanisms to register the preferences that people already have.

There are markedly different conceptions of deliberative democracy. Theorists and commentators differ, for example, over:

- who should do the deliberating;
- the extent to which certain standards of 'rationality' should govern discussions;
- the collective goal of deliberation (consensus, truth, working agreement?);
- the individual goal (enlightenment, confidence, empowerment?); and
- the appropriate siting of deliberative forums (courts, parliaments, specially designed citizens' forums, political parties, local communities, among the oppressed, in social movements, within the state, against the state, within national boundaries, across national boundaries?).

A reasonable stab at a common definition is that of Bohman: 'Deliberative democracy, broadly defined, is . . . any one of a family of views according to which the public deliberation of free and equal citizens is the core of legitimate political decision making and self-government' (Bohman 1998, 401).

Deliberative democracy's impact on our understanding of most of the dimensions of democracy has been significant. Some versions, notably Dryzek's 'discursive democracy', have reinforced the prospect of democracy operating across national and other borders [A]; perhaps across cultural borders as well, laying stress on procedural means by which heterogeneous groups may be able to cooperate through open-ended and inclusive processes built around properly facilitated discussion of agendas and options [C].

The issue of what majorities can do in a democracy, and what rights individuals may have against majorities [B], is given a distinctive spin by the deliberative conception – a spin that is likely to prove influential. Deliberationists generally take the view that constitutional rights cannot be taken for granted as having universal status and applicability, or general justification; they must instead be justified deliberatively themselves, and to that extent they remain *provisional*.¹ At the same time, deliberationists have placed a question mark against the very notion of a 'majority'; there is nothing especially worthy, in democratic terms, they argue, about an aggregate majority of views which simply reflects popular ignorance or prejudice on the issues. If the conventional question has been 'what constitutional constraints should democratic majorities face?', then the new deliberative version suggests replacing 'constitutional' with 'deliberative', and leaving the status of the constraints open to deliberative revision.

In one sense, the deliberative conception downgrades the importance of the direct versus representative debate in democratic theory [D] – each is less than adequate to democratic purposes if it fails to be sufficiently deliberative as well. All adult citizens may have an equal *vote*, but will their *voice* have equal weight in democratic deliberation? Can inclusiveness in this larger sense be achieved? Will the model deliberative forum be like a university seminar, following (sometimes, at any rate) certain canons of rational debate, appropriate evidence and so forth? If so, it may be exclusive because those notions of what counts as rational discourse differ from one group to another. The results may rapidly be overrun by the irrationalities of normal, competitive politics anyhow. Can key deliberative arenas be flexible and inclusive enough to embrace cultural difference in highly pluralistic post-modern societies?

Deliberative conceptions have transformed our view of accountability [E]. Rather than expressing a property of a line-hierarchy – e.g., the civil servant is accountable to the minister, the minister to parliament, parliament to the people – deliberative democracy places renewed stress on accountability as the *ongoing giving of accounts, explanations, or reasons* to those subject to decisions. As such it prompts us to reinterpret such subjects as freedom of information, the accessibility of parliamentary procedure, and the role of broadcasting and the internet in fostering links between representatives and constituencies. Further, it renders much more flexible our notions of who must give accounts to whom (e.g., non-elected officials can be held to various forms of deliberative accountability).

With regard to the sixth dimension [F], deliberative democracy, especially in versions influenced by the work of the prominent German social theorist Jürgen Habermas (1996), has emphasized the importance of a fluid, dynamic process of ‘opinion-formation’ in the non-state public sphere; some who are influenced by Habermas now seek to go beyond his latest framework to underline even further the greater scope that exists for authentic democratic action outside the constricting formal boundaries of formal state structures – the essence of John Dryzek’s (2000) influential ‘discursive’ model.

In these respects, deliberative conceptions have not so much shifted perspectives within the six dimensions as demanded that we rethink what we *mean* by them. The meanings of belonging, rights, participation and accountability have been profoundly affected by the deliberative current. Important questions remain, however. One especially critical one is: where does or should deliberation occur? The possibilities canvassed in the literature include:

- in specially constructed micro-forums such as ‘deliberative opinion polls’ and citizens’ juries, where a small representative sample of people debate and in some cases vote on issues;
- within political parties;
- in national and other parliaments;
- in supra-national committee networks such as those in the governing structures of the European Union;
- within private or voluntary associations;
- within courts; or
- within a diverse ‘public’ sphere of ‘protected enclaves’ or ‘subaltern counterpublics’,² in other words, oppressed groups in society.

Deliberative democrats will continue to be pressed on who is to do the deliberating, and where, and with what links to other decision-making institutions. Continuing practical experiments in the USA, Australia and various West European countries with deliberative opinion polls and citizens’ juries provide one sort of response to the ‘who’ and ‘where’ questions from within deliberative theory; but there are other ways that offer sometimes radically different responses – not least in the following democratic innovations.

Direct democracy

We turn now to the oldest innovation in democratic thought – direct democracy. The main recent innovation in this area, in terms of its impact on theory and practice, is the ‘party-based’ model explained and advocated by Budge (1996; 2000). Each of the innovations considered in this chapter has elements which shade into the territory of direct democracy. The local orientation of associative democracy and many ecological visions has a ‘direct’ quality; deliberative forums too, insofar as ordinary citizens get to participate. The need for cross-border referendums is discussed as

part of the cosmopolitan model. Clearly, the categories we are working with are not watertight.

As Budge sees it, the idea of a party-based direct democracy involves ‘the people’ in effect becoming a third house of a national legislature. Major policy proposals, or bills, passed in the representative legislature would go to a national referendum vote. Propositions would become law only if they passed in a referendum, according to criteria which may include thresholds (or super-majorities) rather than simple majority rule. In this system, political parties would continue to run candidates for elective public offices, form governments, propose legislation, and so forth. In Budge’s schema, however, they would in addition campaign for their preferred outcomes in regular policy referendums.

Budge is keen to avoid the problems of what he calls ‘unmediated’ direct democracy – easily dismissed as utopian or unworkable by direct democracy’s critics – in which representative or secondary institutions such as parliaments, parties and even governments are assumed not to be necessary, or have no role. Any serious vision of direct democracy today must see it as operating alongside, or more clearly as part of, a larger democratic system which includes (for example) elected parliaments and political parties. It is here that we can see the major contribution to democratic reconstruction of this model – the effective collapsing of any simple and strong distinction between direct and representative democracy, and within that the assertion of new, practical conceptions of direct democracy which challenge the widespread perception that it is unworkable in modern conditions.

In the party-based vision, direct forms of policy accountability via the referendum (dimension [E]) become much more feasible and desirable since people are now much more educated, and can make sensible choices on policies (especially if still guided by parties). Developments in technology facilitate debate and decision-making capacity for citizens, though there is no easy or obvious route to ‘teledemocracy’ (Arterton 1987). The suggestion is that higher levels of citizen education, along with widespread access to and capacity to use relevant information, both justify and make practical the view that important government proposals should be put to the people in referendums before becoming law.

One could conjecture that the direct–representative distinction will indeed be, and come to be seen to be, less important in advanced states in the future. This in part reflects the fact that direct democracy requires indirect (representative, administrative, facilitative) institutions for its realistic functioning, such that pressures to increase the scope for direct decision-making will reinforce appropriate indirect structures. One might add that the emphasis on talk, discussion and deliberation will likely continue to downgrade the significance of hard-and-fast representative–direct distinctions – though the importance of voting and elections generally will remain.

Direct democracy in the form of the referendum comes in a range of types. If the referendum is desirable in principle, then some basic choices must be made about how it might be deployed. First of all, should it be:

- conducted nationally, regionally or locally, depending on the issue?
- controlled by government, or the product of citizen initiatives (petitions) or some form of independent commission?
- confined to use on constitutional questions (basic rules of the system, such as who has voting rights), or extended to cover some legislative questions (everyday laws) as well?
- binding on governments, so that they must enact the outcome, or merely consultative, so that they can ignore the outcome if they wish (or maybe both, depending on the issue)?
- one vote decides the issue, or renewable so as to reflect changing citizen attitudes?

In addition, other specific questions about the context in which referendums are held will invariably arise, such as: how should the question be framed? How can more or less equal publicity for all sides be achieved? And what is the appropriate timing?

There are many objections to using any forms of direct democracy. Let us explore some of these briefly. First, it is sometimes argued that citizens are not qualified, or not sufficiently competent, to deal with complex policy questions. There is no definitive answer to this question, but in reply one might say that elected representatives are not necessarily vastly more competent than ordinary citizens (especially with imaginative use of, for example, special deliberative forums such as citizens' juries). Elected representatives in strong party systems are themselves prevented from exercising any real degree of independent judgement. Besides, one might ask, is there ever a neutral body of experts that fully understands complex problems and agrees on their solution (e.g., effects of radiation)? Perhaps direct democracy can even bring more expertise to bear on complex questions? And, as Budge points out, are not citizens better informed, or do they at least have more ready access to information, now, in the information age?

Second, it is sometimes suggested that direct democracy would result in minority groups being swamped by intolerant populist majorities. In reply, one can say that direct democracy does not mean that citizens, especially vulnerable minority citizens, should lose their basic rights. Courts in the United States, where the referendum operates in approximately two-thirds of the states, are not slow to strike down laws passed by referendum if they judge that people's rights have been undermined.

Third, direct democracy does not escape certain logical problems of voting. Indeed, some see it as especially vulnerable to these problems. The difficulty, in essence, is that there is no neutral or reliable way to find out the 'will of the people'. To some extent, all electoral and voting systems are arbitrary, in the sense that the outcomes depend in part on the specific shape of the procedure that produced it. Putting it more precisely, it has been shown that where there are three or more voters and three or more candidates for election (or options in a referendum), there may be no avoiding 'cycles', whereby each candidate can be beaten by another candidate, and there is no 'majority' winner (McLean 1986; Budge 2000). Some commentators have seen voting cycles as a decisive problem against direct democracy – how can a genuine majority choice be found, given these logical problems? But why is it more of a problem for direct than representative democracy? We still vote for representatives, and, as far as we know, our votes may often be cyclical (most of the time we don't know, because in order to know we would need to know most voters' order of preferences for all candidates or options). Cycles can in part be avoided by party ideologies bringing policy issues into line along one 'dimension' – the left-right dimension. Once that happens, it is logically possible always to locate a majority winner on that dimension. Budge's innovation is to point out that, in a system with extensive use of referendums for deciding policy issues, parties would be no less involved than they are in more familiar representative systems.

Fourth, is direct democracy open to manipulation by special interests and demagogues? This is a common charge in the United States. But on the other hand, current political processes in representative systems, built around spin and news management, can themselves be highly manipulative. Insofar as upcoming referendums provoke public debate on the issues, then perhaps that debate will tend to act as a guard against troubling levels of manipulation. Finally, there is the argument that direct democracy undermines representative government. But surely it need not do so. Much will depend on the context, the extent to which democracy is widely accepted and defended, and so forth. It could just as readily work the other way around: direct democracy can bolster the legitimacy of representative systems. The two do not constitute mutually exclusive alternatives, but rather complementary devices.

Cosmopolitan democracy

David Held (1995) influentially contends that the future health of democracy depends upon the entrenchment and defence of a common set of democratic rights and obligations at local, national, regional and global levels. A move towards cosmopolitan democracy could deepen the capacity of people affected by decisions and actions which increasingly escape nation-state control to have a say in them. The rights concerned – based on the principle of autonomy – range from civil and political through to cultural and reproductive rights. In institutional terms, Held envisages effective new courts and parliaments operating at regional and global levels, entrenching and enacting these rights and opportunities as part of a ‘common structure of political action’.

The issues Held addresses are both basic and complex. For political or economic developments which have a significant impact on populations across a number of countries, how can democratic consent – and with it democratic legitimacy – be attained without a democratically constituted supra-national political entity? How can the ‘democratic deficit’ of virtually all international political institutions be addressed effectively if not by extending and adapting democratic rights, principles and institutions to levels of governance beyond the national?

Held innovates along dimensions [A] and [B] in particular. With respect to the issue of political community, cosmopolitans argue that democracy ought not to be understood primarily as being applicable above all to nation-states, but also and equally at other levels from the local to the global. With regard to majority rule and citizen rights, democratic majorities at any level must be constrained from transgressing a wide array of autonomy rights. The (underdeveloped) cosmopolitan view of nested layers of legislatures and courts from the local to the global also offers a distinctive perspective on federalism (Held writes of his cosmopolitan model as involving something ‘between the principles of federalism and confederalism’; 1995, 230). Certainly it is interesting to think of these concepts as applicable to more than simply national contexts, and so outlining a case for this model being innovative with regard to our dimension [C] as well.

How compelling are these cosmopolitan breaks with the ‘default mode’? Even setting aside dispute over the nature and extent of ‘globalization’, some question whether democratic citizenship can ever operate in any conventional way above the national level (Kymlicka 1999; Wendt 1999). Others go further, such as Robert A. Dahl, who argues that ‘an international organization is not and probably cannot be a democracy’ (Dahl 1999, 19). According to Dahl, if we consider that international organizations and processes operate on such a scale; with such remoteness from ordinary people’s lives; with respect to issues whose complexity evades the vast majority; and in a context where the diversity of peoples and nations makes common interests elusive at best, then we can only conclude that cosmopolitan models tend to be over-optimistic.

If Held’s innovation on the first dimension is hotly disputed, on the second it is hardly any less so. There are issues arising from the sheer range of rights Held argues ought to be constitutionalized (or taken out of majoritarian hands). It is true that there is no *inherent* tension between democracy and constitutional limits on what majorities may decide (Saward 1998, chapter 3). But if the set of democratic rights extends far beyond familiar civil and political rights, such as rights to freedom of speech and to a vote of equal value, we can find ourselves on a ‘slippery slope’ where the courts must resolve issues that arguably belong in the realm of ‘normal’ democratic politics. In short, the cosmopolitan model appears to shift the balance between constitutionalism and democracy in favour of the former.

In addition, some of the specific rights Held proposes for constitutionalization might prove to be especially controversial, such as suggested rights to ‘control over fertility’ and to a ‘guaranteed minimum income’. Although Held argues that such rights ought

to be enacted in ways that are 'sensitive to the traditions, values and levels of development of particular societies' (Held 1995, 201), there appears to be some slip-page between the need for a 'common structure of political action' (built on common rights) and any *particular* common structure. Arguably, a common structure of action on a regional or global scale would (a) need to be 'thinner' or more minimalist than Held appears to suggest, and (b) concerned more with procedures and less with substance.

Often enough, disputes *within* one of democracy's key dimensions spill over into disputes about others, or about their relative importance. Dryzek (2000) argues that Held's four nested layers of political units, with their array of familiar governmental institutions and overlapping jurisdictions, are less than adequate in that they *replicate* conventional nation-state models – formal government of continuous territorial units within specific physical borders. In his view, state-like structures are too inflexible; transnational democratization must depend more on transnational *civil society* (in part addressing issues in dimension [A] by subordinating them to issues in dimension [F]). For Dryzek, 'discursive democracy' in informal or non-state cross-border networks represents the future of democratization in the transnational sphere. Dennis Thompson is likewise critical of Held's model, partly for the ways in which he thinks its dispersal of political authority will render accountability more elusive and complex (a point of relevance to dimension [E]), but also because it does not take the idea of deliberative democracy sufficiently on board. It is difficult to know how to organize cross-border votes; it is easier (arguably) to organize cross-border talk or deliberation on issues of mutual concern. Thompson thinks international accountability and decision-making can be enhanced if, for instance, 'a state could establish forums in which representatives could speak for the ordinary citizens of foreign states, presenting their claims and responding to counter-claims of representatives of the host state' – 'a kind of Tribune for non-citizens' (1999, 121–2).

We can glimpse how the cosmopolitan model has begun to shift the focus of political theory on dimension [A] especially. Its critics largely accept that the problems it seeks to address are real ones. At the same time, one does not have to accept a strong version of the globalization thesis to see cosmopolitan democracy as a compelling vision. It is difficult to envisage transnational democratic forms not continuing to develop, however haltingly; or the motivations behind cosmopolitan models subsiding. But perhaps the *type* of democracy that evolves in this context will be something produced from a different mould than Held suggests – transforming our ideas of what counts as 'democracy' along the way. If, for example, Dahl (1999) and Hirst (2000) are right to be sceptical about whether democracy in any conventional sense can work at that level, then perhaps democracy will (have to) mean forms of reason-giving accountability rather than constituencies voting; official-to-official and official-to-group rather than representative-to-electorate accountability.

Ecological democracy

Political ecologists do not offer a new, three-dimensional model of democracy, but rather an orientation towards, and a set of focused criticisms of, democratic orthodoxies. Many of these criticisms resonate with cosmopolitan and deliberative concerns.

Green political theorists, like greens in general, have been highly critical of the idea and practice of representative democracy as we know it (as we saw in the discussion in the previous chapter). Early waves of green political theorizing featured calls for more direct democracy, radical decentralization of political authority to local communities, radical grassroots party organization, and small, rural, face-to-face assemblies on the Athenian model (Bookchin 1982; Sale 1985). Since the early 1980s, though, green political theory has had a more nuanced relationship with democratic norms and practices. Today, the ecological stress is on adapting,

renovating and deepening democracy rather than replacing it; rendering it fair and inclusive with respect to non-human interests as well, moving it beyond 'human chauvinism'. Thus, innovation along some of our dimensions of democracy has been a high priority for political ecologists. In particular, this has involved rethinking democratic *procedures*, in line with concern about green attachment to democracy as expressed by Goodin: 'To advocate democracy is to advocate procedures, to advocate environmentalism is to advocate substantive outcomes: what guarantee can we have that the former procedures will yield the latter sorts of outcomes?' (Goodin 1992, 168).

Key ecological emphases arise with respect to dimension [F] – public or private, state or civil society? Suspicious of the extent to which states are locked into ecologically unsustainable economic, military and developmental imperatives, Dryzek favours models of democratization which are more oriented towards and active within civil society; the suggestion here is that democratization (in the West at any rate) has probably gone as far as it can in the formal structures of the state; further democratization (and progress on environmental issues) can and must take place within civil society instead. His examples of such action centre on networks of non-state organizations across national boundaries, targeting, for example, 'biopiracy' in South American rainforests.

With respect to dimension [B], greens have agreed that democracy must be regarded as a self-binding concept. This means that they think democracy needs to limit itself in order to protect itself; majorities cannot do just anything, they cannot legitimately override citizens' rights. But while accepting this view, greens give it a distinctive ecological spin. If majorities must be limited in certain ways for a system to be a genuine democracy, then why can *ecological* limits not be part of a package of constitutional provisions constraining democratic governments? Conceived as a necessary condition for a thriving democratic community, why should not freedom from environmental harm or degradation be analogous to freedom of expression (for example) in the pantheon of democratic thought (Eckersley 1996)?

Further, it has been proposed that familiar representative institutions can and should be adapted so that the vital interests of (in particular) non-human nature and future generations can find a 'voice'. This could work, for example, by the *proxy representation of nature*: interested constituencies (such as memberships of campaigning environmental groups) electing members of parliament whose task is to represent non-human nature, on the grounds that, since democracy is all about representing the interests of the affected, it would be unjust to exclude and thus to discriminate against non-human interests of the natural world (Dobson 1996b). Clearly this idea reinforces the institution of representation and the importance of representative democracy (dimension [D]) by remoulding it. Prior to that – indeed, as a condition of it – fundamental interpretations of what it takes to be a member of a political community are being challenged head-on (a key aspect of dimension [A]). The idea of new, and multiple, communities-of-fate is important here. Environmental circumstances link the destinies of people, animals, and the rest of non-human nature in fateful/inescapable spaces. Boundaries for democracy thus defined are fluid, shifting and unpredictable rather than fixed and securely known over time. And related to this, the meaning and potentialities of accountability (dimension [E]) are radically broadened in green thinking. Accountability to the interests of non-human nature, accountability across the generations, constitutional accountability for the specific circumstances of community thriving – in these and other senses, accountability like representation comes under renewed questioning by green thinkers.

Many of these would-be innovations are linked by green theorists to the ubiquitous deliberative current in democratic thought. According to Eckersley, deliberative approaches can foster a long-term view, and prompt deliberators to hear expressions of, and ideally to take on board, others' (including nature's) interests. It is vital,

though, to link representative innovations to deliberation by insisting on the inclusion of the marginalized. Perhaps the most challenging point here is how democratically to include non-human interests in parliamentary and bureaucratic policy-making procedures, if not through Dobson's proxies. Eckersley, for example, advocates a number of innovative mechanisms, including an 'Environmental Defenders Office' and constitutional entrenchment of the 'precautionary principle', which guards against actions which may carry considerable ecological risks (Eckersley 2000). Clearly this complex vision of an ecological democracy calls for innovations across the range of democracy's core dimensions. Some of these innovations involve adapting the familiar – legal rights, for example. Others, such as proxy representation for nature, have a more utopian look. But for how long? In twenty years, given the recent pace of the development of environmental consciousness and awareness, it ought to be no great surprise if the unthinkable has become thinkable – and even seen as necessary.

The politics of presence (and 'difference')

Advocates of a 'politics of presence' (and the related 'politics of difference'), like deliberative democrats, are critical of how liberal democracy has traditionally viewed democratic citizens as fundamentally the same as each other: a citizen is someone with rights and obligations by virtue of membership of the state. No particular characteristics, sexual, ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religious, attach to the category of citizen. Feminist and multicultural critics have challenged this apparently neutral view of citizenship, arguing that it masks processes of social and cultural exclusion and inequality by in turn masking differences that are highly relevant to a more sophisticated view of equal treatment.

For Phillips (1995), a key response to the relative exclusion of (for example) women and ethnic minorities from formal political institutions (such as representative parliaments) in many Western democracies is to supplement 'the politics of ideas' with 'the politics of presence'. Party and parliamentary politics as we are broadly familiar with it, she argues, is about what representatives *do* rather than who they *are*; about the ideas (or policies or ideologies) they press for rather than their gender, race, religion, etc. It is no longer enough, in her view, to lay much greater stress on representing ideas; instead, we should elevate the importance of addressing 'the inclusion of previously excluded voices' by promoting a politics of presence (1995, 10). Parliaments should have a gender, ethnic (and so forth) composition that broadly reflects the population at large. Even if more women and black MPs, for example, do not necessarily represent some mythically essentialist view of 'women's' or 'black' interests, representation, like justice, needs to be seen to be done, as well as to be done (1995, 82).

If Phillips's approach is basically reformist – supporting practical changes that would heighten the presence of previously relatively excluded voices from representative legislatures – that of Iris Young has been more radical (and perhaps more difficult to pin down). Young has stressed the importance of forms of deliberative democracy which take fully on board group difference – indeed she has called her preferred conception 'communicative democracy' and said that this alternative model goes 'beyond deliberative democracy' (Young 1996). Where Phillips is wary of strong guarantees of representation for (e.g.) women in legislatures, Young argues that 'commitment to political equality entails that democratic institutions and practices take measures explicitly to include the representation of social groups whose perspectives would likely be excluded from expression in discussion without those measures' (Young 2000, 148). Her earlier work involved demands that a certain number of seats in the legislature be reserved for members of marginalized groups. She has moved from this position, favouring the principle but being more flexible about the means of achieving it – forms of proportional representation in multi-

member constituencies, for example, would avoid tendencies to 'freeze' the characters of groups into false essences (Young 2000, 148–53).

'Difference' and 'presence' theories challenge democratic orthodoxy across the six dimensions, in ways that variously reinforce and diverge from cosmopolitan and deliberative critiques. They stress the ways in which populations of contemporary Western states at least are highly differentiated and varied in cultural and other ways; social and cultural pluralism, not homogeneity, is the challenge that models of democracy must confront [A]. On the second dimension [B], some 'difference' logic would add group rights, perhaps even group vetoes, to the 'list' of constitutional limits on what democratic majorities may do. That is a controversial move: individualism and individual rights have been powerful underpinnings for the idea of democracy throughout the modern period, notwithstanding the importance of groups (such as trade unions) in fighting for the achievement and deepening of democracy, historically. But perhaps democracy today does demand radical redress for long marginalized interests, and perhaps too the strength of that demand in the principle of equality lends it democratic credibility despite its anti-majoritarian character?

Ideas about rethinking representation among 'difference' democrats have a clear impact upon the shift in emphasis from territorial/federal forms of sub-group autonomy to 'identity' groups [C]; curiously, too, they shore up representative rather than direct forms of democracy by (as these theorists see it) adapting the concept of 'representation' itself [D]. With regard to accountability [E], they press us to make a double adaptation of democratic orthodoxy. First, the deliberative approach of emphasizing accountability as the continuous giving of reasons rather than the existence of formal, hierarchical lines of answerability is adopted; and second, this is deepened by adding the idea of intra-group accountability whereby (for instance) black representatives may be required to justify their actions to black constituencies within a larger system of group representation. By the same token, these approaches could be said to offer ways in which key divisions and social inequalities in civil society may be addressed by revising democratic structures in the state [F].

For a mid-range theory, the 'politics of presence' highlights pressing challenges to democratic orthodoxy in diverse, multicultural, multifaith societies, such as France, the UK and the USA. Controversy attends ways in which political representation might need to be reshaped to reflect the demands of 'presence'. One can expect institutional innovations here to continue, by necessity.

Associative democracy

Visions of associative democracy, most notably in the work of Hirst (1994) and Cohen and Rogers (1992), continue to be highly influential among political theorists and policy-makers looking for new, diverse and flexible ways to make and deliver policies in the wake of a broad loss of confidence in, and political and philosophical support for, the traditional top-down model of the welfare state. Proponents of ideas of associative democracy look to move beyond the individualist–statist divide (in theory and in practice) to make voluntary groups or associations the focal point for the citizen's participation in, and engagement with, his or her community. As such, they stress new forms of responsibility and accountability at the local level, reducing the role of the central state. Associationalists seek a 'dispersed, decentralized democracy' which 'combines the individual choice of liberalism with the public provision of collectivism' (Hirst 1994, 189; 22).

In Hirst's associative democracy, which I take as the base-line, the existing structures of liberal democracy would be supplemented (and in some cases replaced) by a range of new institutions, mostly local associations such as religious and cultural organizations, interest groups and trade unions. Publicly funded according to a formula reflecting the quality, coverage and character of their provisions, these associations would take over much of the delivery – and up to a point also the

devising – of welfare services. In principle, citizens would be free to opt in and out of associations (and their services) as they wish. The context for this decentralized, pluralistic associationalism would be an economy which has a much more local and regional focus and in which small and medium-sized firms would take on an array of public functions, perhaps most crucially welfare service delivery. In this vision, the role of the state would change quite dramatically, from a provider to an enabler or facilitator of services as well as a standard-setter for more decentralized systems.³

Associative visions offer innovations on a number of the core dimensions of democracy. While the nation-state as the territorial basis of a democratic community is not questioned in any substantial way within this model (dimension [A]), clearly the role and status of democratic majoritarianism *is* (dimension [B]). Here, the restrictions on democratic majorities are couched not in terms of constitutional rights, but rather in terms of a radical decentralization of political power such that central government majorities can have little impact on on-the-ground political change. So, the associative model encourages us to remodel our basic interpretations of dimension [B]. It ought no longer be conceived as a continuum from majoritarianism to constitutionalism. Instead, it raises questions about the nature and extent of central government's legitimate role vis-à-vis local associative provision. Associationalists and their critics debate whether traditional majoritarianism might be bypassed entirely, in favour of the local community and group-centred system of regulation and decision-making – reminding us in the process that it is the individualistic basis of democratic theory that makes majoritarianism a central category, and that that basis is in the end optional. Strong forms of association or group-based pluralism can contribute to paradigms in which (a) the very idea of majority rule makes little sense, but (b) the depth of democratic choice and welfare is, arguably, increased.⁴

Associative democracy clearly envisages a significant shift in focus from territorial to functional sub-groups (dimension [C]), though the confederal vision favoured by Hirst combines territorial and functional modes of representation. It is not clear how a working associative order would resolve inevitable tensions between the claims to legitimacy and domains of activity (such as general standard-setting for service delivery) represented by institutions based on these two modes respectively.

With respect to the representative–direct divide (dimension [D]), associative democracy adopts and radically modifies elements of both in a new structure of representation and participation. The 'direct' element is exercised not (primarily, at any rate) through voting, but rather via participation in and through associational life of regions and localities. 'Representation' goes beyond a traditional electoral-constituency basis; one's needs are represented through associations which gain or lose materially according to how well they are perceived to serve the relevant interests. Similarly, democratic accountability takes on a different meaning (dimension [E]), involving the accountability of local associations both to their members and recipients of their local services, and to central government with respect to maintaining basic framework, minimum standards for service-delivery. Significant emphasis is placed upon self-determination at the local level in civil society as an alternative to state provision and determination of services (dimension [F]) – activating the participative potential of civil society is close to the heart of associative visions. In short, on various dimensions, the associative model rethinks the meanings of basic democratic concepts and practices.

Conclusion

This chapter has covered enormous ground in a short space. I hope enough has been said to show that the major challenges confronting democracy are finding answers. I hope also that it shows that those answers are not decisive and finished, and that the debate about democracy's futures remains as open and lively as it is important.